

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

This award recognizes innovative local government programs or processes that creatively balance a community's social, economic, environmental, and cultural needs.

Populations of 50,000 and greater

Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project | Dubuque, Iowa

Michael C. Van Milligen, City Manager



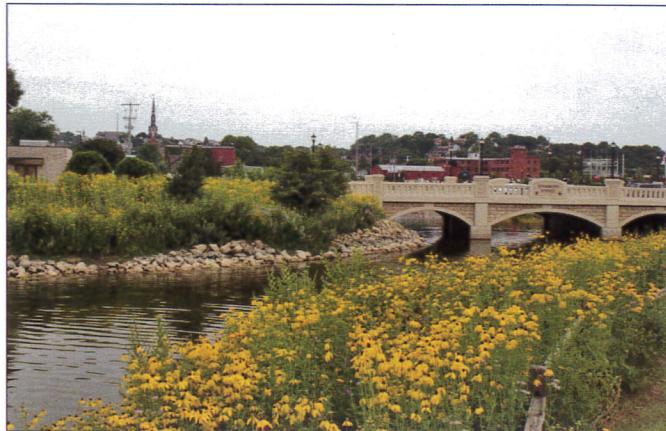
Challenge: To find a solution for frequent flash flooding in the Bee Branch Watershed that also supports the watershed's overall health, water quality, neighborhood preservation, and community development.

Backstory: More than half of Dubuque's residents either live or work in the Bee Branch Watershed, an area of historic neighborhoods that have a mix of affordable housing, small businesses, and schools. A 2009 FEMA study found that 1,373 homes and businesses, including 70 businesses that employ more than 1,400 people and account for \$500 million in annual sales, are prone to storm water flooding.

The Bee Branch Creek had been buried in a storm sewer in the early 1900s. As Dubuque grew, major rainstorms regularly overwhelmed the sewer's capacity. Between 1999 and 2011, the area was declared a federal disaster area six times and logged an estimated \$69.8 million in damages. As a result, while commercial property values rose 39 percent citywide between 2004 and 2009, they fell six percent in the watershed.

Solution: The Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project (BBWFMP), a green infrastructure investment to mitigate flooding, improve water quality, stimulate development, and enhance quality of life.

Program Implementation: The project catalyzes community economic, social, and environmental capital to create resilient neighborhoods, foster economic opportunities, and balance resources. The BBWFMP created an open waterway and floodplain designed to carry storm water through Dubuque's north end without flooding adjacent properties. It also serves as a linear parkway connecting Dubuque's historic riverfront and urban core. The parkway features a hike/bike trail, rain gardens/bioswales, pervious pavement, an amphitheater, and more than 1,000 trees and other plantings.



A sustainable approach to flood mitigation.

Business, health, environmental, and economic organizations, and neighborhood associations supported the project because of its contribution to economic growth, the livability and vitality of the downtown and neighborhoods, and enhanced biodiversity.

Costs: \$219 million. Because of its innovative approach, Dubuque was able to secure more than \$160 million grant dollars from state and federal agencies.

RESULTS

BBWFMP will prevent an estimated \$582 million in damages over its 100-year design life.

WHY IT WORKS

- The BBWFMP is a significant shift for cities. Traditional flood mitigation involves buyouts and demolitions, sewers, and levees. Instead, Dubuque citizens and their partners embraced a sustainable approach.
- This project was one of the first of its kind to remove funding "silos" and "braid" funding streams and permitting processes.
- It embraced citizen engagement through neighborhood meetings, public hearings, and infrastructure input sessions.

PM

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

*Just the
Ticket*

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TO A COMMUNITY'S STRENGTHS

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