



Rockford, Illinois: Growing Forward for Hazard Mitigation

Welcome to Rockford! With an area already over 64 square miles, the City of Rockford, Illinois, still has plenty of room to grow. How to grow and the extent of the growth has been an area of concern for many years.

As part of the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP), which covers Winnebago and Boone Counties, the city is working with RMAP to develop a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. RMAP was one of the few agencies to receive a grant from HUD to create a 20-yr sustainable plan that will include components such as storm water master planning, energy efficiency, waste management, water resource management, and many other elements. The plan and data gathering are underway with a draft to be completed in 2013.



Resilience Takes Time...and Proper Planning

As part of RMAP's 2040 plan, one of its growth strategies is that "The region shall seek a coordinated growth strategy that enhances livability of neighborhoods, balances development pressure with infill development, promotes the agriculture economy, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, introduces walkable landscapes, conserves natural resources, and rejuvenates historical economic centers."



Marcy Leach

The City and its partners are well on their way to achieving this goal by planning and building walkable streetscapes and parks, studying the potential of wind and hydropower energy in the region, installing a solar field, studying greenhouse gas emissions, retrofitting buildings for thermal and electrical energy savings, and re-writing building codes for energy standards, says Marcy Leach, Rockford's engineering operations manager.

The City and its region are working together to promote these initiatives so the community can become more resilient to disasters and sustain itself throughout the changing times. Residents can also look to the city of Rockford's Emergency Preparedness homepage for tips issued by FEMA in terms of taking sustainability into their own hands when it comes to mitigating hazards.

Lifting Spirits While Rebuilding Against Natural Hazards

The City of Rockford and Rockford Local Development Corp in 2008 combined efforts to purchase 112 properties along Keith Creek that were inundated by declared disaster floods in 2006 through 2008. The city went outside the box and obtained a \$10 million line of credit to rescue the homeowners who were saddled with heavily damaged homes and no place to go. The cleared land provides community open space for a future linear park and community gardens.



Rockford worked with state agencies to obtain hazard mitigation grants and disaster recovery grants to repay the line of credit and demolish the homes. Five years later - the city of Rockford is still paying on the line of credit and still working hard to find grant money to help mitigate this Keith Creek floodplain. Though this process has been long, the Keith Creek/Churchill Park Neighborhood Association has not let that ruin their spirits.

This disaster and its remediation have brought the neighborhood closer together. They have come together to create community gardens and have banded together to bring their skate park back to life for the kids. This neighborhood hosted Rockford's National Night Out and worked together for a neighborhood tree lighting ceremony.

For more information on how Rockford combats hazards, check out the city of Rockford's Emergency Management website at: <http://www.rockfordil.gov/fire.aspx>

