



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **IDNR, City of East St. Louis announce plan to buy out flood-damaged properties**

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has agreed to provide nearly \$2.6 million to the City of East St. Louis to buy out 39 properties that have experienced repeated flooding and flood damage.

The funding, through [IDNR's Flood Hazard Mitigation Program](#), will be used to reimburse the city for approved costs associated with acquiring homes on a total of 39 lots, plus one vacant lot, in the Mary Avenue and Terrace Drive areas near Harding Ditch, which does not drain properly during heavy rainfall. The structures were badly damaged during a storm system that resulted in 7 inches of rain July 26-28, 2022.

For the first time, this project includes additional funds to assist homeowners who resided in the flooded structures up to \$22,500 in additional funds to purchase a home. These funds are not for non-resident owners or renters. The additional assistance was deemed necessary because of the low value of the structures and the need for the property owners to find a new home that is decent, safe, and sanitary.

After the properties are purchased and demolished, deed restrictions will be placed on them to prohibit new structures from being built in the same locations. Independent studies have shown that flood acquisition projects save \$6 for every dollar spent. After demolition, plans are for the land to become public green space, such as parks, trails, or athletic fields, benefitting the entire community.

"IDNR is pleased to be able to assist the City of East St. Louis with helping residents whose lives have been upended by flooding," **said IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie.** "As our climate changes and we continue to see stronger and more frequent storms, it's important that we work together to break the cycles that lead to reconstruction in flood-prone areas."

**East St. Louis City Manager Robert Betts** said he appreciates the support the city has received from local, state, and federal partners as they worked through a lengthy process that can be frustrating for residents whose homes are destroyed by flooding.

"This will be the end of a long-awaited process and a new beginning for residents impacted by the flooding," Betts said. "My goal now is to retain them as residents of East St. Louis by providing new housing opportunities that are not prone to flooding."

The total estimated cost for the East St. Louis project is \$2,583,895, including acquisition, asbestos abatement, demolition and clearance of the acquired properties, reshaping the properties to a safe and manageable condition, and acquisition transaction expenses, such as appraisals, title commitments, attorney fees, and recording costs.

“I appreciate IDNR’s response to significant, repeated flooding issues in East St. Louis that have resulted in excessive property damage over time,” **State Sen. Christopher Belt (D-Swansea)** said. “Providing funds to assist homeowners shows the commitment we have in protecting the city and its residents from the impact of these floods.”

The City of East St. Louis has a long history of flooding, both from the Mississippi River and from the city’s internal drainage system. Levees have been built and improved to protect against a 500-year flood from the Mississippi, but the city still experiences frequent flooding from the internal drainage, canals, creeks, and maintenance challenges in the storm sewer system. The area of Mary Avenue and Terrace Drive has experienced multiple flooding events during the past 30 years.

“The people of East St. Louis have faced a tragic cycle of flooding that has disproportionately affected families in the area,” **said Rep. Kevin Schmidt (R-Cahokia Heights)**. “This is a step forward to a better future for those so severely impacted and I appreciate the attention IDNR has given to addressing this need.”

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