



*Office of Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey
LEADING BOLDLY, WORKING TOGETHER*

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT INFORMATION:

**Brian Eber
Public Works
Storm Water Program Manager**

March 11, 2009

Phone: 815-967-7061

E-mail: Brian.eber@rockfordil.gov

CITY RECEIVES FEMA AWARD FOR KEITH CREEK AREA BUY-OUT

ROCKFORD – March 11, 2009 –City of Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey welcomed Norbert Schwartz, Mitigation Division Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region V, Ron Davis of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), Mitigation Office, and several Aldermen and guests to receive a \$3,014,025.00 award from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

In addition to the grant receipt, Mayor Morrissey signed an agreement with IEMA committing the city to the acquisition and demolition of the homes currently held by Rockford Local Development Cooperation (RLDC). The ability for the city to pursue this next phase in its mediation efforts is a direct result of the grant award.

The targeted homes, all of which had suffered extensive damage during the floods of 2006 and 2007, had been purchased as part of a cooperative effort between the City of Rockford and RLDC with the intent of eventual demolition as part of a county-wide mitigation strategy.

Following the flood of August 2007, the city developed the goal of preserving the homeowner's ability to relocate with minimal financial impact, to acquire the homes at market value, and to redevelop the area into a park that would allow for green space for residents and act as a storm water management plain during heavy rainfall.

The ability for the city to take this unprecedented step was a direct result of a cooperative effort between the City of Rockford, IEMA and FEMA, with support from the area's elected officials: Congressman Manzullo, Senator Durbin, and Representative Jefferson. "I would like to personally thank our Aldermen for the leadership they displayed on our council floor when they approved the original funding for this mitigation effort. Their actions opened the doors for support from IEMA, FEMA, and our elected officials both locally and in Washington," stated Mayor Morrissey.

State Representative Chuck Jefferson echoed the Mayor's comments as he pointed out: "This is what happens when government entities work together. We worked together, went to bat at all levels, and supported the program. The end result was a solution that allowed for the betterment of the community."

The City of Rockford of Rockford applied for the grant in January of 2008. Earlier work done in developing the County-wide Mitigation Strategy had defined the Churchill Park area as one in which structures were most at risk for repetitive loss. This analysis showed that mitigation was the most cost-effective strategy for this neighborhood and would limit the number of structures in the flood plain and create open-space for the area residents.

City staff, including Brian Eber, Storm Water Program Manager, Land Acquisition Officer, Mark Rose, and City Attorney, Kerry Partridge worked closely with RLDC and the various agencies in implementing the mitigation plan for Churchill Park. "This kind of project is the cornerstone of disaster prevention efforts and illustrates the importance of local, state and federal governments working together for the benefit of citizens," said Janet M. Odeshoo, acting regional administrator, FEMA Region V.

###