



FEMA

Flood Control Projects Revamp Communities

Kansas City, MO – In 1864, Brush Creek flowed through the middle of the Battle of Westport, (the biggest battle of the American Civil War west of the Mississippi River). The site is present-day Kansas City. Today the creek is the focus of a different battle, to keep floodwaters at bay, to protect area citizens and to enrich contiguous communities.

Brush Creek, located 5 miles south of downtown Kansas City, meanders 6.5 miles across Kansas City from the Kansas state line on the west to the Blue River on the east. It lies at the center of residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, educational, cultural and research institutions.

“When the Brush Creek channel was first built in the 1930s, everything on the southern edge of Kansas City was rural and farmland. The water control system was built to handle water under those circumstances. Everything in the area changed as growth and development occurred. Water flow increased dramatically,” said Kent Myers, program manager at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District.

In 1977, storms and heavy rains caused flash flooding as Brush Creek quickly spilled its bounds into surrounding roadways, residential and commercial districts. The storm caused an estimated \$66 million in property damages and 12 people were killed at nearby Country Club Plaza. Shops and restaurants in this upscale outdoor shopping mall were filled with more than five feet of floodwaters.

As a first-line strategy following the catastrophe, Kansas City petitioned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help reduce flood hazard problems. As the Corps implemented environmental assessments and planned construction designs to control flooding, the city’s Parks and Recreation Department developed companion plans to enhance nearby communities and beautify the adjacent linear park which runs parallel to the creek.

Kansas City’s Public Works Department, Water Services Department, city planners, consultants, community leaders and citizens joined the flood control planning team. This collaboration formed Brush Creek Flood Control and Beautification Initiative in the early 1980s.

In 1987, Kansas City passed a \$51 million bond issue, the Cleaver Plan, introduced by then Kansas City Councilman Emanuel Cleaver, now Congressman. The plan helped to fund the flood control and beautification projects.

Known as America’s first outdoor shopping mall, the affluent Country Club Plaza and adjoining Plaza Reach, were the first areas revamped following the Cleaver Plan. While the U.S. Corps of Engineers constructed channel improvements, the City undertook the replacement of several bridges along Brush Creek that restricted water flow during heavy rain storms. Flood control works progressed eastward to include nearby Paseo intersection and Lake of Enshriners, which extends up Brush Creek as a result of a city-built dam.

“The Corps identified justification for the project to initiate at Country Club Plaza and nearby districts based on an economic impact analysis,” added Karin Jacoby, division manager, Water Services Department, Kansas City.



Jackson County,
Missouri



Quick Facts

Year:

1998

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$164,000,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Flood Control

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)