



Spicket River Floodplain Acquisition

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Essex County, Massachusetts

Arlington, MA - The May 2006 flooding within the Arlington neighborhood of Lawrence impacted two dozen fewer families than in the past, according to Michael Sweeney, Planning Director for the city. This older urban area is located next to the Spicket River, a tributary of the Merrimack River, and close to Malden Mills of textile manufacturing fame. In the previous twenty years, there have been several evacuations due to flooding.



In 2003, the largest New England acquisition by FEMA was completed here with twenty-two owners and tenants relocated out of the river floodplain at a cost of \$1,411,430. A FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) award paid for 75%, and a Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant covered the remaining 25% of costs. MEMA (Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency) and DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation) provided technical assistance.

Two months after the heavy spring flooding in 2006, the grassy fields at the site appeared untouched. Red clover and milkweed bloomed profusely as butterflies fluttered about. Local children frequently explored the broad open space. This is an unusual landscape to find in a congested city of 10,000 people per square mile. Community leaders recognized the unique opportunity this land offered to local families.

Officials plan to make the property part of a larger greenway along the Spicket River. Additional city lots nearby are being held to use in a larger planned, passive recreation area. Now the neighborhood is looking at a future ball field and river walkway. Sweeney says, "None of this would have been possible without FEMA and the state."

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region I**

State: **Massachusetts**

County: **Essex County**

City/Community: **Lawrence**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Severe Storm; Flooding; Hurricane/Tropical Storm**
Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts; Relocation; Floodplain Management**
Structure Type: **Wood Frame**
Activity/Project Start Date: **06/1998**
Activity/Project End Date: **06/2003**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Local Sources; Other Federal Agencies (OFA)**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**
Funding Recipient Name: **City of Lawrence**
Application/Project Number: **9999**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$1,411,430.00 (Actual)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **Yes**
Federal Disaster #: **1142 , 10/25/1996**
Federal Disaster Year: **1996**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **2006**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: http://www.cityoflawrence.com/Pages/LawrenceMA_PlanDev/index
Reference URL 2: <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/mitigate/>

Main Points

- In 2003, the largest New England acquisition by FEMA was completed in Arlington, MA with twenty-two owners and tenants relocated out of the river floodplain at a cost of \$1,411,430.
- A FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) award paid for 75%, and a Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant covered the remaining 25% of costs.



View down Holly Street during the May 2006 flood disaster.



These acquired properties were totally submerged during May 2006 flooding .



The open space of the buyout area along Holly Street can be developed into a public recreation area.



Red clover and weeping willow trees recover quickly on the new open spaces laying within the Spicket River floodplain.