



Acquisition, Evaluation, and Analysis: Acquisition Successes in Birmingham

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Jefferson County, Alabama



Birmingham, AL - The City of Birmingham faces its greatest hazard from flooding associated with severe weather. Birmingham’s high population density and development render parts of the City particularly vulnerable to the effects of flooding. In an effort to end this damage cycle, FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) provided funding for one of the largest flood acquisition project ever implemented. The buy-outs under this project have avoided losses of over \$60 million on an investment of \$36 million.

Village Creek’s floodplain comprises 53 percent of Birmingham’s Special Flood Hazard Area. In some locations, floodwaters can rise as quickly as 3 feet per hour. Village Creek has flooded nearby neighborhoods over 20 times in the past 20 years. Since 1977, federally declared flooding events have occurred 11 times. This history of repetitive flooding and associated damages prompted the City and the USACE to seek congressional funding to accomplish both structural and non-structural solutions to resolve the cycle of repetitive flooding.

The acquisition project was a cooperative effort by the City, the State, and the Federal government that spanned 20 years and removed 735 structures from the floodplain. Additionally, the project returned the floodplain to its natural state as a retention basin for floodwaters; breaking the cycle of flood damage in the floodplain of Village Creek.

The report “Losses Avoided in Birmingham Alabama” documents the direct losses avoided resulting from the federally cost-shared Village Creek Acquisition Projects.

When severe storms hit Birmingham with four inches of rain on March 10-11, 2000, in the residential areas surrounding Village Creek there was little residential property damage, no displacement of residents, and no need for assistance even though floods elsewhere in the City were serious enough to result in a Presidential disaster declaration. The financial savings realized by the community as the direct result of implementing the acquisition project can be put towards other civic improvements/projects.

Activity/Project Location
Geographical Area: Single County in a State
FEMA Region: Region IV
State: Alabama
County: Jefferson County
City/Community: Birmingham

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Severe Storm; Flooding**
Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts; Relocation**
Activity/Project Start Date: **12/1983**
Activity/Project End Date: **03/2000**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Local Sources**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$37,500,000.00 (Estimated)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **No**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **2000**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floodsmart.gov>
Reference URL 2: <http://www.fema.gov/business/nfip/>

Main Points

- Birmingham's high population density and development render the city particularly vulnerable to the effects of flooding. In an effort to end this damage cycle, FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) provided funding for one of the largest flood acquisition project ever implemented. The buy-outs under this project have avoided losses of over \$60 million on an investment of \$36 million.
- Village Creek's floodplain comprises 53 percent of Birmingham's Special Flood Hazard Area ... This history of repetitive flooding and associated damages prompted the City and the USACE to seek congressional funding to accomplish both structural and non-structural solutions to resolve the cycle of repetitive flooding.
- The acquisition project was a cooperative effort that spanned 20 years and removed 735 structures from the floodplain. Additionally, the project returned the floodplain to its natural state as a retention basin for floodwaters; breaking the cycle of flood damage in the floodplain of Village Creek.

