



FEMA

The Power of Collaboration in Kirkland, IL

Kirkland, IL - Les Bellah, former Mayor of Kirkland, Illinois, knows the power of water. According to Bellah, in July 1996, a storm dumped eighteen inches of rain on his town in less than twelve hours. The Kishwaukee River jumped its banks and flooded the Congress Lake Estates Trailer Park. Water came up to the windows of many trailers and left a two-foot-high watermark on Kirkland's Village Office.

The 1996 storm ultimately destroyed the Congress Lake Estates Trailer Park and left masses of debris in its wake.

After the waters receded and the debris was all hauled away, the Village faced a serious question: what to do now with the devastated Congress Lake Estates Trailer Park? Local leadership prudently chose to go down the path of mitigation.

Within months of the flood event, Kirkland leaders collaborated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State of Illinois on a hazard mitigation acquisition project aimed at buying out the mobile homes at the Congress Lake Estates Trailer Park.

Once the trailers were all purchased at pre-flood market value, Kirkland residents decided to create a natural park where the trailer park once stood, thereby both beautifying the area and preventing the location from future flood damage.

The former site of the Congress Lake Estates Trailer Park has now been transformed into Pioneer Park, a large green space by the scenic Kishwaukee River.

"We are very proud of our park," said Bellah. "With this last flood of August 2007, we proved one more time that we made the right decision. The area flooded again, and it would have affected homes if they were still here. So the project really paid off."

According to Bellah, Kirkland residents were ecstatic about the results of this project. "We are sad for all the people who lost their homes during the flood of 1996," he said. "But through foresight and some good decisions, we were able to turn the whole experience into a positive thing."



**DeKalb County,
Illinois**



Quick Facts

Year:

1996

Sector:

Public/Private Partnership

Cost:

\$1,600,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Acquisition/Buyouts

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)