



FEMA

Flooded Homes To Farmers Market A Bluefield Success Story

Bluefield, VA - Bluefield wasn't always known by that name. Eighty years after its third change, Bluefield is undergoing more changes. "Two creeks collide in the middle of town," according to Todd Day, Public Works Director for the City of Bluefield, Virginia. "Beaver Pond and Whitney Branch meet under the IGA store. When torrential downpours happen, the whole town floods." From 2001 to 2003 the area has experienced four floods that impacted Walnut Street, home to seven longtime residents of this town of just over 5,000.

As a result of a flood that hit in 2001, Bluefield was awarded funds from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to buyout and subsequently relocate the seven families on Walnut Street. "Removing the buildings won't stop the flooding," Day said. But the trauma associated with frequent flooding and the damage it caused has come to an end. "The residents of those homes were concerned about finding suitable housing," Day stated. A valid concern considering many of the residents were senior citizens. "The residents of Walnut Street have been relocated inside the city limits, and I believe they are reasonably happy with their homes," Day added.

Road repairs and maintenance were a costly factor for the city, too. "We were patching and paving and building back that road over and over again. We figured out that had we not become involved with the HMGP, it would have cost the city more than \$65,000 for repairs and maintenance over the next five years. That will be a huge savings for Bluefield," said Day. "When Walnut Street flooded, we were going down there in power boats, with the rescue squad and fire department and all other types of emergency services regularly."

Bluefield Mayor Bill King said the Walnut Street flooding occurred even when there was only a moderate amount of rain. Consideration was given to elevating the homes, but in the final analysis the houses were considered too old to elevate successfully.

Day said that a group of citizens has formed a committee to consider possible uses for the "green space" created after the homes were vacated and demolished. The committee is considering using that space for an unpaved parking lot or a cordoned-off park area with benches. "The committee is still forming, but so far, favor seems to be on the side of forming a farmers market there," Day said. "That would be good for Bluefield."



Tazewell County,
Virginia



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$409,522.00 (Actual)

Primary Activity/Project:

Acquisition/Buyouts

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)