



Office of the Drain Commissioner
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, July 11, 2012:

FEMA GRANT WILL HELP BUY HOMES IN FLOOD-PRONE SHAWMUT HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD

GRAND RAPIDS - The 2000 block of Tremont Boulevard (near Covell Avenue) has historically been prone to flooding. Runoff from rain and snow, teamed up with homes built on higher ground nearby, create a sort of 'bowl' causing water to flood driveways, garages and basements of numerous homes in the vicinity. Eight homes in this neighborhood suffer repeated severe flooding and damage. The engineers and staff from the Kent County Drain Commissioner's office have looked at numerous possible solutions, and after discussions with neighbors, all parties have reached a sensible solution.

Given the current housing market in Kent County, flooding problems make eight of the homes even harder to sell, driving down their property values. The Drain Commissioner determined repairing the infrastructure in this area would cost between \$5 million and \$10 million. Buying the homes and taking them down would cost approximately \$1 million, a substantial tax savings to residents. Residents unanimously agreed that selling to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is in their best interest. Kent County Drain Commissioner William Byl applied for a grant through FEMA. Today at 10:00 AM, he was notified that Kent County will receive a grant to buy the homes and move them or tear them down.

"Once FEMA has the deeds, the homes will be removed, the site cleared of debris and the site will be graded and re-seeded," said Drain Commissioner William Byl. "This deal is in the best interest of not only the homeowners in this flood-prone area, but to the taxpayers of the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County as well."

Once the site is cleared and re-seeded, Kent County will receive ownership, with the intention of constructing a storm water storage and infiltration facility, as well as dedicated green space. Kent County will assess the district \$100,000 for engineering, pavement modifications and construction of the facility, costing property owners in the district an average of \$35 a year, over the next seven years. The City of Grand Rapids will provide \$400,000 (a required match for the FEMA grant) to pay for the flood mitigation and restoration portion of the project. Once paid in full, the property will be turned over to the City of Grand Rapids.

There is a ninth home (located in the middle of some flood-prone homes) which is not eligible for the FEMA grant, as it has not experienced any flooding. In order to keep the park space contiguous, negotiations are underway with the homeowner to include it in project.









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