In-Progress Project Summary: Reading Floodplain & Trails Plan

Anticipated Completion: 2017

Overview

Flooding from the Mill Creek is an issue that has plagued the city of Reading since its founding. This problem continues to grow as the upper watershed of the Mill Creek develops and rainwater runs off of the roofs and parking lots of the new development. Flooding impacts Reading residents by destroying property, imperiling lives, decreasing property values, requiring costly insurance and decreasing the quality of life.

Momentum is also growing to form a regional network of bicycle and pedestrian trails, and the Mill Creek corridor has been identified by Tri-State Trails as an important regional trail corridor. Segments of the Mill Creek Greenway Trail have already been completed in the City of Cincinnati and more are planned.

The City of Reading, in partnership with the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities, has been awarded Community Development Block Grant funds to prepare a concept plan to address flood risk reduction and recreation trail opportunities in Reading’s Mill Creek Valley. The plan will identify opportunities for targeted improvements to address flood risk, while also identifying a preliminary corridor for the Mill Creek Greenway Trail through the area. Since these two issues are so closely linked, they are being considered together as part of the same planning effort. Your input and support will be key to making this plan successful. Please see below under “Community Engagement” for opportunities to contribute your knowledge to this important planning effort.

Background

Recent revisions to the FEMA 100-year floodplain map have placed many Reading households and businesses within the 100-year flood plain, resulting in significant flood insurance premium increases, negatively impacting the bottom lines of households and businesses in Reading. At the same time, momentum is building for the completion of the Mill Creek Greenway Trail, and the Village of Evendale recently completed a bike and pedestrian master plan. This places the focus squarely on the City of Reading in
providing a crucial link in this nascent regional trails network. The economic development benefits of trails, in the form of increased property values and business and talent retention and attraction, have also been well-documented. The convergence of these two issues in this place and at this time present a unique opportunity to create a plan that will guide the City of Reading in addressing these issues.

In partnership with the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities, the City of Reading applied for and has received a grant to hire a consultant, AMEC Foster Wheeler, to conduct a coarse-level planning analysis that will address two issues:

**Recreation Trail Planning**

The plan will identify the most feasible route for the Mill Creek Greenway Trail and opportunities for connecting trails within the City of Reading. The plan will also evaluate trail impacts to City parks and private properties.

**Flood Risk Reduction Opportunities**

The plan will identify opportunities on City-owned properties and/or partnerships with local landowners with an eye toward improvements that could potentially reduce the base flood elevation in the area and remove some Reading residences and businesses from the 100-year floodplain.

While limited grant funding will only allow for a general identification of opportunities, it will provide a solid planning foundation that will give the City the opportunity to potentially leverage further grant funding for detailed engineering studies and implementation to address both the floodplain and recreation issues. It is the first step in a larger process that we hope will ultimately result in a direct positive impact on the bottom lines of Reading residents and businesses in the form of reduced flood insurance premiums, improved recreational opportunities for City residents, and completion of a crucial link in the regional trails network.