

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

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Working Together:

Stormwater Management Policy

Flooding, whether it be inside your home or outside in your yard or street, can be dangerous, problematic, and at the very least, inconvenient.

The City's Stormwater Management Policy makes provisions for assistance to property owners during a rainfall event by primarily investigating the source of the flooding. The Policy also defines the responsibilities of both private property owners and the City.

The Stormwater Management Policy guides the City's attempts to control the movement of stormwater in order to reduce damage to property and protect public health, safety, and general welfare.

The Policy also assists in identifying projects, programs, and initiatives that will reduce flooding conditions within the City by the most cost effective means and at the appropriate level of protection. Stormwater drainage improvements frequently involve flood control measures, such as storm sewer pipes and storm drainage structures.

The City of Lake Forest works closely with FEMA and the National Flood Insurance Program to protect residents and their property.

The Public Works and Community Development Departments, located in the Municipal Services Building, are ready to help residents in dealing with flooding issues and provide information during and after a flooding event on your property.



The Illinois Drainage Law

The Illinois Drainage Law states that landowners must accept the advantages or inconveniences of drainage that nature places upon their land. One of the most important principles of the Illinois Drainage Law is that owners cannot adversely alter drainage and that owners of lower ground must receive surface water that naturally flows onto it from higher ground. Where the natural flow is from one tract across another tract, the higher land is the dominant tenement, and the lower land is the servient tenement. Owners of dominant tenements have legal rights to have water drain off their lands.

Owners of servient tenements have the duty of not obstructing the natural flow.

A landowner has no right to obstruct the flow of surface water. Under Illinois law, the owner of lower land has no right to build a dam, levee, or other artificial structure that will interfere with the drainage of higher land. In fact, the willful and intentional interference by an owner of lower land is considered a petty offense and is punishable by a fine. This is in addition to private lawsuits that the owners of affected properties may file.



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

The City of Lake Forest's Policy and Objectives

Storm Water Drainage Capital Projects List

The Department of Public Works maintains a prioritized Capital Improvement Plan of proposed public stormwater drainage projects. Proposed projects may be added to the list by following the procedures.

- ⇒ Residents who have stormwater concerns in their yards or basements should call or submit a letter to City staff describing the problem in detail
- ⇒ A site visit will be performed by City staff in order to give a diagnosis of the stormwater issue and recommendation of next steps. City staff will determine if the flooding is caused by an issue with the City's infrastructure (storm and / or sanitary sewers) or a private property owner's infrastructure. If the cause of flooding is determined to be a City infrastructure problem, the City is responsible for any short term repairs in a timely manner. If the cause of flooding is determined to be a property owner problem (such as a failed sump pump or altered landscaping), the property owner is responsible for the repairs. City staff typically investigates basement flooding within 24 hours after being notified by the property owner and private yard flooding events within three days.
- ⇒ If it is determined that the property owner is responsible for correcting the flooding problem, the property owner is encouraged to work with staff from the City's Engineering, Water & Sewer, and / or Building Departments. Staff from these Departments can provide ideas and possible solutions to correct or minimize the flooding issue. Private property owners are also welcome to solicit input from local engineering and / or plumbing firms.

Guidelines for Lake Forest Residents

Under the Illinois Drainage Law, private landowners have certain rights to improve the drainage on their land, and may:

- ⇒ Widen, deepen, and clean natural depressions that carry surface water
- ⇒ Straighten out channels on their own property and accelerate the movement of surface water so long as they do not change the natural point of entry or unreasonably increase the flow of water onto lower land
- ⇒ Drain standing or ponding water in the direction of overflow
- ⇒ Tile their property to expedite the flow of water so long as they do not unreasonably increase the flow, change the point of entry on lower land, bring water from another watershed, or connect their drainage tiles to the tiles of other owners without their consent
- ⇒ Expedite the flow of surface waters through natural lines of drainage into a watercourse or stream



All of these possible improvements noted above require plan review and approval by The City of Lake Forest's Engineering Section.

Because of the effect on surrounding lands, landowners must not:

- ⇒ Dam or obstruct a natural drainage channel so that the escape of surface water from higher land is retarded or the channel is shifted
- ⇒ Divert water to lands that do not naturally receive this drainage
- ⇒ Change the point of entry of surface water on lower land
- ⇒ Bring in water from another watershed that would not have flowed across lower land naturally
- ⇒ Pollute any waters that pass from their land through the property of others - whether surface or underground water, streams, or diffused waters
- ⇒ Connect their own tile with another owner's tile lines or with roadway tile lines without consent
- ⇒ Accelerate the flow of water unreasonably, or with malicious intent, to the material damage of lower land owned by others, even though the flow is accelerated through natural channels

The City of Lake Forest and other public agencies have constructed storm water facilities that are designed to expedite the drainage of storm water, but not to eliminate all flooding. Other ways, per the Illinois Drainage Law, to eliminate or minimize flooding on a lot may be found here:



Illinois Drainage Law: <http://ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs5.asp?ActID=869&ChapterID=15>.

Additional Guidelines for Lake Forest Residents

In Lake Forest, there are instances where some yards are designed to carry stormwater runoff overland towards a nearby structure, stream or creek.

In other cases, if a piece of property is within a floodplain, it is at risk for flooding if the stream overflows during prolonged rainfall or rapid snowmelt. A high water table may also contribute to wet basements.

To deal with wet basements, the City recommends checking the building's gutters and downspouts. Downspout water should be directed away from the building; preferably towards the front and rear of the lot or towards the nearest storm sewer structure if one is available.

City staff also recommends working with a professional drainage consultant about re-grading around the foundation of any building so as to direct water away. The property owner's consultant may also propose constructing swales along the property lines to convey water to the desired location.

Residents may also consider installing a catch basin or yard drain at the low point on the lot and conveying storm water out towards the right-of-way, drainage easement, or storm sewer. There are also more sustainable practices and options that residents can consider, such as bioswales or rain gardens. The property owner's consultant must submit an engineered proposal to the Engineering Section for approval before this work can be done. The proposal should include sufficient grading information to clearly and accurately show drainage on the lot before and after the proposed work is done. If any drains or conveyance pipes are to be installed, the consultant should include the sizes and materials of such items as well as rim and invert elevations for any and all structures to be installed.

Finally, property owners are reminded that re-grading and/or landscaping within a drainage easement is not allowed. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the City's Engineering Section. Permanent structures (i.e. sheds) are also not allowed within drainage easements, or any structure (i.e. wall, fence) that will disrupt or otherwise block the natural or designed flow of water through the easement.

City professionals can help

City professionals offer free consultation to help with your stormwater management options. Please contact Jim Lockefer, Public Works Management Analyst, at 847.810.3542, or lockfej@cityoflakeforest.com with any questions, to learn about the National Flood Insurance Program, or for more information. To view the Stormwater Management Policy, please visit http://www.cityoflakeforest.com/assets/1/7/Stormwater_Management_Policy.pdf.

