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- Breaking
- Police
- Village
- School
- Obituaries



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- High School
- Youth
- Athlete of the Month
- Athlete of the Week



## OPINION

- From the Editor
- Letters to the Editor
- Contributing Columnists
- Photo Poll



## LIFE & ARTS

- Dining Out
- Faith Briefs
- The Scene



## MARKETPLACE

- Classifieds
- Real Estate
- Cutting Values
- Summer Fun Guide
- 2015 Northbrook Shopping & Dining Guide
- Northbrook Community Resource Guide



## TOWER PLUS

- Member Benefits
- Digital Paper

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# MWRD conducting stormwater study in Northbrook




Maple Avenue is one of the streets that have flooded during heavy rainstorms in Northbrook. 22nd Century Media File Photo



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Matt Yan, Editor

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Stormwater flooding is an issue all across the North Shore and Northbrook is no exception.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago is currently conducting a pilot study in Northbrook to identify aspects of the land that contribute to flooding and to create a Stormwater Management Master Plan for the Village.

The study, available at [www.northbrookfloodstudy.org](http://www.northbrookfloodstudy.org), asks residents if, where and how often they have experienced flooding; what steps they have taken to address it; and a whole host of other questions related to the impact of local flooding. Survey-takers can answer anonymously while still providing the necessary details. All the answers will be compiled and analyzed by Engineering Resource Associates, Inc., a consulting firm hired by the MWRD to complete the study.

The project will run through next February, according to Jeff Macke, water resources engineer with the firm.

“The past 10 years or so there’s been more and more high-frequency, quick flash flooding events,” Macke told The Tower. “Not only do you have longer term flooding events that involve the river rising and over-topping and flooding, but you’re getting a lot of these quick, small, fast events that affect more of your neighborhoods that are outside the technical floodplain.”

Flooding is a very real and pressing issue, especially considering Illinois had the most rainfall — a 9.53-inch average — in recorded history this June, according to state climatologist Dr. Jim Angel. The figure is 1.26 inches greater than the old record, set in 1902.

Macke and his team have already visited residents in unincorporated Northbrook to get their input on flooding. Areas like the Mission Hills golf course and the Glenbrook Countryside subdivision have shown to be problem spots for flooding, Macke said. Techny and Midway roads are also hot spots for the problem.

The survey responses are being compiled into a database that Engineering Resource Associates, Inc. will use to determine how best to combat flooding. Geographic Information Systems Technician Cody Frovarp is already on the job, converting survey results into data points on a map.

“Everyone that takes the survey, I go by the parcel and location, whether they say they have flooding, I color code them onto our map and I overlay that on the hydrologic

analysis," Frovarp said.

After reading through all the survey entries and looking through submitted flood pictures, Frovarp and his colleagues will create projects to address the floods. They'll then hold public meetings in late 2015 so residents can give feedback. The public comments will be added to the findings before the engineering firm presents its final report to MWRD sometime in February, according to Frovarp and Macke.

"Within the report will be proposed projects. Some of them will look like previously proposed projects — making pipes bigger, adding detention ponds," Macke said. "Other aspects of proposed projects will include green infrastructure on a wider scale."

In addition to MWRD infrastructure improvements, residents can also take matters into their own hands to improve water drainage. The Village sells 55-gallon rain barrels for \$25 each to Northbrook residents to help reduce the amount of water that enters the storm system. Rain gardens are another option that absorb stormwater runoff. Green roofs, permeable pavement and bioswales — depressions in the ground covered with dense vegetation and underlain by permeable soil — are the other green choices more suitable for locations in the development process, Macke explained.

"They've got varying costs and varying advantages but all of them are beneficial," he said.

Frovarp estimates that the study will close at the end of August, unless the firm hasn't gotten enough responses.

The Northbrook study is one of five pilot studies being conducted by MWRD. The organization has begun to create a Cook County 100-year stormwater plan so that if a massive flooding event does occur, municipalities like Northbrook won't be caught unprepared.

The plan will include town-specific measures to capture stormwater, according to MWRD Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer Allison Fore.

"Of course, there are the traditional projects that will also be identified," Fore wrote in an email to The Tower. "Some areas need large reservoirs to address the current situation. The MWRD views these large reservoirs as emergency room measures. They will help the patient live but these communities will need to change their water diet

and water exercise program.

“Learning to deal with water differently so that it can infiltrate or be captured on a property by property basis will provide the final bill of health for a flood-free Chicago.”

Fore noted that the MWRD is currently moving forward on about 80 flood relief projects and will take the lead on designing and building stormwater amenities for certain projects in Northbrook.

“The MWRD needs to do its part, the communities need to do their part, and every citizen needs to learn how to manage water,” Fore wrote.

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