



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES \$1.635 MILLION COMMITMENT OF OPPORTUNITY RETURNS FUNDING FOR FORD HEIGHTS AREA

Funds will Enhance Safety in Deer Creek Flood Plain

SPRINGFIELD – As part of his comprehensive plan to spur economic growth in Northeast Illinois, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced a **\$1.635 million** commitment of *Opportunity Returns* capitol improvement funding to the Deer Creek Flood Damage Reduction Project, which will avert flooding in the Deer Creek Flood Zone in the village of Ford Heights. The project will be completed in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District, the village of Ford Heights with support from Cook County, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.

“This construction project will alleviate flooding in Ford Heights, which will lead to increased economic development in the region. Residents who have had to worry when it rains will instead look forward to new economic opportunities in the near future. It stands to reason that when flooding problems are eliminated, Ford Heights will become more attractive to prospective businesses and homeowners,” Governor Blagojevich said.

The village of Ford Heights is located within a 100-year floodplain. Overbank flooding along Deer Creek has been a recurring problem, with up to 40 percent of structures in the community experiencing flood damage. When completed, the flood protection measures will provide an estimated reduction in structural damage of \$589,000 annually in Ford Heights.

“Governor Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* program is such an innovative approach to economic development because it finds creative ways to make our communities more marketable by building on the assets that we already have. This flood control project will make a real difference both for Ford Heights and the surrounding communities,” State Senator James Meeks (I-Calumet City) said.

“Governor Blagojevich’s commitment to solving flooding problems in Ford Heights is the first domino to set in motion economic recovery for the community,” State Rep. David Miller (D-Dolton) said. “Deer Creek, through this *Opportunity Returns* project, becomes a community asset that will attract new developers to the area.”

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The project includes engineering features to help alleviate flood damage, as well as vegetation plantings for ecosystem restoration. The major project features include 238 acre-foot, two-cell reservoirs, channel clearing and modification, and 13.4 acres of ecosystem restoration, including an oak savanna area, open water, fish enhancement and native plantings.

“This is a great example of economic and ecological concerns benefiting the community simultaneously,” said Joel Brunsvold, Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. “Hundreds of residents won’t have to worry about flooding, and at the same time they can enjoy the restoration of native plants and wildlife habitat.”

Construction begins today. Completion of the flood damage reduction features is planned for 2006. Completion of the ecosystem restoration and vegetation plantings is scheduled for 2008.

Governor Blagojevich’s *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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