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Home
Customer Services
» Ways to Pay Your Bill
» Account Information
» Customer Assistance
» Service Line Protection Program
» Water Rates
» Property Managers & Trade Professionals
Water Utilities
» Drinking Water
» Wastewater
» Stormwater
» Harbor Water
» Long Term Control Plan
The Watershed
» Watershed Protection
» Watershed Recreation
Citywide Initiatives
» Regulatory Reform
» Environmental Education
» Conservation Programs
» Air Pollution Control
» Noise Codes & Complaints
Business and Professionals
» Forms & Permits
» Economic Development Unit
» Doing Business with DEP
» Asbestos Abatement
» Construction, Demolition & Abatement
About DEP
» Inside DEP
» News
DEP Featured In...
Stories from DEP
Press Releases
Public Notices
Testimony & Public Comments



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Department of Environmental Protection Announces New Initiatives to Manage Stormwater and Reduce Flooding in Southeast Queens

Projects Include the Targeted Installation of Storm Sewers, Catch Basins, and “Reverse Seepage” Basins

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced a number of new initiatives to help manage stormwater and alleviate local roadway flooding in neighborhoods throughout southeast Queens, including the recent installation of storm sewers on 111th and 113th Avenues in South Jamaica. Based primarily on input from elected officials, community groups, and reports of flooding logged with the City’s 311 system, engineers conducted a block by block analysis of the most flood prone locations to identify specific areas where the installation of storm sewers and catch basins, or other mitigation projects, could help to better manage stormwater in advance of the planned construction of a more comprehensive sewer system for the area. In addition to the four blocks of new storm sewers and 14 new catch basins built on 111th and 113th Avenues there are a number of other locations currently under consideration for similar upgrades. Leveraging advances in its GIS and hydraulic modeling capabilities, DEP engineers have been able to arrive at faster, more focused solutions to certain chronically challenging areas. DEP has also been evaluating the performance of three pilot “reverse seepage basins” that were installed last year and are intended to couple the traditional stormwater management functions of catch basins with the potential corollary benefit of reducing residential and commercial basement flooding. Investigations are currently underway to evaluate locations where this innovative approach, done in

» [Capital Projects](#)






» [Careers at DEP](#)

» [Environmental Reviews](#)

» [Interagency MOUs](#)

» [A to Z Index](#)

» [Contact Us](#)



cooperation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, would be feasible and could effectively improve drainage and flooding conditions.

“The City’s sewer system protects public health and promotes economic growth, which is why we have invested more than \$383 million over the last ten years to continue to extend sewers throughout southeast Queens,” said DEP Commissioner Strickland. “We have committed an additional \$380 million to continue to build out the sewer system in the area over the next ten years, and we will also work with community leaders to identify locations where complementary, near-term investments will help to better manage stormwater, reduce flooding, and improve the quality of life for the residents of southeast Queens.”

"I applaud Commissioner Strickland for taking a significant step forward in the on-going battle southeast Queens faces in dealing with chronic and destructive flooding," said State Senator James Sanders. "These new initiatives demonstrate a commitment to easing the pain that residents have felt due to pervasive flooding in their homes. While this will not be the silver bullet to cure the flooding problem in its entirety, it's an important signal of forward progression. I look forward to working with the commissioner on tackling the even greater challenges that still lie ahead to guarantee residents in southeast Queens can enjoy their homes and avoid the terror they feel when the forecasts include rain."

“We are very appreciative of the efforts being undertaken by DEP to deal with the flooding problems in Southeast Queens,” said Assembly Member William Scarborough. “We recognize that no one initiative will resolve these issues and we look forward to continuing to work with DEP to provide an overall solution to these problems.”

"I am pleased that DEP is targeting major flooding concerns within southeastern Queens," said Assembly Member Barbara M. Clark. "DEP’s storm sewer and water main installation capital project currently under construction along Linden Boulevard between 199th and 203rd Streets in my district is of particular significance, as it will provide immediate and necessary relief to overwhelmed homeowners upon completion."

"I am pleased that the Department of Environmental Protection is committed to meeting regularly with residents who live in areas impacted by flooding, and that new projects are under way to help mitigate the situation," said City Council Member Leroy Comrie. "Ground water and flooding issues within southeast Queens cannot be resolved without total cooperation from all involved and we must stay vigilant to ensure the funding continues. It is critical that everyone affected participate by contacting any of our offices to detail your problem so a complete review and response can be determined."

"We appreciate the work the Department of Environmental Protection has invested into improving our sewer infrastructure, including dedicating some of their best engineers to investigate the flooding situation in southeast Queens," said City Council Member Ruben Wills. "The millions of dollars being allocated towards these projects will foster a peace of mind with homeowners and small business owners alike. Flooding has unfortunately become a norm rather than an isolated occurrence and in the near future residents can look forward to the beginning of a flood free southeast Queens."

"I am very much looking forward to these essential improvements," said City Council Member Donovan Richards. "For far too long, large sections of southeast Queens have had to deal with subpar sewer systems and I eagerly await the relief these new initiatives will bring. There are several projects in my district that desperately need to be finished in order to grant the community some resiliency and peace of mind. I plan to work closely with DEP and see these issues resolved."

The commercial and residential development of southeast Queens outpaced the extension of the City’s sewer system and many of these neighborhoods are not

yet equipped with catch basins or storm sewers to drain precipitation from the roadways. As the multi-year, \$6 billion effort to construct a comprehensive storm sewer system for the area continues through the City's capital construction program, DEP has initiated a number of smaller, targeted projects that can be advanced more rapidly and will help to manage stormwater and reduce flooding in the interim. In order to identify the locations that are most prone to flooding, DEP consulted with local elected officials and community groups, and analyzed 311 reports. Engineers then conducted field investigations during both wet and dry weather. The analysis considered the topography of the neighborhood, the hydraulic capacity and location of existing storm sewers, the relative elevations of existing sewers and groundwater, and the nature and severity of the stormwater management challenges in order to identify specific areas where the strategic installation of storm sewers and catch basins could help to alleviate flooding. The first two locations identified for upgrades were 113th Avenue between 156th and 157th Streets, and 111th Avenue between 155th and 158th Streets, and both projects were recently completed. Analysis of additional locations is currently underway and DEP expects to approve other projects in 2014.

Building out and upgrading the sewer system in southeast Queens is one of the operational goals outlined in Strategy 2011-2014, a far-reaching strategic plan that lays out 100 distinct initiatives to make DEP the safest, most efficient, cost-effective, and transparent water utility in the nation. As part of DEP's capital construction program, there are numerous projects either ongoing or in the planning and design phase, to build out the sewer system throughout southeast Queens. These include the final phase of the \$175 million Springfield Gardens upgrade that will be completed in the fall of 2014 and will bring nine miles of storm sewers and eight miles of sanitary sewers to the area. Also planned are a \$26 million upgrade for the Brookville Boulevard area, an \$18 million project that will bring high level storm sewers to the Twin Ponds neighborhood, and a \$5 million project to install an additional sewer line under 183rd Street at Jamaica Avenue.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$14 billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. This capital program is responsible for critical projects like City Water Tunnel No. 3; the Staten Island Bluebelt program, an ecologically-sound and cost-effective stormwater management system; the city's Watershed Protection Program, which protects sensitive lands upstate near the city's reservoirs in order to maintain their high water quality; and the installation of more than 820,000 Automated Meter Reading devices, which will allow customers to track their daily water use, more easily manage their accounts and be alerted to potential leaks on their properties. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

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