

# **Malmo Plains Community Consultation on Flood Prevention Held March 23, 2005 at Malmo Hall**

## **Consultation Summary**

Attendance: 55

Main presenter: Russell Barth, Senior Engineer & Flood Prevention Project Leader for Ward 5,  
Drainage Services, City of Edmonton

### **Presentation**

Following introductions, Mr. Barth reviewed the drainage engineering findings for the community and discussed options for reducing the risk of flooding in the future. He noted that the findings show better flood prevention requires action on the part of both the City and homeowners. System improvements for Malmo Plains under consideration by Drainage Services include:

- Building a dry pond on University Farm property northwest of 51 Avenue and 115 Street, and diverting surface stormwater to the pond. The water would be held there until the underground system has the capacity to drain it away.
- Building a short underground stormwater pipe from street drains at 51 Avenue and 115 Street to the dry pond.
- Upgrading some existing sanitary sewer pipes to relieve system pressure and increase capacity.
- Sealing sanitary manholes to prevent rainwater from entering the sanitary system.
- Subsidizing the installation of backwater valves in all homes in low lying areas.

The estimated cost of implementing these options is \$3.6 million. In addition, homeowners were asked to improve their own on-site drainage as much as possible. Options include:

- Better lot grading to ensure surface water gets away from the house.
- Repairing and maintaining good eavestroughs and downspouts.
- Having downspout extensions that channel water at least 6 feet (1.8 metres) away from the house. If an extension is not possible, to drain onto a splash pad.
- Installing and/or maintaining a backflow prevention valve.
- Installing, if appropriate for the situation, a sump pump.

### **Input from Residents**

There were many comments and clarifying questions about the presented options, mainly regarding the speed of implementation and the dry pond. There were also lots of questions and comments about system maintenance and flood prevention home improvements like backwater valves.

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There was general support for moving forward with the dry pond and enlarged pipes options. One person suggested that when the sanitary sewer lines are upgraded that the stormwater pipes lying in the same location be upgraded as well. One person requested a schematic of the type of servicing in Malmo Plains be made available.

City staff were encouraged to implement the improvements as quickly as possible. While there was an understanding that funding for the changes was not part of the existing budget, it was suggested that money be found to do less expensive improvements this summer like sealing manhole covers.

Several individuals said it was important that some immediate relief be provided to the community. There are fears that insurance companies may not provide future flood coverage without some changes being made. One person suggested the frequency and intensity of flooding is increasing and another flood this summer is likely.

It was noted the proposed location of the dry pond seems appropriate given water naturally drains from the University Farm property into Malmo Plains during rainstorms. One person was concerned the pond would be uphill from his home on 114B Street, where considerable pooling occurs. He noted there was no drain at that location to convey water to the stormwater system or to the future pond. Another person believed any surface drainage change would not help those living in a low lying area. One person suggested the Whitemud Freeway be used as a stormwater reservoir during storms.

Many residents expressed doubts about the adequacy of sewer system maintenance in Malmo Plains. Some pointed out that a bent manhole cover has prevented crews from doing the cleaning of one pipe. Others suspected cleaning has not occurred as frequently as it should. It was suggested that an annual maintenance schedule be provided to the community.

One individual suggested low pressure flushing was likely ineffective given a hose smaller than the pipe is used in the flushing process. He also suggested only a camera could confirm there is no blockage in a pipe. The City was encouraged to do more inspection and maintenance of pipes in low lying areas to reduce the risk of flooding.

Two people expressed concern that new developments at Heritage Mall and the University Farm property would place added pressure on Malmo Plains' drainage system.

#### Homeowner Options

Those at the meeting liked the idea of having every home in a low lying area receive a subsidy to install a backwater valve. However, it was suggested that the current subsidy is inadequate to pay for the work. It was recommended that the City consider increasing the subsidy, particularly for those living in high-risk areas. One person asked if a subsidy for sump pumps would be reintroduced.

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Some people said they lacked sufficient information about the installation and maintenance of sump pumps and backwater valves, particularly in complex situations where two valves may be required. It was suggested the City provide more information and support to homeowners so they can make informed decisions. One person suggested the City consider registering who has backwater valves so “weak links” can be identified.

There was also interest in more information being communicated about weeping tile, downspouts, root problems and other home drainage system elements.

#### Timing

Many people at the meeting urged the City to implement the changes as quickly as possible. One person suggested more people were flooded in Malmo Plains than City statistics show and therefore the need for flood relief was more significant than City officials may appreciate. A few individuals expressed frustration that Council approval would not be sought until the fall and therefore funding is not available now to do the work. One person expressed concern that there would be insufficient funding to do all of the improvements in Malmo Plains as there are 14 other high risk communities competing for flood system improvement dollars. One person asked that the next meeting include a representative from the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

#### **Next Steps**

Input from the community regarding system options will be incorporated into a more detailed implementation plan. This plan will be discussed with the community before being presented to City Council in the fall. Mr. Barth noted a number of funding options were being considered, including federal and provincial support. Implementation plan timing will depend on funding and the capacity to do the work. Community residents will be notified of the next consultation. Additional comments or questions may be forwarded to Mr. Barth at 496-5552 or [russell.barth@edmonton.ca](mailto:russell.barth@edmonton.ca)

#### **Other Key Contacts**

Call 496-5539 to be added to the flood prevention program mailing list or to receive future updates and notices by e-mail. Call the 24-hour drainage hotline at 496-1717 if there is a drainage or sewer problem on your property or on your street.

More information about drainage services and the flood prevention program is available at [www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention](http://www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention)