

River Des Peres – University City Flood Risk Management Study General Reevaluation Report Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



1. What is a Flood Risk Management study?

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) flood risk management studies evaluate structural and nonstructural measures to manage the hazards associated with flooding and reduce the negative consequences of flooding to people and property. Structural and nonstructural flood risk management measures include channel modifications, levees, floodwalls, dams, diversion culverts, natural and nature-based features, elevating structures in the floodplain, floodproofing, acquisition or relocation, flood warning systems, floodplain management, and road elevations. A Flood Risk Management study assesses flood risks to communities and identifies solutions that improve a community's flood resilience. The River Des Peres-University City Flood Risk Management study will assess solutions that, if implemented, can reduce risk to homes and businesses in and around the floodplain.

2. What is the USACE project process?

USACE civil works water resources activities are initiated by non-Federal partners or potential non-Federal partners, authorized by Congress, funded by Federal and non-Federal partners, and typically constructed by private contractors supervised by USACE. A civil works project partnership between USACE and a non-Federal partner progresses through four phases: feasibility study (planning); preconstruction, engineering, and design (PED); construction; and, once project construction is complete, operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and rehabilitation (OMRR&R). Most civil works projects – from planning through construction – are cost-shared between the Federal Government and a non-Federal partner or partners. Currently, only the feasibility study (planning) is funded.

3. What is a General Reevaluation Report (GRR)?

A General Reevaluation Report is a way for USACE to reevaluate a previously-studied and congressionally authorized project that may or may not have been built. The approved study or built project may have had circumstances change thereby requiring additional (and sometimes new) analysis. In this case, the previously authorized project was a 1989 feasibility study that recommended channel modifications, selected floodproofing, a flood forecasting and warning plan, and recreation/environmental features. This recommended project was later judged to create flooding impacts downstream of the study area, making it unacceptable. This General Reevaluation Report will identify measures that were previously assessed but will also consider new data, analyses, and existing conditions in the Upper River Des Peres study area.

4. Will University City be involved in the process?

Yes. University City is the Non-Federal Sponsor for this study and will be engaged at every stage of the planning process. Additionally, the planning process will include input from representatives from Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District, St. Louis County, the East-West Gateway Regional Council of Governments, and state, federal, and non-governmental organizations.

5. How long will the study take?

The study will take 3 years and will be completed in April 2023. It takes this long for the Corps to gather data, build models, and conduct analyses, and go through all our required review processes to ensure that the final product is of the highest quality and complies with all relevant rules and regulations.

6. I know University City has done buyouts/acquisition along the river in the past. Is this going to happen again?

Buyouts/acquisition are just one tool in the toolbox of flood risk management solutions. The study team has not yet made any decisions on what the recommended solution(s) will include. In fact, this public meeting is a key opportunity for you to provide input on potential solutions, including buyouts. We want to hear what you think.

7. What should I do if I'm concerned about my home or business being in the floodplain or floodway?

Talk to your local government officials. If you are not already, become familiar with the flood depths in and around your home or business during previous flood events. Learn the risks in your area. Know your emergency evacuation routes. In short, public awareness and education is a large component of reducing the negative impacts of flooding. Your local floodplain administrator, such as University City's Director of Public Works, may be able to assist you. The Missouri State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) is also willing and able to assist you. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Map Service Center website (<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home>) has lots of resources including flood maps covering this area, and FEMA's National Flood Hazard Layer Viewer (<https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps/tools-resources/flood-map-products/national-flood-hazard-layer>) is an interactive map where you can find your flood risk.

8. Will climate change be taken into account?

Yes – the study team will take climate change into account in the planning process. This may include projected changes in rainfall. We will also incorporate projected development in the surrounding area.

9. Will there be an Environmental Impact Statement for this project?

At this time, this project will be National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)-compliant with an Environmental Assessment, not an Environmental Impact Statement. However, this may change as the project evolves.

10. Will the public have an opportunity to provide comments to the NEPA document?

Yes, the Environmental Assessment will be made available for public review for 30 days.

11. Is this study related to FEMA's flood mapping and the National Flood Insurance Program?

FEMA is responsible for publishing Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and then updating them periodically. Because your flood risk changes over time, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and FEMA work with communities across the country to identify and map flood risk on an ongoing basis. Flood maps show a community's risk of flooding to include flood zone, floodplain boundaries, and base flood elevation.

This Flood Risk Management study project bases its recommendations on the most current FIRMs, which are the 2019 Preliminary St. Louis County maps (obtained by USACE through the State Emergency Management Agency, SEMA). This study will not affect FEMA's flood risk mapping process.

12. How does this study fit in with MSD's combined sewer separation and other projects?

Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District is under a consent decree agreement with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, requiring MSD to spend a minimum \$4.7 billion over the next two decades to address the issue of sewer overflows and other sewer system improvements. These overflows are points where a combination of stormwater and wastewater discharges into local waterways from the sewer system during moderate to heavy rainstorms. These sewer overflow points act as relief valves when too much stormwater enters the sewer system. MSD has sewer separation projects and other sewer projects planned for the study area during the period of analysis for this study, which will be taken into account.

13. What happens once the study is complete?

Once authorized, a study or project must have Federal funding before it can begin. Federal funding from the annual USACE appropriations will not be available for a specific study or project until the authorized study is included in either the President's Budget, which is submitted to Congress each February, or the Administration's work plan, which is submitted by the Office of Management and Budget.

The President's Budget categorizes requested funds by the phase of the civil works project. Funds for all pre-construction activities, including feasibility studies and preconstruction, engineering and design (PED) up to the award of the first construction contract are "Investigation" funds. "Construction General" funds are then provided to complete engineering and design after award of the first construction contract and cover all remaining project construction and implementation requirements.

USACE is always looking at least two fiscal years ahead in the budgetary process. Therefore, a newly authorized study may not appear in the President's Budget in the Investigations category for at least two years. Similarly, a newly authorized project may take years before it is included in the Construction General budget.