

## Lee County Iona McGregor Drainage PD\_GIP

Lee County Iona McGregor Drainage Canal C Network and Canal D Improvements

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION – CDBG-MIT-GIP Cycle 2

#### 1. PROJECT PURPOSE AND PROPOSED ACTIVITY

Lee County, a qualified unit of general local government (UGLG) and a HUD-determined Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) county, proposes to mitigate 6 (six) miles of canals in a heavily low/moderate (LMI) income section of the Iona McGregor neighborhood in Lee County. This is an eligible CDBG project under rehabilitation or construction of storm water management systems and improvements to drainage facilities. This proposal approximates the CDBG requirement for Low/Moderate Income (LMI) and also addresses urgent need mitigation (UNM). Lee County has a Hazard and Vulnerability Research Institute's Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI®) of Medium High.

The funding request to mitigate this 10.1-square-mile area of critical flooding is \$3.2 million.

This proposal will help ensure that Lee County is more resilient to future natural disasters. In response to Hurricane Irma flooding in 2017, the County executed strategic and high-impact activities to minimize or eliminate risk and reduce losses from future disasters. In response to rainy season and Hurricane Irma flooding in 2017, Lee County Commissioners invested nearly \$6 million in short-term and long-term flood resiliency efforts. Lee County proposes to use CDBG-MIT funding to implement its current unfunded projects. This proposal complements similar work along the H7 canal system in the Iona McGregor neighborhood that was funded by a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program award in 2019. This is not a duplication of benefits; these are separate canal sections.

This proposal addresses both Community Development Block Grant objectives:

- LMI — The LMI population of this neighborhood – 5,550 – is 47.09% of the total 11,785 population. See Figure 1: Iona McGregor Drainage Canal C and Canal D Area LMI.
- UNM – The proposal mitigates critical unmet needs. See Figure 2: Iona McGregor Drainage Canal C and Canal D Elevation. This project will mitigate:
  - Flooding for structures and roads flooded during and immediately after Hurricane Irma;
  - Repetitive Loss Areas of National Flood Insurance Program claimants; and
  - Extensive low-lying areas below 5 feet NAVD in areas where Flood Insurance Rate Maps require 8 to 12 feet for new construction and substantial improvement; and
  - Community development barriers of LMI and other residents by protecting the availability and value of affordable housing stock in Lee County and by ensuring that residents have more resilient access to home, work, and school after a declared disaster as a result of these flood mitigation efforts.

This grant will also enable Lee County to overcome an unusual jurisdictional history for this area. Although this area is part of the now-defunct Iona Drainage District (IDD), which was created in the early 1920's as a drainage system for an area south of Fort Myers, there are no assessments generating revenue to support operations or upgrades to these canals. Easements were established in favor of the district from landowners who either voluntarily granted easements or conveyed title to the district. A condemnation suit completed the remaining easements that the district needed. Many of these canals

are shown on tax maps for Lee County as IDD canals. By a legislative act on May 25, 1953, the State of Florida dissolved and abolished the Iona Drainage District (*Senate Bill Number 633, Chapter 28456*). Part of this act provided for the assignment of all the district's easement rights to Lee County. On June 4, 1971, the Florida House of Representatives amended Senate Bill 633, Chapter 28456. The amendment provided for the vesting of title to all properties of the drainage district, other than easements rights to Lee County (*Florida House Bill 2421*). Currently, these existing canals are shown on drainage maps as former IDD canals.

## **2. RISK MITIGATION**

Proposed mitigation of 6 (six) miles of canals, designated by Lee County as Drainage Canal C Network and Canal D includes work to reestablish the canal system to original cross-sections and remove vegetation and silt.

This project mitigates risk for all residents of the area, particularly those with structures that were inundated by Hurricane Irma funding and those living in repetitive loss properties insured by the National Flood Insurance Program., and residences and businesses damaged during Hurricane Irma.

## **3. NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Although this work will improve man-made canals, it includes improvements for removing exotic vegetation and delivers value to the taxpayers as a primarily non-mechanical surface water management system.

## **4. WORK PLAN**

Lee County's departments of Transportation and Natural Resources have conceptualized a general work plan. The construction contractor will be selected through a competitive bidding process supervised by the Lee County Procurement Department through established Lee County Competitive Procurement protocols and in compliance with all federal guidelines outlined in the Federal Register Notice and Florida DEO requirements.

The procurement process will include encouraging employment opportunities for Section 3 certified contractors and the hiring of Section 3 qualified individuals. Lee County will ensure compliance with Davis Bacon wage requirements, NEPA environmental review, fair housing, and other crosscutting federal regulations through existing policies and procedures used to ensure compliance for the County's CDBG entitlement funding.

The Department of Transportation will manage the project and monitor the progress of any grants, the design, construction, and close-out phases of the project.

## **5. DETERMINATION OF PROJECT FUNDING REQUIREMENTS**

The amount of funds required for this proposal is estimated at \$3.2 million, based on a combination of the concept plan cost estimates and previous similar projects, including the HMGP-funded work on the Iona McGregor H7 canal, which is now in the implementation phase.

## **5. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES**

This proposal will:

- Improve resiliency – specifically economic resiliency – for LMI households in the Iona McGregor service benefit area;
- Help assure that workers in neighborhood have resilient access to home and work after a hurricane, heavy rains or other natural disaster;
- Increase safety and security by mitigating the risk of riverine flooding, particularly in low-lying areas below the current regulatory base flood elevations for new construction or substantial improvement; and
- Protect the value and supply of housing for the LMI population in this neighborhood.

## **6. MAINTENANCE**

The estimated annual maintenance cost for this six-mile area of canals is \$250,000. Lee County will commit to including this in annual budgeting for the Department of Transportation.