

UNDERWOOD CREEK DAYLIGHTING REFERENDUM

November 5, 2024



What is “Daylighting”?

Daylighting is the process of opening a waterway that has been artificially channeled underground in a culvert (pipe). The Underwood Creek Watershed drains 18 square miles in 12 linear miles of stream throughout Brookfield, Elm Grove, and Wauwatosa. The section of the creek that runs through downtown Elm Grove was channelized and covered with a parking lot in the 1960’s. This concrete confinement channeled the water under the parking lot and under Sendik’s before it reappears and flows alongside the 890 building.

Why are we daylighting Underwood Creek?

The underground box culvert that was built in the 1960’s was NOT permitted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the WDNR will not permit repairs or replacement of the box culvert. If the box culvert fails, the parking lot above could collapse, rendering a main commercial node of the Village paralyzed. Naturalization of the Creek would become the responsibility of the private property owners upon unexpected failure. There would be no certainty on a timeline for the restoration.

The WDNR required the Village to actively pursue funding to accomplish the future daylighting of Underwood Creek with an ultimate goal of replacement. In 2003, the Village began the Underwood Creek Flood Management project to reduce the risk of flooding in Downtown Elm Grove during large scale rain events. The Flood Management project was successfully tested during a heavy rainstorm in June 2008 and several times since then, during which no overland flooding of any downtown structures occurred. Daylighting the Creek is the final step.

What is the benefit of daylighting Underwood Creek?

Daylighting the Creek utilizes a design incorporating natural elements that will help to restore the waterway’s natural path and provide a habitat for native fish and wildlife species, while providing floodwater storage during high-flow events.

Preemptive planning and construction BEFORE failure of the underwood box culvert ensures economic viability of the downtown will be maintained.

What will this project cost?

The estimated project cost is \$8.5 million. Updated cost estimates have been received from the Project Engineer which reflected an increased project cost from 2019 when the daylighting effort first began. Increases in project costs have been driven by concerns of soil contamination and costs to handle these soils properly. Recent environmental soil testing has shown that contamination levels are low, and therefore should bring down the project cost.

The cost of the project will be covered by the tax increments generated in TID No. 2, grants, and stormwater user fees that residents already pay. This means that taxpayers **will not** see any increase on their property taxes for this project.

The Village has successfully secured the following grants, while still seeking additional grant opportunities:

- \$75,000 through the Fund for Lake Michigan
- \$85,000 through the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewer District (MMSD) Green Infrastructure Partnership Program
- \$200,000 through the Fund for Lake Michigan
- \$300,000 through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

What about construction and parking?

The Daylighting design keeps the businesses affected by the construction in mind each step of the way. The Park and Shop and Sendik’s will remain open for business during construction.

There is ongoing coordination with the property owners to design a new parking lot configuration. However, the parking lot is on private property and the final design of the parking lot will ultimately be up to the property owners.

Referendum Question

“Shall the Village of Elm Grove complete the Stormwater Management Plan developed in response to severe flooding by daylighting and realigning Underwood Creek south of Watertown Plank Road through the downtown area?”

The existing creek enclosure located under the Park and Shop parking lot and the Sendik’s building is failing, and will not receive permitting for significant repair from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Village will acquire land and easements and construct a naturalized streambed for the purpose of Village stormwater management. This project will protect public safety, create public space, connect pedestrian pathways and enhance the economic viability of the downtown. The project will be paid for with funding from Tax Incremental Financing District #2, existing storm water fees, and grants. The total project cost SHALL NOT exceed \$8,500,000.

_____ YES _____ NO”



Visit the village website using the above QR code to read more information about the project.

Upcoming Events:

Public Information Meeting - Thursday, October 24
Court Room at Village Hall (13600 Juneau Blvd)
Session 1: 3:30 P.M.
Session 2: 6:30 P.M.

In-Person Absentee Voting Begins: Tuesday, October 22

In-Person Absentee Voting Ends: Friday, November 1

November General Election: Tuesday, November 5