

164 of 2222 DOCUMENTS

Times-Picayune (New Orleans)

August 26, 2009 Wednesday

Options mulled to cut flooding risk; Mandeville residents to share their stories

BYLINE: By Cindy Chang, St. Tammany bureau

SECTION: METRO; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 469 words

Eleven times in the 25 years he has lived on Carroll Street, Ren Clark has seen his yard flood during a hurricane or tropical storm.

Often, he dusts off his pirogue and paddles through the watery landscape, checking on the damage elsewhere.

The Clarks' 1905 cottage, three blocks from Lake Pontchartrain and raised several feet off the ground, has never had water inside. Others in old Mandeville have not been so lucky. More than 50 homes flooded during Hurricane Gustav last year, with Katrina exacting an even greater toll.

With the lake so close by and bayous cutting through neighborhoods, some flooding is inevitable. But Clark is joining with Mandeville officials to examine solutions, such as flap gates on storm drains emptying into the lake, that might not cost millions of dollars and would at least minimize the threat to homes not directly on the lake.

"I'm hoping there is some consensus that it's worth looking at," said Clark, who serves on the city's Planning and Zoning Commission but is acting as a private citizen on this issue. "Are we going to be Holland or Bangladesh or somewhere in between?"

Last week, Clark sent an e-mail survey to people he knows in old Mandeville, asking them to describe their experiences with flooding during Hurricanes Gustav and Ike last year. The survey also solicits comments on how much money would be reasonable for the city to spend on flood protection.

In the next few months, city officials hope to convene a panel of volunteer experts, including University of New Orleans engineering professor Donald Barbe, who will share their opinions about various flood protection options.

A 1992 study showed that a pump providing only 10-year storm protection would cost \$400,000, Public Works Director David deGeneres said at a recent City Council meeting.

But technology has improved since then, and there is broad agreement at City Hall that ideas short of pricey and unsightly pumps are worth discussing.

"I think we need to open the dialogue on this," said Mayor Eddie Price. "If there are alternatives out there that are not as expensive as building pumps, I think we need to look at them."

Options mulled to cut flooding risk; Mandeville residents to share their stories Times-Picayune (New Orleans) August 26, 2009 Wednesday

St. Tammany Parish officials are also moving on the flood protection front, pressing the Army Corps of Engineers to build a weir along the Rigolets that would block water from entering the lake.

Clark thinks that flap gates on the storm drains, and perhaps barriers at the mouths of smaller bayous, could prevent lake water from backing up into Mandeville during storms.

"There may be a solution, but it may be cost-prohibitive," said Councilwoman Trilby Lenfant. "We could put up flap gates, or do we need giant pumps? Let's just explore the situation and determine whether there are viable options."

.....

Cindy Chang can be reached at cchang@timespicayune.com or 985.898.4816.

LOAD-DATE: August 26, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2009 The Times-Picayune Publishing Company