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## **Construction on rain garden to start**

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**By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer**

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Owensboro's Regional Water Resource Agency has won a \$93,358 federal grant to help it develop a rain garden in Chautauqua Park.

It's not for decoration.

The agency hopes the pilot project will result in less storm water going into the sewers and a reduced need for large detention basins around the county.

Chautauqua Park's "Green Solution to Pollution" is planned for the area around the administration building on the north side of Parrish Avenue.

Work should start next summer and be completed in late 2012, said Dean Behnke, RWRA's engineering director.

The rain garden and a larger "biofiltration system" will use plants and "re-engineered" organic or sandy soil to "put more water in the ground rather than the storm water system," he said.

Most people driving along Parrish Avenue won't even notice the project, he said.

But it could provide significant cost savings to developers in the future if they don't have to set aside as much land for detention basins.

"We're confident that this will lead to more rain gardens in the community," Behnke said. "We want to see what works best."

"The more projects we can do like this, the fewer basins we'll need to build," City Engineer Joe Schepers said earlier this year. "We want to try it on public property first to be sure it works."

Gov. Steve Beshear announced on Tuesday that a federal grant will pay approximately \$2.9 million to 11 communities and organizations around the state for the "developing watershed management plans and implementation of nonpoint source pollution controls."

"These grants will fund efforts to help control pollution from sediment, pesticides and other substances that run off our land when it rains," he said in a news release.

Nonpoint source pollution is "the number one contributor to water pollution in Kentucky, accounting for approximately two-thirds of the water quality impairments in Kentucky's streams and lakes," the Kentucky Division of Water said in the news release.

The Division of Water said it received 33 grant project proposals for the federal money. Twenty were invited to apply this year and 11 were chosen.

Those selected have to provide local funds for a 40 percent match. That means RWRA will have to find \$62,239 in nonfederal dollars for the project, the state said.

The rain garden will be a small dry basin, a depressed area near the parking lot, planted with vegetation that "helps pull water into the ground" through the roots, Behnke said.

The low valley along the fence on the north side of Parrish Avenue will also be planted with vegetation that pulls water down into the ground, and the soil will be improved to "let rain perk

down to the water table. We have to make sure the ground water stays charged," Schepers said.

Behnke said the project will have an educational component so people "can see what we did and why."

The project will be monitored for three years to see how it works, he said.

In 2007, the Environmental Protection Agency began encouraging cities to use green infrastructure projects "to keep rainwater out of the sewer system to reduce sewer overflows and to reduce the amount of untreated storm water discharging to surface waters."

Rain gardens, it said, are attractive gardens that can support a habitat for birds and butterflies.

They are designed to drain within four hours of a 1-inch rain.

"This won't be the first in town," Behnke said. "The Western Kentucky Botanical Garden is adding one."

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