Global cities and the mega-regions surrounding them are rapidly becoming the world’s centers of economic growth and innovation. The Great Lakes area, stretching from Minnesota to New York, has the potential to become one of the world’s leading mega-regions.

But Great Lakes cities face similar challenges: inadequate flood control, expensive wastewater management, and outdated infrastructure that wastes water.

Consumers face rising water bills while aging mains and pipes leak an increasingly vast volume of water. Millions of home owners, businesses, churches, and schools face misery from flooding. Antiquated water infrastructure leads to polluted rivers and lakes and impaired wildlife habitat.

The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) is working with communities and other nonprofit organizations to help find intelligent, practical solutions for these problems.

Join the effort! By partnering with CNT, your community can understand the scope of the problem, find low-cost solutions, and reduce costs and heartache for your residents.

Flip this sheet over to learn more about the specific work your community could engage in.

“State Farm processes thousands of claims each year for property damage related to failing water infrastructure. We see how prevalent, costly, and devastating this is for families and business owners, and we’re pleased to be working with CNT to find ways to better understand and address the problem.”

- Michael Rivas Rossman, State Farm

“Restoring the health of the Great Lakes and area waterways is critical to the sustainability of the region. Investments in this work are vital to supporting a vision to protect the environment and resources for the future. For many years, the Joyce Foundation has helped CNT develop innovative, cost-effective solutions to water infrastructure woes. We are pleased to help them now develop networks of communities that will bring their solutions to scale across the Great Lakes.”

- Molly M. Flanagan, The Joyce Foundation

To get involved in the SMART WATER FOR SMART REGIONS initiative contact Harriet Festing, Director, CNT Water Program hfesting@cnt.org | (773)269-4042.
How Your Community Can Be Part of the SMART WATER FOR SMART REGIONS Initiative

The Center for Neighborhood Technology approaches water challenges—its use, conservation, and management—from every angle, but always with a large element of community involvement. A few of our current projects show the breadth of our means and methods.

Gathering Data
We are researching the water-loss control policies of the top 50 utilities within the Great Lakes region to develop strategies for improved investment in infrastructure and services. We will then work with a select number of utilities to make improvements in water-loss control.

Community Collaboration
In partnership with American Rivers and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, we piloted a practical planning tool to help communities manage stormwater flooding and sewer overflows. The Green Infrastructure Portfolio Standard, or GIPS, takes advantage of existing infrastructure and urban development procedures to minimize the cost and maximize the effectiveness of stormwater management programs.

Documenting the Damage
We survey and interview residents who routinely suffer sewage backups or flooding. The research shows that while the financial toll can be high, there is a psychological price as well. CNT is working with local government officials to address the problem.

Inventive Solutions
Our work with residents and communities to develop a flood abatement service is based on simple, low-cost tools such as building rain gardens, repairing private lateral sewage pipes, installing water permeable paving, even collecting roof runoff in rain barrels. Because these tools are not familiar to everyone, the Center for Neighborhood Technology is creating a one-stop wet weather retrofit or Wetrofit service.

CNT is collaborating with the following organizations in its SMART WATER FOR SMART REGIONS initiative:

American Water Works Association
Alliance for Water Efficiency
Great Lakes Commission des Grands Lacs
Water Environment Federation

Join the GREAT LAKES WATER NETWORK, an open forum for water advocates and professionals.


About CNT
Awarded a 2009 MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions

The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) was founded in 1978 to research, adapt and test new community revitalization strategies relevant to urban communities, especially strategies that harness the environmental and economic value of the more efficient use of natural resources. Over the years, CNT has worked to disclose the hidden assets of the economy and urban areas more broadly, to demonstrate the multi-bottom line benefits of more resource-efficient policies and practices, and to show how the value of what we demonstrate can be captured to benefit communities and their residents inclusively. CNT’s work, especially in the areas of energy, transportation, materials conservation and housing preservation, helped fuel a generation of community development institutions and learning, garnering us a reputation as an economic innovator and leader in the field of creative sustainable development. CNT serves as the umbrella for a number of projects and affiliate organizations, all of which help the organization fulfill its mission: to promote the development of more livable and sustainable urban communities.