

Stormwater still a concern in

Residents fault nanoscale college, but school officials say 'blame game' needs to stop

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McKownville Improvement Association President Don Reeb points to the soggy, dune-like ground created by storm water flooding in the woods behind Freedom Quad.

Ryan Munks/Spotlight

The Town of Guilderland, in cooperation with Stuyvesant Plaza and a number of state entities recently worked together to mitigate a flooding problem that frequently occurs on Western Avenue and Fuller Road. However, Assemblyman John McEneny, D-Albany, said that stormwater in McKownville is still an issue.

According to McEneny, residents in the area believe the construction of the University at Albany's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering has disrupted the natural flow of stormwater to the north, and redirected it to the south.

"The flow used to go into Patroon Creek [to the north] and now flows south into Krumkill and then Normanskill," said McEneny.

The result of the diverted flow is the increase in soggy ground and moisture that has an effect on the foundations and basements in homes south of the college.

Don Reeb, president of the McKownville Improvement Association, said the amount of standing water in the area has increased since the building of the nanotech college, which has had

major additions since 2004. He said the pond behind Freedom Quad has grown since the construction commenced on the new college.

"Years ago, if you couldn't jump over it, you could certainly almost jump over it," said Reeb.

The university has said there is no connection between construction of the college and the flooding.

"I'm surprised that this blame game is continuing since the issue was dealt with a year ago," said Stephen Janack, vice president for marketing and communications for the college.

Janack said that a year ago, geological experts determined that the flooding in McKownville is tied to an increase in the water table due to

abnormally heavy rainfall over the course of the past few years. He said the experts determined that flooding in McKownville would have occurred even if the construction of the college had not taken place.

"To tie the flooding situation to anything occurring at the college is simply inaccurate," said Janack. "It's time to stop the blame game and focus on identifying and implementing a solution. We're in this together, and we would like to find a solution together."

McEneny said that the only thing that has changed in the area since the flooding started was the construction of the college.

"I'd like to see the responsibility assigned to someone," he said.

"Somebody has to make a ruling. ... They didn't have flooded basements before [the construction], and they didn't have soggy ground."

McKownville resident Laura Plant described a situation in July 2009 in which the stormwater caused a cave-in of the wall in her basement.

"That year, we had a really heavy rainstorm. ... I heard a sound late at night, and I didn't think much of it," said Plant.

She said it wasn't until her husband returned home from work that the damage was discovered.

"Water was pouring in like a river ... the whole underground wall caved in," said Plant.

Since the dirt that entered the home clogged up Plant's sump pumps, they were unable to

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pump the water out of the basement.

Following the incident, town authorities ruled the home unsafe to live in and the Red Cross put the family up in a hotel for four days, until they were able to find other accommodations. The family was able to move back into the home 10 days after the collapse, after support beams were added to support the home in lieu of the missing wall.

While the Plant family's situation is an extreme example of damage from

stormwater, flooding and the sump pumps used to prevent flooding in basements have become commonplace in the McKownville area.

The community will discuss stormwater issues at the next meeting of the McKownville Improvement Association on Thursday, Feb. 18, at 7 p.m. at the Holiday Inn on Western Avenue. Representatives from the Albany County Storm Water Coalition will give a presentation on issues concerning the Krumkill watershed area.