



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: PRIVATE SEWER LINE
REPLACEMENT OR
REPAIR GRANT PROGRAM

FROM: John Ristow

DATE: October 23, 2018

Approved

Date

10/23/18

INFORMATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform City Council about the October 1, 2018 launch of a \$300,000 Sewer Replacement or Repair Grant Program.

BACKGROUND

In 2013, the City of San José entered into a consent decree agreement with Northern California River Watch. As part of the agreement, the City agreed to fund and implement a program which reimburses homeowners for a portion of the cost of repairing their privately-owned and maintained sewer lines. The grant applies only to the building sanitary sewer line (sewer lateral) from the face of the building to an approved cleanout access point typically located near the sidewalk or street. The sewer lateral eventually feeds into the City's main sanitary sewer line in the street.

Damaged sewer laterals can prevent wastewater from properly leaving a building's sewer system and entering a City main sanitary sewer line. Cracks and defects in sewer lateral pipes can allow sewage to penetrate the groundwater, create a pathway for roots to enter the sewer line system, and potentially cause blockages that could lead to overflowing of untreated sewage. Overflowing sewage can cause property damage, create health risks for the public, and if it enters a storm drain, pose a threat to wildlife in creeks and the San Francisco Bay. By assisting property owners with the cost of replacing or repairing defective sewer laterals, this program will help reduce those potential environmental and health impacts.

THE SEWER REPLACEMENT OR REPAIR GRANT PROGRAM

Per the consent decree, the grant program is open to all City of San José property owners who occupy the property as their primary residence at the time when a plumbing permit to replace or

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repair a sewer lateral is finalized. Grants are available to cover 50% of the replacement or repair costs, with a maximum of \$3,500 per property. The City will make the grant program available to qualifying applicants until the \$300,000 fund is depleted.

To qualify, the homeowner must submit an application along with video evidence of damage to the sewer lateral, proof of ownership, and three verifiable replacement or repair bids to the Department of Transportation (DOT). Applications will be reviewed and approved by DOT staff, and if approved, the City will issue a “Contingent Award Letter.” Once completed, the sewer lateral replacement or repair work must pass final inspection by the City’s Building Division in the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department. The property owner must also submit video evidence showing the final condition of the replaced or repaired sewer lateral and a copy of the paid invoice to receive reimbursement through the grant program.

DOT staff will make information about the grant program available to the public in a number of ways. Flyers are being generated and will be provided for distribution by staff and Council Offices at community events. Council Offices will be provided with a brief written summary of the program for inclusion in newsletters or other channels used for resident engagement. DOT will announce the program through its social media outlets to raise awareness and has made information available on the City’s website. Also, as DOT sewer maintenance staff respond to sewer related calls and engage with residents in the field, they will provide information and literature on the program.

Additional information about the Sewer Replacement or Repair Grant Program can be found on the City’s website <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?nid=6172>.

/s/

JOHN RISTOW
Acting Director of Transportation

For questions, please contact Jennifer Seguin, DOT’s Sanitary and Storm Sewer Maintenance Division Manager, at (408) 794-6453.