

El Perico
Nuestro Mundo

OMAHA, Ne (May 17, 2007) Omaha is among 772 cities nationwide that must develop a long-range control plan to prevent sanitary sewer water from overflowing into the Missouri River and local streams. A combined sewer overflow, called a CSO, usually happens during rainfalls when storm water enters the combined sewer system along with sewer waste and the capacity of the system is unable to handle it. The plan, which will take three years to develop, has so far involved more than 140 community volunteers, members of city government and dozens of engineers. The key requirement is to meet the federally mandated safeguards for water quality. This is an unfunded Federal mandate. The city is working to keep the project as affordable as possible and a plan that is acceptable to the community.

At public meetings to be held Thursday, May 17, at Lewis and Clark Middle School and Tuesday, May 22, at South High School, the city and program management team will update residents on the progress being made by the engineering firms. These firms have been working to identify solutions to meet federally mandated water quality requirements while at the same time to consider community opportunities and to develop cost estimates.

The area of the city which has combined sewers is generally located between 72nd Street and the Missouri River, I-680 to Harrison Street. This area has been divided into ten basin areas in order to efficiently study the problems unique to each basin. Volunteers representing various community groups and neighborhoods have worked with the engineers and city officials to guide ways to solve the problem. They are taking into consideration the regulatory requirements, how much the project will cost and the impact it will have on the community. Of the 10 basin areas, three of them include basins in the South Omaha area. They are Ohern/Monroe, South Interceptor and Papillion Creek South.

Alternatives presented to the individual basin areas range from:

- total sewer separation to
- below ground storage tanks to store the sewage and storm water runoff during a rainfall, and pumping to the treatment plants after the storm event,
- building small treatment plants in the basin which will provide treatment and disinfection before releasing flows to the river or stream.

It is expected that a combination of these alternatives will be used. Engineers and Basin Advisory Panel members are working together to collaborate on alternatives which best fit the criteria established for all the basins. Those criteria include;

- water quality improvement,
- reduction of sewer back-ups into basements,
- reduction of street flooding,
- minimizing community disruption,
- reliability of solutions,

- opportunities for infrastructure/utility improvements,
- compatibility with the community, and
- opportunities for community enhancements.

For example, the South Interceptor basin advisory panel members said they want opportunities for community enhancement as a result of the alternatives chosen to meet the water quality issues but at the same time they placed a high emphasis on reducing basement backups and sewer odors in the community. As a result, engineers are considering a combination of sewer separation in the basin coupled with storage tanks built at several of the main outfalls in the area. The storage tanks will allow for heavy volumes to be stored until the system can adequately handle the excess flow. Over the course of the next few months, additional work will be done to determine which course of action best meets the water quality requirements and community concerns and can be accomplished at a reasonable cost to the ratepayers.

The same process has been repeated in each of the basins and work will continue until the preliminary plan is presented to government officials in October. Once the preliminary plan is accepted, more work will be done over the next two years to put together a final plan including construction timelines, budget and continued community involvement. Construction is expected to begin in 2009 and could take up to 15 years. During that time the city will continue working on sewer separation projects as needed to address localized issues.

Public meetings outlining the preliminary results for all the basins will be held Tuesday, May 17, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. at Lewis and Clark Middle School, located at 6901 Burt Street with an identical presentation scheduled for Tuesday, May 22, 2007 at South High School, 4519 South 24th Street, also beginning at 6:30 p.m. **Translation services will be available at the South High School public meeting.**