

Omaha Star Article

OMAHA, Neb. (September 1, 2008) Over the past few months, residents living in north Omaha have seen construction crews working to reduce combined sewer overflows (CSO) and basement sewer back-ups. The work is partly the result of the city's long-term plan to improve the quality of water for area rivers and streams required by an unfunded federal mandate.

In the area defined as the Burt-Izard basin, two large construction projects are underway. Separation of the sewers in the 26th and Grant Streets area began. This separation project is part of the city's on-going program to reduce sewer back-ups into basements. This project is expected to take up to 14 months for completion.

The city also began work on the Webster Street sewer extension – one of the largest early CSO projects. This two-phase project is in the area between 16th and Webster Streets and 27th and Cuming Streets. A 96-inch storm sewer and two 15-inch sanitary sewers are being added. This project will help to reduce flooding issues in the area as well as provide a way to get some of the stormwater out of the old combined sewers. The \$12 million project is expected to be completed in December, 2009.

The city continues to re-examine CSO control solutions set for the Minne Lusa basin. Members of the basin's advisory panel were briefed in May regarding the possible elimination or downsizing of the proposed high rate treatment facility scheduled to be located near the Minne Lusa CSO outfall, just south of the OPPD power plant. There is continued discussion as well, regarding the proposed 5.8 mile tunnel located 170 feet below ground, which will carry both sewage and storm water runoff to a new treatment plant to be constructed near the existing Missouri River Wastewater Treatment facility in south Omaha.

In the Miller Park area, work has begun on a sewer separation project resulting in recreational improvements to the Miller Park pond while providing storage of separated stormwater from the neighborhoods south and west of the park.

In Cole Creek basin, where sewer separation is the primary CSO solution, a secondary project, involving green solutions focuses on improving Cole Creek itself. Its goals are to stabilize the stream, improve the water quality and enhance the creek for recreational and educational use. The city is partnering with the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District and Omaha by Design on this project.

Some may view Cole Creek as nothing more than a drainage ditch. But for the Cole Creek partners, beginning with the Benson-Ames Alliance, the waterway is a natural asset that provides an opportunity to create a valuable neighborhood and amenity for residents.

In the next two months, three community-wide meetings will be held to update the public on work that has already begun as well as any changes that may have been made to the CSO proposal, how the city will pay for this project, estimated to cost \$1.5

billion, and steps the city is taking to provide rate payer assistance for those individuals who are either low income or on a fixed income. The city will also discuss other community benefits it hopes to achieve as a result of this project. The meetings are scheduled as follows: September 18, 2008, Chalco Hills Recreational Area Visitor Center, 8901 South 154th Street; October 7, 2008, Metro Community College – Ft. Omaha Campus, Building 7 – Room 107; October 23, 2008, Metro Community College – South Campus, Room 534A- Mahoney Building.

For more information on the CSO project or the community meetings, call the CSO hotline at 341-0235 or visit www.omahacso.com.