



# SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

February 6, 2012

The Sustainability & Transportation Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on February 6, 2012 at 3:30 p.m.

## COMMITTEE PRESENT

Dina Higgins, Chairwoman  
Dennis Kavanaugh  
Dave Richins

## COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

## STAFF PRESENT

Kari Kent  
Donna Bronski

### 1. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

### 2-a. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on Off-Site Improvement Requirements.

Director of Development and Sustainability Christine Zielonka introduced Deputy Director of Development and Sustainability Beth Hughes-Ornelas who was prepared to address the Committee. Ms. Zielonka reported that previously staff discussed with the Committee the requirements for new development in the City and were directed to evaluate the program and explore creative options. She said that today's presentation would provide a summary of the development requirements and programs that are currently in place.

Ms. Hughes-Ornelas displayed a PowerPoint presentation (**See Attachment 1**) outlining the City code requirements for development. She advised that developers are responsible for the installation of roads, curbs, drainage, streetlights, sidewalks and utilities whether the development occurs inside or outside of the City. She added that these same obligations apply to property owners who request to be annexed into the City. (See Page 2 and 3 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Hughes-Ornelas advised that currently when the City's water or sewer services are requested, the property owner is responsible for the cost to install roads, curbs, drainage, etc. She stated that at the City's discretion an in-lieu payment for these requirements could be accepted. She explained that the Transportation Department would conduct an evaluation to determine if it would be in the best interest of the City to construct a road now or in the future.

Ms. Zielonka advised that the subcommittee previously requested that staff review the Off-Site Development Standards to determine if they should continue to be utilized. She explained that not requiring all development to meet the same standards as other parts of the City incentivizes subpar development. (See Page 5 of Attachment 1) She stated that at some point development standards will be required and if those costs are not covered by the developer they will fall upon the rest of the City. She added that the current standards promote quality development, create a level playing field and meet the basic standards established by the City Council.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Richins, Ms. Zielonka explained that the County's Development Standards are not the same as the City's. She said that years ago portions of northeast and southeast Mesa were annexed into the City without requiring improvements. She stated that the City then had to pay to have the roads paved and drainage installed. She noted that the City has attempted to ensure that developers pay for the improvements prior to annexation.

Ms. Zielonka displayed a photograph of the intersection at Guadalupe and Hawes Roads where only one side of the street has been fully developed. She said that in the future when development occurs on the south side of the street the developer will be responsible for the frontage improvements along both Guadalupe and Hawes Roads. She also displayed a photograph of the unimproved roads at the intersection of Hawes and Redberry Roads that have drainage problems. She noted that the lack of a secondary access for public safety vehicles in this area creates a safety hazard. (See Page 6, 7 & 8 of Attachment 1)

Discussion ensued regarding unimproved areas that have been annexed into the City and how the City can assist individual property owners in meeting the City standards.

Ms. Zielonka advised that at the Council's discretion some of the required standards could be eliminated. She said that currently there is a program, particularly used for road construction, where an in-lieu payment for the estimated cost of the road can be accepted prior to construction. She explained that the benefit of this program is that a developer or property owner can make an in-lieu payment at today's costs and if the City decides not to build the road for 10 years the owner would not be required to make any additional payments. (See Page 10 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Zielonka stated that the City Manager's office has the ability to modify the standards for off-site improvements. She explained that if a property owner objects to a development standard they can request that the City Manager's office modify that standard. She said if the City Manager's office determines that the standard should apply the next step for the developer or property owner would be an appeal to the subcommittee. She added that if the subcommittee chooses to modify the code a recommendation would be made to the full Council and four votes would be required to modify the standard.

Ms. Hughes-Ornelas reported that there have been a couple of appeal cases that have been brought before the Council. She advised that one case related to the expansion of an existing Elks Lodge on Power Road where additional water service was required and the other case involved a single family home that had a drainage issue caused by two frontages.

Ms. Zielonka advised that the current system provides some flexibility and allows developers the ability to appeal their case. She said that maintaining the current development standards ensures the consistency of the development requirements in the City and in the planning areas. She added that the current standards also ensure public safety access and promote quality development.

Ms. Zielonka stated that staff is recommending that the City continue utilizing the current program which allows for an appeal process through the City Manager's office and the Council.

In response to a question from Committeemember Kavanaugh, Deputy City Manager Kari Kent explained that currently there is one pending appeal that involves a residence with a frontage on two sides of the property. She advised that there have been concerns with regard to the amount of the in-lieu payment and the property owner was directed to come forward with justification for the City Manager's office to review. She said that the property owner will still have the option of going before the Sustainability and Transportation Committee if they are not in agreement with the City Manager's decision.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Richins, Ms. Zielonka stated that in the past it would have cost \$1,300 to appeal.

Ms. Kent advised that the Appeal Fee was previously eliminated.

In response to a series of questions from Chairwoman Higgins, Ms. Zielonka explained that annually there are not many requests for water service outside of the City. She said at some point in time the County islands will become part of the City and the improvements will have to be made. She stated that staff would determine if it is in the best interest of the City to have a single family home annexed and provide them with water service. She noted that commercial development is always required to annex before water service is provided.

Committeemember Kavanaugh remarked that there is a business in District 3 located on a County parcel inside the City of Mesa that receives City services and has no desire to annex. He said that the City loses thousands of dollars in sales tax revenues from this business as it contributes nothing to the City of Mesa except through payment of a water bill. He stressed that the City needed to use caution when providing services to people outside of the City.

Water Resources Department Director Kathryn Sorensen remarked that as much as the City would like to have more water customers, services should not be provided to areas outside of the City unless the City was willing to give up on that property owner paying their fair share into the system. She said once utility services have been provided there is no incentive for them to have contact with the City.

Discussion ensued regarding utility customers outside of the City who do not pay for the use of the system.

In response to a series of questions from Committeemember Richins, Ms. Sorensen explained that research could be done to determine how many exempt wells are serving individual homeowners in the City. She said there is some new legislation that makes it more difficult for individuals to drill exempt wells close to the municipal system.

Committeemember Richins commented that the City needed to discourage the use of wells since a higher quality of water can be obtained through the City's water system. He stated that the City's Development Standards are important however, there are unique areas such as the Lehi Subdivision where the City does not require curbs, gutters and sidewalks. In addition, he remarked that the City's fire trucks are sturdy and can maneuver on unimproved roads however, the idea is to get these areas hooked on to the City's water system.

Ms. Sorensen explained that it would be at the Committee and the Council's discretion to waive the requirements and allow individuals to hook on to the City's water system. She said that the Council would need to decide what is more important, the off-site improvements, air quality, public safety issues, roads, drainage, etc., or providing water service. She added that it would be up to the Council to make those tradeoffs.

Committeemember Richins remarked that he was comfortable with the current system where each issue can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Committeewoman Higgins commented that there are people who live on County islands who want water service but do not want to pay the development costs associated with annexing into the City. She stated that more requests for water service could be received if the information is made available to the public.

Ms. Zielonka advised that different standards exist for different areas of the City.

Discussion ensued regarding areas that do not have the same development standards and the process for requesting services without annexation.

Committeemember Richins commented that the City will entertain requests for services and those requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis without requiring annexation.

Ms. Zielonka said that a large commercial development understands that there will be a cost to develop the property but for a single family it can be a huge impact. She explained that the Appeal Fee was eliminated in order to make it easier for single family residences to approach the Council with their individual circumstances.

In response to a question from Chairwoman Higgins, Ms. Zielonka explained that the City could handle the requests more efficiently if the property owners approached the City as a group.

Ms. Zielonka said that staff will continue utilizing the current program and will work on making the information more accessible to the public.

Chairwoman Higgins thanked staff for their efforts.

2-b. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on the Septic to Sewer Transition Program.

Ms. Sorensen displayed a PowerPoint presentation (**See Attachment 2**) highlighting the Septic to Sewer Transition Program. She also displayed a map of the specific areas where septic systems are located within the City of Mesa. (See Page 2 of Attachment 2) She noted that some of the septic systems are located in the Arizona Water Company service area. Ms. Sorensen explained that since the City has grown eastward into areas that were once serviced by private companies on septic systems there are now approximately 24,000 lots with septic systems in the Mesa planning area.

Ms. Zielonka advised that septic systems are a health hazard across the country and pose an immediate threat to residents, surface water and groundwater when they malfunction. She said septic systems can potentially compromise the ability to provide safe and sanitary drinking water. She stated that today's presentation would provide an overview of a program that could transition septic users onto the City system.

Ms. Zielonka displayed a series of photographs that illustrated the effects of a backed up septic system. (See Pages 4, 5 & 6 of Attachment 2) She said that when septic systems fail it increases the probability of groundwater contamination and compromises the City's ability to provide a potable water supply.

Ms. Zielonka said that in the past the County would have automatically issued a septic permit. She advised that since the working relationship between the County and the City has improved the County now calls the City prior to issuing a permit.

Ms. Sorensen said that a house-to-house approach to convert septic users to the sewer system is not efficient. She explained that if someone's septic system fails the County will contact the City to determine if the system should be repaired or if the property owner will be required to hook into the City's sewer system.

Ms. Sorensen advised that the goal will be to extend the sewer lines to areas where it is currently not available. She said that staff will prioritize the areas where the sewer line could be extended based on the risk to public health and the environment.

Ms. Zielonka advised that a Risk Assessment would be conducted to determine which areas would be a top priority and those areas would be included in the budgeting cycle.

Ms. Sorensen said that each project would be brought before the Council and they would have the opportunity to approve or deny the project. She noted that once the sewer lines are in place the City will require those residents to hook into the system.

Committeemember Richins stated that the City will need to work with the County so that septic permits are not issued if the property is in an area where it could be hooked into the sewer system.

In response to a question from Committeemember Richins, Ms. Sorensen explained that the ultimate goal is to place a sewer line in all locations within the City's planning area. She advised

that this will be a gradual process and will be very expensive. She added that this project would be worked on as the utility can afford it over an extended period of time.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Kavanaugh, Ms. Sorensen explained that this project covers 24,000 acres and requires expensive pipeline. She stated that this project could take up to 50 years to complete.

Responding to a series of questions from Chairwoman Higgins, Ms. Sorensen explained that the cost of this project is estimated to be in the ballpark of \$150 million. She said that in the interim the City will place sewer lines in the planning areas and as septic systems fail the City will require that those property owners hook into the City's sewer system. She added that there are some situations where a residence is located close to the sewer main however, the elevations may not be right and, therefore, they are unable to hook in to the system.

In response to a question from Committeemember Richins, Ms. Sorensen explained that until a sewer line is in place property owners would be allowed to replace their septic system. She said that after the sewer line has been installed if a septic system fails the property owner would then be required to hook in to the City's sewer system.

In response to a question from Chairwoman Higgins, Ms. Sorensen explained that even if a home was only 100 feet away from the sewer line the homeowner would not be required to hook into the City's system until their septic system failed. She added that every case is a hardship case and it is difficult to place those costs on individual residents.

Ms. Zielonka stated that the idea is to have the cost of hooking into the sewer system be comparable to the cost of a new septic system. She said that the City would be assuming the largest portion of the costs by installing the mainline and the residents would then be responsible for the cost to run the line from the house to the main.

Discussion ensued regarding the responsibilities of running the main sewer lines directly to a residence.

Ms. Sorensen advised that this program would not apply to new subdivisions or commercial properties.

Ms. Zielonka said that developers of large subdivisions will be required to bring in the sewer lines.

In response to a question from Committeemember Richins, Ms. Zielonka explained that there is not a specific exemption in State law for a single residence. She said that the City cannot force residents to pay \$15,000 or \$20,000 to hook into the sewer system if they can't afford it, therefore, this program is a reasonable approach.

Deputy City Manager Kari Kent stated that if the Committee is in agreement an allocation will be included in the Water Resources budget that will be presented to the full Council.

Chairwoman Higgins stated that based on the concurrence of the Committee this item should be forwarded on to the full Council.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Sustainability and Transportation Committee meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Sustainability & Transportation Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2012. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

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LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

bdw  
(attachments -2)

# Off-Site Improvement Requirements

## Sustainability & Transportation Committee February 6, 2012



# How Does Development Occur?

- In the City
  - Developer pays for and installs:
    - Roads
    - Curb
    - Drainage
    - Streetlights
    - Sidewalks
    - Utilities

# How Does Development Occur?

- Properties requesting annexation
  - Same requirements for property owner/developer
    - Roads
    - Curb
    - Drainage
    - Streetlights
    - Sidewalks
    - Utilities

# How Does Development Occur?

- Outside the City requesting City water
  - Property Owner requesting water
    - Roads
    - Curb
    - Drainage
    - Streetlights
    - Sidewalks
  - Option of In-lieu payment for street improvements at City’s discretion



# Should Standards Continue to be Equitable?

- If not equitable, incentivize sub-par development outside the City
- Current standards create a level playing field for quality development both inside and outside the city









N Hawes Rd & E Redberry, Mesa, AZ

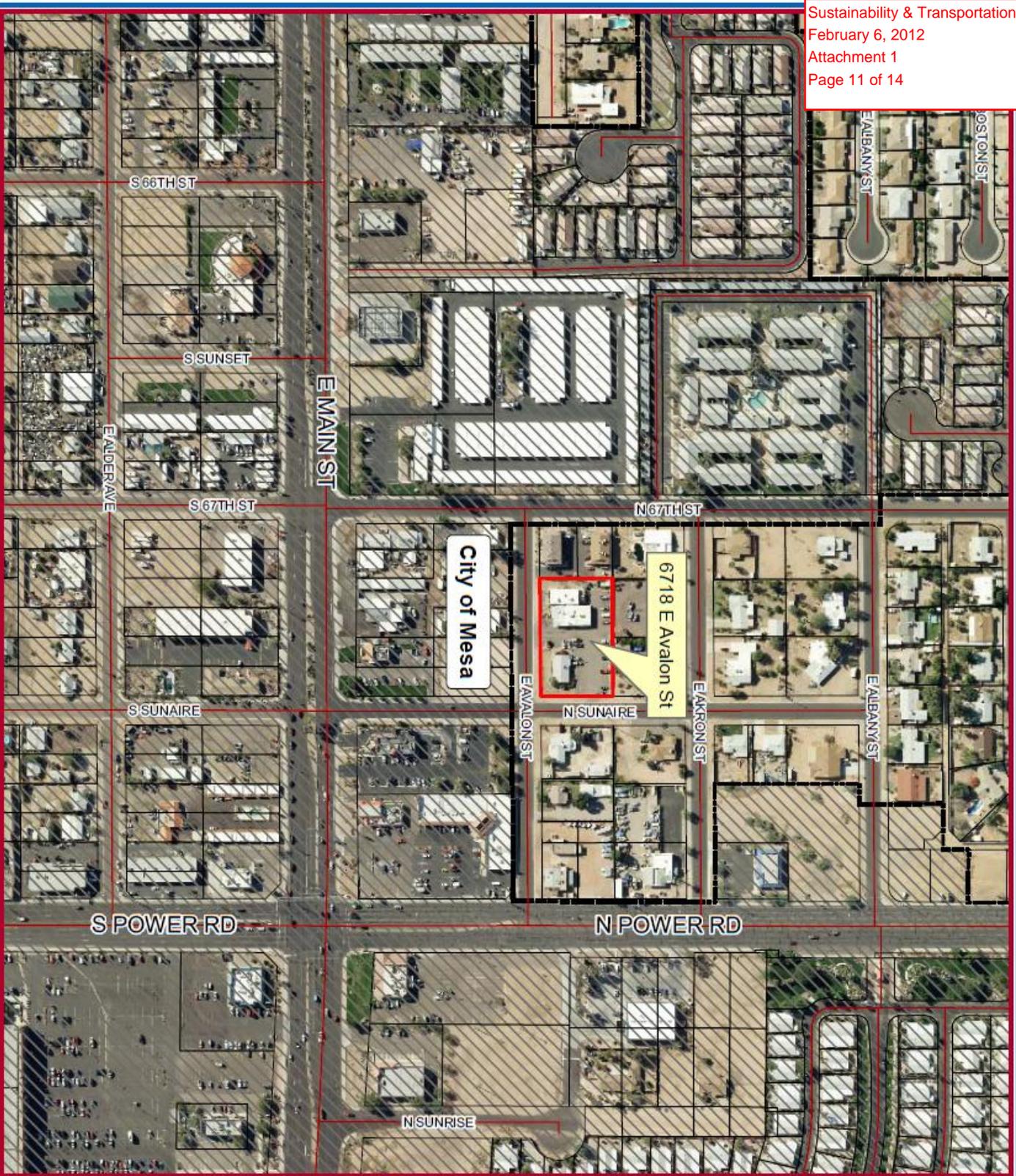


# Current Program for Annexation and Water Service Outside the City

- Construction or Payment in-lieu of Construction of improvements
- Exceptions by City Council upon recommendation by City Council Committee, which may include deferrals

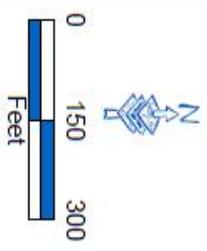


mesa·az



# Exhibit A

-  Requesting Parcel
-  City Boundary
-  Streets



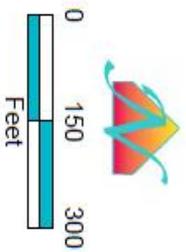
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City  
of  
Mesa



# Aerial

-  City Limits
-  Parcels
-  Streets



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# Staff Recommendations

- Maintain Current Development Standards
  - Ensures consistency of development requirements both in the City and in our planning area
  - Ensures Public Safety access
  - Promotes quality of the built environment
- Continue to apply modified street standards for unique character areas

# Questions?



# Septic to Sewer Transition Program

Water Resources

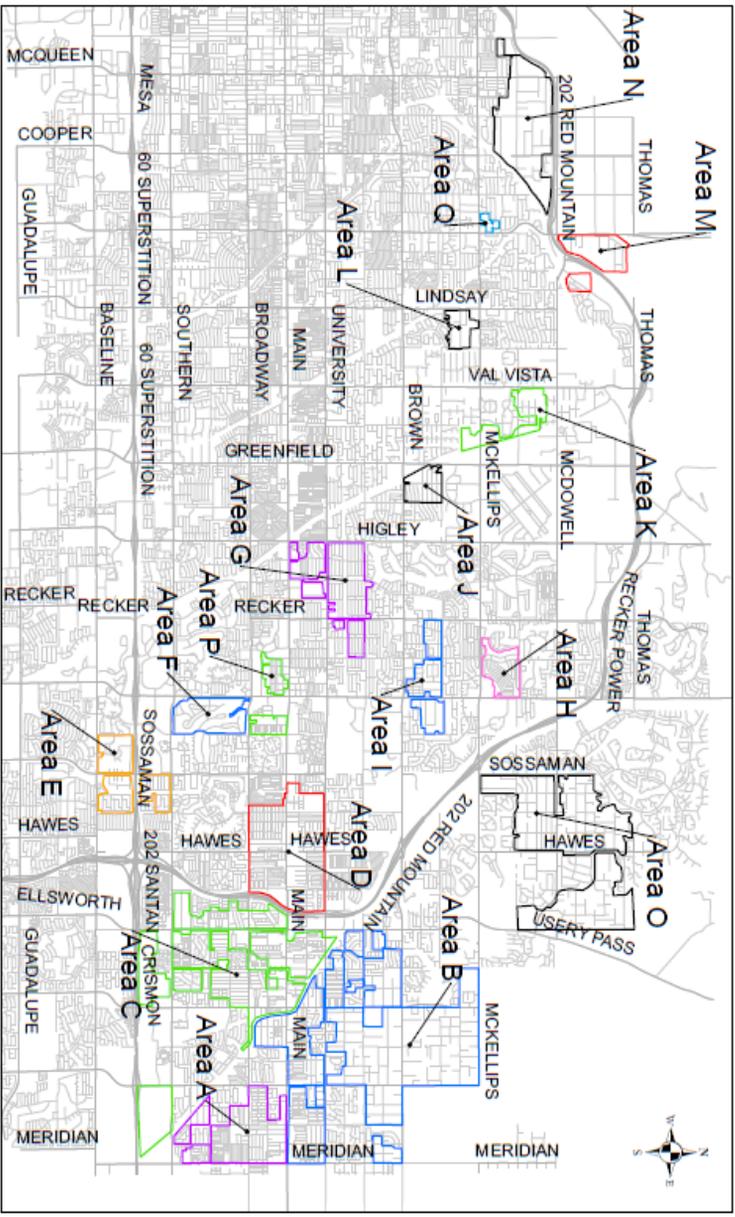
Development and Sustainability

Engineering



# Background

Approximately 24,000 lots with Septic Systems within COM's Planning Area



# Septic Issues

- Septic represents a public health hazard
- This program's objective is to transition from septic to the sewer system

# Failed Septic Systems Can Cause...

## Yards flooded with Sewage



# Contaminated Ground Water



# Sewage back-ups in homes



# Result



**WHILE**

A blue double-headed arrow pointing both left and right, positioned between the two diagram boxes.



# Problems with Current System

- House by house approach not the most cost-effective way to expand the sewer system
- City's goal is to begin extending sewer lines where they are not currently available

# Proposed Program Overview

- Water Resources and Development and Sustainability will establish prioritization criteria based on risk to public health and risk to the environment
- Prioritized projects will be included in the wastewater utility's capital improvement program

# Proposed Program Overview

- The City will require connection to the sewer system upon failure of existing septic system when there is an existing sewer line adjacent to the property boundary and no public sewer line extension would be required for service
  - Homeowner pays for the connection from the main sewer line to the home
  - Homeowner pays the impact fee for connecting to the wastewater system
  - Cost comparable to replacing septic

# Proposed Program Overview

- New Single Residences (not in a subdivision) will be required to install plumbing consistent with future availability of sewer main
- Commercial and Multi-Residence property owners still required to extend sewer lines in all cases (new construction or upon failure of existing septic system)

# Conclusion

- City's goal is to transition from septic to sewer
- New commitment of capital dollars each year to extend sewer lines based on public health priorities
- More cost effective than house-by-house approach to sewer line extensions
- Decrease the probability of groundwater contamination

# Questions?

