

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**COSA - CITY CLERK  
2024 APR 04 PM 03:11:24

**TO:** Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk

**FROM:** Councilmember Teri Castillo, District 5

**COPIES:** Erik Walsh, City Manager; Andy Segovia, City Attorney; Joe Frank Picazo, Interim Assistant to the City Manager; Emily McGinn, Assistant to the City Council

**SUBJECT:** Water & Sewer Lateral Improvements Program

**DATE:** Tuesday, April 2, 2024

Issue for Proposed Consideration

After coordinating this Council Consideration Request (CCR) with the City Manager, I respectfully request for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the Governance Committee:

Requesting consideration of the Water & Sewer Lateral Improvements Program CCR.

Brief Background

Every resident deserves a functioning connection to the main water and sewer infrastructure via lateral systems. Laterals are responsible for moving wastewater from homes to the main sewer line, and without them, wastewater will eventually contaminate groundwater and surface water spreading disease through the following pollutants: bacteria and viruses, heavy metals, and toxic chemicals. Proper water and sewer laterals also help maintain a good quality of life for residents by preventing backups, reducing infiltration and inflow, reducing building code violations, increasing the overall lifespan of the sewer system, and even help to improve property values.

While codes have been updated and building practices have improved over time, there are homes and other residences still without connections to the main sewer line - especially in older areas of San Antonio. A range of factors can result in a home not having proper lateral connections for generations, such as:

- The property was subdivided, and proper laterals were never installed.
- There was a real estate transfer, and the lateral issue was not disclosed.
- The lateral issue was not properly reported as a code violation.
- The lateral repair involves cutting into the street which transfers infrastructure costs to the resident.
- Lateral lines which run across two or more lots allow the resident with the service meter to effectively control other residents' water service. This allows for nefarious actions such



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cutting off lateral service without warning, charging exorbitant fees for reconnection, and overcharging for monthly service.

While programs like Plumbers to People and COSA's home rehabilitation programs exist, they are not intended to assist at this level as both programs are more focused on minor plumbing issues like leaks, not major plumbing projects which involve cutting into the right-of-way. As an example, sewer-related issues are not currently an eligible expense under Plumbers to People. SAWS has a Laterals to People, but the program only covers repairs from the home to sidewalk – it does not cover impact fees and other costs related to connecting the laterals to the main water and septic lines, which involves the onerous process of cutting into the curb and street. Furthermore, a program is needed to assist homeowners with replacing failing septic tank systems with a lateral system and connections.

Cities across the country developed lateral assistance programs which COSA could review for best practices related to program funding, implementation, eligibility, and sustainable design.

- The Sewer Connection Assistance Program in Springfield, MO uses Community Development Block Grant funds to offer both no-interest loans and direct grants. The no-interest loans aren't required to be paid back until the property is transferred or sold while the direct grants are used to offset the tax bill.
- Philadelphia, PA has the HELP Loan program which offers zero-interest loans payable over 60 months.
- The Gulfport, FL Private Water Line Replacement Assistance program provides residents a 50% rebate up to \$3,500.00 after the purchase, installation, and inspection of failing waterlines or sewer lateral between the home connection and the city connection.

The primary goal of this request is to create a funding source and program to assist residents who do not have proper lateral connections. Special consideration should be given to minimizing impact fees and costs for cutting into the right-of-way as well as extending program eligibility to homeowners with septic tanks. The eligibility requirements for SAWS' Plumbers to People program could also serve as the eligibility requirements for this program.

There is also an opportunity to strengthen existing code language within *Division 2 Article V - Sewage Transportation, Treatment and Disposal* related to insufficient laterals and disclosures of missing laterals when there is a real estate transfer. Prospective residential buyers should be made aware of lateral issues which could potentially turn into building and health code violations. Missing laterals also become an affordable housing issue as they usually are only discovered once development as begun, adding unexpected materials, permitting, and construction costs. In the City of Berkley, Sewer Lateral Certificates are required for any transfer or sale of property by ordinance.





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This process can even reference SAWS, Public Works, County data and other maps and submitted plans to help identify existing residences without lateral connections. For example, related to subdivided lots and laterals, the City of Fayetteville requires that sewer service lines must run directly from the lot which they serve to the main without crossing another lot. COSA could review and adopt such language to prevent future issues caused by laterals running across multiple lots.

Again, water and sewer laterals are essential to every household, and this policy request, if implemented, will improve the health, sanitation, and quality of life for families who are currently suffering.

### Request

I ask for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the Governance Committee:

1. the development of a COSA-sponsored Residential Water & Sewer Lateral Installation Pilot which includes connections to the SAWS water and sewer main lines located within the right-of-way.
2. a review of and update to *Division 2 Article V - Sewage Transportation, Treatment and Disposal*.
3. requesting the appropriate entities work together to map out residential properties with missing laterals.


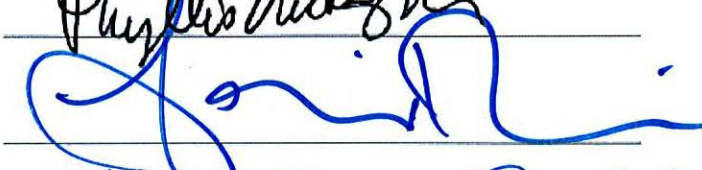
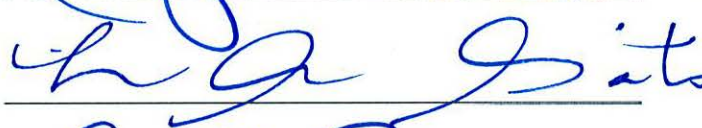
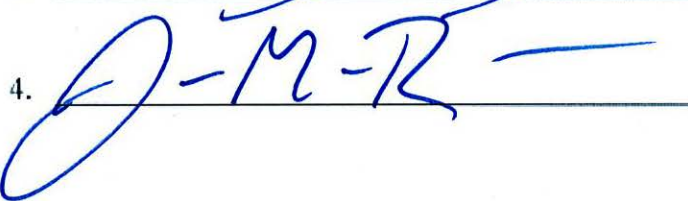
Submitted for Council consideration by:

Councilmember Teri Castillo

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Supporting Councilmembers' Signatures (exactly 4)

District

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