

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Kim Welsh
Hans F. Larsen
Kerrie Romanow

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC ART PROJECT FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS
OF SEWER SYSTEM IMPACTS**

DATE: February 18, 2015

Approved



Date

2/18/15

INFORMATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform the City Council of a pilot project to use City Public Art funds collected from Sanitary Sewer Capital Program investments in a community engagement project to raise public awareness about the City's sewer collection system and reduce the incidence of sanitary sewer overflows caused by the inappropriate disposal of fats, oils, and grease (FOG).

Background on City Sewer Collection System and Sanitary Sewer Overflows

The City of San José owns a vast and complex sanitary sewer collection system that conveys an average of 110 million gallons of wastewater per day to the San José-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility in North San José. The system consists of approximately 2,300 miles of sewer pipes, 16 pump stations, and 45,000 manholes.

Responsibility for the sanitary sewer collection system is shared among the Environment and Utility Services City Service Area's three partner departments. The Environmental Services Department (ESD) provides education, inspection and enforcement services designed to ensure that all commercial and industrial discharges into the sewer system are suitable for conveyance and treatment. ESD also fully manages the Regional Wastewater Facility. The Department of Public Works (DPW) designs, inspects, builds and rehabilitates the sewer system through various capital improvement and development funded programs. The Department of Transportation (DOT) performs the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the sewer system, as it does with the rest of the City's public street right-of-way infrastructure. Collectively, the City invests approximately \$43 million per year to operate, maintain and rehabilitate the sewer system.

Recent investments by the City Council to provide enhanced levels of sewer system maintenance and rehabilitation have resulted in significant improvements in the performance of the sewer system. Most notably, the number and severity of sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) in which untreated sewage escapes the sewer system have been greatly reduced. In FY 2011-12, the City

experienced 192 SSOs. In FY 2013-14, the number of SSOs was reduced to 101, a 48% reduction. Some of the investments leading to this and other improvements include the purchase of new equipment that has enabled crews to clean more sewer pipes, implementation of a program to eliminate tree root growth in sewer pipes, and the completion of more sewer system rehabilitation projects.

While ongoing investments in the operation, maintenance and rehabilitation of the sewer system are having a positive effect, there is a need to further educate the public about how they can help ensure that the sewer system functions properly, and without SSOs or unnecessary maintenance. The most common misuse of the sewer system by the public is the disposal of food products that contain fat, oil and grease down a kitchen drain, or flushing inappropriate items such as baby wipes down the toilet. FOG and other non-flushable items do not break down in the sewer system or freely travel to the treatment plant. Instead, they form into large obstructions that can eventually clog the sewer system and cause an SSO. To address this, the Public Art Program was enlisted to develop an artist-led community engagement process to better understand and affect the human impact contributing to FOG-related SSOs.

Use of Public Art to Raise Awareness of Sewer System and Avoid Environmental Impacts

Public art is being utilized to further the missions of ESD and DOT around community engagement in the understanding of the collector systems, protection of the environment, and the important role these systems have regarding the livability of San José. Public art will create unique places and events to help San José's diverse communities understand the complex connections that shape and define the systems of collection and management - an approach that has been successfully implemented in other cities nationally and internationally.

The artist team of Claire Napawan and Brett Snyder were selected through a public Request for Qualifications to develop a project engaging residents in pilot areas in reducing FOG-related SSOs. The artists focused on two San José neighborhoods identified by DOT as requiring higher-than-normal levels of maintenance in order to prevent FOG-related SSOs. Through direct engagement with parent focus groups at elementary schools in these areas, and meetings with DOT and ESD staff and field maintenance crews, the artists identified circumstances that contribute to current behavior and conditions that may inhibit proper disposal of FOG. From this information gathering, the artists designed a multi-phased strategy to increase awareness of the sanitary sewer system, the people who maintain it, and its direct impact on the health of San José and the San Francisco Bay.

The artists' proposal reaches target communities with a three-phase approach that together reinforce the important work of DOT's sewer maintenance staff, the importance of the community in understanding the sanitary sewer infrastructure, and the potential actions that residents can take to achieve a positive impact on the sewer system, the environment, and their communities. The elements work together to stimulate community curiosity, encourage participation in best household practices, and promote environmental stewardship:

- **Doorhanger:** Addressing the issue directly at the household, a bold graphic poster will be distributed as a door hanger by DOT crews in the vicinity of recent sanitary sewer maintenance activity. The poster features simple and engaging icons to educate about various FOG wastes and common household products not to be put in the system. The poster also brings awareness to features of the infrastructure system. Printed in the project's signature electric green color, the door hanger connects to the other art elements described below. Multilingual text provides explanation and vocabulary for a more informed community. Distributing informational door hangers is a current practice of DOT; the newly designed poster will be distributed in the pilot area to start.
- **Manhole Marker:** Addressing the issue at the street and bringing attention to the infrastructure below, manholes of recently serviced sewer lines will be painted in the project's signature electric green color, creating awareness of this largely unnoticed infrastructure. Painting of the manholes will coincide with the distribution of door hangers creating a connection from the front door to the system under the street.
- **Maintenance Truck Graphic:** A bold vinyl graphic will be applied to select sewer maintenance trucks traveling to the target neighborhoods that will feature a design that calls out the 24/7 sewer maintenance service provided by the City. The vinyl graphic will be rendered in the project's signature electric green color reinforcing the connection between the truck, door hangers and manhole markers and the workforce that is constantly on the move to manage the system.

The pilot launch of this suite of projects will focus on locations in District 3 and 7 in the vicinity of Washington School and Santee School where the initial community outreach occurred. The pilot project will be implemented in three phases that build the scope of outreach to a total of 2900 door hangers, 75 manhole markers and 14 trucks with graphics. Additional door hangers will be made available for distribution at City events. At the end of the pilot, the programs' effectiveness will be assessed through qualitative data based on reengagement with the focus groups, and a determination will be made regarding expansion of the program.

/s/
KIM WALESH
Deputy City Manager
Director of Economic Development

/s/
HANS F. LARSEN
Director of Transportation

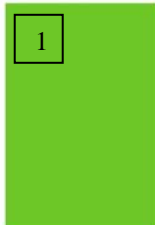
/s/
KERRIE ROMANOW
Director, Environmental Services

For more information, contact Jennifer Easton, Public Art Director at (408) 793-4338 or jennifer.easton@sanjoseca.gov

Attachment

Attachment

Illustrations: 1) the project's signature electric green color, 2) mock-up of a painted manhole cover, and 3) mock-up of maintenance truck with graphic to be used for the Public Art project as part of a pilot campaign to build community awareness about residential FOG.



SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS

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occur when solid waste causes a clog in the SEWER SYSTEM, and untreated sewer water is released.

PANTONE 375 U

C=60 M=0 Y=100 K=0

TYPE in PANTONE 375 U

