

STAFF REPORT

Date: May 21, 2025

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Jackie Bryant, City Manager

Subject: Resolution No. _____ (For Possible Action): Resolution in support of the City of Reno applying for a grant from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection for the Rivermount Neighborhood Septic-to-Sewer Conversion project, together with matters which pertain to or are necessarily connected thereto.

From: John Flansberg, Regional Infrastructure Administrator

Department: Regional Infrastructure

Summary:

The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) announced that they will be awarding grant funds for water and sewer infrastructure improvement projects using the State Revolving Fund and taxpayer bonds. NDEP has stated that they will award 25%-80% of the total project cost depending on their available funding. NDEP requires a resolution from the governing board to show support for the project as part of the grant application. The Island 18/Rivermount Neighborhood septic to sewer conversion project qualifies for this program because it would abandon individual sewage disposal systems if NDEP approves a program or project to satisfy state statutes and regulations. The Island 18/Rivermount neighborhood is coming up for street reconstruction beginning in 2026. This area is in need of sewer infrastructure, and the most cost-effective and beneficial time to do the work is in conjunction with a street project. The timing of the grant funding aligns with the city's planned timeline to reconstruct the streets in the Rivermount neighborhood.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Infrastructure, Climate Change, and Environmental Sustainability
Fiscal Sustainability

Previous Council Action:

There is no recent Council action relevant to this item.

Background:

March 12, 2025 – Award of a contract to DOWL for the design of the Rivermount Neighborhood Street and Sewer Improvements

Discussion:

The Island 18/Rivermount neighborhood (including Carter Drive, Frandsen Circle, Suda Way, Alexander Hamilton Drive, Benjamin Franklin Drive, Daniel Webster Drive, and Thomas Jefferson Drive) has been selected for the Neighborhood Street Rehabilitation Program with construction to begin in 2026. This area is one of the few remaining septic islands within the City of Reno. This project area was previously a part of unincorporated Washoe County. The area was annexed into the City of Reno in 1999; however, the 1,100 single family homes in the area still rely on septic systems for sewage disposal. The Neighborhood Street project encompasses street rehabilitation, stormwater and drainage improvements, pedestrian connectivity, and installation of sanitary sewer infrastructure. The City plans to fund the street, drainage, and pedestrian improvement costs through the annual Neighborhood Streets program budget. The City would like to request \$3,000,000 from the NDEP Capital Improvements grant to help offset the costs of extending sewer infrastructure to another 123 homes within the Island 18 area, including a stub to each of the properties as part of the street reconstruction. There will never be a more cost effective way to complete this multifaceted project than by addressing all of the infrastructure needs of this area simultaneously.

The installation of sanitary sewer in this area has been part of the long term plan for the City of Reno. The work is being conducted in phases due to the extensive nature and cost of the work to be completed. In 2014, West Plumb Lane was widened as part of a regional road improvement project where the City included the sanitary sewer infrastructure for 65 homes on Plumb Lane with the ability to tie in future service to the greater Island 18 area. This next phase of the project would provide the backbone infrastructure for future septic-to-sewer conversions of properties upstream of the Rivermount neighborhood area.

The homes in Island 18, specifically the homes in the Rivermount neighborhood were built in the 1950s and 1960s. It is estimated that the average age of most of these septic systems is 60–70 years, far exceeding the average useful life of 20–30 years. Aging septic systems become less efficient over time. Septic system failures cause a human health hazard by allowing untreated sewage to enter places that it should not be, including yards around the holding tank, sewage backup into homes, or sewage contaminating the groundwater table. Septic system failures can release harmful bacteria, viruses, and pathogens into the environment. This project would eliminate concerns of septic leachate containing nitrates and other contaminants from getting into groundwater or drainages leading to the Truckee River. A 2020 EPA review of 2,000 septic systems showed a failure rate as high as 50%, generally due to improper installation or maintenance. Additionally, septic system failures are incredibly costly to repair. If the septic

system is unable to be repaired or replaced, the homeowner is responsible for the costs of bringing municipal sewer infrastructure to their property or their home gets redtagged by the health department and becomes unlivable. This project would lessen the burden on homeowners by bringing the sewer infrastructure to their property line and allow them to connect to City sewer. Conversion to the municipal sewer system will provide this neighborhood and the community with a more reliable and sustainable solution for public health, groundwater protection, and homeowner expenses.

Financial Implications:

This grant funding opportunity will have anywhere from a 20%-75% required match depending upon how much of the project NDEP approves to fund. The remaining funding for the sewer portion of the project would come from the Sewer Fund and a possible special assessment district.

Legal Implications:

Legal review completed for compliance with City procedures and Nevada law.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends Council approve the resolution supporting a grant application to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection for Capital Improvements Grant funding.

Proposed Motion:

I move to approve staff recommendation.

Attachments:

Proposed Resolution