

City of Sausalito Sewer System Upgrade Needs Common Questions and Answers

Q: What is the issue?

A: Like many Marin sewer systems, Sausalito's 75-year-old sewer system is old and deteriorated. Many of our 27 miles of sewer pipe were built in the 1930s and are made of clay, which breaks easily and spills raw sewage into the Bay. We need to upgrade our sewer system to protect the environment and the health and safety of Sausalito residents.

Q: Can sewer system upgrades protect the Bay?

A: Yes. We have a responsibility to keep the Bay clean. Currently our crumbling, deteriorated sewer pipes cannot keep hazardous sewage from spilling into our environment and polluting the Bay. By upgrading our sewer system and infrastructure, we can prevent future spills of raw sewage – protecting our waterways, beaches and the Bay. While we can never prevent 100% of spills, these upgrades will ensure we have a safer system with very few, and much smaller, spills which can be contained more easily.

Q: What about resident safety?

A: Spills of raw sewage present a real health risk to residents. Ensuring we have updated pipes and infrastructure to properly and safely transport sewage is essential to maintaining a healthy, safe community.

Q: What is the urgency?

A: The City's sewer system is operating under a 2008 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) order. The order requires the City to reduce the number of sewer spills and overflows from its sewer system. By improving the ongoing maintenance of our sewer system, the City has remained in compliance with the EPA order, avoiding tens of thousands of dollars in fines. However, we now need significant upgrades to our sewer pipes and infrastructure to continue to comply with the EPA's order and clean water requirements, which are growing progressively more demanding over time.

Q: What has been done?

A: The City has done everything it can to reduce sewage spills that pollute our environment and the Bay. In the last four years, we have substantially increased maintenance, inspection, and repairs of our sewer system. Additionally we have completed some sewer pipeline and lateral replacement projects. While these improvements have been able to significantly reduce the spills of raw sewage, they are still too frequent. Additional funding is needed to address the major infrastructure upgrades our sewer system needs to prevent future spills.



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Q: What is the solution?

A: Working with an independent sewer expert, the City has identified \$5 million dollars in capital improvement projects over the next five years that would address priority sewer system needs and help prevent future spills of raw sewage – protecting our residents, the environment and the Bay.

Q: Can we make needed sewer upgrades without new rates?

A: Not without cutting other, important city services. These upgrades require a significant capital investment in our community's health and safety. Unfortunately there are no other sources that can fund needed sewer system upgrades other than the City's general fund, which is already devoted to funding important City services, such as police and fire protection, recreation services and street maintenance.

Q: How are the proposed updated rates more equitable?

A: The proposed rate structure was developed to ensure costs of service are fair and equitable for all customers. Proposed residential customer rates improve equity by being based in part on winter water consumption, so that residents who conserve water (and therefore generate less wastewater) would pay less. Proposed rates for commercial customers align more closely with water consumption (and wastewater generation) so that businesses which utilize more water, and therefore place a greater strain on the sewer system, would pay more.

Q: How can we be sure funds are spent as promised?

A: All funds raised by sewer fees are legally required to stay in Sausalito and be spent to improve our sewer system. No funds can be taken by Sacramento. In addition, these funds are subject to annual independent audits, the results of which are available to the public.

Q: How can I get more information?

A: More information is available on our City's website at: www.ci.sausalito.ca.us. In addition you can call 1-800-676-7516 between 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday through Friday to speak with someone about your questions.