

2008 Storm Sewer Improvement Project

Construction of storm sewer improvements in the area west of Michigan Avenue and north of the railroad (Phase Three Area Three) will begin this year. This is one of many such projects that have taken or will take place in the city. Other areas of Phase Three along Michigan Avenue (Craig Road, June, Junior and Cranbrook Drives as well as Chantilly Drive and Parkway North and South) were addressed in 2004 through 2007. These were preceded by similar sewer projects beginning in 1986 in areas south of the Anthony Wayne Trail (west of Key Street and east of Side Cut Metro Park) and north of the Anthony Wayne Trail (west of Key Street, east of Conant Street, and south of the Norfolk & Southern Railroad).

The objectives of the Phase Three projects are to:

- improve storm drainage by constructing larger capacity storm sewers that meet current sewer design standards,
- reduce the inflow of rainwater to the sanitary sewer system,
- construct a pump station to redirect the storm water collected,
- reconstruct the streets.

Improving the storm drainage will reduce the inflow of storm water into the sanitary sewer and help alleviate both basement flooding and the need to employ emergency pumping in a heavy rainstorm. And, EPA regulations require that the city address these issues and prevent the discharge of untreated water into the tributaries of the Maumee River.

In 1986, Council established a formula to pay the cost of this sewer construction. Generally, the cost was to be split one-third by property owners, one-third by the sanitary sewer fund, and one-third by income tax revenue. State grants and amounts from Street Construction Funds and the Sanitary Sewer Fund have provided varying amounts for the different construction projects. The majority of the funding has come from the City's income tax revenues.

Assessments to properties are based on a lot's surface area that drains to the storm sewer. In the six projects that preceded this area, the 1986 formula was altered by limiting increases to the property owners' share to a factor based on the Construction Cost Index. Over time this limit has reduced the property owners' share from 33% to 18%. Commercial property is assessed at twice the rate of residential property on the premise that commercial property has more hard surface area resulting in more run-off than a residential property. There are no commercial properties in the Phase Three Area Three project.

Property owners receive an estimated assessment notice after Council has determined that it is necessary to construct the improvements and assess costs. When a notice of estimated assessment is received, the property owner has the opportunity to object to the way the assessment has been allocated. Objections are heard by an Assessment Equalization Board that is formed solely for this purpose.

An Assessment Equalization Board is composed of residents who are owners of property not in the assessment district. The board's job is to determine if the assessments have been fairly apportioned. Objections regarding the assessments (i.e., inaccurate measurements, limits of the assessment area, method of allocation, etc.) will be considered by the board. Sometimes, objections are made for reasons that are beyond the scope of the Assessment Equalization Board's authority (i.e., objection to the need for the construction, objection to the method chosen to address storm water issues, inability to pay an assessment, etc.). The board will make recommendations to Council and Council will consider those recommendations. When Council decides the assessments are proper, it will fix the assessments and "determine to proceed" with construction. At that time, bids to do the work will be solicited from contractors. The contractor submitting the lowest and best bid will be awarded the contract to construct the

improvements. Full benefit of the storm sewer construction will be realized once the paving is completed, which will be the final phase of the project.

After construction is completed and the contracts are closed out, property owners will be notified that payment of the assessment is due. This will likely occur in 2009 for the 2008 construction. Owners will be allowed at least 30 days to make full or partial payment. The city then will sell bonds to finance the unpaid amounts. The bonds will be paid off over ten years. The unpaid assessments (with interest based on the bond sale) will be sent to the County Auditor to include with property tax bills collected by the Lucas County Treasurer. For this project, the first inclusion in property tax bills will likely occur in 2010.

February, 2008