



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: January 28, 2025

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Public Works Department

SUBJECT: Business Case Analysis for the Sewer Lateral Inspection Program [Agreement]

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council authorize the Public Works Director to execute a City Professional Services Agreement with GHD Inc., in the amount of \$104,927 for professional services for the SLIP Business Case Analysis Project and authorize \$10,492 for potential extra services, for a total expenditure authority of \$115,419.

DISCUSSION:

Sewer Lateral Inspection Program (SLIP) Update

There are approximately 25,000 privately owned sewer laterals throughout the City of Santa Barbara (City), measuring an estimated 300 miles in total. The private sewer laterals connect private plumbing fixtures to the City's wastewater collection system. Unfortunately, many sewer laterals are old, poorly maintained, or damaged. Aging laterals require regular maintenance and/or repair to continue to function properly. If not properly maintained, sewer laterals will become vulnerable to tree root intrusion and rainwater/groundwater infiltration, which may cause costly blockages and backups within the private sewer lateral or the City's public wastewater collection system and can eventually result in sewer overflows, which pose a threat to public health and the environment. City Wastewater Staff responded to 18 private sewer lateral spills in 2024 (as of December 13, 2024) and it is assumed there are many more that occur and go unreported to the City. The City operates 255 miles of public wastewater collection system and experienced 11 spills in 2024 (while there is no current metric, the historical industry metric was 4 spills per 100 miles).

SLIP, which was established in 2007, assists City customers by providing free education and support to property owners who need help maintaining and/or repairing their private sewer lateral and/or sewer lateral connection. Property owners are required to inspect their private sewer lateral based on four triggers: Private Lateral Sewer Discharge (PLSD) or Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) originating from the property; a City-identified defect on the private lateral through Closed Circuit Television inspection of the public sewer

main; the property is adding 400 square feet or more of living space or two or more plumbing fixtures; or the property is identified as commercial, industrial, or common interest development which require reinspection every 15 years. SLIP staff provides a range of services to property owners to guide them through the SLIP process and ensure their sewer laterals are brought to compliance. Over the past 24 months, staff have reviewed 1,315 sewer lateral inspection videos, leading to the issuance of 571 repair notices. Additionally, staff have coordinated 448 repairs utilizing the City's contractor and engaged in more than 2,300 discussions with property owners about their sewer laterals.

SLIP continues to evolve based on the community's needs. In the spring of 2023, SLIP staff developed a Condition Rating Scale (CRS) for sewer laterals and sewer lateral connections. The CRS is based on the National Association of Sewer Services Companies' (NASSCO) Lateral Assessment Certification Program standard and has been modified to fit the nature of the City's SLIP program. The nationally recognized NASSCO standard is currently used by the City's Wastewater Collection System to assess, monitor and maintain the public wastewater system.

The CRS was developed to prioritize SLIP cases with severe defects requiring accelerated or immediate repairs and to assist property owners with the challenges presented with making those repairs. The CRS also provides additional options to property owners, allowing them to monitor and maintain their lateral if the defects identified are not classified as severe.

The CRS was developed with the goal of providing multiple benefits to both SLIP staff and the public. The CRS allows the SLIP Team to focus on the most severe sewer lateral defects and work with property owners to find the best repair option. Property owners benefit from a standardized reference for the severity of lateral defects identified. This knowledge empowers the property owner to better understand the severity of existing defects so they can develop an appropriate plan and timeframe for making needed repairs.

Since the CRS was implemented, staff have been able to reduce the number of active SLIP cases from 2,440 to 1,528. However, the number of SLIP cases with severe defects still remains high and additional tools are needed to address this issue. This is a main driver for this business case.

SLIP Business Case

Since its formation in 2007, SLIP has continued to evolve in response to community input and needs and field data collected as part of daily operations. One of the biggest challenges facing the program is how City staff can support and motivate customers to complete repairs to their private sewer laterals in an environment in which repair and maintenance costs can be highly variable and navigating repair solutions and plumbing contractors can be overwhelming. Recognizing this tension and wishing to improve the program and reduce spills, staff developed a Request for Proposals (RFP) and conducted a competitive bid process for a Business Case Analysis of SLIP. The goal of this effort is

to develop and define alternative program options that will support our goal of eliminating all wastewater spills in the community. Alternative program options may include, but are not limited to: enforcement mechanisms, required sewer lateral inspection at point of property sale, the ability for the City to place a lien on a property to fund the lateral repair when a customer does not have the funding available, and redirecting funds spent on SLIP back towards maintenance and repair of the City's wastewater collection system. The goal of the business case is to evaluate which of these alternative options will best support the City's goal of eliminating all wastewater spills in the community, which is critical to protecting public health and environment.

Staff recommends that Council authorize the Public Works Director to execute a contract with GHD Inc. in the amount of \$104,927 for professional services for the SLIP Business Case Analysis Project and authorize \$10,492 for potential extra services, for a total expenditure authority of \$115,419. GHD Inc. is experienced in this type of work and was selected as part of a competitive Request for Proposals process. They proposed the most qualified team from a total of two firms that submitted proposals.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

There are sufficient expenditure appropriations in the Water Fund in Fiscal Year 2025 to cover the SLIP Business Case Analysis, including potential extra services, and City staff costs.

A copy of the contract may be requested from the Public Works Department for public review by contacting PWInfo@SantaBarbaraCA.gov.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

SLIP, established in 2007, addresses the increasing number of private sewer lateral spills and public spills by partnering with property owners to identify the best solution to their failing private sewer laterals. By identifying alternative offerings for property owners in Santa Barbara, we can protect property, our environment, and public health.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The Program Update and Business Case Analysis for the Sewer Lateral Inspection Program (SLIP) does not have any direct or indirect physical changes in the environment, therefore, this update and analysis falls outside of the definition of a "Project" under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines § 15378 (b)(5) as administrative activities of governments that will not result in physical changes in the environment are not subject to CEQA environmental review.

SLIP itself is categorically exempt under CEQA Guidelines § 15301 Existing Facilities, as the operation, repair, maintenance, and minor alterations of existing utility lines results in negligible or no expansion of use.

WATER COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

This item was presented to the Water Commission at its meeting on January 16, 2025, and the Commission voted **X-X-X in support of staff's recommendations.**

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SUBMITTED BY: Clifford M. Maurer, P.E., Public Works Director

APPROVED BY: Kelly McAdoo, City Administrator

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