

# The Scoop... On Public Works & Utilities



**OUR WASTEWATER  
TREATMENT FACILITY WAS  
BUILT IN 1959**

*Our Wastewater Treatment Plant has been in operation since 1959 and underwent a large upgrade in the mid 1980s to stay in compliance with evolving regulations and to continue to process our city's residential, commercial, and industrial sewage. However, by now, even the newest upgrades to the treatment plant have been in operation for over 30 years, which means that portions of the facility are starting to reach their end of useful life.*

## Our Aging Wastewater Treatment Plant

Last year our Public Works team with the help of consultants completed a study of our Wastewater Treatment Facility infrastructure. The "Wastewater Facility Master Plan" includes a full assessment of the Facility and sewer pump stations, its concrete structures, piping system, and electrical and mechanical systems. The evaluation was needed to identify and prioritize areas that need to be repaired or replaced due to the facility's aging conditions, and to protect against the potential impacts that natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, could have on these outdated structures.



**TODAY'S WASTEWATER  
TREATMENT FACILITY**



*The Wastewater Treatment Facility's close proximity to the Pajaro River Levee makes it prone to floods.*

## Preparing for Potential Natural Disasters

Our Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), which was completed last year, identifies the natural disasters that our city is most prone to. The Plan looks at past disasters, estimates the probability of future occurrences and sets goals to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards. For example, the LHMP identified areas in our wastewater structures that have cracks and need reinforcement to sustain earthquakes. The Plan also brought to light the need to protect the whole facility against floods, as it is located next to the river levee.

## ***Wastewater Treatment Plant Significant Projects Identified in the Master Plan***

We have prioritized projects that are crucial and need to happen over the next 10 years to continue providing sewage services and to stay in compliance with current and new regulations. The cost estimates of some of these projects have been included in the City's Capital Improvement Plan and a utility rate rate study was supposed to be presented to City Council in June 2020. Recognizing the hardships associated with the pandemic, staff decided to wait a year. However, it is crucial to secure funding for these much-needed improvements, as they will allow us to continue providing a reliable service for the next 20 years. While the City has been successful in obtaining grant funding for many significant projects, such as road repairs, there is very little grant funding available for water or sewer projects. These must be funded almost entirely from our rate payers.

A new financial analysis and a new rate study have been developed to determine how the City will pay for the needed projects. The new rate study will be presented to the City Council for consideration this Spring 2021 and will include recommendations to fairly and sustainably adjust our utility rates to generate the funds needed over the next 5 years.

<b>2020-2025 Significant Projects*</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Replace main electrical system of the entire Plant	\$11.3M
Stabilize river levee embankment to protect plant against floods	\$1.6M
Replace or repair collection system pump stations	\$1.5M
Repair and/or replace priority sewer pipelines (Airport Freedom trunk Sewer (Completed); Freedom Blvd. (Alta Vista to Green Valley); Green Valley Road	\$6.3M
Replace plant control system (SCADA)	\$400K
<b>Total cost of significant projects</b>	<b>\$21.1M</b>

<b>2026-2030 Significant Projects*</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Improve digester mixing systems and make improvements to protect in case of earthquakes	\$3.2M
Increase receiving station capabilities for fats, oils, and grease to maximize biogas production, which supplies power to run Plant	\$5.8M
Replace and/or upgrade headworks, Influent Pump Station, and gravity thickener	\$15.8M
Upgrade or replace 7 collection system pump stations	\$7M
Repair and replace priority sewer pipelines	\$5.5M
<b>Total cost of significant projects</b>	<b>\$37.3M</b>

\*Visit the City's website for a full list of the remaining 10-Year Capital Improvement Projects and costs.



The City of Watsonville is uniquely fortunate to own and operate its own wastewater treatment plant. Our wastewater collection system encompasses approximately 21 square miles and includes more than 170 miles of sanitary sewer lines and over 20 City-owned wastewater pump stations. The plant processes an average of 5 million gallons of wastewater daily from approximately 60,000 people from Watsonville and the Freedom, Salsipuedes, and Pajaro Sanitation Districts.

*Our Wastewater team serves as the first line of defense in protecting our environment. They operate, maintain, and repair our wastewater facility, and monitor the quality of the treated wastewater to ensure safety. They work around the clock to meet regulatory compliance for air, wastewater, biosolids, and recycled water.*