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**Clark Regional
Wastewater District**

Press Release

Clark Regional Wastewater District Works with State and Federal Partners to Solve Water Quality Challenge

Vancouver, WA. Homeowners in the Sunset Strip neighborhood will start the new year with the opportunity to access affordable and reliable public sewer service from Clark Regional Wastewater District (District), addressing a long-standing challenge with failing septic systems in an urban neighborhood.

As part of a larger Septic Elimination Program (SEP), the District recently completed a project to bring sewer service to more than 70 homes in the neighborhood, which is currently reliant on aging and sometimes failing, onsite septic systems. District General Manager John Peterson states this challenge isn't unique to the Sunset Strip neighborhood. *"This is a legacy issue."* Peterson said, *"There are more than 40 neighborhoods like this in our service area containing approximately 1,400 septic systems that are reaching the end of their useful life,"* he added.



Nutter Corp. installing sewer in Sunset Strip in 2023

Builders in the Sunset Strip neighborhood constructed homes in the 1970s with onsite septic systems due to the absence of a sewer system to connect to at that time. These aging systems are failing, posing public health and environmental risks. Limited space in urban residential settings leaves homeowners with expensive septic system repair options, averaging around \$25,000, according to Clark County Public Health. The District's SEP program aims to mitigate long-term environmental risks and provide homeowners with a more affordable opportunity to connect to public sewer.

The District prioritizes SEP projects for low-income homeowners and sensitive environmental areas – both conditions that apply to the neighborhood. State and federal funding for the project significantly reduced the cost of connecting to public sewer. As a result, the District already has commitments from fourteen homeowners to connect to the recently installed sewer. Sewer connection is voluntary, and each homeowner makes the decision that is best for them.

"We are glad that we finally have sanitary sewer. We were good and ready. The savings due to the funding and the District incentive were a big plus. We are very happy," Klaus Micheel said.

Once installed, the cost to connect to public sewer can be a barrier to many homeowners. Extending sewer service to a neighborhood requires significant investments in new infrastructure and requires equal distribution of costs for each property. The Sunset Strip project cost \$2.3 million, with initial estimates showing it would cost homeowners approximately \$30,000 each to connect to public sewer.

Sunset Strip homeowners benefitted from a significant cost reduction through a partnership with federal and state legislators. The program secured \$1.6 million in combined federal and state funding, with \$800,000 coming from each source. Support from U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and State Representatives Sharon Wylie (D-49) and Monica Stonier (D-49) made the funding possible, with the District leveraging \$700,000 in their own funding. Taking advantage of program incentives, homeowners in the project neighborhood will pay around \$13,000 when they choose to connect to public sewer with options to pay the fee over time, in addition to their service rate of \$45 per month, the lowest in Clark County.

"Projects like this are a win for the whole community. It protects our water resources and addresses a potential public health hazard," says Board President Neil Kimsey. *"Homeowners shouldn't have to carry the entire financial burden to receive sewer service, and we appreciate and need the continued support of our state and federal partners for the Septic Elimination Program to be successful."*

The District is already working on the next SEP project, Wallace Heights, in the Hazel Dell area near Sudds Creek and is seeking additional funding for that project. For more information about the District and the Septic Elimination Program, visit www.crwwd.com. If you have questions about the Sunset Strip neighborhood project or the Septic Elimination Program, please contact Heath Henderson, Collection Infrastructure Director, at 360-993-8815 or hhenderson@crwwd.com.

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