

February 11, 2020

Just put the \$25 million on my Visa Card!

Like so many other cities in this country, the basic underground utilities in Ames, IA were originally installed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most of the water and sewer lines have been buried out of sight and keeping the city clean and sanitary for well over 100 years. The high quality of clay tile performed well and lasted a long time. But let's face it, 100 years is an exceptionally long time and much of the tile had become brittle and cracked.



The material breakdown led to leaks and high flows, which led the city to embark on a major inspection of the entire sanitary sewer system. These inspections uncovered defects that would cost \$25 million to repair. Of course, the City didn't have a spare \$25 million laying around, so they brought WHKS into the team to conduct a risk analysis on the defects and help develop a prioritized repair list, beginning with those segments of the sewer that are in the worst condition. The plan established a series of projects that will, over a 10-year period, address all the problems in the, by then, almost 140-year-old system.



The projects are being paid for by a combination of City funds and a loan from the State Revolving Fund. This unique loan program provides money at just 2% interest, but, like your credit card, also provides 1% cash back as long as the returned money is used for watershed-related projects. Since the heavily-farmed state and densely-developed community faces nutrient-infiltration and instability issues with waterways, the City is excited to invest in storm water control, stream restoration and wetland reclamation projects. This, in turn, improves parks, recreation opportunities and many other quality-of-life factors, all contributing to a better city.

Discovering that the 100-year-old sewer system was in sad shape has not only led to those repairs, the snowball effect of the loan program is improving life in many other areas too.

