

TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

**DEPARTMENT: UTILITIES
AND PUBLIC WORKS**

DATE: JUNE 23, 2008

CMR: 294:08

**SUBJECT: COORDINATION OF UTILITY AND STREET WORK IN THE
COLLEGE TERRACE NEIGHBORHOOD**

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND

On Monday, June 16, 2008, the Council received a petition from citizens in the College Terrace Neighborhood listing concerns related to the utility construction projects occurring on the city right of ways adjacent to their homes. In response to this petition, staff is providing background on these projects and responding to the concerns that have been raised.

In 2006 the City Auditor completed a Street Maintenance Audit that made a number of recommendations intended to improve street conditions in Palo Alto. Several of the recommendations were addressed at improving the coordination between utility and street resurfacing projects to minimize utility street cuts in restored streets. The Auditor made the recommendation that seven work zones be established in the city. Staff responded to this suggestion by implementing an alternate proposal to establish Targeted Work Zones (TWZ). The purpose of the work zones was to establish specific areas where the streets were in very poor condition so that utilities could evaluate the condition of the infrastructure and replace it prior to the resurfacing. The concept of TWZs was brought to Council as staff responses to the Auditor's recommendation in the audit progress reporting process.

The concept of TWZs was implemented in the South of Forest Area where several private development and City utility projects were in progress. This TWZ was not a complete testing of the TWZ because construction was underway on a number of projects prior to the designation as a TWZ. A second TWZ area in College Terrace was identified as an area where the concept could be tested further and the process refined. Staff began working on developing plans for College Terrace in 2006. Because of the large area and the amount of work required, the plan included several phases. During 2007 plans were completed for the first phase, bids were awarded, and construction began on a wastewater project. The gas project was started after the

wastewater project. It should be noted that the gas project included some water main work on Dartmouth St.

The Wastewater Rehabilitation Project 19A began in October 2007 in College Terrace. The specific work performed was to replace the city owned laterals between the main line and the edge of the street ROW. This work required a specialized piece of equipment that is inserted into the existing pipe that bursts the pipe while inserting a new pipe. This project was initiated to replace clay lateral lines that were deteriorating and were causing backups in the main due to the pipe cracking and tree root intrusion. This project was completed in March of 2008.

The Gas Main Replacement (GMR) Project 16 in College Terrace was part of a larger project to replace ABS plastic main lines. These lines are a high priority replacement because the ABS plastic has deteriorated rapidly and is developing cracks. The utility has planned to have all ABS mains replaced by 2012.

GMR Project 16 began in March 8, 2008. The mains were replaced using a boring technique with specialized equipment that replaces a gas main by drilling a pilot hole between pits and pulling new gas pipe between the pits. The gas main line is formed by fusing the gas pipe in each pit. Once the main line is in place, service lateral stubs from the main line to the meter locations are installed. The final step in the process is to connect the new gas lateral to the house service through a meter. The project in College Terrace is currently in the final step. College Terrace has had additional disruption during this last phase because many of the gas meters in this area are located in the planter strip in subsurface boxes. Usually meters are located above ground next to the house. The additional disruption is due to the meter boxes being replaced at the street. Service connections are expected to be completed in 5-6 weeks.

Once replacement of the utility services are completed this area of College Terrace will be ready for paving. The paving in the College Terrace area will occur in three phases over a 3 year period beginning in 2009 and ending in 2011 as funding allows. Each phase will cover about one-third of the College Terrace area. The paving phase in 2011 will include paving College Avenue following permanent traffic circle modifications and/or improvements.

Utilities work in College Terrace has been on-going over the last 10 years. Most of the water mains were replaced in earlier years and the gas project has included the remaining water main replacement. Once the current projects are finished the section of College Terrace between Amhearst St. and Cornell St. will be complete. In fiscal year 2008/09 there will be a gas main replacement project in College Terrace between Cornell and El Camino Real to replace the remaining ABS gas pipe. This project is in the final stages of review prior to going out for construction bids. This project is expected to start construction in the fall of 2008. This is the final pipeline replacement project in College Terrace.

DISCUSSION

Staff has reviewed the issues in the petition and acknowledges that the extended construction work in the College Terrace have been disruptive to the neighborhood. The construction has increased daytime noise and impacted parking. The City has tried to balance citizens concerns related to construction with required construction needs by establishing Public Works Standards,

Contract General Conditions, and the City's Noise Ordinance that regulate aspects of construction such as: set work hours, establish traffic routes, provide guidelines on the use of the street for storage, regulate noise etc. Staff takes the concerns of residents seriously and tries to accommodate requests and special needs when it is feasible.

One issue raised was related to construction hours on the project. The contract conditions establish 8:00 a.m. as the time construction activity can begin. Contractors are aware of the construction start and staff has been monitoring them to make sure they do not start construction prior to 8:00 a.m. The contract does not restrict the contractor from moving trucks and equipment prior to this time. However, onsite inspectors encourage the contractor not to start equipment prior to the authorized start time. Staff will ask the contractor to avoid starting equipment prior to 8:00 a.m.

Another issue raised was the availability of parking during construction. The city does not have property available for contractor storage in the vicinity of College Terrace. Because of limited areas for construction staging within the City, the Public Works Standards allow contractor equipment parking and material storage on City streets to facilitate construction and reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.

A concern was also raised about construction crews entering property in order to perform excavations. During construction all customers are notified about impending construction with 30 day, 7 day and 24 hour construction notices. Staff instructs the contractor to attempt to contact customers before performing construction on property outside the public right-of-way, although it is not always possible to contact the customer prior to work starting. The City has the right to enter property as reasonably required to maintain its infrastructure as a condition of service.

Another concern was that the project was inefficient because the same contractor came at different times to do the wastewater and gas projects. Historically staff has bid wastewater and gas jobs separately because very few contractors have experience performing wastewater rehabilitation and gas pipeline replacement. Construction techniques and requirements for working on each system differ resulting in a different group of contractors bidding on each type of project. It would be possible to bid gas and wastewater projects together, but this may severely limit the number of bid packages received. For example, of the contractors that submitted bids on these two projects, Ranger Pipelines was the only bidder on both projects. However, staff will investigate and determine if there are efficiencies that can be obtained by closer coordination of water, gas and wastewater projects in TWZs.

Staff understands the concerns expressed by residents in College Terrace and will assess the project at completion to find ways to better communicate through additional mailings and public meetings prior to and during construction in TWZs. In the meantime, staff will endeavor to complete the remaining work on the current gas project as fast as possible.

RESOURCE IMPACT

None.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

None.

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