

ITEM #:	<u>37</u>
DATE:	<u>08-12-25</u>
DEPT:	<u>PW</u>

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: **MAPLE GROVE MOBILE HOME PARK
REQUEST FOR SANITARY SEWER CONNECTION**

BACKGROUND:

On July 8, 2025, City Council received a memo from staff regarding a request from Horizon Land Management, on behalf of Maple Grove MHC, LLC, to connect the Maple Grove Mobile Home Park (6100 W. Lincoln Way) to the City of Ames sanitary sewer system (the request from Horizon Land Management and staff memo are attached). **The Council directed staff to place the memo on a future agenda for the City Council's consideration.**

A history of complaints and investigations by the Iowa DNR has documented ongoing concerns about the mobile home park's existing septic system, including citations for illicit discharges that pose environmental risks. To comply with Iowa DNR requirements while exploring alternatives, the park currently pumps wastewater from its private collection system and hauls it offsite for treatment.

If the system becomes overloaded between pumping intervals, excess sewage would be discharged into a Boone County drainage district tile that empties directly into College Creek. Under current City policy, properties located outside the City limits are not eligible for sanitary sewer service, regardless of their land use designation.

While drought conditions in recent years have complicated water quality sampling, new data reinforces prior concerns. On June 18, 2025, Prairie Rivers of Iowa collected water samples from College Creek at Wilder Boulevard as part of its regular monthly monitoring. **The sample was analyzed for microbial source tracking and confirmed the presence of human-source fecal contamination upstream of Wilder. Although the exact point source of contamination could not be determined, Prairie Rivers, acting as the City's water quality consultant, attributes these elevated E. coli levels in part to failing septic systems and lagoon overflows in the area.** These systems are discharging into Boone County Drainage District 93B and Story County Drainage District 4 tile lines, which flow directly into College Creek.

SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE:

The City's FY 2023/24 Ames Plan 2040 Sanitary Sewer Extension project, now complete, extended a public sanitary sewer main from the west end of Norris Street to approximately 500 feet south of Lincoln Way, along the west edge of the S. 500th Avenue right-of-way (see attached map). This sewer main was constructed to support future annexation and development contemplated by Ames Plan 2040. The main lies entirely outside the current City limits, within Story and Boone Counties.

During and after construction of the sewer main, staff received multiple inquiries from the Iowa DNR and three nearby property owners located outside the City limits

(including Maple Grove) regarding abandoning their existing septic systems and connecting to the new public sewer. These properties are identified in Table 1, below. Sewer flowline elevations have been reviewed and can adequately serve this area with the City's new sanitary sewer main.

Within City limits, sanitary sewer charges are based on metered water usage and are billed monthly through the customer's water bill. For properties outside the City that are not served by City water, an alternative method of determining usage would be required. This could involve coordination with Xenia Rural Water, the area's primary rural water provider, or the establishment of a standard usage assumption for properties on private wells. **Either approach would require creation of a new "rural" sewer rate, similar to the rural water rate outlined in *Municipal Code Section 28.201(5)*.**

Although the City has not historically provided sewer service outside of the corporate limits, there are a few examples of the City providing water service outside of Ames. There are eight properties located outside the City limits where the City has agreed to provide water service, either because the rural water provider was unable to do so or because the City intended to eventually annex into that area.

These customers paid for the costs of extending the water infrastructure, and their accounts are metered and billed at a higher rate than those within the corporate limits. However, none of these out-of-city properties are connected to the City's sanitary sewer system and, therefore, do not pay sewer charges.

Area Properties:

Table 1 reflects the properties that have been identified as likely beneficiaries of a public sanitary sewer connection in this area. Among these, the properties marked with an asterisk are those that have inquired with staff about a connection.

Table 1.

Property Address	Owner	Acres	% of Total Area	Water Source
5820 Lincoln Way*	LDR Iowa I LLC	12.38	47.3%	City of Ames
5910 W Lincoln Way*	West End Apartment L C	3.55	13.6%	Xenia
6008 W Lincoln Way	Watkins, Graham	1.14	4.4%	Well
6014 W Lincoln Way	Sporrer, Jeff & Stacey	0.38	1.4%	Xenia
6018 W Lincoln Way	Joan Pfeffer	0.42	1.6%	Xenia
6100 W Lincoln Way*	Maple Grove MHC LLC	8.30	31.7%	Xenia
Total	-	26.17	100.0%	-
* Properties inquiring about sanitary sewer service connection to the City's system.				

The City Council is not obligated to authorize the extension of sanitary sewer service to properties outside city limits. However, Council may determine that there is a benefit to considering the request. Three options are available, and the advantages, challenges,

and additional considerations related to each are detailed below:

1. "Rural Sewer" Service Agreement

This option would allow sanitary sewer service to be provided without annexation. Maple Grove Mobile Home Park would still be responsible for extending the public sewer main to its property and constructing a service connection per City standards.

A formal agreement would be required with each property owner that requests to connect. Such agreements would include: 1) conditions addressing future annexation timing, 2) use restrictions, 3) modification of their internal sewer system without City consent, and 4) rates for a new "rural sewer" service class.

Advantages:

- Allows for the removal of non-compliant septic systems from the College Creek watershed.
- Allows for faster implementation compared to annexation, particularly for Maple Grove, which faces urgent environmental compliance issues.
- May be more acceptable to property owners not ready or willing to annex at this time, but would establish annexation agreements for the future.
- Limits City obligations strictly to sanitary sewer (and excludes intersection improvements, road maintenance, police, fire, etc. that would be required of the City with annexation).

Challenges:

- A method would need to be established by the City to determine sewer usage to allow for billing for those properties that use unmetered well water.
- Adds administrative complexity for managing custom agreements and enforcement.
- This approach creates a mechanism for properties to receive both City water and sewer utilities without annexing. Historically, access to these utilities has been tied to annexation, facilitating the growth of the City. Additionally, these properties will remain exempt from City land use, zoning, and code enforcement jurisdiction.

2. Annexation of All Six Properties

Under this option, the property owners would need to initiate a voluntary annexation of the six parcels listed in Table 1 and petition the City for approval. As part of annexation, the property owners would enter into a development agreement requiring them to extend the sanitary sewer main west to their properties, in accordance with City specifications and easement requirements, and to install individual service connections at their own expense. In this option, unless all six properties agree to be annexed, it will not be possible to develop a contiguous annexation area including Maple Grove.

Advantages:

- Allows for the removal of non-compliant septic systems with high risk of environmental contamination in the College Creek watershed.
- Ensures that future re-development of the affected properties will be consistent with City zoning, land use regulation, and development standards.
- Enables sanitary sewer billing through the City's existing water utility system for properties served by City or Xenia water.
- Annexation is consistent with the Ames Plan 2040 vision for growth in this area.

Challenges:

- The existing land uses in the subject area do not fully align with the City's adopted Future Land Use Map, which envisions higher-density residential along Lincoln Way.
- Some existing properties may encounter challenges complying with the City's standards (e.g., rental housing regulations).
- Requires cooperation from multiple property owners to create a voluntary annexation.
- Commits the City to providing other municipal services (e.g., street maintenance, police, fire).
- The time necessary to organize the annexation may delay the correction of immediate septic problems.

Additional Considerations:

With annexation, the City would not automatically assume jurisdictional responsibility for maintenance and repair of W. Lincoln Way between S. 500th Street and X Avenue in Boone County. **However, the City would assume responsibility for the Boone and Story County right-of-way adjacent to the annexed area on S. 500th Street. Additionally, the annexed area contains some drainage district infrastructure. The City would become a party to the maintenance of that infrastructure if annexed.**

3. Decline the request to provide sanitary sewer service outside the City limits for the subject properties

Advantages:

- The environmental impacts posed by the existing septic infrastructure will continue to be managed by the County Sanitarian and Iowa DNR.
- City staff time remains reserved for established Council priorities.

Challenges:

- The properties may have to resolve their septic issues in a piece-meal approach rather than at one time in a comprehensive manner.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Direct staff to develop a "rural sewer" service agreement that would allow Maple Grove Mobile Home Park and other nearby properties to connect to the City's sanitary sewer system without annexation.
2. Require annexation into the City of Ames as a condition of connecting to the sanitary sewer system.
3. Decline the request for sanitary sewer service to Maple Grove Mobile Home Park and maintain the current policy of not extending sewer service outside the City limits.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Extension of a public sanitary sewer main to serve Maple Grove and adjacent properties appears to be the best path to ensure septic issues do not continue to threaten the quality of water in College Creek. **The key question to resolve is whether connection should be made contingent on either:**

1. Execution of a detailed "Rural Sewer" agreement addressing billing, maintenance, and future annexation conditions; or
2. Annexation of the properties into the City of Ames.

Staff believes a Rural Sewer agreement, with future annexation conditions, would be the best approach in this situation. It provides for the affected properties to eventually become part of the City while resolving environmental issues as quickly as possible. The challenge with this approach is the staff time that will be necessary to prepare the agreements for annexation and sewer service. Although this area is within a future growth area, it is not an immediate priority. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[25-07-08 Maple Grove Sewer Memo.pdf](#)

[Map - West Ames Sanitary Sewer Connection.pdf](#)

[N._Flippen_-_Connection_to_COA_Sewer_Line.pdf](#)