

THE MODESTO BEE

Some of these homes in west Modesto are almost 100 years old. They are finally getting sewer service.

January 30, 2018

By: Ken Carlson

Stanislaus County is moving ahead with bringing wastewater service to three unincorporated neighborhoods in west Modesto, but it is not going to happen overnight.

The three areas were chosen because they are disadvantaged economically and have trouble with septic tank failures. By showing the improvements are cost-effective, the county hopes to position the West Modesto Sewer Project for millions of dollars in state funding.

More than 140 lots on Spencer and Marshall avenues, off California Avenue near Mellis Park, are first in line for the improvements. County Public Works Director Matt Machado said construction could begin in spring 2019.



The two other priority areas include: 465 lots along Beverly Drive and Waverly Drive, on both sides of Carpenter Road, bordered by Chicago Avenue on the north and Paradise Road on the south; and 333 parcels in the Rouse-Colorado neighborhood east of John Thurman Field.

County officials roughly estimate a total cost of \$14.7 million for bringing wastewater service to the three neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods were assigned a higher priority last March over seven other unincorporated pockets in west and south Modesto and north Ceres.

Tuesday, county supervisors approved a \$1.3 million contract with Modesto-based O'Dell Engineering for design and engineering services.

Sewer lines will be constructed to connect the neighborhoods with Modesto's wastewater system. Completing the entire west Modesto project could take from three to five years or almost 10 years, various staff members said.

"We will be holding community meetings once we have something to show to people," Machado said. Modesto won't annex the residential areas but approval from the Local Agency Formation Commission is needed for providing service outside city boundaries.

Machado said the county has some community development grant funds to start with the Spencer-Marshall area and will apply to the state for construction money. The county will need millions of dollars in additional funding to bring wastewater service to the Beverly-Waverly and Rouse-Colorado unincorporated pockets.

The county was encouraged in getting Clean Water State Revolving Fund support for wastewater projects in the Airport and Parklawn neighborhoods.

Tom Crain was one of 30 people who attended a meeting on the Spencer-Marshall project in December. He said the septic system for his Spencer Avenue home works fine, though an initial system had to be replaced. Some neighbors living in homes built in 1928 have dealt with septic tank problems and may want to connect to city service, he said.



“This is a good use of grant money for residents,” Crain said. “My wife and I have no pressing need to connect. But who knows what will happen. We were reassured at the meeting it is no cost to us.”

With these kind of projects, public funds pay for putting in the sewer lines, while homeowners are responsible for a service line to the home and septic tank removal, Machado said. Those items may cost a homeowner around \$3,000.

Homeowners are taking advantage of municipal service in the Parklawn area of south Modesto, an old county pocket that serves as a model for the west Modesto effort. About 40 percent of the 326 lots in

Parklawn have connected to modern wastewater service and 24 additional lots have been issued permits to connect. Another 28 lots are in the application process, the city said.

Miguel Galvez, deputy director of planning and community development, said the county may work with the nonprofit Self-Help Enterprises to seek funding for a feasibility study, planning and assistance to help west Modesto property owners with connection costs.

“If there is no assistance, it can be difficult to pay for that connection,” Galvez noted.