

Public Works Committee**Meeting Date:** 12/16/2025**Primary Strategic Plan Initiative:** Create a positive image for residential neighborhoods, business districts and key corridors.**Title:**

Discuss Repairing Irrigation Damage Associated with Improvement Projects

Purpose/Background:**Purpose:**

The purpose of this case is to consider recommending repairing irrigation damage associated with improvement projects.

Background:

The typical street reconstruction project will impact the boulevard within 6 to 8 feet from the existing edge of pavement or back of curb. In both urban and rural settings, the city includes repairing any damage caused to existing driveways, landscaping, turf, mail boxes, retaining walls (essentially any visible infrastructure) within the public right-of-way. In rural settings any private driveway culverts are considered the home-owners responsibility to maintain; if the project necessarily impacts a driveway culvert the city does repair as part of the improvement project.

Since 2017, the city has put the responsibility to repair any damage caused to underground irrigation and/or invisible dog fences during the reconstruction projects on the property owner. This change in practice was a reaction to the difficulties with irrigation repairs during 2015 and 2016 improvement projects. The primary driver was the number of staff hours inspecting the irrigation system functionality after the project was complete.

Since 2017, staff has included notices in the project update letters that private lawn irrigation systems may be impacted by the work and that relocating and/or repairing private irrigation systems within public right of ways as needed to accommodate construction is the responsibility of the property owner. During construction, because the irrigation systems are not visible, at least some impacts are unavoidable. During the first few construction seasons after 2017, this typically generated a few conversations on each project with property owners to clarify the policy.

In general, with the city's primarily sandy soils, irrigation is necessary to maintain a quality turf lawn, which is often desired for better curb appeal. Commercial developments, though not specifically requiring irrigation systems by code, do require sod and plantings (unless given City Council approval for alternative restoration), which in turn generally requires irrigation to survive. As we complete reconstruction and overlay projects on newer subdivisions, it is apparent that irrigation systems are more common. In new subdivisions, the vast majority of properties install an irrigation system. During ADA pedestrian ramp improvements, almost all pedestrian ramps have irrigation heads adjacent to the work, and will have significant impacts.

It should be noted that under the current system, there is not a financial incentive for the contractors to reduce damage. Where there's been obvious negligence by the contractor, staff does its best to help property owners come to an agreement with the contractor for reimbursement or repairs, but negligence is often difficult to prove. Based on the type of construction, there are times where the irrigation lines are simply in the way and impeding construction. This is associated with the standard procedure for irrigation installation is to run main lines at or near the back of curb or edge of pavement and placing irrigation heads at the edge of the pavement(s).

In staff's opinion, including irrigation repairs will provide the following benefits to city improvement projects:

- Meet property owner expectations
 - Staff often hears from property owners that the project caused the damage and the city should repair it
 - Other cities in the area do pay for repairs as part of the project
- Improve project outcomes
 - Contractors will be incentivized to minimize damage to irrigation systems
 - Ensures systems will be repaired in a timely manner
 - Help promote boulevard restoration by watering newly seeded areas
 - Avoid re-seeding due to after-the-fact irrigation repairs
- Promotes lawn care
 - Functional irrigation systems promote higher quality turf yards
 - Increases curb appeal
 - Avoids damaged pipes being left exposed by residents not willing to repair systems themselves

Notification:

Notification is not required for this case.

Time Frame/Observations/Alternatives:

Staff estimates up to 15 minutes will be needed to present this case and respond to questions.

Funding Source:

Funding for irrigation repairs would come from Pavement Management Fund or Municipal State Aid Funds where applicable.

Based on feedback from local area cities, several different methods are used to pay for irrigation repairs:

- Lump Sum
 - Contractor quotes one price, number of repairs required does not impact the price
- Irrigation or Landscape Allowance
 - City sets an allowance in the bid; Contractor submits time and material invoices for any repairs
- Each per property or each per irrigation head
 - All work to remove / salvage / plug / install new heads by occurrence
 - One city does not repair irrigation heads which are not marked

The last project the city repaired irrigation was the 2016 Andrie Street Reconstruction. The City paid by each property; the lowest bid was \$600 each. With an assumed 35% inflation, in today's dollars that would cost approximately \$800 each. For the 60 total properties with irrigation on that project, the estimated costs would be \$48,000 in today's dollars. Irrigation repairs by each irrigation head are difficult to estimate, since the systems cannot be easily viewed, and as-builts of the lines are not readily available. A cost for each (irrigation head) was estimated at \$125 by a neighboring city.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends including irrigation repairs by lump sum on public improvement projects moving forward. By nature of a lump sum, the contractor is incentivized to minimize the amount of irrigation damage during the project. This will in-turn provide better project outcomes in speeding up restoration, promote continued grass maintenance following construction, avoiding additional touch-up work, and meet the expectations of property owners. Based on recent years the staff time for inspecting irrigation repairs is anticipated to be offset by the time required to discuss damage with both residents and the contractor.

Staff is seeking a consensus direction from the Public Works Committee on this matter.

Outcome/Action:

Dependent upon Public Works Committee direction.

Attachments

No file(s) attached.

Form Review

Inbox

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Form Started By: Joe Feriancek

Final Approval Date: 12/11/2025

Reviewed By

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Date

12/11/2025 02:07 PM

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