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## Our Opinion: City clears the air on Parkway A

Sep 13, 2019



This section of Parkway is easy on the eyes but harder on the nostrils.

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Andy Clements seems like a cautious type.

The city's director of public works and transportation is reluctant to claim victory in the lengthy battle against sewer odor on Parkway A. Residents have long complained of the periodic stench on that stretch between 28th Street to the west and Mark Twain Elementary to the east.

"I would like to caution that staff has never suggested that the problem will be 'solved,' Clements writes in an email. "The goal of the project was to reduce the frequency and severity of the issues through Parkway A through Mitchell."

Others in the area might express a similar level of caution, but they are breathing a little deeper after the City Council authorized more than \$500,000 toward a “super-oxygenation” system that is designed to control the odor.

Since the system went online in August, observers who drive in that area have noticed fewer days with the kind of foul odor that makes a motorist hope for a green light in order to get away as soon as possible. It also makes for a reduced quality of life for those who live in what is otherwise a picturesque section of Parkway in St. Joseph.

Mindi Richardson, principal at Mark Twain Elementary, agreed that the bad odor events seem to be a less frequent occurrence these days. “I basically have not noticed any kind of odor issue lately,” said Richardson, entering her second years as that school’s principal.

The city tried odor-neutralizing chemicals in the past, but it was an expensive option for what residents in the area considered a semi-permanent fix. A switch to a separated sewer system would solve the issue, but the projected cost was simply unfeasible.

The combined sewer system, with rainwater and waste moving through the same pipe, is at the root of the problem. Because of the flat, low topography near Parkway A, waste has a tendency to move slower and cause gas to vent. Residents can tell you what happens next.

Clements said some venting is normal in a combined system, but the severity of the problem was unusual on Parkway A. The new system injects oxygen into the wastewater, which slows the process of the sewage going septic. In the long run, the new system might be cheaper than using chemicals to control odor.

“I do think we’re getting good benefit thus far in the season,” Clements said.

St. Joseph is an old city that makes things. Sometimes, that equates to something less-than-pleasant for the nostrils.

Though some stinky days may remain on the horizon, the city seems to be making progress in addressing this festering issue on this one section of Parkway.

We hope so. We know Parkway A residents do, as well.