For the past several years, the Metropolitan Council has been working with local communities to reduce the amount of clear water flowing into the sanitary sewer system. This flow is known as Inflow and Infiltration, or I/I, and it is cause for concern because it consumes available reserve capacity in the wastewater system.

In many communities, a majority of the sewer system is private – the responsibility of private property owners. The City of West St. Paul instituted an inspection and grant program to stem the I/I problem in that community, and save money.

West St. Paul mitigation efforts
- Addressed public system to reduce flow from those sources
- Created in-home sewer inspection/repair program for private properties
- Used a grant program to help defray repair costs for private property owners
- Provided inspections at no cost to private property owners
- Allowed property owners 6 months to make identified repairs

Financial impact
- City created a grant program for property owners to help reduce repair costs.
- City provided inspections at no cost to individual property owners.
- If repairs were not made within 180 days, properties faced a monthly surcharge.

According to West St. Paul city officials, the community response was overwhelming and positive. In an area where there were 900 homes, nearly 800 were inspected in a short amount of time. About 40% needed repairs. Since then, repairs that have been made have improved the amount of clear water the city is contributing to the system.

Advice for other communities
- Assess public sewer lines and fix any existing issues
- Divide the private properties up into smaller segments of the community and work through it systematically – perhaps 20 or 30 homes at a time
- Give property owners enough time to make repairs
- Provide financial assistance

“I have no doubt that the work we’re doing is helping us.”

Matt Saam, public works director, City of West St. Paul