

**DOWNERS GROVE SANITARY DISTRICT
DECENNIAL COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 24, 2024 – 6:00 PM
BOARD ROOM**

PROPOSED AGENDA

- I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 16
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT
- III. DRAFT REPORT: ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

DECENNIAL COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
MINUTES

July 16, 2024

A meeting of the Downers Grove Sanitary District Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency was held on Tuesday, July 16, 2024, convening at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the District's Administration Center, 2710 Curtiss Street, Downers Grove. Present were Trustees Amy E. Sejnost, Jeremy M. Wang, and Mark Eddington; Board of Local Improvements Members Kenneth J. Rathje, Robert T. Jungwirth, and Mark J. Scacco; General Manager Amy R. Underwood; Administrative Supervisor Carly Shaw; and Senior Advisor Lawrence C. Cox. Gregory Kuhn, Craig Anderson, and James Norris from the Northern Illinois University (NIU) Center for Government Studies (CGS) also attended.

Public Comment - None

Organizational Service Delivery Review and Analysis Update

The project team from the NIU CGS introduced themselves and provided an overview of their approach for the organizational service delivery review and analysis. They also provided a status update on the project.

The schedule was discussed. The next Decennial Committee meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 24. The final meeting was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, October 15 before the Board of Trustees regular meeting. Members of the Committee requested that they be provided with the draft report earlier than the usual Friday before the meeting, so they have extra time to review it.

A motion was made by Trustee Eddington seconded by Trustee Wang to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 p.m. The motion carried.

Approved: September 24, 2024

Committee Chair/District President

Attest: _____
Clerk

**Downers Grove Sanitary District
Organizational Service Delivery Review and Analysis and
Illinois Local Government Efficiency Act Compliance**



REVIEW DRAFT ONLY

September 10, 2024

| NIU-CGS Study Team Members | |
|---|---|
| Gregory Kuhn, PhD - Project Coordinator/Lead | James Norris, MPA - Local Government Management, Development, Finance and Organizational Specialist |
| Craig Anderson, MPA - Public Works, Public Utilities and Local Government Management Specialist | Jeanna Ballard, MPA - Local Government Management Specialist |

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I. Organizational Service Delivery Review and Analysis Scope

The Downers Grove Sanitary District (referred to as DGSD, or the “District”) retained the help of the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies (NIU-CGS) to undertake a service delivery and organization design analysis. This endeavor is intended to help determine systems, resources, approaches, and positional mixes that align with the District’s core service and operational requirements, as well as to strengthen strategies to utilize staff skills, equipment, and other district resources in the most effective manner.

The study includes review to address compliance requirements of the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act (Public Act 102-1088), effective June 10, 2022, herein called the Illinois Local Government Efficiency Act. This legislation requires a written report at least once every ten years to the County Board summarizing findings on local efficiencies of the District.

Components of the study include interviews with DGSD staff and board members, evaluation of job analysis questionnaires, a guided tour of the wastewater treatment plant facilities, and review of pertinent information provided by District staff, as well as what is available on the District’s website. Thirty-eight staff members participated in interviews, which included a mix of individual and workgroup sessions. An individual interview was conducted with each Trustee, and an individual interview was conducted with the Senior Advisor. Also, each staff member was invited to complete a job analysis questionnaire to provide more detailed information about their specific job. Moving forward with this project reflects the District's commitment to effective and efficient service delivery for the benefit of its customers and the larger community.

II. Organizational Purpose and Description

Under the State of Illinois Sanitary District Act of 1917, the Downers Grove Sanitary District was organized in 1921, as a separate unit of local government to provide sanitary sewerage service for incorporated municipalities and other areas within its boundaries. The District’s treatment facilities were first located along Curtiss Street in the Village of Downers Grove. This original location is now the site of Sterling North Park.

The district’s Administration Center, 2710 Curtiss Street, Downers Grove, is close to the current wastewater treatment center (WWTC), 5003 Walnut Avenue, also in Downers Grove. Construction of this facility began in 1954. Expansion of the Walnut Avenue facility allowed closure of the Curtiss Street plant in the mid-1960s. The Walnut Avenue facility has had many improvements since its opening, including major expansions in the early 1970s and late 1980s. Additionally, the District has accepted expansions of its sewer system as development has occurred within its service area. It is noted that parts of the sewer system date back to 1904,

requiring a dedicated commitment to maintenance of pipes and structures in satisfactory working condition to meet expectations for service and compliance with regulatory requirements.

It is noted that the District has begun the process of preparing a plan for updating its facilities to address present, anticipated, and potential needs associated with aging infrastructure, growth, and future regulations. The plan is intended to evaluate alternatives, allocation of resources and space to ensure smooth operations and maintenance, help align short-term and long-term goals, set priorities, and enable District eligibility for the IEPA Water Pollution Control Loan Program.

The DGSD sanitary sewer system service area includes most of the Village of Downers Grove, part of the Village of Westmont west of Cass Avenue, and portions of the Villages of Woodridge, Lisle, Oak Brook, and Darien. Thorough review of operations and functions reflects the District's commitment to and emphasis on efficient and effective practices and procedures, including environmental impact and resource recovery.

The primary functions of the DGSD are to provide sewer service, wastewater collection and treatment for residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional customers, while meeting the requirements of its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The District serves over 60,000 people, which includes more than 20,000 customers. The WWTC has a design average capacity of 11 million gallons per day.

The effluent from the sanitary wastewater collected and treated at the wastewater treatment center is discharged to the East Branch of the DuPage River or St. Joseph's Creek, as permitted by the State of Illinois with authority from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

The DGSD is an original member of and an active participant in the DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup, a consortium of local units of government dedicated to management of the valuable stream resources of the East and West Branches of the DuPage River and Salt Creek. This consortium conducts state-of-the-art monitoring of stream biology, chemistry, and habitat, the data from which is used to promote and implement initiatives to cost-effectively restore these streams to their intended uses.

III. Organizational Structure, Facilities, and Operations

The DGSD is governed by a Board of Trustees, consisting of a President, Vice President, and Clerk, each appointed by the DuPage County Board Chair, with the advice and consent of the County Board, for a staggered three-year term. The Board of Trustees has the authority to enact ordinances as needed to define policies, services, and fees for the District.

The DGSD also has a Board of Local Improvements, consisting of a President, Vice President, and Clerk, each appointed by the District's Board of Trustees for a one-year term. The Board of Local Improvements has the authority to review and approve improvements to the sewer collection system, new sewer service, and sewer extensions. Also, it advises the Board of Trustees regarding the annexation of property into the DGSD service area.

The District's daily operations are the responsibility of 39 staff members, most of whom are full-time:

- **Management and oversight positions** include the General Manager, Administrative Supervisor, Laboratory Supervisor, Operations Supervisor, Maintenance Supervisor, Sewer Construction Supervisor, Sewer Maintenance Supervisor, Safety Coordinator, and Senior Advisor.
- **Maintenance and operations positions** include the Laboratory Analysts, Biosolids Mechanics, Senior Operator, Operators, Senior Mechanic, Lead Mechanic, Mechanics, Electrical Technicians, Inspector, Permit Technician, Sewer System Engineering Technician, Senior Sewer System Technician, and Sewer System Technicians.
- **Administrative positions** include the Information Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, Senior Billing Coordinator, Billing Assistant, Office Clerical, and Accounting Assistants.

The District has an 18-step salary plan with four pay ranges, which include merit and cost of living adjustments. The length of employee retention is good. Human Resources responsibilities are shared by the General Manager and the Administrative Supervisor.

Safety in fulfilling the mission of the DGSD is a priority. The Safety Coordinator, part-time, indirectly supervises employees with respect to work safety. There is focus on procedures, training, documentation, and suggestions for repair and improvement of old infrastructure.

Administrative staff duties necessary for the District's operations include customer service, billing, accounting, record-keeping, payroll, and purchasing. Implementation of new accounting and record-keeping systems is pending, and a new timekeeping system is in place. Customer service includes in-person counter service, along with telephone and electronic communications. Administrative staff review and direct some emergency or urgent service requests. Office personnel are seen as very helpful and conscious of the needs of older customers.

The combined, coordinated efforts of all personnel are required for the District to fulfill its mission in an effective, efficient, and safe manner 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition to the above noted tasks of administrative staff, several examples of duties and responsibilities of the District's wastewater treatment center and sewer system operations personnel are provided below:

- Wastewater treatment system functioning is controlled and monitored at the plant or remotely by a supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system. It allows for efficient operations, including timely adjustments and mitigation of problems, 24 hours per day, which exemplifies emphasis on cost efficiency and effective customer service. Treatment operators use data, laboratory results, experience, and trends to make critical process control decisions, including adjustments to handle higher flows.
- The District's senior mechanic and lead mechanic have overall responsibility for care of the wastewater treatment system, including combined heat and power (CHP) generators and buildings, and to address priority situations. There is emphasis on safe, efficient, and effective maintenance and repair with in-house staff.
- As previously noted, parts of the wastewater treatment center date to 1954, with subsequent additions and improvements in the 1970s and 1980s. Its many aging components are given attention and care by maintenance mechanics, including response to urgent repair needs. Examples of typical tasks include welding, fabrication, pipefitting, and plumbing. In some instances, there is a need to develop innovative solutions to address problems. Other functions include maintenance of the District's lift stations and system valves.
- Electrical technicians address electrical issues, including determination of actual problems and making necessary repairs (e.g., operations, process control, and electrical distribution). Examples of other assignments include lift station inspections, wiring and upgrades for programmable logic controllers, development of policies for safe operations, and planning assistance for some projects.
- Biosolids mechanics assure proper, environmentally sound processing of the biosolids, a byproduct of the wastewater treatment process, and equipment maintenance. Biosolids processing includes drying, storage for two winter seasons to eliminate pathogens, and distribution via in-person pick-up or delivery.

The District's on-site laboratory allows for timely wastewater treatment process quality assurance testing, for which integrity of data entry and meeting the requirements of the NPDES permit are priorities. Reports are provided to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Work is underway to update pre-treatment program standards based on industrial and other users within the service area.

The District's extensive infrastructure includes more than 250 linear miles of gravity sewers, nine lift stations, and approximately 44,000 linear feet of force mains, which are the discharge pipes from the lift stations that carry flow to the gravity sewers. Also, the area served by the District includes about 300 linear miles of privately owned service pipes connecting buildings to public mains and 4.5 linear miles of private main connected to public main.

Proactive system maintenance is a priority for the District. Members of the sewer maintenance staff address system care daily, including response to residential sewer issues, planning for repairs, coordination with contractors, handling JULIE locates, and cleaning. Additionally, staff conduct home inspections for participation in the lateral sewer service line repair program, respond to sewer back-up calls, and inspect manholes on a regular cycle.

An on-call rotation schedule is in place for District staff to respond to urgent after-hours service calls. The rotating schedule for job assignments is appreciated, providing for variety and ongoing interest.

Many substantial and specialized components are required to undertake effective and efficient treatment of wastewater from the District's service area and discharge of the resultant effluent. Among the equipment and structures which comprise the District's wastewater treatment center are the climber screens, pump stations, grit tanks, primary clarifiers, aeration tanks, secondary clarifiers, intermediate clarifiers, sand filters, chlorine contact tank, excess flow clarifiers, sludge concentrator tanks, anaerobic digesters, belt filter press, sludge drying beds, sodium hypochlorite building, sodium bisulfate building, sludge pumps, pump station wet wells, sampling chamber, CHP equipment, gas cleaning equipment, hauled grease trap waste collection facility, and standby generators for use in the event of electrical power failure.

IV. Finances

The grand total appropriation for the DGSD for fiscal year May 1, 2024, through April 30, 2025, is \$18,910,000. Most revenue is derived from sources other than real estate taxes (e.g., tap-in permits, user fees, trunk sewer service fees, monthly fees, and surcharges). The categories of expenditures include Administration, Wastewater Treatment Center, Laboratory, Collection System, Lift Stations, Insurance and Employee Benefits, and Capital Improvements.

The District has created a five-year fiscal plan which projects revenues and expenditures for all activities. As noted earlier, the aging of the system requires a substantial commitment of resources to maintain pipes and other structures in satisfactory working condition to meet regulatory requirements and customers' expectations for service. Infrastructure maintenance and improvement projects for 2024 include Powell Street Sewer Rehabilitation, rehabilitation of approximately 2,000 linear feet of effluent discharge (outfall) pipe, and replacement of approximately 2,300 linear feet of force main from the Venard Lift Station¹.

For the fiscal year 2024-2025, estimated sources of revenue are demonstrated in Figure 1.

¹ Downers Grove Sanitary District 2024 Annual Newsletter

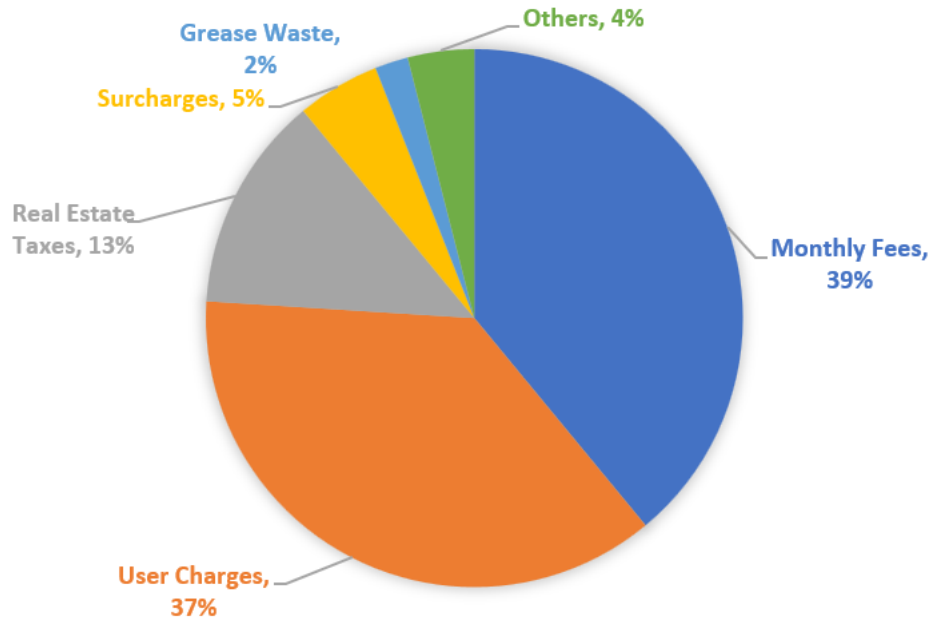


Figure 1

For the fiscal year 2024-2025, estimated expenditures are demonstrated in Figure 2. The user charge consists of a volume charge based on water consumption (currently \$2.75 per 1,000 gallons of water consumption) and a monthly service fee (currently \$20.00 per account).

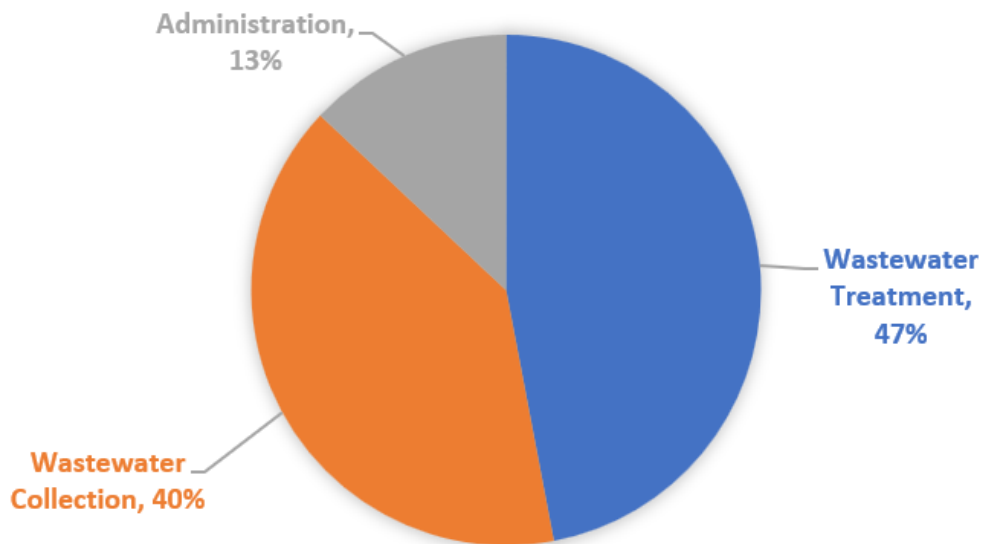
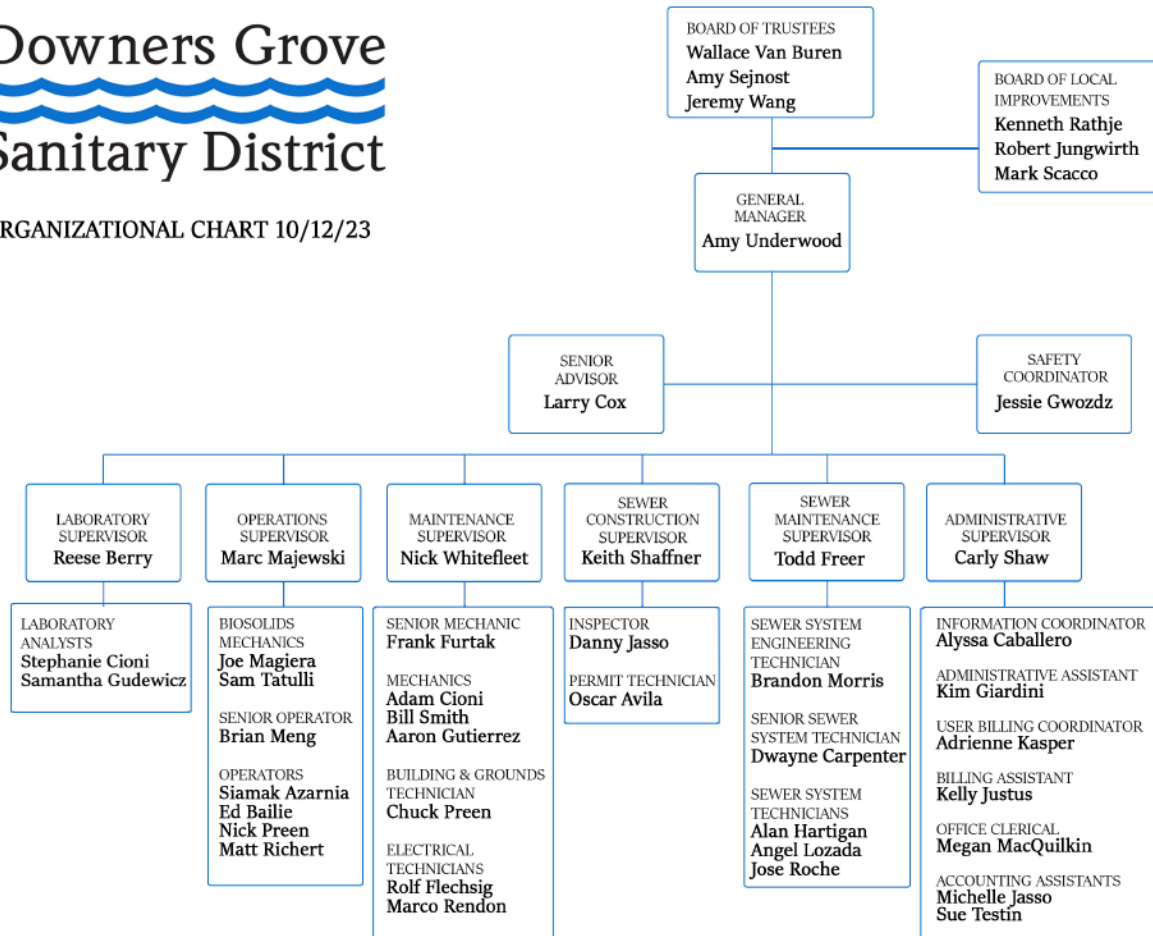


Figure 2

V. Organizational Chart



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 10/12/23



Source: Downers Grove Sanitary District – at the conception of the study

Figure 3

VI. Illinois Local Government Efficiency Act (Public Act 102-1088) Compliance

The DGSD website² provides a comprehensive amount of easily accessible, useful information for customers and other interested persons or entities regarding District operations and history, as well as steps already undertaken to improve, maintain, and enhance efficient, effective, and environmentally sound operation of the District. This approach to operation and communication reflects constant focus on the District's primary purpose to fulfill its mission by providing outstanding service while protecting the health of people and the environment.

² <https://www.dgsd.org/>

It is important to note that staffing for the District includes the position of a part-time Information Coordinator, which has been in place for 10 years. Examples of duties associated with this position include responsibility for the District's website and employee intranet, outreach to schools for presentations and wastewater treatment center tours, assistance with the annual open house, and some work with the media.

The DGSD sets an excellent example of accuracy and transparency for availability and dissemination of information. In keeping with this standard, team communication training at all levels of the organization is planned.

Examples of readily available information include sample bill and payment options; the sewer collection system and a summary of service provided; a facilities planning service area map; sanitary sewer service request and permit procedures; employment opportunities; and facilities locations.

Additionally, the District's website provides quick links to forms and documents. Some examples are noted below:

- **Public Comment Submission form** – Allows a person who cannot attend a public meeting to submit comments electronically to the Board of Trustees or the Board of Local Improvements.
- **Easy Pay form** – Allows a customer to sign up for electronic automatic bill payment for District sanitary sewer services.
- **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request** – Allows online submission of a FOIA request.

In addition to required statutory transparency, the District provides other mechanisms for its customers to know how revenue is used, including an annual open house which features a tour of the wastewater treatment center and displays highlighting various aspects of District operations (e.g., the laboratory or the sewer system). Also, an annual newsletter is provided to customers with their late spring / early summer bill.

Along with its annual budget, the District has implemented a five-year plan which includes projected revenues and expenses for all District activities. The plan is available for review on the DGSD website, along with the fiscal year appropriations ordinance and the current independent financial audit. The District's commitment to transparency is also reflected in easy access to employee total compensation information, board meeting agendas, and board meeting minutes.

Proactive outreach is used to inform the public of the District's mission. Tours of the wastewater treatment center are provided throughout the year for groups, students, teachers, professional organizations, and wastewater professionals. The District works with local elementary schools and high schools, in addition to environmental groups, to provide educational information

pertaining to wastewater treatment, the role of the sanitary district in the community, and the value of water. Also, the District participates in “river sweep,” a community river clean-up project (Figures 4 and 5)³.



Figure 4



Figure 5

The District’s wastewater treatment center operates under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit issued by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. During 2023, the water treated by the District and discharged to the East Branch of the DuPage River was significantly better than the permit limits for three major NPDES permit parameters: Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), suspended solids, and ammonia nitrogen. (Source: Downers Grove Sanitary District 2024 Annual Newsletter).

Striving to have the wastewater treatment center function as a net-zero energy facility is a major goal of the District.

In partnership with an environmental education non-profit organization, the School & Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education (SCARCE), the District collects and recycles used cooking oil. This program is intended to encourage District customers and residents of the surrounding area to recycle their used cooking oil instead of pouring it down the drain or disposing of it in the garbage. Used cooking oil can be dropped off at any time at the designated receptacle at the District’s administration center⁴.

A recreational vehicle wastewater dumping station is available to the public at the DGSD Administrative Offices. This station provides an easily accessible option for environmentally sound disposal of such wastewater.

³ Source: <https://www.dgsd.org/blog/tag/dupage-county/>

⁴ Source: Downers Grove Sanitary District 2024 Annual Newsletter

The DGSD wastewater treatment process produces a Class A biosolids byproduct, which is available to the public, free of charge, for use as a soil supplement. In addition to being a sustainable practice, it also is of benefit to the district by avoiding biosolids disposal costs. This soil supplement is available at the District's pick-up station. The District can deliver bulk quantities to its customers and other entities having needs for this supplement. Also, a Class B biosolids byproduct is applied to farm fields.

The land area occupied by the wastewater treatment center includes a walnut nursery. In addition to being an attractive feature, it contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing emissions associated with lawn maintenance, as well as related costs. The trees also help offset carbon emissions by absorbing and storing carbon dioxide.

The District has recently employed a state-of-the-art trenchless technique, known as 'Cured in Place Pipe' or CIPP, for sewer rehabilitation, without the disruption which otherwise would be required for excavation, removal, and replacement of the old sewer. CIPP allows an epoxy-laden felt liner to be inserted into the existing pipe and heat-cured in place, using the existing pipe as the exterior form for the new pipe. This same technology is planned for use for upcoming sewer and outfall rehabilitation projects⁵.

Since June 2022, the District has participated in the Illinois Wastewater Surveillance System (IWSS), a monitoring network that tracks COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) by measuring the amount of viral RNA (ribonucleic acid) in wastewater throughout Illinois. Twice weekly, District staff collect samples of raw wastewater entering the WWTC, which are then forwarded to the University of Illinois-Chicago for analysis. The data is reported on the IWSS website. This initiative is a collaborative endeavor of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and the Illinois System's Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) intended to deliver actionable information to public health decision makers⁶.

Customer service is of the highest priority for the District. Customers may be eligible for assistance to address sanitary sewer backups or other problems through the Building Sanitary Service Repair Assistance Program (BSSRAP), Reimbursement Program for Installation of Overhead Sewer or Backflow Prevention Devices, and Reimbursement Program for Sanitary Sewer Backups Caused by Blockages of the Public Sanitary Sewer. Additionally, the DGSD has technicians available to help address sewer problems at all hours, with a call number available on its website.

The information, comments, and discussion from the interviews conducted during this study noted the District's openness, creativity, accuracy, and transparency. The District is viewed as

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

approachable, environmentally responsible, fiscally responsible, innovative, and resident-focused, with accurate information and answers provided in response to questions from customers.

VII. Personnel

It is apparent to the study team that there is a well-shared opinion that the DGSD upholds standards, is a good place at which to work, employees care about their work and each other, management cares about staff, records and equipment are well-maintained, and there is focus on doing things the right way. There is also pride in the high quality of the effluent produced from the treatment process. Furthermore, there is appreciation for jobs which provide variety, for an organization focusing on innovation, and for doing good for the environment.

During interviews, discussions, and visits at the DGSD, the study team was presented with several suggestions and ideas seen as possibly benefiting the District's mission. That input is appreciated by the study team and has been helpful in preparing this report.

VIII. Recommendations

Based on the results of the organizational service delivery review and analysis, including compliance with the requirements of the Illinois Local Government Efficiency Act, it is evident that the current management and operation of the DGSD are well-focused on the provision and delivery of efficient, effective, fiscally sound, and environmentally aware services to the benefit of its customers and the larger community. In keeping with this commitment to fulfilling the mission of the District, several recommendations are presented below.

- **Recommendation 1** – Continue keeping the District's mission at the forefront of current and future operations regarding immediate, short-term, and long-term decisions, including environmental sensitivity and initiatives.
- **Recommendation 2** – Maintain the paramount importance of customer service, including easily accessible information, transparency, responsiveness, and sewer service assistance programs.
- **Recommendation 3** – If not a part of the contemplated facilities planning study, include review of current and projected office space necessary for efficient, effective, and comfortable delivery of administrative and customer services.
- **Recommendation 4** – Review the types and amount of regular and unexpected employee assignments and tasks to ensure adequate staffing levels to maintain ongoing customer service excellence. In conjunction with this process, consider options for cross-training to provide redundancy and back-up when needed, as well as to enhance a shared work culture among the several departments.

- **Recommendation 5** – Continue emphasis on beneficial technology integration and adjustment to address current and future operational needs of all departments.

IX. Best Practices

Wastewater acceptance and treatment is an essential service provided by the DGSD to protect the health and well-being of the public and the environment. The management and operation of the District reflect efficient and effective service delivery in an environmentally sound, fiscally responsible, and innovative manner. An outline of several best practices which are already in place, or which might be added, is offered below.

- **Compliance with Regulations:** Commitment to compliance with wastewater treatment regulations, including amendments and updates, and staff training. The DGSD’s commitment to this practice is evident in its work to assure adherence to the requirements of the Illinois Local Government Efficiency Act.
- **Strategic Planning:** Ongoing engagement in planning is recommended to ensure the consistent and sustainable functioning of the District to fulfill its mission. The District’s detailed, comprehensive five-year financial plan, which includes recommendations with respect to expenditures and revenues necessary to meet operations, maintenance, replacement, capital improvement, and debt service requirements reflects the importance of such planning.
- **Outreach and Transparency:** Continue to provide readily accessible information for the District’s customers and other interested parties to be informed and learn about operations, have questions answered, and participate in programs in which they have interest and might be qualified. It is noted that the DGSD hosts an annual Wastewater Treatment Center open house each October, for which information is available on the District’s website.
- **Staff Training and Development:** Encourage and provide for participation in professional development opportunities to enhance employee skills and knowledge.
- **Emergency Preparedness and Failure Response Procedures:** Assure that well-defined and supported plans and procedures are in place to address emergency situations and system failures which might occur.
- **Professional Organizations and Local Government Consortiums:** The DGSD is a founding member of and an active participant in the DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup, as well as a member of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, Illinois Association of Wastewater Agencies, and Midwest Biosolids Association. Participation in organizations representing the best interests of its members and their constituents with helpful, cost-effective services can help address issues of mutual concern.

X. Conclusion

The findings and results of the comprehensive analysis completed by the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies reflect the ongoing commitment of the Downers Grove Sanitary District to environmental sustainability, energy efficiency, sound resource management, fiscal responsibility, outstanding customer service, and overall operational efficiency and effectiveness.

The District's proactive compliance with the Illinois Local Government Efficiency Act and its focus on innovative practices, transparency, and community engagement demonstrate its ongoing dedication to fulfilling its mission in the best interests of its customers and the surrounding community. By maintaining these core values and embracing continuous improvement, the District is well-positioned to navigate future challenges, attract and retain top talent, and uphold its reputation as a leader in public service and environmental stewardship.

XI. References/Resources

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[reuse.pdf.](#)