

NEW SMYRNA BEACH UTILITIES

COMMUNITY AWARENESS PLAN

August 2024

Community Awareness Plan

Kimley»Horn

New Smyrna Beach Utilities

PREPARED FOR:

NEW SMYRNA BEACH UTILITIES

PREPARED BY:

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In December 2023, New Smyrna Beach Utilities (NSBU) was awarded a \$7.5 million grant for the conversion of private residential septic systems to municipal sanitary sewer service within the Silver Sands area. The NSBU septic to sewer conversion project will decommission approximately 554 residential septic systems and connect those properties to a centralized sewage collection system to be owned, operated, and maintained by NSBU. Once all properties are connected to the centralized sewer system, the wastewater generated will be process at NSBU's treatment facility through a lift station gravity system.

This large-scale project will take multiple years to plan, design, and construct, with multiple project milestones prior to construction. Due to the projects impacts on the local community NSBU requested that Kimley-Horn provide community outreach serves including the development of a Community Awareness Plan (CAP).

1.2 PURPOSE

The public's involvement, input, and support will significantly impact the success of the Silver Sands septic to sewer conversion project. Public acceptance will be a critical factor due to the financial responsibility residents will need to assume during the implementation of the Silver Sands septic to sewer project.

A CAP provides a strategy for effectively engaging the public and stakeholders. The guiding principle of this CAP is for those affected by the project implementation to feel they have a voice and ability to influence the decision-making process. The CAP will document public outreach efforts, the development process, and the resolution of project-specific issues. Various approaches and tools will be identified to achieve public participation and acceptance. The plan will represent a commitment by NSBU to promote public involvement initiatives throughout the Silver Sands project as well as provide information and involvement opportunities throughout all phases of the project.

The International Association of Public Participation has implemented a set of principles to guide effective engagement, these principles will be utilized and are as follows:

- Transparency.
- Access to information.
- Inclusion in decision making.
- Stakeholders' capacity to advocate.
- Accountability to the public.

The Silver Sands CAP will be a living document which will be flexible and will be periodically updated based on changing conditions. As conditions change goals and objectives of the CAP may also change. However, all objectives of the CAP will be based on best practice approaches to ensure community outreach effectiveness. Objectives and goals of the Silver Sands CAP are outlined below:

- Develop a plan to notify local stakeholders.
- Promote public trust and increase public support.
- Early and continuous outreach and education.
- Clear and continuous messaging.
- Accurate and timely updates.
- Provide a clear understanding of the project's objectives to stakeholders.
- Create meaningful two-way conversations to gain valuable feedback.

The CAP will be a tool that serves as a pathway for all residents and stakeholders to exercise their voice and influence the decisions that will impact their communities, neighborhoods, and way of life. The following offers a preliminary framework for the Silver Sands CAP.

2.0 COMMUNITY IMPACT

The conversion of septic systems to central sewer is anticipated to have moderate impacts on the local residents and properties within the Silver Sands service area due to the need to access the properties themselves, construction in the right of way in front of the properties, and the financial responsibility for the homeowner's portion of the installation cost. The actual or perceived impacts to property owners' accessibility must be adequately addressed, along with reinforcing the benefit of converting to a central sewer system. Typical public concerns that arise from septic system replacement projects include:

- Maintaining parking and safe access to and from properties during construction.
- Property owner share of construction, connection, and service costs.
- Taxpayer shares of construction and service costs.
- Construction impacts on property, driveways, landscaping, and other features fronting the residences.
- Construction noise, vibration, dust, equipment traffic, etc.
- Temporary interruption of potable water and sanitary sewer service
- Long-term lift station operation activities

It is important for Stakeholder engagement to maintain regular, open communication with an emphasis on the public benefit of these types of projects. Targeted communication strategies should be adopted by NSBU during the initial stages of the project. Key benefits include:

- Central public sanitary sewer systems are a more effective method of wastewater collection, transmission and treatment as compared to private septic systems. Individual property owners are fully responsible for maintaining their private septic systems, and some may not be adequately servicing these units. This is especially critical for systems that are at the end of their useful life leading to sewage discharges into the groundwater, which could negatively impact public health and water quality.
- New Smyrna Beach's economy and reputation depend on its steadfast commitment to protect and restore its waters. Recreation, tourism, fishing, and real estate all depend on the health of the local marine environment. Tax revenues from these activities fund the local infrastructure, roads, schools, parks, beaches, and social services that underpin the high quality of life that the community of New Smyrna Beach value and enjoy.
- The conversion of private septic systems to a public central sewer within the area will improve and preserve the quality of the area's environmental and recreational resources for generations to come. The conversion to a central sewer system also has the potential to raise property values and allow for further development within the service area.
- Senate Bill 712, cited as The Clean Waterways act will require the replacement of traditional septic systems to central sewer or nitrogen reducing septic systems by 2030. The \$7.5 million grant awarded to NSBU in December 2023 will help offset the cost of the septic to sewer conversion project. NSBU will be fully responsible for operation and maintenance of the central sewer system, while owners of private system will be fully responsible for the upkeep, repair, and/or replacement of these systems.

To ensure successful completion of this project it is paramount that the community is engaged throughout the decision-making process and support the project.

3.0 STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECT CHAMPIONS

The community is comprised of key project stakeholders which include residents (property owners and renters) within the Silver Sands area as well as City of New Smyrna Beach and Volusia County government. In addition to stakeholders, the community is comprised of project champions. A project champion is a key individual, group, or business who backs the project and advocates for project success.

The stakeholders and project champions for the Silver Sands septic to sewer project include:

Stakeholders:

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
- Department of Health (DOH)
- Homeowners Associations (HOAs)
- City of New Smyrna Beach
- Volusia County

Project Champions:

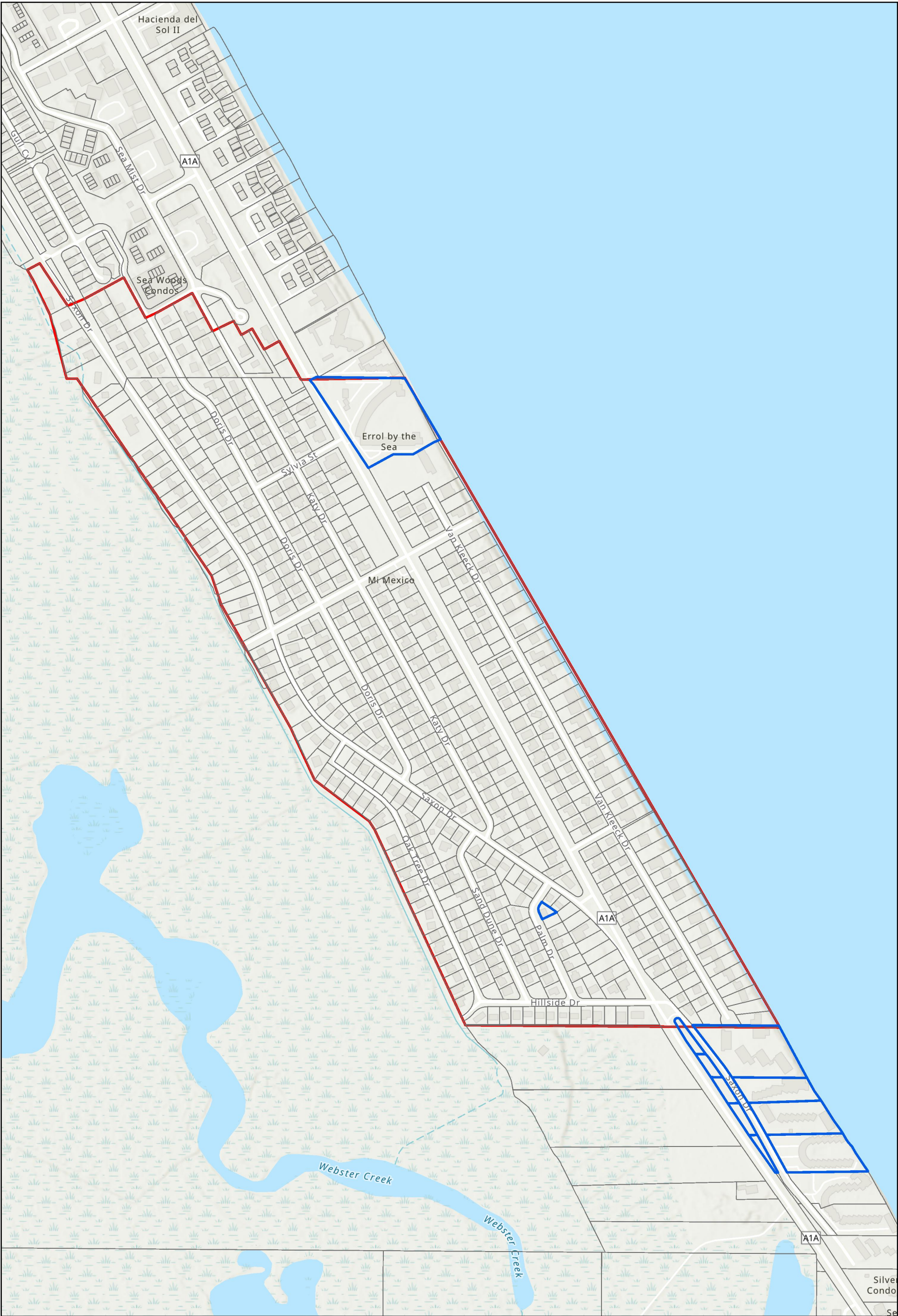
- Local Business Owners
- Elected Officials
- Environmental Groups
- NSBU Staff Members

In addition to identifying stakeholders, NSBU should partner with local homeowners' associations (HOAs), neighborhood associations (NAs), or civic associations. HOAs provide management of common or shared property within a neighborhood or building complex, with the goal of improving property values through enforcement of neighborhood rules and regulations and creating a desirable community. HOAs can also provide a sense of community throughout a neighborhood. A list of the HOAs within and adjacent to the Silver Sands area is provided below in **Table 3-1**, as well as illustrated in **Figure 3-1**.




Creating relationships will allow NSBU and the HOAs to collaborate and broadly disseminate information to residents. There is also the opportunity to have an ambassador from each HOA who can ensure that the community plays an active role in the decision-making process and has all information relating to the project. These stakeholder engagement methods along with other communication strategies are outlined in the subsequent section.

TABLE 3-1 HOMEOWNERS AND CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

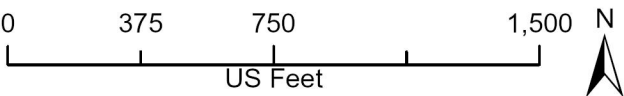
Name	Location
Errol by the Sea	Atlantic Blvd
Ocean Club North Condo Association	Saxon Dr and Atlantic Blvd
Shore Villas Condo Association	Saxon Dr and Atlantic Blvd
Surfside Condo Association	Saxon Dr and Atlantic Blvd
Silver Sands Civic Association Inc.	Palm Dr



Legend

-  HOAs and Civic Associations
-  Parcels
-  Silver Sands Service Area

Silver Sands
HOAs and Civic Associations



4.0 PUBLIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Community outreach serves as a mechanism to provide information and engage in collaborative discussions to allow NSBU to understand the stakeholder's perspectives. Communication methods to be employed include the following:

- Direct Personal Contact – personal interaction between NSBU officials with the residents.
 - NSBU officials and project champions can be utilized as a bridge to the community. Employees should be identified to voluntarily assist with sharing critical information throughout the Silver Sands community.
 - NSBU officials and the project delivery team should attend and speak at special events, churches, socials, and neighborhood gatherings.
- Public Meetings – meetings act as a tool to provide information and increase project awareness.
 - To broaden participation in public meetings, consideration should be given to holding public meetings at various times and locations, as well as having both in person and virtual options to allow for as many participants as possible.
 - Periodic meetings will be held to share information, demonstrate NSBU's commitment to community involvement, and to provide mechanisms for resident feedback. These periodic meetings can include the already scheduled Board of City Commissioners (BOCC) meetings and meetings with HOAs.
 - Meetings should take place before field work is conducted and after major milestones are completed to keep the community informed on project updates and progress.
- Print Media – utilize local newspapers, magazines, flyers, and mailed newsletters.
 - Develop content that can be shared via newspapers, magazines, flyers, and/or mailers to update residents and other stakeholders about public meetings and updates on the project status.
 - Meeting summaries or newsletters can also be provided after each public meeting to solidify the key points of the meeting.
- Electronic Communications – utilize online tools to share information.
 - *Social Media* – social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, can be set up for NSBU to share information and progress updates. NSBU can also run ads on these social media platforms directing viewers to NSBU or project website.
 - *Websites* – A website will be developed utilizing the existing NSBU website platform that provides a platform to share information and project updates for Silver Sands and other projects in the future. The website will need to be updated regularly, and can include information about public meetings and events as well as key project information. Additionally, every document will be uploaded to the project website and a directory will be made.
 - *Email Blasts* – Emails can be sent out to residents who sign up at public meetings or through links on websites and social media posts. Information shared over email can be similar to the information shared on the website.
- Peer-to-Peer Engagement – Community leaders and / or involved residents who can serve as ambassadors to reach target populations.
 - Establish informal relationships with HOAs and identify an ambassador who can transfer and disseminate information to the community.

- A community leader, such as Buddy Davenport, and involved residents should be identified during public meetings and work with the NSBU officials to assist in the transfer of project information.
- Informal Partnerships – Create partnerships with local HOAs and organizations.
 - NSBU should partner with local HOAs and other influential neighborhood organizations in order to better disseminate information. Partnerships with these groups will allow the groups to share information provided by NSBU to a broader audience.
- Speaker's Bureau – Members of the project team and outside experts who can represent the project.
 - Have a project expert from NSBU as well as outside experts (ex. FDEP, FDOH, Non-Profit Organizations, Water Management District) present at public meetings, HOA meetings, and community events to validate the necessity of the Silver Sands project.

5.0 COMMUNITY AWARENESS NEXT STEPS

As NSBU initiates the Silver Sands Septic to Sewer Project, it is recommended that NSBU consider an umbrella approach to developing the community awareness and engagement plan for septic system replacement. Targeted plans and strategies, adhering to the NSBU approach, can be developed for the Silver Sands project.

In addition to the recommended umbrella approach for developing community awareness and engagement specific key steps have been identified which should be completed to successfully implement each phase the project. As this is a large-scale multi-year project, the project can be categorized into four key phases, conceptual design, preliminary design, final design, and construction.

<p><u>Project Engagement During Conceptual Design:</u> During the conceptual design phase, several key elements of the project will be defined, such as key project contacts, project goals, anticipated challenges, project boundaries, stakeholders, and conducting public meetings to introduce the project. Key community awareness and engagement opportunities during this phase include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying project point of contact for the public such as Ellen Fisher, NSBU Communications Manager. • Conducting a public meeting to introduce the project. • Developing a schedule for project update meetings and community engagement events. • Developing communication tools such as frequently asked questions.
<p><u>Project Engagement During Preliminary Design:</u> The preliminary design phase of the project includes field investigations of the project area, such as survey and geotechnical evaluations, project phasing, and scheduling. Key community awareness and engagement opportunities during this phase include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting community meetings and or workshops. • Preparing notification of field activities. • Continue to identify and engage with key external stakeholders as well as project champions.
<p><u>Project Engagement During Final Design:</u> The final design phase of the project includes detailed engineering and preparation of construction documents, identifying exact locations of the proposed infrastructure, and a detailed evaluation of property connection locations. Key community awareness and engagement opportunities during this phase include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting community meetings and or workshops. • Preparing notification of field activities. • Continue to identify and engage with key external stakeholders as well as project champions.
<p><u>Project Engagement During Construction:</u> The construction phase of the project will include the installation of the centralized wastewater collection system as well as the connection of properties to the collection system. Key community awareness and engagement opportunities during this phase include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting frequent community formal and informal meetings and or workshops, including a public kick-off meeting to introduce the contracting team and discuss construction schedule and logistics. • Providing construction progress communications to the community, stakeholders and project champions. • Continue to engage with key external stakeholders as well as project champions.

The intent of this community awareness plan is to provide an initial and continuous roadmap for public outreach and engagement. This document will be updated throughout the project, as key milestones are met to ensure that the communications strategies utilized align with the community's needs.