

City of Oak Park Heights Local Sales Tax Water Infrastructure



Overview

The City of Oak Park Heights, population 4,849, respectfully requests authorization from the Minnesota Legislature to pursue a 0.5 percent local sales tax to fund \$41,000,000 of critical water infrastructure improvements necessary to ensure the continued delivery of safe, reliable, and compliant water service. The proposed improvements address aging infrastructure, regulatory requirements, and long-term system resiliency. These investments are not only essential for the City's residents and businesses, but also serve a broader regional purpose, benefiting multiple governmental units and regional institutions beyond the City's corporate boundary.

Regional Significance

While still a small city of less than 5,000 residents, the City's municipal water system functions as a regional utility. Most notably, the City provides water service to the following regional users located outside the City's corporate boundary:

1. Washington County Government Center
2. Washington County Jail
3. Washington County Emergency Housing Facility

These Washington County facilities serve residents from across the region and are essential to regional governance, public administration, and public

safety. Reliable water service to these facilities is critical to maintaining countywide operations, emergency response, and correctional services.

In addition to serving facilities outside the City, the City's water system supports several regionally significant institutions located within the City limits. These regional institutions include:

1. Stillwater Area High School
2. Oak Park Heights Correctional Facility

Both the Stillwater Area High School and Oak Park Heights Correctional Facility depend on uninterrupted, high-quality water service for daily operations, public health, and safety. The state correctional facility is part of Minnesota's statewide public safety system, while the regional high school provides educational services to families well beyond the City's borders.

Summary

The proposed water infrastructure improvements will ensure continued compliance with drinking water regulations, reduce the risk of service interruptions, and enhance system reliability for all users. Authorizing the City to pursue a local sales tax is an appropriate and equitable funding mechanism given the regional nature of the benefits provided by the City's water system.