

STRATEGIES FOR LEAD SERVICE LINE PROGRAM COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

PREPARED FOR THE CITY OF ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

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delta institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delta Institute (Delta) compiled this plan documenting Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) Program communication outreach strategies in response to a technical assistance request from the City of Rockford, Illinois (the City). The City's Water Division serves more than 50,000 water system customers. According to the July 2024 Lead Service Line Inventory update, the City's distribution system comprises 55,374 service lines, which include 14,237 lead service lines, 11,451 non-lead service lines, and 1,088 galvanized service lines requiring replacement. As of July 2024, there were 28,598 service lines of unknown materials.

Since 2017, the City has implemented a robust LSLR program, having replaced approximately 3,500 lead service lines. The City's 2024 LSLR Plan outlined a multi-year strategy that prioritizes LSLRs based on exposure risk and several other metrics. While the City's LSLR program predates Illinois and federal lead service line rules, the City continues to update the program to comply with new requirements, including upcoming United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Lead and Copper Rule Improvements. The City's LSLR program involves communication strategies for identifying unknown service line materials, planning construction projects, and securing site access for LSLRs. The City has created an online map, which allows users to find their service line material or complete a service line survey. City staff have sent 40,000+ mailers, conducted door-to-door outreach, hosted town halls, and more. The City has secured several rounds of LSLR funding through the Illinois EPA Public Water Supply Loan Program since 2019.

Despite Rockford's outreach efforts to water system customers, the City still faces challenges encouraging LSLR program participation. These challenges limit LSLR program progress and include low service line material survey responsiveness, limited or delayed participation in voluntary LSLR projects, and pushback from some residents against mandatory projects.

The City submitted a request to the US EPA Water Technical Assistance (Water TA) program in Fall 2024 for support with enhancing and developing new LSLR program communication and outreach strategies. US EPA approved this request for Delta in our capacity as a US EPA Region 5 Environmental Finance Center (EFC) in November 2024. Delta met with the City routinely between December 2024 and April 2025 to learn more about ongoing LSLR program efforts and Water Division challenges, identify specific communication needs, and gather feedback. Delta completed an in-depth LSLR literature review, including municipal case studies, published research, state and federal guidance, and other best management practices. Delta analyzed existing City communication resources and assessed opportunities for local partnerships. Delta synthesized this information into conceptual LSLR program communication strategies, which Delta presented to the City's Water Division and communications staff. Based on City feedback, Delta narrowed down and revised the strategy proposals to account for City priorities, staff and funding capacity, and limitations.

Delta organized LSLR communication strategy ideas into three proposals: (1) updates to the Rockford Lead and Drinking Water webpage, (2) strategies to enhance direct outreach, and (3) external partnerships with local organizations. These proposals acknowledge existing City efforts, capacity, and resources and offer a menu of options to consider. Delta shared each strategy proposal with the City in June - July 2025. Delta has compiled the three proposals into this final document for the City to revisit and evaluate when ready to do so.

Communications and Outreach Proposals

Summaries of each strategy proposal are provided below.

1. Suggested Lead and Drinking Water Webpage Updates

The first proposal summarizes potential enhancements for the City's Lead and Drinking water webpage, including the associated communication materials (e.g., service line map, graphics, etc.). Potential updates involve using existing materials to re-organize the webpage to increase engagement, provide additional resources, and facilitate information sharing. Updates may include creating a "story framework" that helps water system customers understand the "what, why, how, and when" of the LSLR process, detailing the program and funding opportunities, and adding a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section. To aid navigation, the City might consider using sub-headings to create a simple table of contents or dropdown menu. The proposal also includes suggested modifications to existing visuals to enhance graphic and message clarity.

2. Direct Outreach Strategies to Increase Response Rate

The second proposal outlines direct outreach strategies that target property owners and renters to address limited survey participation and difficulty securing access and easements from residents. Strategies include updates to existing materials (e.g., door hangers), adjustments to how communications address residents (e.g., resident-specific greetings), and suggestions for engaging difficult-to-reach residents, such as renters and rental property owners. Each strategy includes an assessment of anticipated challenges and mitigation approaches to assist with comparing options based on City resources or the current LSLR process step.

3. External Partnership Opportunities

The final proposal outlines opportunities for organizational partnerships and the ways external partners can assist the City with advancing their LSLR program. Partnerships can bridge communication gaps, provide capacity assistance to the City, and help build trust with water system customers. Partners may serve in different roles – as informal LSLR program "ambassadors", event hosts, or LSLR resource sharers – depending on the type of organization. The proposal focuses on three types of partner organizations, Rockford Public Schools, the Rockford Public Library system, and faith-based organizations, but also considers other possible partners. The proposal also summarizes anticipated partnership challenges and potential mitigation strategies.

Delta has framed the LSLR communication and outreach strategies in these proposals as suggestions for the City's consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact Delta via email (delta@delta-institute.org) or phone (312-554-0900) with any questions about the LSLR program strategy proposals, any future State Revolving Fund (SRF) requests, or other water infrastructure technical assistance needs.

About Delta Institute's EPA Region 5 Environmental Finance Center

As one of the EPA Region 5 EFCs, Delta Institute is providing targeted technical assistance centered around funding for projects that achieve the goals of either the Clean Water Act or the Safe Drinking Water Act. These projects focus on water infrastructure for local governments, states, Tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations. Delta is engaging with Region 5 communities that have struggled to access federal water infrastructure funding.

Over five years of EFC operations, we plan that more than **200 communities will benefit from our eligible clean water and drinking water finance technical assistance services**. Learn more at delta-institute.org/epa-region-5-water-infrastructure/.

Acknowledgements

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1.0 - LEAD SERVICE LINE COMMUNICATIONS PROPOSAL: WEBPAGE UPDATES

1.1 - Introduction

The City of Rockford's (City's) Lead & Drinking Water webpage may be many water system customers' first introduction to information regarding service lines, lead in drinking water, and the City's lead service line inventory and replacement program. The City is preparing for a website update, which presents an opportunity to overhaul and re-organize the current Lead & Drinking Water webpage in a way that would potentially increase engagement, provide additional resources to customers, and facilitate information sharing between the customer and their utility (e.g., completion of the service line inventory survey). Recognizing that changes to a website take time and effort, this proposal outlines strategies utilizing a combination of new and existing materials, which can be implemented separately or together.

1.2 - Lead Service Line Program Communications and Outreach Barriers

Rockford Public Works Department has communicated various challenges in reaching water customers for the Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) Program. These challenges include:

- Limited Water Service Line Material Survey participation
- Limited or delayed participation in voluntary LSLR project (i.e., waiting to sign up until construction crews are mobilized), which creates hurdles for construction planning
- Pushback from some residents against mandatory replacements projects.

Informational barriers associated with water delivery services and LSLRs may partly contribute to each of these challenges. Surveys suggest large portions of the American population do not know where their water comes from and how it gets to their home (Kemira, 2020).

This proposal presents strategies to refine the City's Lead & Drinking Water webpage to further address informational barriers among City residents. Although there are helpful resources and information on the existing webpage, there are opportunities to reformat the webpage and convert text to easy-to-read graphics, which may make the webpage more approachable for residents with limited water distribution knowledge. The following section discusses these opportunities in detail.

1.3 - Description of Proposed Strategy

This section proposes several modifications to the City's Lead & Drinking Water webpage. The proposed modifications build upon Rockford's existing communications materials and are intended to assist City with meeting its LSLR Plan goals. The modification also acknowledge Illinois statute 415 ILC 5/17.12 and US EPA's Lead and Copper Improvements rule.

These strategies aim to succinctly convey information about the water system and LSLR process and enhance LSLR program participation by creating a "story framework" that defines

the “what, why, how, and when” of the LSLR process.

The sub-headings in this section serve as a suggested guide for ordering the webpage’s contents beginning with the question, “What is a Service Line?” To aid navigation, the City might also consider using the sub-headings to create a simple “table of contents” or dropdown menu with links at the top of the Lead & Drinking Water webpage.

1.3.1 - What is a service line?

To address a potential unfamiliarity with drinking water service lines among City residents, it may be helpful to begin with a basic description of what a service line is. To support that description, the City might consider:

Option 1 – Revising and changing the placement of the existing service line diagram (under heading “Where Can Lead Be Found in Home Plumbing”): The diagram is currently near the middle of the page, and the diagram’s resolution makes it appear fuzzy.

Option 2 - Developing a new service line diagram: Other municipalities that have implemented successful LSLR programs, such as Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW), start their lead service line program landing page with a branded diagram of a water line (*Figure 1*). The City of Chicago uses similar methods to prompt users with the question, “What is a Service Line?” in large, bolded text on the homepage, with a graphic like that of GCWW immediately following the question (*Figure 2*).

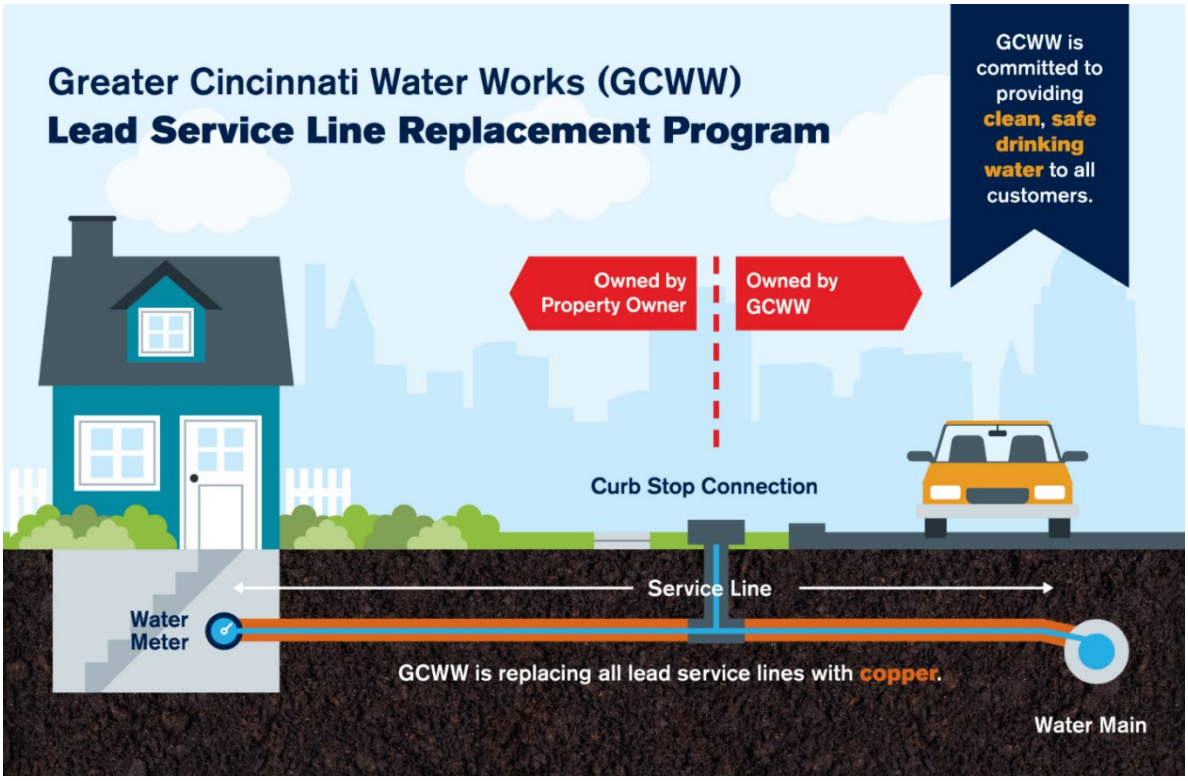


Figure 1: Diagram illustrating a clear, high quality depiction of a service line in Cincinnati (Source: Greater Cincinnati Water Works, https://la.mygcww.org/)

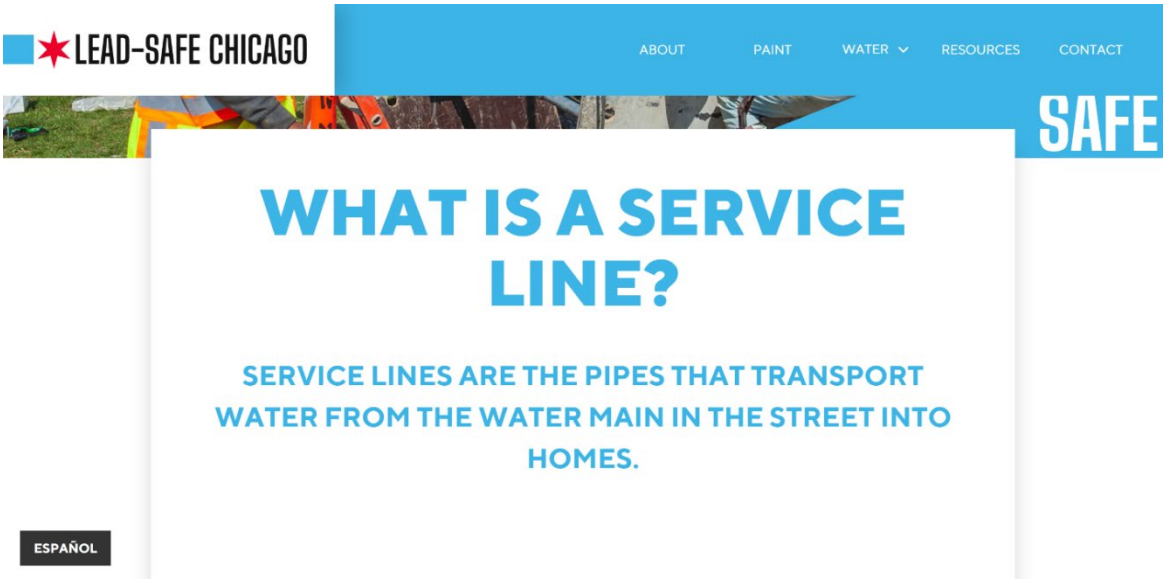


Figure 2: Main text, "What is a Service Line?" on the City of Chicago's Lead-Safe Chicago webpage (Source: Lead-Safe Chicago https://www.leadsafechicago.org/lead-service-line-replacement).

1.3.2 - How Does Lead Enter Drinking Water?

Because the City's residents may be unfamiliar with how Rockford treats and supplies water and how lead can enter drinking water, the City might follow the "What is a service line" section with a section describing how lead enters drinking water (i.e., why this information should matter to residents). In this section, the City might retain the current text informing residents that there is no lead in the City's source water, but it may enter via plumbing material corrosion. After that text, it may be helpful provide a slightly revised version of the current Lead & Drinking Water figure to illustrate the water delivery process and potential lead contamination pathways.

Suggested revisions to the Lead & Drinking Water figure include:

- Embedding the image in the City's webpage (instead of requiring water system customers to click and enlarge the image, which may reduce engagement).
- Revising the title to "Where does Rockford's drinking water come from?"
- Illustrating how water moves through the system with arrows. See *Figure 3* for an example.

For additional information about how lead can enter drinking water, the City could consider moving the graphic with the PDF on the webpage titled "Where Can Lead Be Found in Home Plumbing?" just after the diagram in *Figure 3*.

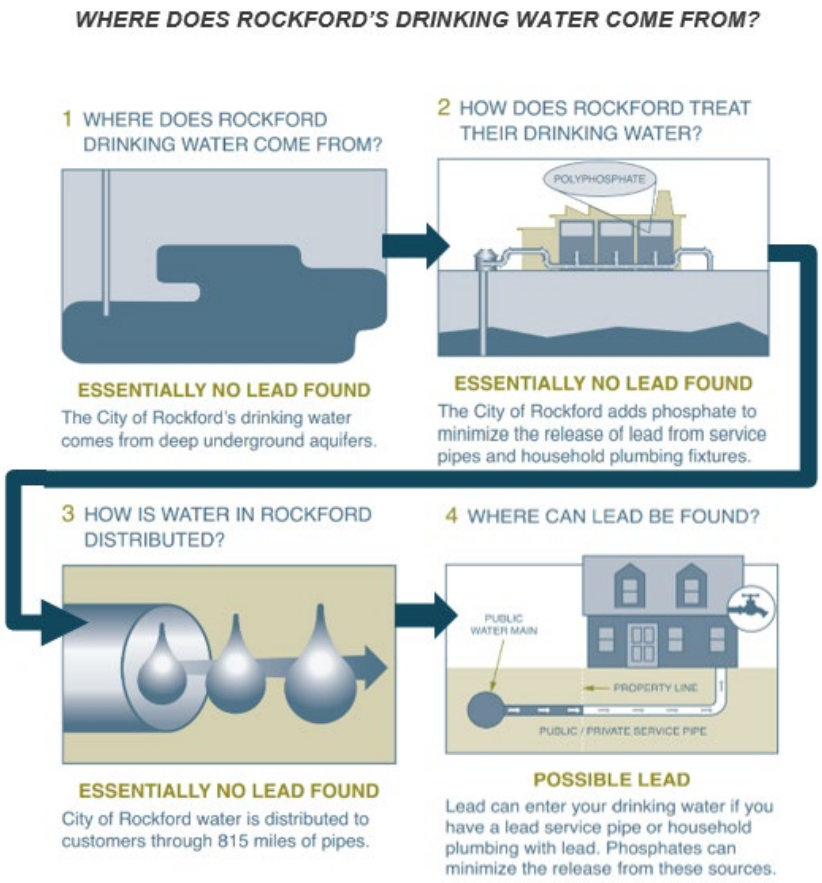


Figure 3: Example figure created and adapted from existing communication materials on the the City's water treatment and distribution system knowing where lead may enter water.

1.3.4 - How Can I Determine If I Have a Lead Service Line?

The existing webpage contains much of the pertinent information for those looking to identify their service line material, but re-ordering that information, such that it is grouped together in one section, may make the materials more navigable. Strategically grouping the service line identification information in one place may also encourage participation in Water Service Line Material Survey. Delta proposes grouping and ordering the information in the "How Can I Determine If I Have a Lead Service Line" section as follows:

Water Service Line Material Survey

The Lead & Drinking Water page currently directs customers to take a "Private Water Service Line Material" survey to help the city verify the material. These survey efforts are a priority to the City, so it may be helpful to start the section with the survey. Additionally, the City might adjust language introducing the survey to emphasize the importance of completing the survey to help the City (and customer) identify lead lines. Example language on the following page:

"*Help support the City of Rockford's efforts to update records and keep our water safe by completing this* Water Service Line Material Survey *or scan the QR code [embed QR code]. To complete the survey, you will need to be at home and have access to your service line. You may use the guide within the survey link to identify the pipe material, or you can use the following Pipe Identification Procedures.*" [Share the existing Pipe Identification Procedures PDF as a link, extracted the materials from the PDF and embed them directly onto the page, or embed the PDF itself, as it is now]. "*Your input may provide the information needed to eliminate a site visit by City staff.*"

Lead Service Line Identification Map

The current Lead & Drinking Water page includes two sections for and three links to the Lead Service Line Identification Map. Providing information about and a link to the map in just one place may make the webpage more succinct. Placing the map after the survey may encourage residents to first complete the survey. Additionally, if residents view the map first, they may see a red or green dot and assume the City knows the service line material on the customer side. Further encouraging survey participation would be beneficial to the City because the City will eventually be required to visually validate service line materials for a certain number of service lines by 2034.

Delta has provided additional map suggestions below.

- **Introductory language**: "*If you'd like to view the current record of service line material at your residence, you can type in your address on the* Lead Service Line Identification Map."
- **Encourage use of the search bar**: In addition, due to the geographic size of the City and the number of residences, it may be difficult for customers to navigate to their address and click on the "point" representing their address. Consider adding the following to the existing left-side panel after the second paragraph: "*Type your address in the search bar to zoom in to your property. Then, click the point located within the property boundary to view the property's service line information."*
- **Consider using scale-based sizing:** Service Line points are small and may be difficult to select, especially when using a phone. The City may want to work with their interactive map management staff to implement "scale-based-sizing" – a function in ArcGIS that allows for elements to increase in size (and enable easier interaction) depending on the scale. Instructions or enabling this feature can be found at the ESRI website.

1.3.5 - Lead Service Line Replacement Program

It is likely that residents who encounter information about lead service line replacement efforts in the City (via email, social media, yard signs, etc.) will come to the City's website to gather information and determine their eligibility. This section may require additional information about the LSLR process and how the City funds LSLR projects to enhance residents' understanding.

In the introductory text, the City can retain some of the existing language under "Lead Service Line Replacement Program" regarding the construction projects themselves. However, the City may consider moving the discussion regarding the Public Water Supply Loan Program (PWSLP) and the State Revolving Fund (SRF) to the end of the "Funding" section (see below) because this information is not directly relevant to residents, who may be more interested in

how LSLR projects proceed and what financial support residents can get. Additionally, the City might consider breaking the LSLR section into a few subparts, as suggested below.

Step-by-Step Guide to the LSLR Process

To help illustrate LSLR process, the City might add a simple step-by-step guide to the webpage. These guides may also be included in paper communications or relayed in in-person meetings to serve as visualization tools. Delta has shared a few example LSLR project diagrams the City could use as templates.

Greater Cincinnati Water Works: GCWW created and embedded a step-by-step guide to pre-address questions about the service line replacement timeline (*Figure 4*). This figure appears in the middle of their webpage after the program has been introduced.

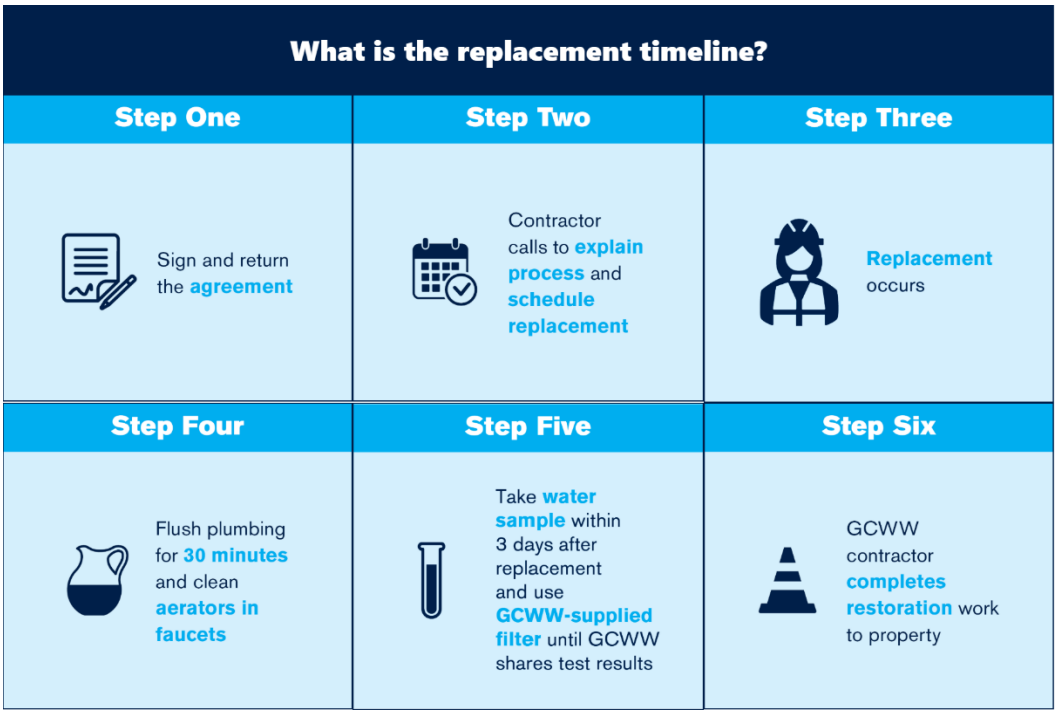


Figure 4: Greater Cincinnati Water Works' step-by-step guide to the LSLR timeline. The image is embedded within their LSLR homepage. (Source: https://la.mygcww.org/).

Denver Water: Denver Water has published a LSLR guide, Your Guide to Water Service Line Replacement, which is available as a PDF online and is included with mailers to qualified residents. This resource goes into detail about each step on subsequent pages. *Figure 5* on the next page is a screenshot taken from that guide:

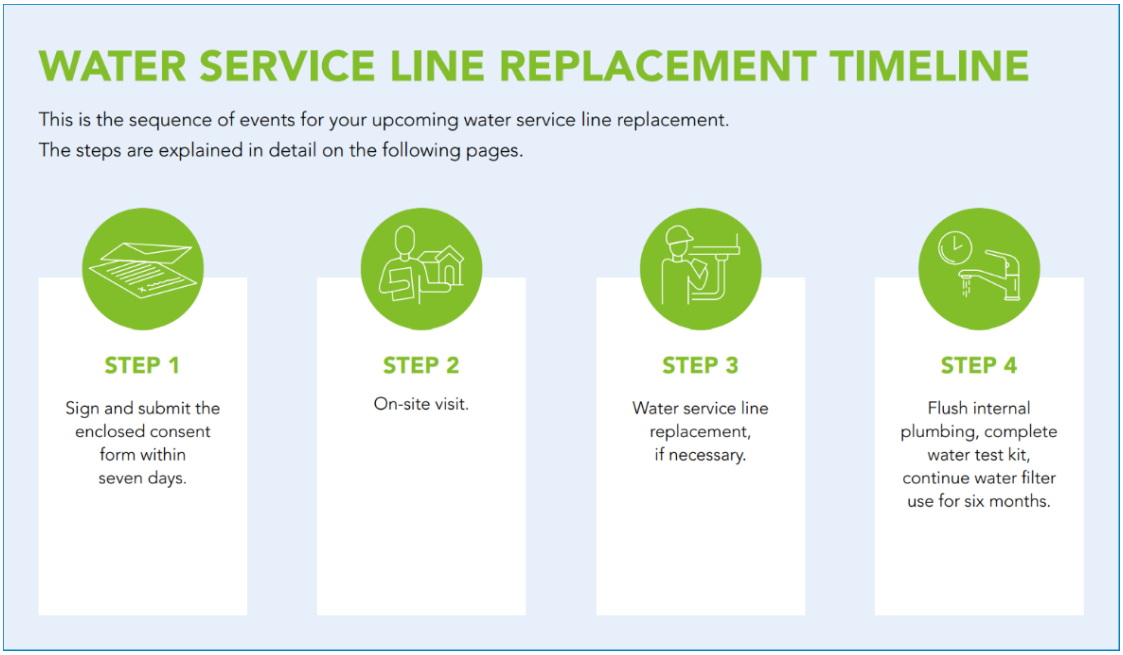


Figure 5: Denver Water Lead Replacement Booklet. (Source: https://www.denverwater.org/sites/default/files/Line%20Replacement%20Booklet%20-%20English.pdf)

Lincoln, Nebraska: Lincoln, Nebraska does not have a visual representation of the process but does have a detailed textual step-by-step resource, which may be a helpful jumping off point for language used in the City's visuals.

LSLR Project Funding

Providing additional details about when the City will pay for a LSLR versus when water system customers are required to pay for their line replacement may enhance program transparency and mitigate confusion among residents. On the current Lead & Drinking Water webpage, the only information regarding a resident's LSLR cost responsibility cost refers to the voluntary replacement program, which requires the resident to pay for the customer-side replacement. However, several City communications (e.g., the LSLR opt-in form and emergency notices) state that "replacements on the private side of the property are covered by Rockford at no cost to the resident." The variation in funding language between the mailed notifications and City website may confuse residents, who are not familiar with the different LSLR circumstances (e.g., voluntary replacement projects vs. mandatory or emergency replacement projects).

The City could organize LSLR project funding information based on replacement project category (voluntary, mandatory, and emergency). For each category, the City could identify whether the resident is responsible for private side project cost or whether the City might support some of the cost. Acknowledging that external LSLR program funding is not guaranteed, the City might add language for the Mandatory and Emergency categories to mitigate creating unrealistic expectations for City funding. For example, "*Only certain residents where [mandatory or emergency] LSLR projects are taking place are eligible for funding support. The City will contact these residents. Supplemental funding for LSLR projects depends on state funding. If the City receives less state funding, the City may need to reduce or eliminate LSLR cost share.*"

As noted on pg. 11, consider moving the PWSLP and SRF discussion to the end of this section as contextual information.

Ongoing LSLR Projects

If internal time and capacity allow for semi-regular website updates, the City might also add a brief sub-section detailing where ongoing LSLR projects are occurring. This information can help residents determine whether to expect a project in their neighborhood. For example, Pittsburgh Water advertises the neighborhoods where replacement efforts are ongoing, as well as "upcoming project areas", on the utility's website. To account for the possibility of schedule changes and limited staff time, the City can add a brief preamble that states, "*This information was last updated [insert date].*"

1.3.6 - How to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water?

While sharing information about lead exposure and health risks is crucially important, providing this information at the end of the webpage can help the City prioritize necessary and time-sensitive information sharing (i.e., encourage service line inventory and LSLR project participation). For this section, the City can leverage its existing brochure on Lead and Drinking Water. Consider pulling key information and subheadings and embedding the link to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's resources on lead health risks. For example, starting this section with information from the brochure's "Learn About Lead," and "What is Lead?" sub-headings can establish helpful context for the other existing webpage information. The City can also share the existing information regarding "Steps to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water," "Corrosion Control," "Testing Water for Lead," and "Lead & Copper Rule" at the end of this section.

1.3.7 - Frequently Asked Questions

Even with all the information outlined and offered by the City in previous sections and existing versions of communications materials, the City may not be able to answer all the questions a resident may have. For this reason, many municipalities conclude their webpage with a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs). This section is an efficient way to expand on topics that are mentioned only briefly or cannot be included in the webpage elsewhere due to space constraints.

The questions included in LSLR FAQ sections and their format vary. FAQs are most commonly formatted as a "drop-down" on a main landing page, but some utilities like Denver Water chose to break their FAQs into categories on a separate webpage. Frequent questions include, "What is lead?", "How much lead is too much?", "What does [insert city name here] do to protect my drinking water?" and "Where can I find more information?". The following municipalities can serve as examples of what types of questions are asked and how the municipality responds:

- Rolling Meadows, IL
- Lincoln, NE
- Lebanon, NH
- Haltom City, TX

1.4 - Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

Overhauling the City's current Lead and Drinking Water webpage might be a significant undertaking, depending on the modifications the City elects to pursue. Modification activities may include:

- Creating visual aids from scratch.
- Adapting existing City LSLR materials or materials from other municipalities.
- Adjusting webpage language and reformatting the webpage layout.
- Seeking review and approval of technical language updates from Public Works staff.

These activities may require many hours from the City's Public Information Officer (PIO), who creates graphics and updates the website in-house.

However, there are strategies to reduce the City's workload associated with the proposed webpage modifications. If Lead and Drinking Water webpage changes are timed to align with other updates made to the City's website by contracted website designers, the City can request that these contractors assist with Lead and Drinking Water webpage revisions. Once the lead service line program images and language are created and approved across departments, images and language can be re-used on other City materials. Additionally, many of these suggestions leverage existing materials which will cut down on time and effort needed. Lastly, Delta can assist with developing diagrams and drafting language if the City would like support.

1.5 - Expected Outcomes

The proposed Lead and Drinking Water webpage modifications are intended to help the City progress toward goals of encouraging residents' participation in the service line inventory and LSLR projects. These modifications also aim to streamline communication of existing and new lead service line program information to residents.

2.0 - LEAD SERVICE LINE COMMUNICATIONS PROPOSAL: DIRECT OUTREACH TO PROPERTY OWNERS AND RENTERS

2.1 - Introduction

This proposal outlines several strategies for enhancing the City of Rockford's (City's) approaches to direct communication with property residents (i.e., owners or renters) during the Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) process. For this proposal, direct communications involve outreach activities intended for individual residents (e.g., mailers, door hangers, door-to-door visits, etc.). These strategies are applicable during several steps of the LSLR process but may have the most utility during the service line material verification and project planning stages (see steps 2, 3a-c, and 4 in *Figure 6*, which depicts the City's LSLR process). These approaches are designed to work in tandem with one another, increasing the points of contact with residents and further encouraging residents to participate in the City's lead service line inventory and replacement program.

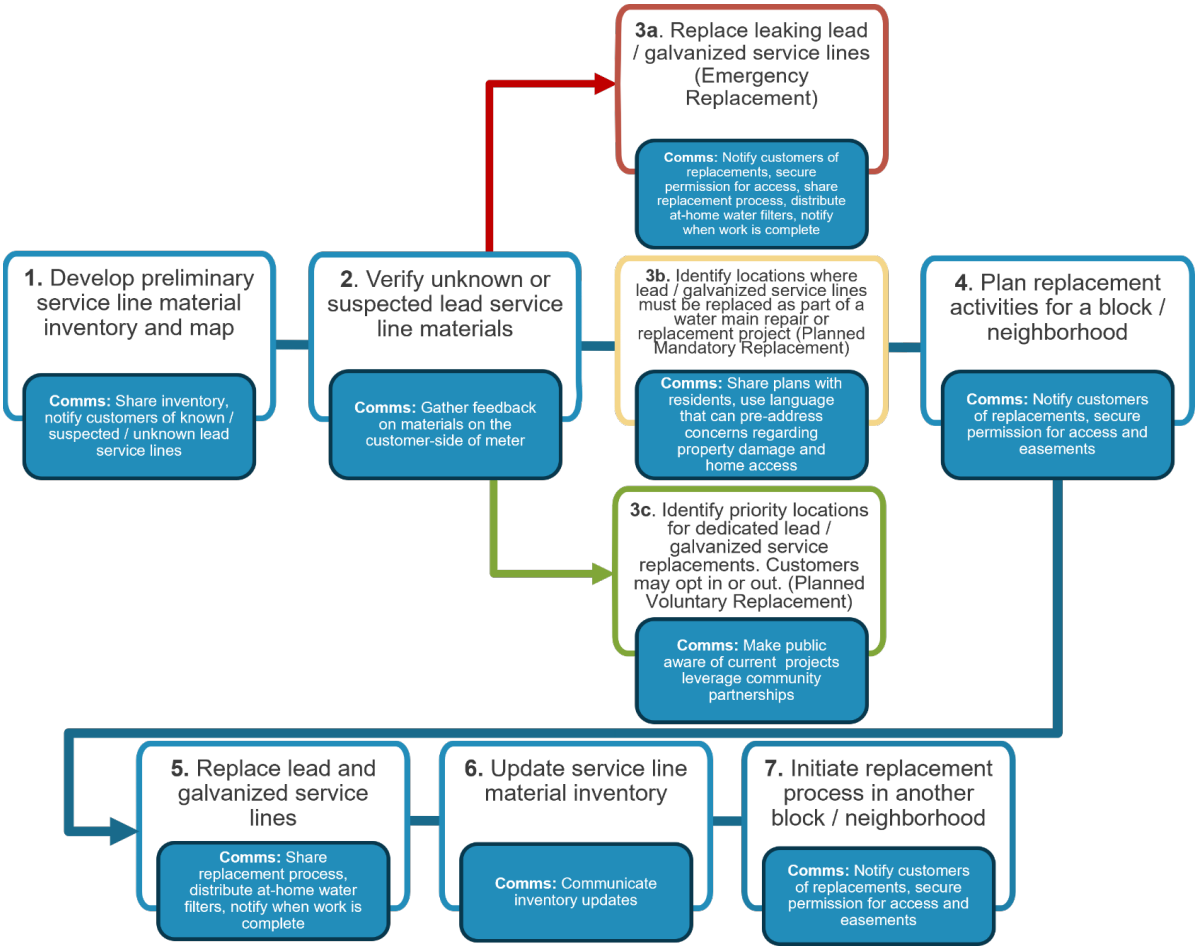


Figure 6: Lead Service Line Replacement Process Diagram. Source: Delta Institute

2.2 - Lead Service Line Replacement Program Communications and Outreach Barriers

This proposal attempts to address several challenges that Rockford has faced in engaging City water customers to reach the City's LSLR program goals. Some of these challenges include:

- Limited Water Service Line Material Survey participation.
- Limited or delayed participation for voluntary LSLR projects
- Difficulties securing easements during mandatory LSLR projects.

The City has experienced each of these challenges despite significant direct outreach efforts, including sending out requests to participate in the material survey, sending service line material notification mailers, placing door hangers and performing door-to-door outreach before LSLR projects commence, holding town halls, and more. Other municipalities have experienced similar challenges with encouraging resident responsiveness to direct outreach and communications for their LSLR programs.

2.3 - Description of Proposed Strategy

This section includes five direct outreach strategies, which are summarized below. The proposed strategies involve enhancements to direct outreach communication materials (e.g., door hangers), adjustments to how communications address residents (e.g., personalized communications), and specific suggestions for renters and those who own rental properties. These strategies build upon the City's existing LSLR communication program and materials. Delta intends for the proposed strategies to enhance residents' responsiveness to direct outreach efforts while accounting for the City's staff capacity. The following subsections provide further details about each strategy.

1. Door Hangers: Supplement the City's existing door hanger packets for LSLR projects with a one-page brochure that provides high-level, simplified information as a primer for planned LSLR activities and to encourage responses from residents. Additionally, consider posting door hangers to encourage participation in the City's service line material inventory.

2. Door-to-Door Outreach: Develop a standard set of reference materials for use during door-to-door outreach efforts for LSLR projects and any service line material investigations. These materials may include hand-outs for residents as well as talking points and answers to commonly asked questions for City staff and contractors to utilize.

3. Personalized Greetings: Incorporate personalized messaging into existing LSLR communication materials (e.g., mailers), in lieu of generic greetings.

4. Targeted Outreach for Renters: Develop a suite of renter-specific LSLR program communication materials because a significant portion of City residents rent their dwellings.

5. Engaging Nonresponsive Rental Property Owners: Develop communication materials targeted at rental property owners, who have had a 10-20 percent nonresponsive rate when asked to participate in past LSLR projects.

Municipalities that have rolled out successful LSLR communication initiatives have often

employed a variety of methods (Elevate, 2023; Jersey Water Works, 2024). Additionally, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) require water systems to make a "reasonable effort" (i.e., at least four attempts utilizing at least two different types of communication) to engage property owners during the LSLR process (US EPA, 2024; Jersey Water Works, 2024). The City already employs a mixed-method communication approach. Delta encourages the City to continue applying that multi-pronged approach and consider incorporating the following strategies.

2.3.1 - Door Hangers

For mandatory and voluntary LSLR projects, the City currently distributes door hanger "packets" that include repair notices, program enrollment forms, Lead and Drinking Water brochures, and other relevant information. Door hanger packets are useful in steps of the LSLR process that are pre-planned or require responses from water customers, such as steps 3a-c and 4 (*Figure 6*). City staff or contractors place these packets inside a waterproof bag and hang them on doors of residents that have not responded to previous contact attempts. While these packets contain necessary LSLR information, the packets may also be overwhelming for residents.

The City's Public Works Department might consider adding a concise and high-level one-page brochure as a "cover sheet" to the existing LSLR project door hanger packets. These cover sheets can serve as an efficient and convenient way to convey high level information. Simplifying the information on these materials may make them more approachable to City residents. To keep information at a high level, the City might focus on only key ideas (i.e., a brief overview of what is included in the packet) and minimize the quantity of text. In addition, using a consistent color scheme and set of visuals established in other City communication materials (i.e., a City brand) may increase the likelihood of response through recognition. Delta can assist with developing a brochure-style cover sheet for the City's LSLR project door hanger packets.

Door hangers formatted in a "brochure-style" may also be used to encourage participation in service line material identification efforts (Steps 1, 2, and 6 in *Figure 6*) by including a link or QR code to the City's service line material identification survey.

For example, the City of Ferndale, Michigan developed door hangers and yard signs with the same color scheme to let residents know that the water department would be in their neighborhood (*Figure 7*). Photographs of these materials were posted on Ferndale's social media to forewarn residents of the upcoming visits. In this case, the advertisement spread awareness of the effort and invited water customers to learn more through a QR code. The text on these materials assisted Ferndale residents in understanding the "who, where, and when" with the opportunity to learn more - the "why" and "how" - through the additional contacts and reference information listed.

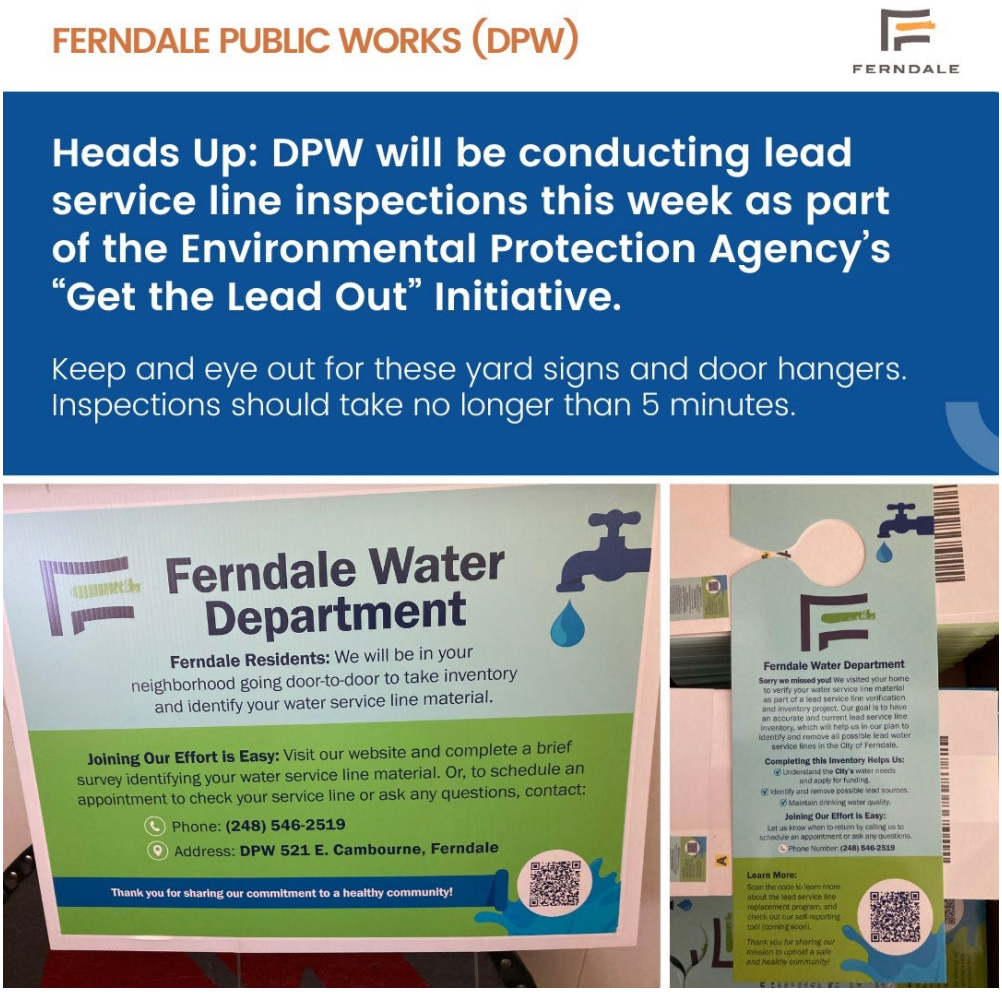


Figure 7: The City of Ferndale, Michigan posted these photos on the city's social media of door-hangers and yard signs that were sent out to the neighborhood scheduled for line material verification efforts. (Source: City Government of Ferndale Michigan).

Figure 8 presents a rough draft example of a brochure-style door hanger that the Rockford Public Works Department may produce to remind residents to complete the City's service line material survey. The text on the figure is brief but expresses the importance of the survey and the benefit to the consumer (i.e., may avoid a future site visit). All language and images are adapted from existing City materials. Delta can assist with developing a final service line material survey brochure.



Figure 8: Draft concept for a door hanger (Left: front of hanger; Right: back of hanger) to be used to encourage participation in the Rockford Public Works Department's efforts to elicit responses from customers to complete service line material survey. This example figure is approximately 2/3 the size of a physical door hanger. (Sources: City of Rockford, IL).

Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies of Door Hangers

Although there is mixed evidence of the usefulness of door hangers for encouraging customer participation in LSLR programs (Gazze, et al. 2025), door hangers remain a commonly used tactic for engaging water customers (Elevate, 2023; Lead Service Line Collaborative, 2022). Municipalities that have utilized door hangers have found that they are most successful when used with other methods of outreach (e.g., Trenton, NJ; Detroit, MI).

Developing additional door hanger materials requires up-front costs, such as printing and City labor for text and visual creation and for multi-department reviews. Delta can assist with door hanger text and visual development, if needed, which can reduce City staff time.

2.3.2 - Door-to-Door Outreach

Curating a set of standardized resources for use by City employees, contractors, and partners may increase the efficiency and effectiveness of door-to-door outreach. These resources can include a list of talking points, an overview of commonly asked questions, and a set of printed hand-out resources for residents. Currently, City staff or contractors engage in door knocking efforts prior to mandatory and emergency LSLR projects, as well as voluntary LSLR projects funded by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) Public Water Supply Loan Program. The City may also consider door knocking during the service line material verification process to help meet inventory requirements.

Example Talking Points for Door-to-Door Outreach

Depending on the LSLR project stage or timing of the outreach, the City or its contractors may share plans of upcoming replacements, secure easements, or distribute water filters. Residents that City staff or contractors engage with may have similar questions about the basics of water delivery, service lines, and lead contamination. Developing and equipping all personnel who engage with the public (including contractors) with key talking points can make information sharing more efficient and accurate. Public Works staff will likely need to coordinate the development of these talking points with the Public Information Officer to align City messaging and with technical staff to confirm accuracy.

Delta has provided suggestions for possible topics to cover, which draw from several sources. The City may consider formulating simplified and approachable responses to questions to supplement US EPA-required or -supplied materials, which can contain confusing jargon.

1. **How does lead get in drinking water?**
    a. Remind customers that lead is not present in the City's source water but could potentially enter through lead service lines. Consider directing residents to the City's drinking water delivery process diagram of when, where, and how lead may enter drinking water.
2. **What are some health concerns of lead?**
    a. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) stresses the importance of relaying public health information in an engaging but not alarming manner. Several talking points regarding possible health concerns and example responses can be found on page 58 of AWWA's Trending in Instant: A Risk Communication Guide for Water Utilities (AWWA, 2019).

3. **What is a service line?**
    a. Consider Greater Cincinnati Water Works' approach to the question – a basic definition accompanied by a large, easy-to-interpret graphic.
4. **How does a lead service line replacement project work? Will there be damage to my property?**
    a. Outline a rough timeline and expectations for the replacement process. Explain how contractors and/or City employees will need to access the property, and pre-address concerns regarding property damage and restoration. See page 4, "What happens during a lead service line replacement?" in Milwaukee, WI's Frequently Asked Questions document for an example. The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority's Frequently Asked Questions document is another example that goes into detail about expected restoration time and materials.
5. **What will the lead service line replacement project cost me?**
    a. Consider having expected cost estimate information available to share with residents and be prepared to answer the following question about which residents and types of projects are eligible for "free" private-side service line replacements.
6. **Who qualifies for free replacements?**
    a. Related to the previous question, outline the City's eligibility criteria for no-cost LSLR projects.
7. **How can I apply for a LSLR project?**
    a. Outline the City's process for how residents can sign up for a LSLR project.

This list of questions may not be exhaustive of City residents' concerns. Delta can assist the City develop a comprehensive list of questions and answers, if needed.

Reference Materials for Door-to-Door Outreach

In addition to example talking points, door knockers can be prepared with a selection of standardized printed materials – such as Rockford's Lead and Drinking Water brochure, which residents may be more likely to read if City staff or contractors distribute the brochure during a conversation than if City staff leave the brochure on a resident's doorstep in a large packet. Making these materials as consistent as possible in style with the City's branding can build upon other efforts to increase Water Division and Public Works visibility.

Service Line Material Inventory Outreach

Finally, the City might consider expanding its door-to-door outreach to bolster the service line material inventory efforts. While this activity may be labor-intensive, it may have long-term benefits for the City. Reducing the number of unknowns within the City's service line inventory will decrease the minimum number of service lines the City has to replace annually. That inventory-focused outreach may involve two separate approaches:

1. **Make residents aware of the online service line identification survey.** Residents who lack internet access or are not technologically-savvy may not be aware of the City's existing service line material survey. A City employee, contractor, or partner may apply door-to-door outreach to help these residents identify their service line materials. The City can make residents aware of the survey and remind them to complete it by using a

hand-out designed with a survey QR code (see *Figure 8*).

2. **Offer in-person identification to residents**. City staff or contractors can offer identification assistance to residents who request assistance. In-person service line material identification can also help the City progress toward US EPA's non-lead service line validation requirements.

Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies of Door-to-Door Outreach

This strategy may have unintended consequences if residents respond poorly to City staff showing up outside their home. Nevertheless, there are several ways to mitigate this issue.

The City can expand on existing efforts to remind water customers that Public Works Department employees or contractors will be in their neighborhood. To remind residents about planned LSLR projects, the City might use door hangers (see previous section) or low-cost information channels such as a post on social media or the City newsletter.

Another option is to leverage formal community partnerships or relationships with well-known faces within the City's government. For example, the Benton Harbor, MI Water Department partnered with a local long-time community faith leader who went door-to-door with Benton Harbor staff to help alleviate skepticism among City residents (Elevate, 2023). For more information and examples concerning external partnerships, refer to Delta's Lead Service Line Communications Proposal: External Partnership Opportunities.

Engaging with the public presents opportunities for difficult conversations. In these interactions, it may be helpful to emphasize the service that the City provides through its water systems. The AWWA uses the following example language: "We are all here today because we care about the safety of our community drinking water," (AWWA, 2019). Another strategy to deal with potential negative responses is to develop hypothetical responses prior to engaging, which can assist a staff member's ability to react calmly and quickly. These hypothetical responses might follow the "CAP approach" for responding to a high-concern question:

1. A **"Caring Message"** that displays empathy toward the problem.
2. An **"Action Message"** that informs customers of the actions taken by the City to address the problem, or how they plan to address the issue.
3. A **"Perspective Message"** that can put the information in perspective.

Figures 5 and 6 in AWWA's Trending in Instant: A Risk Communication Guide for Water Utilities detail more example responses to questions in specific scenarios, such as what to say when presented with incorrect information. If not already provided, the City may consider trainings that incorporate these ideas to staff and contractors prior to door-to-door outreach.

Direct door-to-door engagement with City residents may take time and labor that go beyond the normal 9-5 schedule of City employees. Despite the significant labor investment, other municipalities have suggested that it has had positive lasting impacts. Training all staff members who interact with the public (including hired contractors) with materials and discussion points as outlined above can encourage a consistent message and more evenly distribute the outreach workload.

2.3.3 - Personalized Greetings

Personalized communications such as cover letters included with required US EPA materials, can elicit a more positive response from customers than a general cover letter alone. This is particularly important when trying to reach property residents by mail. For example, the City's current "1st Notice" documentation begins with "Dear customer,". Instead, the City might consider using the full name of the water customer on record for that address when the Water Division decides to send notices via mail. The City can apply residents' names in bulk using the "Mail Merge" tool in Microsoft Office applications.

Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies of Personalized Greetings

Not all internal records may be up to date, which could result in properties receiving mail not addressed to the current occupant. In these cases, residents may be more likely to discard mail without reading. Including this effort along with other diverse attempted points of contact (yard signs, face-to-face outreach) with a unified branding message may still contribute positively to the overall response rate. Ideally, a resident would see the letter and recognize the branding – reaching out to the Water Division through contact information obtained through other materials. For those residents who may be most likely to lack up-to-date occupant records, such as those in rental properties, consider combining door-to-door efforts with the renter outreach strategies described below.

The initial set up of this effort may require internal record organization, depending on how names and addresses are stored internally by the City. After the City has organized records as needed and designed a template, the City can continue applying this strategy throughout the contact process.

2.3.4 - Targeted Outreach for Renters

To engage the roughly 46% of the population in Rockford that rents property (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025), the City may consider developing renter-specific communication materials. These materials can address questions and concerns that arise when communicating with the lessee of a rented property and make renters aware of their role in an LSLR project.

One reason municipalities have identified renters as a difficult population to reach for LSLR projects is that renters may discard mail addressed to property owners or another generic title (Okatch et al., 2022). If the City knows a property is occupied by renters, the City might address notification letters directly to the renters, provided the City has records of the renters' names, similar to the strategy outlined in the Personalized Greetings section. If the City does not have access to the names of current rental property residents, the City might address communications with "Dear renter" or "Dear Current Property Resident", instead of using "Dear Customer" because renters may not be the water system customer.

The City may also encourage renter participation in the LSLR process by informing renters of their roles. In material notification or LSLR project letters, the City may consider including an introductory sentence, such as "If you are a renter…" followed with a description of the important roles a renter plays in facilitating the LSLR process. These roles may include sharing the letter with the property owner, identifying the private-side service line material, requesting City inspection of the service line material, or even scheduling an LSLR project.

Additionally, the City may want to develop a guide for the renter to engage their lessor in a dialogue about a potential LSLR project for the property. The City might provide this “How To” guide as a written resource during door-to-door outreach efforts, in door hanger packets, and at tabling events. This document may contain the following example talking points for renters:

1. Asking lessors if they are aware that properties have lead service lines or not.
2. Informing lessors about ongoing replacement projects in the neighborhood and asking lessors if they intend to enroll in the program.
3. Expressing to the property owner that the renter is willing to coordinate with the City’s Public Works Department to schedule a LSLR project.

The “How To” guide or other renter-focused communications might also include information about how to navigate a situation when a property owner is nonresponsive or non-cooperative in the case of a mandatory LSLR project. That information may contain guidance about how to notify the City about the situation, how the City will attempt to engage the property owner, and what the City’s process for securing LSLR access without owner approval is.

Providing a framework for a positive dialogue benefits the renter and property owner and promotes LSLR process efficiency because verifying service line materials and securing access permission for LSLR projects often requires collaboration between the two parties. While the City can employ this strategy at any step of the LSLR process, sharing information early in the LSLR process may mitigate future challenges.

Delta can assist with renter-specific communications material development.

2.3.5 - Engaging Nonresponsive Rental Property Owners

Developing LSLR program communication materials that specifically target rental property owners and address their concerns may help increase engagement among this population. The City, similar to several other municipalities, has previously experienced challenges with encouraging rental property owners who do not occupy the properties to participate in LSLR projects. Previous efforts by the City to engage nonresponsive rental property owners has reduced the nonresponse rate from ~20 percent to ~10 percent. The City can build on this progress by employing lessor-specific communications.

One approach is that the City can consider sending an advance postcard informing rental property owners to expect correspondence from the Water Division. Specifically referencing the property owner and their rental property in the postcard might encourage participation. The postcard may act similarly to a door hanger by providing a concise overview of an LSLR project or by informing property owners that they should be on the lookout for future mailers. *Figure 9* is an example of a postcard that would inform property owners to be on the lookout for important LSLR program mail from the City. A common concern cited by property owners is a fear of property damage resulting from an LSLR project. Mailers sent to rental property owners might pre-address concerns regarding property damage. The City can consider including a timeline and graphics about the property restoration process, which can be the same as the information discussed in the Door-to-Door Outreach Example Talking Points. The mailer might also include a color photo of a successful replacement project and site restoration. The City can obtain these visuals by asking a contractor to photograph the property before, during, and after restoration.



Figure 9: Example postcard that would inform property owners to be on the lookout for important LSLR program mail the City (e.g., mandatory replacement notices or requests for service line material verification). (Source: Delta Institute, City of Rockford, IL).

Additionally, door-to-door outreach or mailers sent to the property (i.e., not where the property owner lives) may fail to reach the rental property owner and address that fear (Elevate, 2023). To confirm that rental property owners are receiving City communications, the City staff might check they have the most updated contact information using the City's rental licensure portal.

Lastly, Delta and the City discussed a separate proposal regarding incorporation of lead service line program information in the City's rental property license portal.

Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies of Engaging Property Owners

These efforts are relatively low-cost and will likely not require outside assistance aside from the printing of colored post-cards containing city branding. Delta can assist with postcard and communication material development as necessary.

2.4 - Expected Outcomes

The Rockford Water Department can increase the response rate among targeted populations through consistent, personalized, and varied methods of contact. These strategies vary in terms of their input costs, but they are all built upon existing materials developed by the City. Finally, several of the strategies outlined here contribute to single steps in the LSLR process, but Delta hopes the strategies can also have positive cumulative effects on the relationship between the Public Works Department and City residents.

3.0 - LEAD SERVICE LINE COMMUNICATIONS PROPOSAL: EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 - Introduction

This proposal outlines potential organizational partnerships and the ways these partnerships can help the City of Rockford (City) advance the goals of the Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) program. External partnerships can bridge communication gaps between Rockford residents and the LSLR program, increase the Water Division's visibility, and create opportunities for trust building. In addition, partner organizations can provide capacity and resources to the City through existing networks and neutral physical spaces, which can contribute to the overall success of the LSLR program.

3.2 - Lead Service Line Replacement Program Communications and Outreach Barriers

The City's Water Division has encountered various challenges in reaching water customers for the Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) Program. Examples include:

- Pushback from some residents against mandatory LSLR projects.
- Limited Water Service Line Material Survey participation.
- Limited or delayed participation in voluntary LSLR project (i.e., waiting to sign up until construction crews are mobilized).
- Water bills being the last bill residents often pay.

These challenges may correspond with a lack of trust or understanding from the water system customers. Some evaluations have considered water departments as a "silent utility" that only engages with citizens reactively in times of crisis (AWWA, 2019). However, in Rockford's case, the Water Division has made many efforts to engage with residents (e.g., tabling at in-person events, attending alderman meetings, and participating in door-to-door outreach). Although the City would like to extend these efforts, the City has internal capacity barriers (e.g., time, personnel, and financial) that limit the amount of engagement possible at any given time.

3.3 - Description of Proposed Strategy

This proposal describes several possible strategies to collaborate with external partner organizations, which can help the City address LSLR program capacity restraints. The City can leverage these partnerships at several points in the LSLR Process, including identification of service line materials, securing easement access in emergency and planned replacement scenarios, and planning replacement activities for neighborhoods. Potential benefits of working with external partners may include:

- Creation of new opportunities for the Water Division to engage face-to-face with residents through the partners' networks and events. In-person communications can

encourage LSLR program participation and address residents' concerns.
- Connections with hard-to-reach audiences, trust-building, and guidance on enhancing communications with certain populations.
- Assistance with LSLR program outreach, event planning, and advertising.

External partners may serve in different roles, depending on the type of partner organization, the organization's constituents, and the organization's mission. Types of roles are presented below. Each role requires different levels of oversight and involvement from the City.

- **Informal "Ambassador"**: An organization may actively communicate information about the LSLR program in meetings and other events. This role would likely require significant City oversight and effort, particularly during the partnership development and training phase. The level of oversight may lessen over time, as the partner organization functions on its own.
- **Host**: Partner organizations may hold events that facilitate face-to- face interactions between the Water Division and system customers (e.g., a tabling event). City staff would represent Rockford, so this role may require less oversight from the Water Division than the Informal Ambassador role.
- **Resource Sharer**: A partner organization may post or share LSLR program resources for its members. This role may require minimal oversight from the Water Division.

This proposal targets three types of potential partner organizations, which focus on families and health with existing programming. Summaries for each type are provided below. More details on each type of organization are provided in the following sections.

1. **Rockford Public Schools (RPS)**: Can serve both in an ambassador, host, and resource sharer capacity by providing a launchpad for information dissemination and including the Water Division at school events. The Water Division and RPS can also collaborate on resource generation, specifically for students and their families.
2. **Rockford Public Library (RPL)**: Would likely function as a resource sharer and host to the Water Division, using their centralized location to allow Water Division staff to share information about the LSLR program with customers.
3. **Faith-based Organizations (FBOs)**: May be considered for a host or ambassador role, depending on their reach and existing social service networks. FBOs and their charitable departments have traditionally wide reach and can allow the Water Division access to many types of customers.

For this proposal, Delta focused on potential partner organizations within and near the Phase 7 LSLR project area because that project is phase is currently in progress. However, Delta included a brief section with suggestions for partner organizations for upcoming LSLR phases. Delta also included sections presenting potential resources for tabling at events and discussing establishment of an external partnership policy for the LSLR program.

All the strategies in this proposal involve person-to-person communications, which sometimes present opportunities for confusion and conflict. Delta tried to anticipate potential communication challenges and presented a brief overview of these challenges and associated solutions under the "Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies" headings.

3.3.1 - Rockford Public Schools (RPS)

Schools can play a pivotal role in educating families about utility services and the LSLR process through knowledge about the populations they serve and as a source of trustworthy information. Through information sharing, schools can amplify and distribute Water Division messaging. Water Division staff can also directly and proactively engage with water system customers served by RPS, which may prevent misunderstandings and pre-address concerns about lead and water, particularly regarding vulnerable populations.

Resource Sharing through RPS: RPS offer a setting for distributing materials about the Water Divisions LSLR program. Two key considerations for resource sharing are provided below.

- **Early Engagement**: Engaging a school in the early development stages of informational resources provides collaboration opportunities and helps confirm resources algin with school language policies. School officials may have valuable input for communication, such as an understanding of language barriers in their district or the most influential communication channel (e.g., paper fliers, e-newsletter) for spreading information.
- **Adaptive Communication Methods**: Water Division staff can adapt the method and information shared, depending on the stage of the LSLR process. For example, if utility crews are scheduled to begin work in a neighborhood served by Bloom Elementary, a social media post from the Water Division detailing construction may be shared by the elementary page. While not all residents of Rockford may follow the Water Division page, it is likely many parents interact with their children's schools on social media frequently to stay aware of any pertinent information.

In-Person Outreach with RPS: Schools present a unique opportunity for face-to-face interactions with many community members. These opportunities include the following:

- **Open Houses**: The Water Division can ask permission to table at an open house event or school fair, which can increase the visibility of the Water Division outside the LSLR process. Open houses may be particularly useful because the events already focus on sharing information and resources with parents. Water system customers may be more receptive to new information at these events than during door-to-door outreach.
- **School Meetings**: Arranging for a member of the Water Division staff to meet with school boards or parent teacher organizations or associations (PTOs/PTAs) can help assuage parents' concerns about lead service lines. Presentations and question and answer sessions with these organizations may effectively spread information via word-of-mouth, the leaders of these organizations are typically elected. Their voices may carry specific weight in a community.

Because children under the age of 6 are most vulnerable to the negative impacts of lead, Delta focused on identifying public elementary schools and childcare centers as possible partners. Delta targeted schools serving Census Tracts 8, 10, and 12, which are within the LSLR Phase 7 project area. These institutions include Roosevelt Community Education Center, Fairview Early Childhood Center[1], Bloom Elementary School, Carlson Elementary School, and Constance

[1] Note that district boundaries for Fairview Early Childhood Center and Roosevelt Community Center are not accessible online. However, these are the childcare centers within closest proximity to Census Tracts 8, 10, and 12.

Lane Elementary School. While every school's communications structure differs slightly, the Water Division might initiate discussions with the school's principal and vice principal. Contact information for these positions within the five listed schools is available in *Table 1*.

Table 1. List of Rockford Public Schools and Contact Information within Lead Service Line Replacement Phase 7

School Contact Information	Principal Contact	Assistant Principal Contact
Bloom Elementary School 2912 Brendenwood Rd. Rockford, IL 61107 T: 815-229-2170	Pati Strehl pati.strehl@rps205.com	Nikisha Johnson nikisha.johnson@rps205.com
Carlson Elementary School 4015 Pepper Drive Rockford, Illinois 61114 T: 815-654-4955	Scott Rogers scott.rogers@rps205.com	Kelsey Scarpetta kelsey.scarpetta@rps.com
Constance Lane Elementary School 620 Gregory Street Rockford, Illinois 61104 T: 815-966-3380	Brian Doering brian.doering@rps205.com	Crystal Bachman crystal.bachman@rps205.com
Fairview Early Childhood Center 512 Fairview Avenue Rockford, Illinois 61108 T: 815-227-8400	Darcy Dunn 815-227-8401 dunnd@rps205.com	Jona Perrin jona.perrin@rps205.com
Roosevelt Community Education Center 978 Haskell Avenue Rockford, Illinois 61103 T: 815-966-3250	John Schmelzer 815-490-7456 john.schmelzer@rps205.com	Dustin Printz Dustin.printz@rps.com

Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies for Engaging RPS

The largest anticipated hurdle to establishing partnerships with RPS is the initial time and effort to reach out and cultivate a relationship with each of the schools. Collaboration will require staff that can allocate time to work with the school to co-develop materials and meet with key members of the school community. When Water Division staff capacity is limited, the Water Division might consider a pared-down collaboration strategy wherein the department sends pre-approved resources for dissemination instead of reinventing materials.

During open forums or question and answer sessions (e.g., at PTO or PTA meetings), utilities may receive negative pushback or unexpected emotional responses. To combat pushback, the Water Division could come prepared with knowledge on conflict resolution and key communication points. Suggestions for these points are outlined in the section of this proposal titled Establishing an Internal Policy for Engaging Partners.

3.3.2 - Rockford Public Library (RPL)

The main branch of the RPL, located at 215 N. Wyman St in Rockford, IL is directly adjacent to Census Tracts 8, 10, and 12, which are within the LSLR Phase 7 Project area. This branch may be a convenient location for members of the nearby communities to meet. Like schools, public libraries are already positioned in an informative and educational role within a community. The RPL currently hosts a robust calendar of events that cater toward all ages but include a variety of adult public education classes, which may be the most relevant audience for most LSLR communications.

Delta identified two possible approaches for partnering with the library.

Tabling at the Library: Consider approaching the library to request sponsorship and use of their space for a presentation or tabling session as an informal education class. This opportunity to facilitate a dialogue around an upcoming LSLR project in the neighborhood in a neutral space such as a library can assist with mitigating tensions that sometimes arise in community-utility conversations. For example, the City of Milwaukee Water Works set aside two hours on a single Saturday where they held "community office hours" at the Milwaukee Public Library and offered to answer questions and guide eligible property owners through the application process.

Sharing Resources at the Library: The Water Division can also ask whether the library would display flyers during parts of the LSLR process that require community notice. Depending on the replacement timeline, the city may approach the library a week or two prior to the first notice goes out with a sign that includes an attention-grabbing sentence, such as "*Attention Rockford Water Customers! Be on the lookout for…*" and follow that sentence with a screenshot of the header for the LSLR notice (see *Figure 10*). The library may display the page in a plastic stand in a high traffic area of the building, such as book check-out, accompanied by a few copies of Rockford's Lead & Drinking Water brochure.

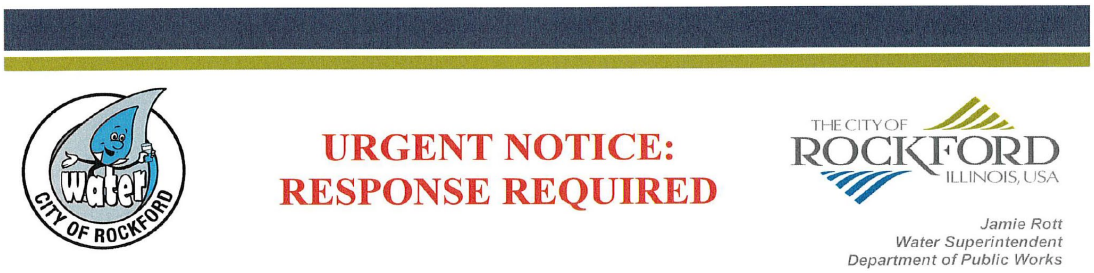


Figure 10: The heading for the City of Rockford's first notice mailed to residents after an emergency repair where a private lead service line was detected.

When LSLR inventory efforts are the primary focus of the Water Division's outreach, consider including the QR code to the Water Service Line Material survey in a simple flyer on official City letterhead that includes the link to the survey, a request for resident participation (e.g., "help us

complete our inventory!"), and Water Division points of contact for questions. Here is an example of a similar-styled survey flyer created by the Village of Arcade, NY to facilitate feedback for a waterfront development project. The Water Division can distribute the flyer to the library with a request that library staff post the flyer on a bulletin board or other accessible location.

To explore this partnership, the Water Division might start by contacting Anne O'Keefe, the Rockford Public Library Assistant Director for Community Engagement at 815-965-7606 ext. 611 or via email: aokeefe@rockfordpubliclibrary.org.

3.3.4 - Faith-Based Organizations

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) can be a valuable partner because they can provide physical and social infrastructure for community engagement. FBOs may also have a wide reach. Past national and local surveys suggest a majority of adults have attended religious services or have affiliated with an organized religion (Williams et al., 2024; ASARB, 2020). These potential partners may have long-standing relationships with residents, some of which may extend across generations.

FBOs as Hosts: Given their community relationships, FBOs might serve as hosts who can help the Water Division reach audiences that may not otherwise be inclined to engage with City staff through face-to-face events, such as a tabling session after a social gathering. Some FBOs may also act in a social service capacity, which may allow for the creation of more LSLR-specific events. For example, YMCA, a Christian faith-based organization hosts a variety of events each month. There may be opportunities for the Water Division to present or answer questions at those events.

FBOs as Resource Sharers: Because participating in events hosted by FBOs might be challenging, the Water Division can also take a more passive approach. For example, the City can request that FBOs share LSLR program information (e.g., a flyer or Water Service Line Material survey) at an event.

Delta identified FBOs organizations within or adjacent to Census Tracts 8, 10, and 12 (the LSLR Phase 7 project area). A list of possible FBO partners and their contact information is provided in *Table 2*.

Table 2. List of Faith Based Organizations and Contact Information within Lead Service Line Replacement Phase 7

FBO Name and Address	Contact Information	Partnership Opportunities
Hope Fellowship Church of Rockford 1135 E State St. Rockford IL, 61104	779-423-0437 Information@HopeRockford.com	Hope Fellowship Community Project page
Zion Lutheran Church 925 5th Ave Rockford, IL 61104	815-964-4609 zionrockford@gmail.com	Zion Partnerships Page Zion Outreach Program Page

FBO Name and Address	Contact Information	Partnership Opportunities
Emmanuel Lutheran Church 920 3rd Ave Rockford, IL 61110	815-963-4815	Emmanuel Lutheran Events Page Emmanuel Lutheran Contact Us Page
Trinity Lutheran Church 200 North 1st St. Rockford, IL 61107	815-963-4446 office@trinityrockford.org	Trinity Lutheran Events Page Trinity Lutheran Contact Page
YMCA of Rock River Valley 200 Y Blvd Rockford, IL 61107	815-489-1252	YMCA Events Page YMCA Contact Us Page

The FBOs in *Table 2* only represent organizations that maintain an event page (either on their website or social media) that suggest community outreach beyond church services. Delta only focused on these FBOs because an explicitly religious gathering such as a sermon is not a suitable time for the City outreach. Three of the five FBOs listed in *Table 2* are Protestant, whereas the other two are non-denominational Christian. The lack of representation of other faiths is due to the limited geographic scope of the LSLR Phase 7 project area. Other census tracts may contain FBOs representing other religions (e.g., Islamic Circle of North America Rockford, Phap Lam Temple, and Temple Beth-El).

Anticipated Challenges and Mitigation Strategies Specific to Faith Based Organizations

When developing a cross-sectional affiliation with a secular entity and a religious one, there are opportunities for misunderstandings of the intentions of the relationship. The City might decrease the chances of this happening through explicit, agreed upon partnership guidelines, such as those suggested by the Fairfax, VA Public School System. These guidelines may include defining shared goals of the partnership, establishing the secularity of the process, and guaranteeing the agreement in writing.

Misunderstandings may also be less likely if the City only uses the partnership as a springboard for tabling and presentation opportunities, rather than members of an FBO serving as formal ambassadors for the City's efforts. Although some water departments, like DC Water, have had success partnering with religiously affiliated community organizers for door-to-door outreach, these situations have often involved organizers active in their communities beyond a religious capacity.

Additionally, transparency about the selection process for FBO partnerships can mitigate concerns regarding biases towards certain religious denominations or FBOs.

3.3.5 - Other Partner Organizations (Beyond the Phase 7 Project Area)

While much of this proposal focuses on organizations within Phase 7 of Rockford's LSLR

program, there are many other special interest groups in and around Rockford that may aid the Water Division during other LSLR project phases. *Table 3* lists several additional organizations to consider for partnerships. Delta can help identify and evaluate other potential partner organizations, if needed.

Table 3. Additional Special Interest Groups for Partnership Consideration

Organization Name	Purpose and Partnership Potential
Connect Rockford https://connect-rockford.com/	Establishes neighbor-to-neighbor networks to provide social support and community connection. Each neighborhood where Connect Rockford is active has a neighborhood captain who already engages in door-to-door outreach.
Rockford Park District https://rockfordparkdistrict.org/	The Rockford Park District's mission to provide support to the community through outdoor recreation is not directly related to the LSLR process; however, the Water Division may leverage their programming at various parks to spread the word about upcoming Public Works projects.
North Highland Square Neighborhood Association https://northhighlandsquare.org/about/	The North Highland Square Neighborhood association aims to connect Rockford residents within their neighborhood with each other and plans meetings and social events. This organization operates within Census Tract 7.
Edgewater Neighborhood Association https://www.rockfordedgewater.org/contact	Similar to North Highland, the Edgewater Neighborhood association functions as a social network for members of the associated area, located within Census Tract 35.
Keep Northern Illinois Beautiful https://www.knib.org/about	Keep Northern Illinois Beautiful is a local chapter of the national non-profit Keep America Beautiful serving Rockford, Machensey Park, and South Beloit, IL. Although their mission is dedicated to the environment and not directly related to the LSLR process, they hold regular programming on a variety of topics and maintain a presence in the community that may contribute positively to LSLR information dissemination.

3.3.6 - Resources for Tabling at Events Hosted by Partners

Regardless of where tabling events take place, these events are most successful when conducted with several resources ready for the water customer. Ideally, all resources will be similar in theme and coordinate with the City's Lead & Water website. Consistency among communication materials can reduce confusion and promote engagement. Resources to share at tabling events may include:

- Take-home informational sheets that explain in detail the steps required in a replacement process (e.g., Lincoln, Nebraska's guide and Phoenix, Arizona's diagram).
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheets that pre-address common questions. This

information can be the same as the materials on the City's website (refer to Lead Service Line Communications Proposal: Webpage Updates).

- Color photographs of "demonstration sites" – homes where successful replacements have occurred and been restored – showing the site before, during, and after the LSLR project.

3.3.7 - Establishing an Internal Policy for Engaging Partners

Approaching and engaging potential community partners will require a fair amount of up-front work for the Water Division. When the Water Division identifies potential partners, the City may need to establish a standardized internal approval process for these partners. However, not all partners may require approvals. For example, partners that will only post or share Water Division LSLR resources at their sites may not need approval, whereas partners serving as event hosts may require a brief review, particularly for FBOs. Partners that serve in an ambassador role may require the most thorough review.

Before engaging external partners, the Water Division may want to confirm that City staff who will engage with the partners have a consistent understanding of the LSLR program and processes. The Water Division may consider holding department-wide meetings prior to engagements with the City's Public Information Officer, such that every staff member is on the same page. Providing all staff with talking points, answers to the most frequently asked questions, and information about whom to direct questions can limit confusion from partners and water system customers.

3.4 - Expected Outcomes

Engaging with external partners to assist with LSLR program implementation may increase the range of Water Division communications and build trust with residents. Partner organizations can share City resources and host Water Division staff at events, where those staff can provide LSLR program information and answer residents' questions. These forums may improve the likelihood that residents complete the Water Service Line Material Survey or respond to LSLR project participation requests Additionally, engaging with City residents through partner organizations may help Water Division staff connect with residents who may not otherwise interact with the City, which can increase departmental visibility.

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