

North Kansas City surveys its sewer links

Videotaping of private sewer laterals and ties to city's mains is aimed at preventing seepage.

By **ROBERT A. CRONKLETON**
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Kris Cook watched the monitor intently as he turned dials and nudged a joystick in various directions.

Cook wasn't maneuvering in a video game's virtual universe. He was investigating another world — the underground sewer system in North Kansas City.

As a closed-circuit TV operator for Trekk Design Group, Cook was using a video camera to inspect the conditions of private sewer lines and their connections to the city's main sewer lines.

The city was videotaping the sewer connections as part of a program to prevent groundwater

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from infiltrating into the sanitary sewer system, said Pat Hawver, North Kansas City's Public Works director.

The city already has seen benefits of the program. Like some other area cities, North Kansas City pays Kansas City to treat its sewage. And as Kansas City moves forward with a \$2.4 billion plan to fix its sewer and storm water system, Hawver said he expects significant rate increases. He thinks the sewer-lining project will help lessen the impact of those increases.

"We are (already) seeing significant reductions in our payments

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Field technicians Jose De Los Santos (left) and Gabriel Gonzalez lowered a camera last week into a manhole on Seminole Drive in North Kansas City. The contractor, Trekk Design Group, is running a video camera connected to a crawler down the main sewer lines and shooting another camera up the service lines.

SEWER: Inspection reveals broken pipes, tree roots and parted joints

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to them — our charges from them," Hawver said. "That can be solely attributed to this program."

This project, which is expected to cost about \$1 million, is a prelude to the final phase of a three-stage program that started in the 1990s. The city began by lining every sewer main in town. In the second stage, the city lined all the manholes.

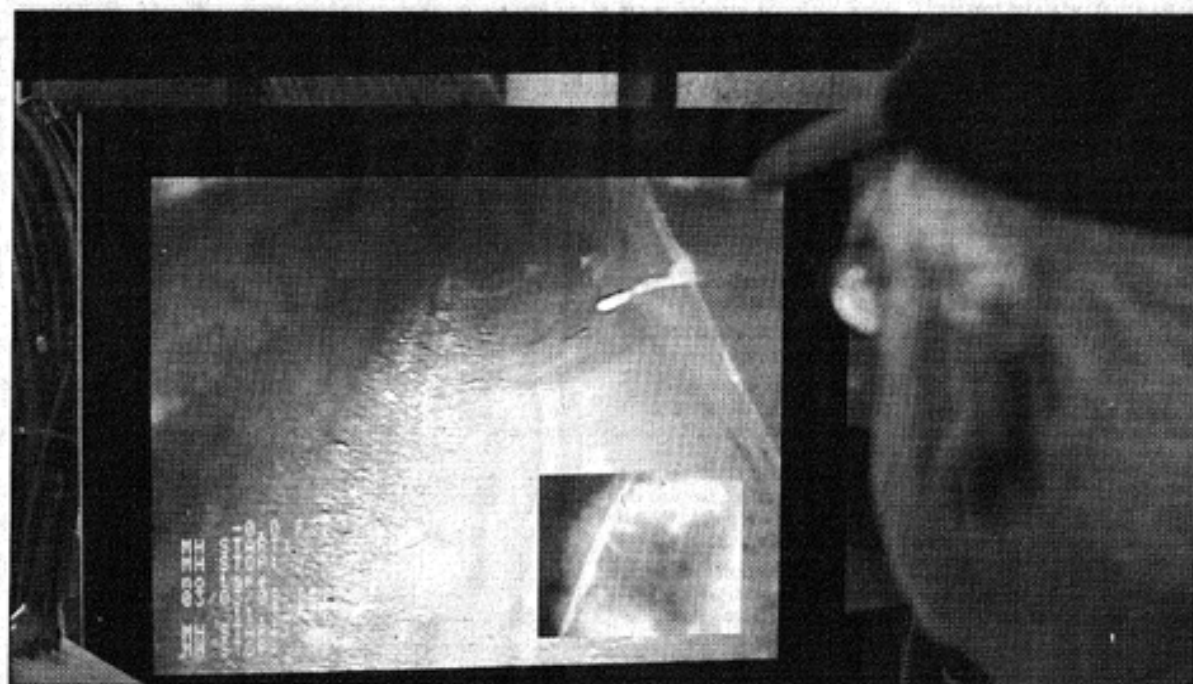
"We have 37 miles of virtually brand-new sanitary sewer lines," Hawver said.

Now, the city is getting ready to repair the connections where the private sewer lines run into the sewer mains.

As part of that process, Trekk Design Group is inspecting the connections between the sewer main and the lines — called sewer laterals — that run from a house or business.

Ron Thomann, project manager with Trekk Design Group, said the company is running a video camera connected to a crawler down the main sewer lines and shooting another camera up the service lines so they can recommend repairs.

The inspection is revealing several things, primarily a lot



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From a truck, Dan Burford, crew leader with Trekk Design Group, is able to observe what a camera sees in a sewer main line. In the assessment, the closed-circuit TV operator looks for defects and offsets in North Kansas City's sewer lines.

of broken and cracked pipes, tree roots and separated joints, Thomann said.

"I would say most of them (sewer laterals) need some attention," Thomann said.

Before starting the project, the city sent homeowners a release to allow the cameras to

go beyond the city right-of-way and as far up the line as possible toward the house.

About 60 percent of the property owners signed the release. They will later receive a DVD showing the inspection of their lines.

Brian Schroeder, manager and systems engineer for Kansas City's Water Services Department, said using video cameras to inspect sewer lines is a common practice. But the unusual aspect of North Kansas City's plan is that it is taking a comprehensive look throughout its entire system, he said.

"That is really terrific and unique," Schroeder said. "That is also an investment."

And other parts of the metro area are watching with interest.

Johnson County Wastewater will conduct a study later this year into the condition of service lines in some older parts of the county and how leaky they are, said Dan Ott, managing engineer of collection systems.

"What they learn and what they find out and how successful they are may impact the decisions that we make," Ott said.

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