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Posted on Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 5:59 a.m.

Bryant neighborhood won't be connected to Ann Arbor storm sewer when water main is replaced

By Ned Randolph

The cost of the project has been corrected.

Residents of the flood-plagued **Bryant** neighborhood on **Ann Arbor's** south side learned Thursday that city crews will not be connecting their homes to the city storm water system when they're digging up their roads next year to replace the drinking water main.



Yards in the Bryant neighborhood flood frequently. This photo was taken last June.

Photo courtesy of the Bryant Community Center

That \$3.7 million project, (<http://www.annarbor.com/vielmetti/arbor-oaks-water-main-project-public-meeting-scheduled-for-december-16/>) partially financed from the state Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund, will break ground in March and finish in October. It will affect Champagne Drive between Shadowood Drive and Stone School Road as well as many of the small cul-de-sacs that join Champagne.

The project could improve street drainage because of heightened slopes and subterranean pipes to keep water from pooling. But it won't drain water that frequently collects behind the homes and floods residents' yards (<http://www.annarbor.com/news/community-lobbies-ann-arbor-city-council-to-find-solution-to-flooding-in-bryant-neighborhood/>), city engineer **Nick Hutchinson** told residents Thursday night.

"We'll be correcting some of the drainage problems, but part of the problem in this neighborhood is flat," he said.

The blue-collar neighborhood, which is on a 1 percent slope, has been described as sitting inside a clay bowl.



In a survey mailed to 286 households by the Community Action Network, 90 percent of the 147 households who returned the form complained about dampness and moisture problems in their homes.

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“If you pump water out of someone’s crawl space, you haven’t changed anything systemically,” said resident Paul Cartman. “Just removing the water from Nancy’s basement, and allowing it go back to Nancy’s basement or Paul’s crawlspace is unacceptable. Flood and water issues need to be addressed community-wide, not house by house.”

The problem is the drainage system was put in nearly 50 years ago by a private developer. But neither the developer nor the community ever formed a Homeowners Association to maintain it.

There is also evidence the developer never completed the system, said Hutchinson.

Last winter, city cameras mapped the public drainage system in the area and tried to access drainpipes beneath Bryant homes. Many simply were not where the developer’s map indicated they are, he said.

Bryant consists of mostly small single-family homes on small cul-de-sacs. It has one of the highest percentages of children on free or reduced-rate lunch among neighborhoods in the Ann Arbor Public Schools attendance area, residents say.

Ann Arbor City Council member Stephen Kunselman told residents he has been asking city staff to take over the storm drain system.

“The staff is saying it’s not our problem, and I’m saying yes it is,” Kunselman said.

He said residents need to come speak during public comment periods at City Council meetings in order to pressure the city, which is simply understaffed because of budget issues.

In June, residents talked of asking the city to form a task force (<http://www.annarbor.com/news/community-lobbies-ann-arbor-city-council-to-find-solution-to-flooding-in-bryant-neighborhood/>) to address flooding issues in the neighborhood.

Crews will start digging in March at Champagne and Shadowood and proceed west in stages. They’ll hit the Bryant Elementary School area in August, meaning school buses will be rolling over gravel covering as classes start.

Streets will be dug up, the drinking water mainline will be replaced and streets will be repaved with new curbs and gutters. Manholes will be also be installed at t-drains that connect the city system to private drainage pipes - to allow crews better access to the private system, should they run another camera down.

This is the second year in a row that Bryant residents have dealt with construction. The city replaced the sidewalks last year.

Cartman said he had to repave part of his driveway to meet the level of new gutter skirts. Some of that city construction will be torn out again.

“Now you’re doing the roads. Why is this not the other way around?” asked a resident.

Hutchinson said the city should have coordinated better.

“I don’t really have an answer to that,” he said.



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Map data ©2017 Google [Terms](#) 500 ft

View Bryant water main project ([http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?](http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=207894807412273999667.00049794bce01f92c9bfc&ll=42.233665,-83.714833&spn=0.011026,0.018239&z=15&soi)

[ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=207894807412273999667.00049794bce01f92c9bfc&ll=42.233665,-83.714833&spn=0.011026,0.018239&z=15&soi](http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=207894807412273999667.00049794bce01f92c9bfc&ll=42.233665,-83.714833&spn=0.011026,0.018239&z=15&soi)
in a larger map

Ned Randolph is a freelance reporter for AnnArbor.com. To reach the news desk, call 734-623-2530.

Comments

Vince Caruso

Sat, Dec 25, 2010 : 9:29 p.m.

Our near west side neighborhoods have had flooding problems for years with little effective planning or effort to deal with the problem. We have \$1M+ for watershed art but no funds to do a meaningful watershed study for this watershed, with 1,200 - 1,500 homes under the gun, to plan for the projects to fix the flooding. This is not rocket science, but it would be nice to know where the water is coming from. They find money to do pet projects but none to find the root of the problems. The homeless shelter initial plan was scraped because they put it in the Allen's Creek floodway which is not legal, and that cost \$1M. Calthorpe showed plans in the AC floodway which is also illegal, \$200K for that contract. Our neighborhood piping of a open section of the Allen's Creek because a developer was allow to redirect it in near 90 degree bends, \$1/2M for that,... I think were starting to talk real money here. 500 year rains now happening biyearly in southern MI and predicted to keep happening because of climate change, it will be getting worse. We have no time to keep dancing around the issue with these naysayers.

a2roots

Mon, Dec 20, 2010 : 9:04 a.m.

@bugjuice...did I say anywhere that I am opposed to fixing the problem. No I did not. I am most perplexed why this problem has taken so long to be dealt with. As I said the neighborhood has always had a vocal community. I find it strange that if this issue has been such a big problem for such a long time, why has it not been in the forefront before now. @Varmentrout...block grant funds if eligible to use make sense since millions of block grant funds have over the years been poured into this money pit neighborhood. Might as well protect the taxpayer investment with more of it.



Sun, Dec 19, 2010 : 2:14 p.m.

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A random question: could CDBG funds possibly be used to correct this problem? A quick Google reveals that many communities have used these community block grants for infrastructure, especially in distressed areas. I'm unclear about whether Ann Arbor would have to apply to the Urban County now to access such funds or whether the city would have direct access. It appears that such funds were available through the Urban County, but those Recovery Act funds are about to expire, I think.

http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/community_development/CDBG-R/Washtenaw%20Co.%20CDBG-R%20Submission%20Template%20Checklist.pdf

digger

Sun, Dec 19, 2010 : 10:19 a.m.

smartest thing for the city to do to solve this storm water problem would be to install yard drains and let the people drain their own yards to it. If storm infustructure isn't large enough at this time put in the right size pipe with a restricter and at least the water will go away

zip the cat

Sat, Dec 18, 2010 : 8:45 p.m.

I worked for the mason contractor that built all the crawl space foundations for most of the houses in the early 70's and when the trenching contractor dug the footings it was all heavy clay soil and clay soil does not drain period.

Basic Bob

Sat, Dec 18, 2010 : 6:23 p.m.

@John Q @Tim Darton This was annexed to Ann Arbor before development. Ed Vielmetti's link to the city's plat map shows this to be true. So the city has always been responsible, even when they choose not to act. Welcome to Ann Arbor, where it sucks to be middle class.

snapshot

Sat, Dec 18, 2010 : 5:36 p.m.

What can these folks do? Maybe if they refuse to pay their mortgages and property taxes and sue the real estate and title companies, along with the developer, or the developer's estate, or estate heirs for a fraud recovery. I don't think the city's response of "it's not my problem" holds water as well as the neighborhood basements. If their was a building department back then, sue them too for negligence.

Joan Doughty

Sat, Dec 18, 2010 : 2:19 p.m.

Thank you Ned Randolph for this article on the Bryant storm sewer problem. There is one item in the article that is slightly inaccurate. The article says : "This is the second year in a row that Bryant residents have dealt with construction. The city replaced the sidewalks last year. " The city didn't replace the sidewalks last year, the sidewalks were marked by the city and those slabs needing replacement had to be replaced by the property owners. It's the way it works everywhere in the city. The city apparently has a rotational schedule where each neighborhood is checked every so many years. For very low income property owners, the city has a grant program, which will pay for up to a certain amount. Community Action Network (CAN) helped several property owners apply to



that program. But the majority of property owners had to pay for the sidewalk slab replacements themselves. We helped those who were interested jointly put their contracts out to bid, so that they could get a better price. The issue was brought up because all this construction (even if it isn't directly under the sidewalks) will likely cause shifting of ground, moving all that mass around - which in turn will probably cause some of the sidewalk slabs to shift and crack. Apparently coordination between the sidewalk replacement program and the water main replacement/street resurfacing projects was non-existent, resulting in homeowners making costly repairs to their sidewalks a year before the city is going in to cause major upheaval to and under the streets.... It's a minor issue related to the storm water drainage, but the property owners definitely have a point.

David Briegel

Sat, Dec 18, 2010 : 9:07 a.m.

If there was standing water in any other neighborhood in A2 there would be a solution promptly. The city has made stormwater improvements when water was backing up in basements of homes here on the West side. This area should be treated the same! This issue has nothing to do with past expenditures. It has to do with minimum acceptable standards for our not so fair city.

MaBear

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 10:20 p.m.

I moved here when the subdivision was new & the subdivision has always been in the city of Ann Arbor. I don't know a person who has ever lived here who did not have a flooding problem in their back yards except those who have homes up on the hill side. The back yards were never graded or finished just the front of the homes had sodd. We had to haul in truck loads of clean dirt to get a back yard. Smokler built, Georgetown, Arbor Oaks, & I believe University Townhouses & Forest Hills.

Hillbillydeluxe

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 9:17 p.m.

Didn't quite understand the reduced/free lunch part of the article. Class warfare is taking over America.

bugjuice

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 6:19 p.m.

I hope that people see the irony in this. The city denies any responsibility and drags their feet over this potentially hazardous issue of storm water within their jurisdiction while they fund a high tech piece of conceptual art whose prime purpose is to showcase and educate people about storm water. I don't think Driesetl cares as long as the check is good.

bugjuice

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 4:35 p.m.

With all the unwanted storm water retention in Stonybrook Driesetl's fountain will never run dry. Move the fountain to Stonybrook.

bugjuice

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 4:22 p.m.





@a2roots... and your home is worth, how much? And would easily spend less time on the market if you were sell when compared to a home in Stonybrook? And you have sidewalks? Street lighting?

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Storm sewers? Do you get the odor from the landfill on a hot summer night when you're not running your a/c? And no drainage problems that can easily be a safety and health hazard? I'm

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sure you'll correct me if I'm wrong, and maybe you're not as fortunate, but the vast majority of residents and taxpayers already have most of the neighborhood amenities that much of SE A2 lack. We already got what that tax money bought. The bona fide city residents of Stonybrook, for the most part, do not.

Gyll Stanford

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 3:46 p.m.

So the city is claiming this is not their problem. I would think that all the property owners or tenants will be allowed to not pay the, Storm-water Discharge Customer Charge, on their water bill. I'm sure the utility dept is already preparing the refunds for all those fees already collected. NOT! This looks like the making of a class action suit against the city for an illegal fee.

a2roots

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 2:20 p.m.

@davidbriegel...Dave please do some research before you blast the city. I am pretty sure this was either a dd223 or dd214 federal project that was built in Pittsfield Township. At some point it was annexed to the city and has been a money pit ever since. I would be damn happy if my neighborhood got just a portion of the money spent in Stonybrook.

David Briegel

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 1:50 p.m.

Who was the developer and who approved the development plans? Is it part of the city? Do they pay city taxes? Yes. "The city should have coordinated better." Duh..... These citizens of our fair city deserve better. The city takes their money without providing the standard services. Isn't there a word for that? Ann Arbor, the Detroit of the West!

Tim Darton

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 1:42 p.m.

As always, so many are eager to jump on the city. A2roots is correct, a ton of money has been poured into this area. If you have been around for awhile you know: This subdivision was built when this was Pittsfield Twp. They should have pressed the developer/builder to do it right. The city bent over backwards to let many in this area connect to the sewers at a way lower than usual rate when their poorly built septic fields failed. There are storm sewers and more could be installed but it is the drainage from the privately owned lots that is the problem. Having a storm sewer is great if the water gets to it. The land needs drain properly and some drainage pipes will be needed and that is the landowners problem, not the city's. If you follow this, it is clear the city is engaged on the problem and doing a whole lot to make things better here.

YouWhine

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 1:29 p.m.

I am confused as to why everybody thinks that the problem - which stems mainly from problems with provately owned systems - should be the cuty's problem. The fact that your yard is not properly graded, a developer never installed your private drainage pipes, and that you have a



crawl space or the fault of the city? So if I buy a house which is uninsulated and has a furnace not big enough to heat the entire home cheaply, can I complain about being cold until the city decides to step in and fix it for me?

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a2roots

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 11:44 a.m.

@alanb...you better check your facts. This neighborhood over the years has been the recipient of more outreach, monetarily and socially than any in the city.

David Briegel

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 11:43 a.m.

This is a disgrace! Who was the developer? Who approved the development plans? Another example of lax oversight and poor management by the County Drain Commissioner. Shame! Tree City, Most Liveable City, Best to retire in.* * In some parts!

Alan Benard

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 11:07 a.m.

Why does the City of Ann Arbor discriminate in its treatment of moderate income neighborhoods? Why does the City of Ann Arbor discriminate in its treatment of its most racially and ethnically diverse census tracts? Leaving drainage in the the Bryant neighborhood as it is amounts to making it uninhabitable, forever depressing the value of its properties. This is a public health issue. This is a fairness issue. And there is every reason for an attorney to investigate the situation on the grounds of malfeasance by the city in enforcing city codes at the time the subdivision was built. And also investigate pertaining to which party has the legal responsibility to maintain the storm sewers and private connection to storm sewers. Just because the city says they aren't responsible, doesn't mean they aren't. What surprises might lie in the subdivision's original documentation?

John Q

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 11 a.m.

I'm shocked that a development built over 50 years ago doesn't mean today's current standards! Was this subdivision even part of the city when it was built? It doesn't sound like it. Take up the complaints with Pittsfield Township about who did or didn't do their job 50 years ago.

a2roots

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 10:45 a.m.

Back in the late 70's and in the 80's millions of dollars was spent in the Stonybrook neighborhood rehabbing the homes and funding a community center with all kinds of services. So please, this neighborhood has not been neglected. I do not recall that there were any issues with water back then. Easy to imagine the developer cut corners. Over the years from time to time Stonybrook has had a vocal and involved community. I am perplexed why this problem is just now in the forefront. When did water start to become an issue?

bugjuice

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 10:26 a.m.

Mr Taylor, with all due respect, this is a matter of perception and as has been said before, perception is reality. Spending on unnecessary stuff, no matter the cost or where the money comes from or where it goes, while residents yards are flooded every year and have been for decades is



Paul Cartman

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I can't necessarily speak for all Stoneybrook/Bryant/Arbor Oaks residents, but I and many others are grateful that the City has embarked upon this \$3.7 million project to replace our water mains and repave our streets. It is also a positive thing that they (the City) will be installing manholes at every "T" connection where drains coming from private easements connect to the storm main under our streets for future maintenance purposes. The "shameful" part is that the City can't or won't find the budget to address the Stoneybrook drainage/flooding issue by installing edge drains and/or curb drains while they have the streets already torn up. The City continues to present this as an individual homeowner problem. It is not! AT LEAST 45% of the homes in the neighborhood have reported water or flooding issues. We are asking that the City acknowledge this neighborhood-wide problem, and take reasonable steps to help us resolve it. Particularly, we think it is ridiculous not to incorporate under-street aspects of a potential drainage/flooding solution while the streets are torn up. Yes, budgets are tight, but penny-wise and pound-foolish is still foolish.

Christopher Taylor

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 10:03 a.m.

We all wish it were that easy. The storm sewers are operational, the problem is that the water doesn't get to the storm sewers off of residents' lots. The City is in the process of working together with residents, CAN, and the County in an effort to identify the problem with engineering-level precision, devise a series of practical solutions, and obtain state, federal, and/or private funding to effect those solutions. This neighborhood has been ignored for too long. It is no longer being ignored, but cost-effective solutions to complex, 50-year-old problems take time. If that sounds like a long and far less than ideal process, it is. It is also unfortunately reality.

AlphaAlpha

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 9:40 a.m.

Racerx has the right idea: "Where was the city when the developer didn't complete the job to connect to the city's drainage system? If the city failed in it's inspection, one could assume that the city is also liable in its failure to monitor the developer and that city rules and regulations were followed." If the inspecting authority missed an obvious problem, they were remiss, and they have a problem. Perhaps we could have just a tad more investigation of this key question?

bugjuice

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 9:27 a.m.

At the suggestion of Sue McCormick (who to the best of my knowledge still does not reside in the city) Council and the administration raided the Storm Water fund to get money for the city hall fountain. 1) Make Fraser and McCormick move to the Bryant neighborhood or fire them. 2) Build Driesett's fountain in the Bryant Neighborhood so the residents will be reminded of who and what the city values next time they vote.

DonBee

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 9:16 a.m.

Digging up and replacing the streets is the largest expense. If they are going to have the streets open anyway, they should but in the storm water system. The one reason not to, and the only reason not to, is if the overall system can not handle the additional water. If it would take millions



and millions of dollars to move the water from the neighborhood and treat it, then I could see not connecting it. But, putting the pipes in and capping them would mean not having to dig up the streets again when they got the rest of the system ready. Ypsilanti did all their neighborhoods with both new water main and new storm main a few years ago, from an infrastructure standpoint - Ypsilanti has better infrastructure than Ann Arbor does.

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C6

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 9:07 a.m.

The city is real quick and complete to include a charge for "storm water run off", but when it doesn't run off and collects in a muddy pond in your yard it suddenly isn't their problem. Prior to being annexed I had no problems with heavy rains leaving any standing water on my yard in Ann Arbor. After having the city dig up the streets to install water and sewer lines prior to annexing us however, I ended up with a corner of the lot that was lower than the street. Since we didn't have curbs or a gutter on the unpaved street, water flowed off the street and formed one of those muddy pools in my yard after every heavy rain. When the city started charging for run off, I tried to get an answer about how much I should be charging the city for the run off I was accepting from their street. They didn't want to talk about it. That's just one more reason I'm glad I've moved out of the city.

Steve Pepple

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 9:07 a.m.

An off-topic comment has been removed.

Linda Peck

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 8:40 a.m.

Yes, it is shameful! If we want to be proud of our city, then let's include everyone in all of the good things it has to offer. Otherwise, Shame!

Craig Lounsbury

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 8:29 a.m.

These folks need to "pull themselves up by the bootstraps". The answer to their problem is to start filing tax returns with at least a 3 followed by 5 additional digits on line 37 (or is it line 38?) of their federal tax returns. Do this and see how fast they get a response from the powers that be. Remember the "Golden Rule"...those who have the gold make the rules.

Brad

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 8:26 a.m.

Interesting that the council member looking into this isn't even from the affected ward.

Olive

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 8:25 a.m.

I'm with krc.

krc

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 8:03 a.m.

Shameful.



Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 6:59 a.m.

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arbor (<http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/>)
These are the very same people who have blindly supported the democratic machine in this city for years yet they receive no support or appreciation in return.

racerox

Fri, Dec 17, 2010 : 6:55 a.m.

Where was the city when the developer didn't complete the job to connect to the city's drainage system? If the city failed in it's inspection, one could assume that the city is also liable in its failure to monitor the developer and that city rules and regulations were followed.

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