

Dig outs and Pothole repairs – ½ Million Dollars is a lot of money wasted

Dig outs and pothole repairs are considered temporary and do nothing to address the underlying deterioration of the street structure. \$500,000 is a lot of money for temporary repairs and reflects the long-term effort by city councils and staff for years to avoid the inevitable deterioration of streets that are not properly maintained.

Even now there is not a plan here to provide preventive maintenance to the “fair” streets. This is almost a tradition each council passes down to the next.

The move to actually repair Palm Ave is progress but it is not a realistic plan to reverse the long-term deterioration of our streets. Adding Stout, Calder and Lyding to the “plan” is again progress but there is a total of 52 streets (5 miles) identified as having reached the end of their useful life and are considered in very poor condition. Using the cost estimate to repair Palm avenue, repairing these very poor streets would cost \$27MM.

My interest is to see the city council review and approve a realistic long-term plan to arrest deterioration of the streets and begin reconstructing streets that are at or near the end of their useful lives. Which streets are scheduled for lower cost surface maintenance with the goal of arresting any further deterioration. For bigger projects what is the priority list? How does it coordinate with the water and wastewater infrastructure plans? What is the proposed financing? The city has been looking for “free money” for years. It is time to develop a plan to finance at least the most critical repairs. Transparency is another option. What streets do you not feel need to be repaired?

In April 2025 you “approved” a “plan” (on the consent calendar) to submit requests for grants. Planned CIP projects were put on hold to reserve funds for possible grant matches. One year later and there has been no announcement of grants and \$500,000 is being invested in “temporary repairs”.

Dig outs and pothole repairs became the plan at the last meeting. Even though you were advised by staff/consultants that the repairs were temporary (maybe 2 years) and would do nothing to arrest the deterioration of the streets, your primary interest was which streets are on the list.

The mayor who opposed the pothole waste of money suggested fixing Palm Ave. This is one of 52 street/ segments (5 miles) rated very poor (no useful life left). Progress is fixing one. Unfortunately fixing one is not a realistic plan.

Time is important as streets deteriorate on a schedule. Below you can see that in October 2024 when the survey was conducted 13 street segments had less than three years of

useful life left. They have since joined the list of very poor streets with no useful life left. Time flies when you procrastinate.

A plan is actually bigger than just fixing streets. Under the streets are water mains and old clay sewer pipes that need to be replaced. Similar to streets, water and sewer infrastructure have been ignored year after year. It would not be a surprise that the city has \$30MM in deferred water infrastructure, \$20MM in sewer and likely \$30MM in streets. This kind of money requires long-term financing and that requires a plan.

Good news, in another year when a plan is together there will only be 16 streets in poor condition (down from 43!). The rest will have passed their useful life and be in very poor condition. By the time the plan is completed, 14 more street segments will have reached the end of their useful life.

Of course, fair streets have useful lives also and with no maintenance these will begin to add to our inventory of poor streets. The progression continues until it all fails.

The charts below are taken from the spreadsheet included in the 2025 Street Study. The (1,3) are useful life segments 1-3 years (less than 3) etc...

Sebastopol Street Conditions (October 2024)				
	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good
# Streets	52	43	128	14
# Miles	4.94	10.74	12.72	1.2

Remaining Useful Life - Sebastopols Poor Streets
(2025 Street Study - October 24 Survey date)

