



## DRINKING WATER STATE REVOLVING LOAN FUND PROGRAM

### CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

TO: All Interested Citizens, Government Agencies and Public Groups

In accordance with the Nebraska Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) environmental review process, which is based on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental review has been performed on the proposed agency action below:

This information reviews the environmental impact likely from a project. This project is planned to be federally funded wholly or in part through your tax dollars; therefore, you are entitled to take part in its review. If you have concerns about the environmental impact of this project, please provide them at this time. The Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) encourages public input in this decision-making process.

### DRINKING WATER SRF LOAN

PROJECT NAME:	Replacement Well 23-1 & Piping
APPLICANT:	Village of Howells
COUNTY:	Colfax
POPULATION:	561 (2020 Census)
DWSRF PROJECT NUMBER:	D311706
TOTAL PROJECT AMOUNT:	\$952,000
PROPOSED DWSRF 40% LOAN FORGIVENESS AMOUNT:	\$380,800
PROPOSED DWSRF LOAN AMOUNT:	\$571,200

The Village of Howells has applied for funding through the DWSRF program administered by the NDEE to replace a well. The scope of the project proposes drilling a new well to replace an existing well (Well 91-2) that has failed. This loan is to assist in the construction of the new well (Well 23-1), associated piping and controls, and a backup generator. The replacement well is to be a submersible well adjacent to the existing failed well, utilizing the same wellhouse with new piping.

The total estimated cost for the proposed drinking water project is \$952,000. A well rehabilitation project for the Village of Howells was listed on the Project Priority Planning list in the State Fiscal Year 2025 Intended Use Plan (IUP). Based on supporting documentation on file with the NDEE, this project was determined to be eligible for a 30-year loan with an annual interest rate of 0.65 percent and an annual administrative fee of 0.65 percent. The Village is eligible for 40.0% DWSRF loan forgiveness, dependent on availability of funds and the test well and new well test kit data for the replacement wells having levels of regulated contaminants below 80% of the established Drinking Water Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCL), per criteria listed in the IUP. For an estimated cost of \$952,000, this would equate to a forgiveness amount of \$380,800. If any regulated contaminant comes back 80% or more of the established Drinking Water MCL,

at that funding point in the project and should the Village continue to move forward with construction, DWSRF funding from thereon would be loan only assistance.

The Village of Howells's water use fees would be pledged to repay the DWSRF loan. For a typical residential connection, the current monthly base rate is \$30.00, with an added consumption charge of \$2.40 per 1,000 gallons of water used, resulting in an average monthly water bill of \$42.00 for a typical 5,000-gallon monthly household water use. The first year annual DWSRF Debt Service (including interest and admin payments) would be \$24,672.25. Based on 335 active service connections, water rates may need to be raised approximately by an additional \$6.75 to address the new debt service for the drinking water loan. This estimate includes the noted loan forgiveness and the 10% coverage requirement for delinquencies or loss of users.

The Village has a permit to operate a public water system under the provisions of the Nebraska Safe Drinking Water Act and the Regulations Governing Public Water Supply Systems, Title 179. The proposed project is determined by the NDEE to help the public water system maintain compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. The system last underwent a routine sanitary survey by the NDEE on December 5, 2023, wherein no deficiencies were noted. That completed survey is the first step of the Technical, Managerial and Financial (TMF) program policy. Howells will still be required to undergo a TMF Assessment by the NDEE to ensure that their capabilities meet the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Also, Howell's current Environmental Targeting Tool score is 10, below the allowable 11 per issued U.S. Environmental Protection Agency guidance.

#### **Categorical Exclusion Justification for Drinking Water Projects**

The proposed projects were reviewed for eligibility for a categorical exclusion from a National Environmental Policy Act review specified in 40 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) Part 6.204. The project meets all criteria described in the above reference, and the Department has determined that this project is eligible for a categorical exclusion. Consequently, a preliminary decision has been made that a Finding of No Significant Impact will not be prepared. Justification for categorical exclusion includes:

- The proposed action is not known or expected to have potentially significant environmental impacts on the quality of the human environment either individually or cumulatively over time;
- The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect federally or state listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat;
- The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect national natural landmarks or any property with nationally significant historic, architectural, prehistoric archeological or cultural value, including but not limited to, properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect environmentally important natural resource areas as wetlands, prime farmland, wild and scenic rivers, and significant fish or wildlife habitat;
- Based on a review of the available mapping, no portion of the project lies within the 100-year floodplain;
- The proposed action is not known or expected to have a significant effect on the pattern and type of land use (industrial, commercial, agricultural, recreational, residential) or growth and distribution of population including altering the character of existing residential areas, or may

not be consistent with state or local government, or federally-recognized Indian tribe approved land use plans or federal land management plans;

- Based on review there are no new/relocated surface or groundwater discharges; the project is not being developed to provide capacity to service a population greater than 30% of that existing for the community; and it is supported by a State growth strategy. In addition, there will not be a substantial increase in volume/loading of pollutants to receiving streams; and
- The proposed action is not known or expected to cause significant public controversy.

The NDEE shall revoke the categorical exclusion and shall require a full environmental review if, subsequent to the granting of exclusion, the state determines that the proposed project no longer meets the requirements for a categorical exclusion due to changes in the proposed project; or new evidence reveals that serious local or environmental issues exist; or federal, state, local or tribal laws are being violated.

This action is taken on the basis of careful review of the application and other supporting data, which are on file in the office of the NDEE. These are available for public review upon request. Persons having a comment on this categorical exclusion determination are encouraged to submit such comments directly to the NDEE State Revolving Fund Program at [ndee.srf@nebraska.gov](mailto:ndee.srf@nebraska.gov). Should additional funding become necessary, amended amounts applied for by the Village of Howells may be provided if funding is available.

Signed this 12<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2024.

Sincerely,



Sarah Starostka,  
Administrator  
Planning and Aid Division

Attachments:      Distribution List  
                         Maps

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DISTRIBUTION LIST  
VILLAGE OF HOWELLS

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HOWELLS JOURNAL

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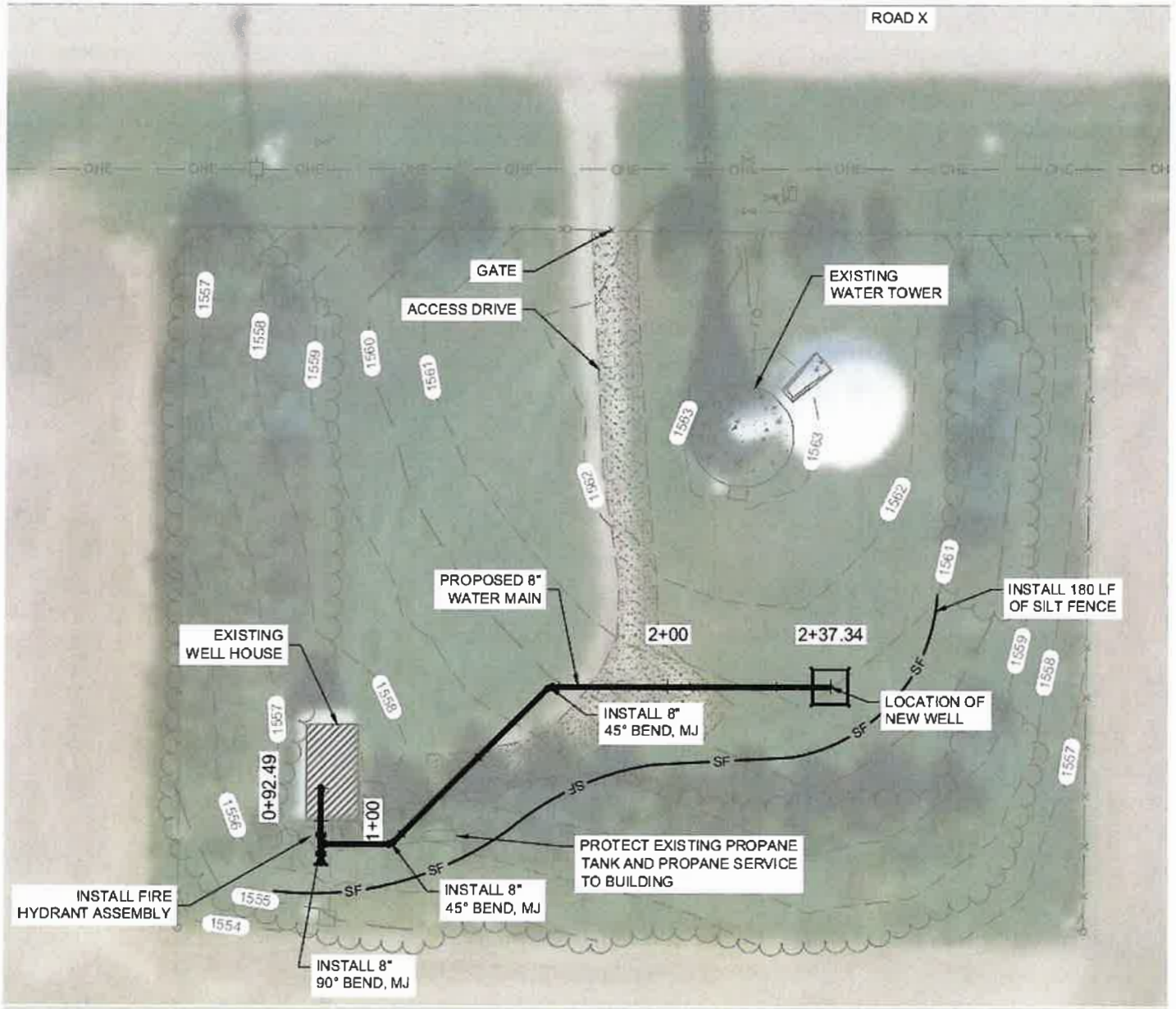
S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
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(Public Information Only not for Public Notice)

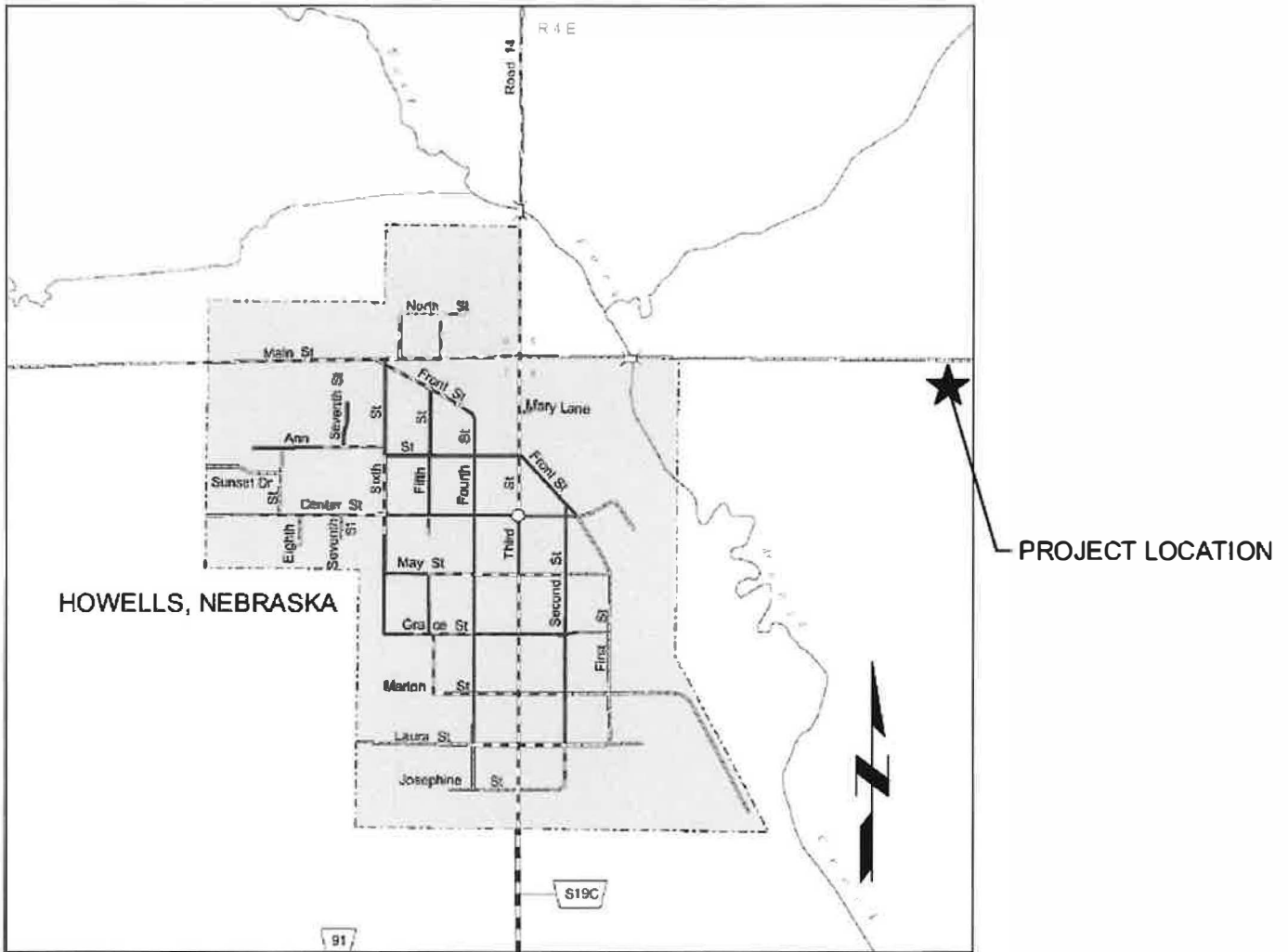
LOWER ELKHORN NRD

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# Howells, Nebraska – New Well Site Plan





**LOCATION MAP**