August 2, 2022
Dante Sawyer
Village Manager, Hazel Crest, IL
Illinois
Phone interview with Jamie Ramsay

Links:
Hazel Crest LSRL Plan

Partnership with EPIC in 2021

Inventory project in Hazel Crest

Hazel Crest predictive Model inventory map

Takeaways:

- Partnerships and technical assistance are key for lower-resourced municipalities to be able to complete applications.
- Hiring an engineering firm to complete Proposal Plan required for application can be cost prohibitive for some lower-resourced communities
- Community engagement is critical throughout the process - especially for inventory
- Technical assistance requirements include data analytics and data management

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Jamie:
how did you first become aware of any lead issues in your community?

Dante:
So it started off with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, we were part of their "Greenest Region Compact". So this program paid for us to bring forward someone interested in careers in sustainability and the environment.

At the time, the person that was a woman by the name of Cheryl Watson she had done some lead live service line replacement work. She was familiar with some of the things that were taking place in that conversation. And she had connected us with the Metropolitan Planning

Council, which is another regional planning agency or Technical Support Agency for governments. Also, at the same time, a conversation was starting in Springfield in the State Capitol in Illinois, about pending legislation that would require the removal of the service lines, identifying and removing lead service lines and your community.

The technical opportunity was available through the Metropolitan Planning Council. We were elected and were provided a technical assistance opportunity to put up processes to identify and a plan to get in. So because we were aware that that legislation and state legislation was in the pipeline for this. The Hazel Crest President and Board saw an opportunity to start getting us prepared for when that piece of legislation actually was put into effect. The thought was that that could help put us in front of the line for any type of assistance or resources that were going to be available to help communities.

Jamie:
Is there priority based on the scope of the problem or the size of your town? Are certain towns at the forefront of receiving any of this funding?

Dante:
I do think that more well resourced towns would have somewhat of an advantage because to apply for the state revolving funds (SRF), we need funding. We have to submit a pre plan, which does require some engineer design work. That work can be reimbursed if you get the grant, but you still have to have enough working capital to pay for those studies up front. And so you're talking about, you know, something that costs in the range of $40,000 that for some of this that can be a hurdle.

Jamie:
Had you thought about applying or have you applied for any of the funds and the bipartisan infrastructure law?

Dante:
No, we had not. I do believe that that part of the money that was made eligible through the State Revolving Fund was appropriated as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill.

Jamie:
Did you feel like you had enough resources within your municipality to like tackle your application for funding?

Dante:
Getting the funding is one process, right? **There is a community engagement component as well, because you have to be able to identify the last service line in your community**. And so the best way to identify them is to visually look at the connection. Well, a couple of ways. One, this will be of course, the excavated right. But the other way, the less invasive way is for the homeowner, or someone that is able to go inside their house and take a look at the connection between the meter and the service line.

And so we did a survey. The village had did a survey back in 2017. I think, right before I started maybe? We had like over 4000 service connections. And I think we've probably got back maybe a couple 100 surveys. And so right now we have a started the actual excavation the actual construction part of it. We have what we call a predictive analysis model. So there's also another database right now I'm working with. So fortunately, all these other opportunities have led us to get into another technical grant from EPIC.

We've just been working on it early today. We just had a meeting just taking a look at how to best utilize the data that we ended up getting through the initial study with the Metropolitan Planning Council.

So a lot of cities do not have a data set. So, once you get the data set, then it becomes a process of okay, now how do you manage that data set? How do you update it as you get real world information? From field verification. we put another survey out to residents to see if we could firm up someone analysis that we have with that first data. As we get those surveys back, how are we going to integrate that into to our current data set? What type of visual analytics can we get to help us with the project from this dataset with all these technical skills.

I don't have a DIS coordinator on staff here. It's hard for me. I don't have anyone on staff that will the level of expertise needed to do the type of data analytics that we're looking at doing to help track this project.

Jamie:
Could get funding before you had inventory information or you had to have all the inventory before you could get your funding?

Dante:
Yeah, and have all that done before we can get.

Fortunately that process of gathering that preliminary data was aided through technical assistance grants. So again, we get direct funding to help pull that together, but we still weren't able to get support to get the technical assistance in order to get that done.

Jamie:
Do those technical assistance grants come through the state?

Unknown 13:20
No. Again, the first one was with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus gave us our sustainability staffer. That staffer connected us to the Metropolitan Planning Council. MPC gave us the technical assistance that built the initial survey, and then the Metropolitan Planning Council connected us with EPIC, who provided the technical assistance that we're currently utilizing with with doing some of the data management, data analytics and

also helping us with the communication documents that we're using to talk about this with the public.

Jamie:
Thank you for breaking it down. How does this program bridge with actual property owners or homeowners?

Dante:
It's about engaging with them, you know, sending them communications. We will probably want to have a couple community meetings to talk about this. We have a page dedicated on our website, talking about this information. And it is about how we talk about it right? Because everyone heard about Flint, Michigan. Everyone is aware that utilizing lead in your household is something that can't be done. So you want to talk about it. You want to be transparent, you want to give everybody information. You don't want to create hesitancy. You don't want to just further inflame any misconceptions.

Jamie:
As far as actually executing the work, will you have to negotiate this with the private property owners? Then is it their responsibility or does Hazel Crest handle all the process of replacing the lines?

Dante:
Hazel Crest handles all of the process, of course. The resident has to provide access to the home right. Outside of that, the cost of the project, all that will be borne by Hazel Crest. Illinois has made it a requirement that you have to remove both the public line and the residential line. I can see some communities where, you know, they may try to negotiate what that cost will be. But for us, any funding that we apply for it is to remove both the residential and public service (lines).

Jamie:
What were things that you wish you would have had help on or is there anything that you feel is confusing for people when they're applying for funding?

Dante:
Yeah, I guess providing the technical assistance on a front end so you know, so you can have someone that could you know, GIS, all the all the addresses in new fields. You know, that's information you need to have in order to submit it to the state. Also, cost estimates on what the work will be for lead service line replacement, having a sense of how many land service lines you have in your community, and also the resources to go out to hire an engineering company that can do the preliminary engineering, which is also required as part of your application.

Also how to add to other water related projects. For example, meter replacements, you know, a meter lasts about 15-20 years and water lines about 10-15 year. So if you're replacing the

meter, and if a meter has a lead service line on it, then technically you are supposed to replace that lead service line as well. Do the work simultaneously.

Dante:
Let move forward that email over to Jonathan Flowers. He was our lead engineer for this project. He can talk with you about the process of submitting an application.