



# News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE PLEASE

## **Ashland City Council passes a resolution with favorable financing terms from the Environmental Protection Agency to construct and move the water treatment plant**

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### **Clean drinking water – An essential right**

Contaminated drinking water transmits diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, dysentery, typhoid and polio and is estimated to cause approximately 505,000 diarrheal deaths each year, according to the World Health Organization. Water crises across the United States have highlighted the continued fight for access to clean drinking water. From Texas, Mississippi, Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico to Hawaii, ABC News reports ongoing water crises that require people to boil their water before cooking, bathing and drinking due to many reasons, including water treatment plant failures.

It is often taken for granted that the small town of Ashland not only has safe drinking water, but perhaps one of the cleanest drinking water sources due to the region and the good work of the City's Water Department. However, the City of Ashland's water treatment plant was constructed in 1948 and is reaching the end of its useful life. It is located in a steep, narrow canyon where landslide, fire, flood and earthquake risk could compromise its ability to produce potable water for the community. The existing plant also has limited treatment capacity for changes in raw water quality, specifically for algal toxins, which are rapid growth algae that can cause harm to people, animals and the local ecology.

The good news is that the City has been planning for the eventual replacement of the treatment plant at a new, safer location. This project has been in development since 2012 when it was first identified in the Comprehensive Water Master Plan approved by Council at that time. Since then, the City has gone through preliminary and final engineering for design of the new plant in order to move into the construction phase, where the City is now.

To support the project, City Council recently passed a resolution with favorable financing terms from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to construct and move the plant to a new location to mitigate the risks. This new water treatment plant will support Ashlander's drinking water need for the next two to three generations.

“The passing of this resolution will allow the City to replace our 76-year-old water treatment plant at an affordable rate and will ultimately save rate-payer money in the long term. We encourage everyone to see our fact page about the City’s water treatment plant, view the background information and especially the FAQ section. Don’t hesitate to reach out to us with additional questions,” stated Interim City Manager, Sabrina Cotta.

The borrowing to support the construction phase is not a general obligation bond, rather this EPA loan\* is intended to provide cities such as Ashland low-cost access to funding that will strengthen its water infrastructure with new technology. With the help of the EPA’s Water Infrastructure and Innovation Finance Act (WIFIA), the City is poised to ensure clean and safe water for our residents for decades to come. *\*The industry term for this type of EPA loan is a bond.*

A FAQ and fact page can be found on the City website, [ashlandoregon.gov/waterPlant](https://ashlandoregon.gov/waterPlant). The page offers technical details on the new water treatment plant and the EPA WIFIA loan. The page also provides answers to questions such as, “what is the true impact of water rate increases on my utility bill?” which surprisingly is not what most may think. Finally, qualified low-income households will be able to take advantage of water utility discounts when this project is fully rolled out.

***“We are Better Together.”***

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