

Pictures are worth a thousand words.



These pictures (taken in 2025) tell us much of what we need to know about one of Lyons' infrastructure needs: to shore up the old drainage culvert running from Steamboat Valley through North Lyons (between 4th and 5th Avenues) and under the central business district.

What's the Problem?

Parts of the culvert are believed to date back to the 1890s. It's since been added to, patched up and sometimes cleaned out. But now – put simply – it's in danger of collapsing.

What damage a collapse would cause depends on how much of it breaks, where, and how much it rains. The 2017 Stormwater Master Plan warned that runoff from Steamboat Valley is "the most significant flood hazard impacting downtown Lyons." Note: the hazard is greater than from another river flood.

And not just downtown is at risk. The Master Plan continued: "Any flow not intercepted by the historic stone culvert continues on the surface flowing through back yards with additional impact to private property and structures." Translation: houses would flood.

The 2016 Stormwater Plan, a *very* detailed study by a top engineering firm, made dangers and risks clear. Here's the full report:

<https://www.townoflyons.com/DocumentCenter/View/2598/Lyons-StormWater-Draft-Report-December-2016>

Why Hasn't It Been Fixed?

So, you may ask, if the Town has been on notice of the risk since 2016 and has recent photos showing parts of the culvert are near collapse, why hasn't something been done about it?

Simple, honest answer: money. Fixing the culvert as it should be fixed would cost more money than the Town has.

The 2016 Master Plan estimated \$7.5 million to re-do the whole culvert. Figure double that now – \$15 million or so. That's beyond the Town's means.

What Can We Afford to Do About It?

In 2025, the Town engaged Martin/Martin Engineers to survey the culvert and detail what could be fixed at what cost.

The 2025 report identified the "worst of the worst" parts of the culvert, with lots of pictures. Here's a link, with pictures in Appendix C showing "Areas of Damage/Concern" (the worst parts): <https://www.townoflyons.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/14753?fileID=34507>

Estimated cost to shore up "High Concern" areas only: \$500,000.

Available balance in the Town Stormwater Fund (which comes from a \$10 monthly fee on your utility bill): about \$250,000.

The Town is submitting a \$250,000 grant request to the State, which has preliminarily suggested the culvert's historic nature may help in grant review. The State Historic Preservation Office may be involved.

If that grant comes through, there *may* be enough matching money in the Stormwater Fund to at least fix the worst culvert spots without a big rate increase. Without grant money, we're probably looking at either (a) a rate increase to do \$500,000 in repairs, or (b) continuing to cross our fingers and hope it doesn't collapse.

I don't think taking that chance is really an option. We've got to fix our infrastructure, including the culvert.

Summary

As photos show, parts of the 1890s-vintage stormwater culvert running from Steamboat Valley through North Lyons and under downtown are at risk of collapse. To fix the whole culvert might cost \$15 million, which the Town doesn't have. Just shoring up the worst parts will cost at least \$500,000, which the Town is trying to raise with \$250,000 of Town funds plus a state grant. Hope for no collapse until at least the "band aid" fix can be done.

Warning: Don't try to go into the culvert and look around. It's dangerous.