

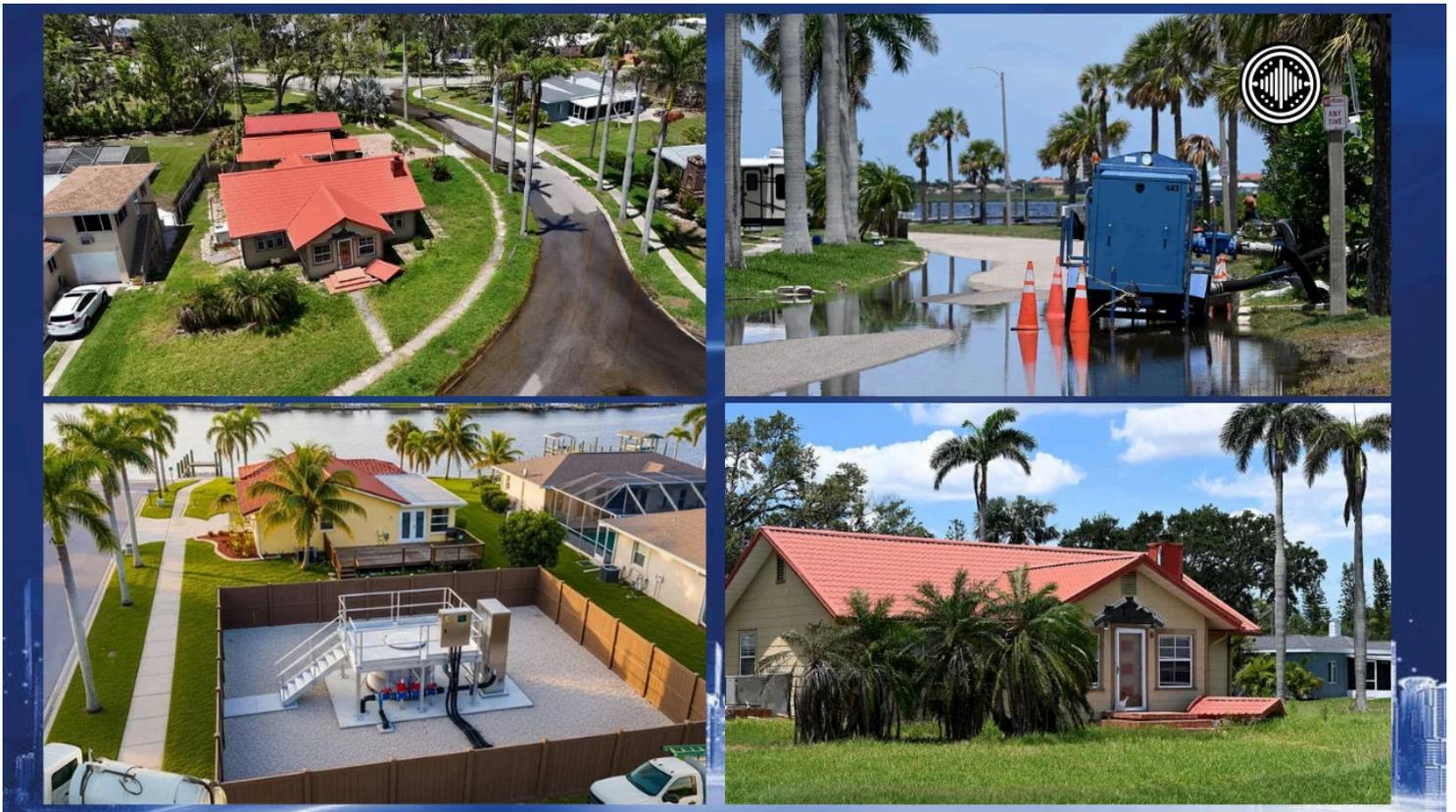
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Bradenton Buys Ex-Councilman's Home for Sewer Project

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The City of Bradenton plans to eliminate Lift Station 13, located on Riverside Drive East—currently in a former home site—by relocating its sewage pumping functions to a more resilient nearby city-owned location. This decision is part of the Lift Station 13 Resilience Project.

In May, the Bradenton City Council unanimously approved a plan to acquire the site of Lift Station 13 on Riverside Drive East (near 2502 Riverside Drive East), but the \$441,000 figure reflects the project's estimated cost to abandon the lift station, not a direct purchase of a

private homeowner's property. The home belongs to Bill Sanders, a former councilman who served the city from 2018 until 2022 and later ran an unsuccessful campaign for mayor in 2024.

Though Sanders has had a stormy history with many city officials, including current Mayor Gene Brown, city leaders insist that the decision to buy his home is based entirely on location and necessity. The house sits on a flood-prone lot, and city engineers believe it's the best spot for a new sewage-pumping station, a critical part of improving the city's aging wastewater system.

"Take every other factor out, what would be the best location and easiest for the project... it has nothing to do with anything except what's best for the project," Mayor Brown said.

Sanders has owned the home since 2011. Like many properties in the area, it experienced significant flood damage during Hurricane Ian in 2022. For the city, acquiring it not only makes sense for infrastructure development, but also removes a vulnerable property from potential future storm risk.

Still, the decision has raised some eyebrows due to Sanders' well-known clashes with city leaders. His term on the council was marked by tension with staff and fellow council members, and during his 2024 mayoral campaign, those conflicts often made headlines. Sanders accused Brown of using his office for personal gain, while Brown fired back with criticisms of Sanders' behavior and credibility.

Despite that history, city officials have stayed firm in their position that this is strictly a practical decision, one that could help solve some of Bradenton's most pressing infrastructure problems.

The new sewage-pumping station is expected to improve the flow and treatment of wastewater in the area, where aging pipes and outdated systems have caused recurring issues over the years. With the city continuing to grow and more pressure on public services, this move is seen as an investment in the future.

While some residents may see the purchase as politically charged, the city says the numbers and the location tell the real story.

At the end of the day, Bradenton's leaders say the goal is simple: keep the city running cleanly, efficiently, and with fewer wastewater failures, no matter who used to live on the

property.

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