



Information Sheet Pertaining To The City of Stuart's Neighborhood Initiated Sewer Expansion Program

What is the "Neighborhood Initiated Sewer Expansion Program"?

The City of Stuart believes that the elimination of septic tanks in existing neighborhoods reduces the potential for contamination of our area's groundwater and surface water resources thereby improving both the public health as well as the environment. In an effort to address this need, the City of Stuart, through its SEWER SYSTEM EXPANSION PROGRAM, has committed to funding sewer expansion projects for the extension of sewer systems into existing neighborhoods. The immense scope of this task compared to the limited financial resources available, however, makes it impossible to extend the sewer system into many areas in the foreseeable future.

For this reason, it was necessary to objectively prioritize the order in which worthy projects would be funded. This was accomplished by enlisting the assistance of the Martin County Health Department and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to assist in identifying neighborhoods with a proliferation of failing septic tanks and prioritizing them based upon public health and environmental concerns.

Recognizing that the residents of some neighborhoods may wish to connect to the City's sewer system at the earliest possible date, (in some cases long before the neighborhood might be addressed under the existing SEWER SYSTEM EXPANSION PROGRAM) the City established a process by which residents may expedite the completion of a sewer system project in their area by committing to share in the cost of a new sewer system. This program has been entitled the **NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATED SEWER EXPANSION PROGRAM**.

Who decides when a Neighborhood Initiated Sewer Expansion Project Is Needed?

The neighborhood wishing to receive City sewer service. The process is initiated by a group of residents (a minimum of 10 contiguous properties) who identify an initial area of interest and obtain signatures on a petition form (provided by the City) from a minimum of 60% of the potential customers within that area indicating their willingness to participate in a Neighborhood Initiated Sewer Expansion Project.

In the City's case, the City Commission makes the final decision to proceed with a Neighborhood Initiated Sewer Expansion Project. They base their decision on a variety of factors including estimated total cost, health concerns, practical concerns, and input from potentially affected residents.

What is typically constructed in a Neighborhood Initiated Sewer Expansion Project?

The City typically installs a sewer main in the street right-of-way, the service lateral, the individual grinder sewer tank, the electrical upgrade for the grinder pump, decommissions the septic system

to each parcel that can be served. The projects may also include sewer pumping stations and associated pressure mains from the lift station to a point of connection to City's existing sewer collection system.

How does the City Commission receive input from the public?

One way that the City Commission ensures that the public is informed about the project from its conception is through the neighborhood canvassing and petition process. In order for City Commission to consider beginning a "Neighborhood Initiated Sewer Expansion Project," the interested parties must first secure signatures of 60% of the potential customers from within the area of interest. This will facilitate community awareness of the proposed project.

If the interested parties achieve the 60% level of interest required to initiate the conceptual design process, the City's Public Works Department will prepare a conceptual design and cost estimate detailing the proposed project area and projected cost estimates. This information will be presented to the City Commission along with a staff recommendation relative to the "feasibility" of the project.

Public notice will be provided of these meetings through legal advertisements in a local newspaper(s). This will provide two additional opportunities for public input.

Finally, if the project is determined to be feasible, there will be a public hearing prior to project bidding at which the public can address City staff with any questions or concerns.

What would my financial obligation be?

Each potential customer would be given the opportunity to enter an Agreement with the City of Stuart anticipating connection to the system once completed. The Agreement would provide a \$2,000.00 discount of the cost associated with the (grinder system installation) if the potential customer connects to the City's sewer system within twelve (12) months of receipt of "Notice of Availability" from the City. This notice would be mailed shortly after completion of the construction project. The fees may be paid in full prior to connection to the City's system and should the property owner pay in full, an additional \$1,000.00 Sign and Save Discount would apply, or may be paid in one-hundred and twenty (120) monthly installments, with no interest, to be included in regular monthly billings for utility services.

If connection to the City's system is not made within twelve (12) months after notice is first given to property owners that the system is available for use, the \$2,000.00 discount (grinder system installation) would not be available. Regardless of when you connect after the initial twelve months, the fees must be paid in full prior to connection to the City's system, or may be paid in one-hundred and twenty (120) monthly installments, with no interest, to be included in regular monthly billings for utility services.

Why should I connect to the City's sewer system?

Septic tanks and drainfields have been successfully employed for many years for the treatment and disposal of domestic wastewater. They have proven to be a reliable and effective alternative to central sewer collection systems when properly designed, installed and maintained. Their effectiveness, however, is often limited by the physical environment in which they are installed.

The most significant factors limiting septic tank / drainfield effectiveness are “heavy” soils which limit the rate of wastewater infiltration into the soil and high water tables which cause mixing of wastewater with groundwater before proper treatment can occur. Septic tanks constructed in soils with a high infiltration rate, although functioning well from a disposal standpoint, do not have the capacity to absorb contaminants. The result can be serious groundwater pollution with the potential for contamination of nearby water wells or surface water bodies.

If your neighborhood has “heavy” soils, high water table, or is near a surface water body, elimination of septic tanks in your area will significantly improve the public health and environmental quality of your community. It is likely that your neighbors, or perhaps even you, have recognized the problem through poor function or excessive maintenance of your septic tank and drainfield systems.

If the project is deemed feasible and approved by the City Commission, when would construction start?

Following approval of the project by the City Commission, surveying and engineering must be completed as necessary for development of the project design. Once the design and contract documents are completed, the project will be competitively bid to allow selection of the contractor. Depending upon the complexity of the project, several months may pass from the time the project is approved until construction is begun.

What happens if I sell my property?

If you are a participant in the Neighborhood Initiated Project and have signed the associated Agreement, that agreement is automatically assigned to the new owner. If you were not a participant, the new owner may still choose to connect.

How will my sewer bills be computed?

City of Stuart customers are billed for sewer service based upon their water consumption. The current monthly sewer charge is computed as follows:

Up to 12,000 gallons\$ 6.14 per thousand gallons (effective Oct. 1, 2015)
Sewer billings are capped at 12,000 gallons