



Indianapolis *Gregory A. Ballard, Mayor*

# REBUILDINDY

Department of Public Works

02-28-2011

## SEPTIC TANK ELIMINATION PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### HOW WILL THE CITY'S PLAN AFFECT NEIGHBORHOODS ON SEPTIC SYSTEMS?

In fall 2005, the City stopped using the state's Barrett Law for septic conversion projects. Under the Barrett Law, the City could charge property owners for construction of city sewers in existing neighborhoods. Since 2006, more than 4,000 homes have been converted to city sewers, under the Septic Tank Elimination Program (STEP). The City plans to bring sewers to 7,000 homes between 2009-2013.

### HOW DOES STEP WORK?

STEP allows the City to construct new sewers in neighborhoods. Under STEP, property owners pay a one-time connection fee and are responsible for private property construction costs associated with connecting their homes to the sanitary sewer. The City is responsible for all construction costs within the public right of way.

### HOW DOES THE CITY DETERMINE WHEN MY NEIGHBORHOOD GETS SEWERS?

The City plans to bring 7,000 sewers to high-priority neighborhoods between 2009-2013, as determined in its 2008 master plan. Projects primarily are prioritized based on septic system failure rates within neighborhoods.

### PAYING FOR NEW SEWERS

#### MY PROPERTY IS SCHEDULED FOR SEWERS NEXT YEAR. DOES THIS NEW PROGRAM MEAN I WILL GET A FREE SEWER?

No. Changing from Barrett Law to STEP has not relieved property owners of all construction and connection costs. You will still need to hire a licensed contractor to connect your home to the new sewer main, and you will be responsible for paying the City a connection fee before you can connect.

#### HOW MUCH WILL THE NEW SEWERS COST ME?

As a homeowner, you have three main costs to connect to the sewer:

1. The construction costs on your property, which include paying a licensed contractor to install

a lateral line from your home to connect to the sewer and abandon the septic tank. Costs for these services are approximately \$2,000 - \$2,500, but vary by property.

2. A sewer connection fee. You pay the sewer connection fee in one lump sum or over 5 years if you qualify for the City's STEP Financial Assistance Plan. In 2011, the connection fee is \$2,530, but it will be adjusted annually based on the Consumer Pricing Index (CPI).
3. Your monthly sewer bill.

### HOW DO I PAY THE CONNECTION FEE?

The City requires that the sewer connection fee and any other permitting fees and charges be paid before construction permits are issued. The connection fee must be paid before you can connect to the sewer system.

If the connection fee isn't included in your contractor's bid for the work (the other permitting fees and charges are typically included in contractors' bids), then you may pay the connection fee in one of the methods described below.

1. Pay in person.

Make your payment in person at the Department of Code Enforcement (DCE), 1200 S. Madison Ave., Suite 100, Indianapolis, IN 46225. You must go to DCE either after your contractor goes to obtain permits, or at the time he or she obtains permits. If you choose this payment option, you must make arrangements with your contractor when you hire him or her to do the work. Your contractor must have already applied for a permit before you make your payment in person.

Cash, personal checks and money orders are accepted, as well as Visa and MasterCard with a valid photo ID. Checks and money orders must be made payable to the City of Indianapolis.

DCE's lobby hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; noon to 5 p.m. on Wednesday; and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday.

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2. Give your contractor a check or money order in an envelope.

Enclose your check or money order in a secure envelope and give it to your contractor. He or she will take your payment to the DCE when he or she goes to obtain construction permits. Do not send cash in this envelope. Ask for a receipt or proof from your contractor that you used this method to pay the connection fee.

3. If your family makes less than \$46,050 a year, apply for the STEP Financial Assistance Plan.

## WHAT IS THE STEP FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PLAN AND HOW DO I QUALIFY?

Marion County residents in STEP project areas qualify for the STEP Financial Assistance Plan if their annual household gross income is at or below \$46,050. The Financial Assistance Plan is not a loan. It is an installment plan that allows qualified residents to pay \$50 per month, which includes administrative fees, over 60 months (5 years). For more information on the Financial Assistance Plan or to request an application packet, call (317) 327-8314.

## CONNECTING TO THE NEW SEWER

### CAN I CONNECT TO THE SEWER IF AND WHEN I WANT TO?

No. You will receive a notice from the City when you can connect. The Marion County Health Department requires you to connect to the new sewer system within six months of notice that the new sewers are ready for connection. State law mandates that any property within 300 feet of a sewer must connect.

### MY PROPERTY IS ALREADY CONNECTED TO A SEWER, YET THE CITY IS PUTTING NEW SEWERS ALONG MY STREET. WILL I HAVE TO CONNECT TO THAT NEW SEWER?

It depends. If you are legally connected to a municipal sanitary sewer and currently paying sewer user fees, your property may be exempt from tying into the new sewer. However, if your connection is into an interceptor (one of the main sewer arteries) or you have no documentation of a legal connection, you may be required to connect to the new sewer. This is done to ensure that connections meet City standards.

### I THINK MY PROPERTY IS CONNECTED, BUT I HAVE NEVER RECEIVED A SEWER BILL. WHAT DO I DO?

A dye test of your property can be conducted to see if the property is connected to a city sewer. If you are legally connected but not paying a sewer bill, you could be billed for all past sewer user fees. Call (317) 327-8314 for more information.

### IF I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR CONNECTING MY PROPERTY, HOW DO I ARRANGE FOR THE HOOKUP?

The City's Permits Division keeps a list of licensed contractors. The list is available at <http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DCE/Licenses/ContractorLicenses/Pages/contractors.aspx>. Information on how to hire a licensed contractor will also be available at public meetings.

### WHY CAN'T THE CITY CONNECT MY PROPERTY TO THE SEWER, SINCE THEY'RE ALREADY LAYING PIPE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD? WHY DO THEY STOP AT THE RIGHT OF WAY?

The City is not allowed to work on private property.

### WE OWN A DOUBLE (BOTH SIDES OF A CONDO). WILL WE BE ALLOWED JUST ONE CONNECTION?

You will need a connection for both sides of the building. The City does not allow the sharing of laterals or connections, so one lateral stub out is made available for each property that needs to connect.

### WE RECENTLY REMODELED OUR SEPARATE GARAGE TO CREATE LIVING QUARTERS ABOVE IT. CAN WE TAP THE GARAGE INTO OUR HOUSE AND HAVE ONE CONNECTION?

You will need to connect each structure separately to the sewer. City standards do not allow common or shared laterals.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit [www.indy.gov/STEP](http://www.indy.gov/STEP) to learn more about connection fees, the Financial Assistance Plan, contractor costs and choosing a contractor. Call (317) 327-8314 for information on when the City will construct sewers in specific neighborhoods.