



CITY OF CLEARWATER

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PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

July 18, 2012

Dear Idlewild Resident:

This letter is to inform you that the City of Clearwater is bringing sanitary sewer service to your neighborhood, and your home is one of 496 properties that will be affected. Construction is anticipated to start in Spring 2013 and continue to 2015. This project is happening because in past years, several septic tank systems in the neighborhood have fallen into a state of disrepair. As a result, septic system overflows have created a pathway for human exposure to raw sewage, and it is creating an environmental hazard.

You will benefit by gaining the city's sewer service. Adding sanitary sewer to your home adds resale value to your property. Having service available also takes the burden of maintaining a failing septic system off the occupant and/or owner, leaving our system to properly dispose of the waste. With a sanitary sewer system, you no longer will have to worry about having your tank pumped or drainfield failure.

The cost to connect to the sewer system can be expensive and can cost thousands. However, the city is able to offer sewer service to you for much less. The earlier a property owner commits to connecting, the less the costs will be. Connect during construction, and the property owner pays the impact fee only, which is \$900; the city will pay the fees for connection and tank abandonment. If connecting within a year after construction is complete, the property owner will pay the \$900 impact fee, plus the connection and tank abandonment fees, less a \$450 credit. After one year from construction completion and the owner has not connected, a "Notice to Connect" will be sent. He or she then is responsible for everything: \$900 impact fee, connection fee, and septic tank abandonment fee, which can total as much as \$2,800 plus the additional cost of a plumber to connect your service from the home. Financial hardship assistance is available to those who qualify.

We know you will have questions. Please read the attached list of frequently asked questions, as well as a fact sheet called "Annexing Into the City of Clearwater: What You Need to Know." We'd also like to meet you and address your concerns at a public meeting. Members of our Utilities, Engineering, and Planning departments will be attending, as well as the Design Engineer and Neighborhoods Liaison:

Idlewild Sanitary Sewer Public Meeting
Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2012
4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Shuffleboard Club & Lawn Bowls Complex
1020 Calumet St., Clearwater, Fla.

Please feel free to call our office if you have questions. For sewer service and connection information, call Glenn Daniel, Water, Reclaimed & Wastewater Collection Manager, at (727) 562-4960 ext. 7249. For information about annexation, call Lauren Matzke, Planning Manager, at (727) 562-4547. For financial hardship assistance, call Laura Cameron, Utilities Senior Staff Assistant, at (727) 562-4960 ext. 7228.

We look forward to bringing this valuable service to you and to serving your sewer needs in the years to come!

Sincerely,

Tracy Mercer
Public Utilities Director
City of Clearwater

Idlewild Septic-to-Sewer Project

Frequently Asked Questions

What is this project?

The project is called the “Idlewild/The Mall Sanitary Sewer System Expansion Project.” The new system will connect almost 500 residential customers to the city’s sanitary sewer system and abandon existing septic systems in the area. Stormwater utility work is also included in this project to improve drainage systems along Bermuda Street, Oakdale Way, Idlewild Drive, and Woodlawn Terrace between Oakdale Way and Douglas Avenue; and, to expand the conveyance system between Woodlawn Terrace “pond” and Spring Branch.

Who will be affected?

496 homes will be affected. Project boundaries include Sunset Point Road to the south, Douglas Avenue to the west, Union Street to the north, and Kings Highway to the east.

What do I have to do to get sewer service?

To connect to the City of Clearwater’s system and to get sewer service, the property must be within the corporate limits of the City of Clearwater or the property owner must sign an Agreement to Annex, or ATA. Approximately half of the properties in the project area are already Clearwater residents, and the remainder are currently “unincorporated Pinellas County” residents. There are no fees or charges to annex into the city. Other costs are explained below (see “What are the costs?”). For more information, please see the attached information sheet called “Annexing into the City of Clearwater: What You Need to Know.” All new connections to the sanitary sewer system are required to pay a Sewer Impact Fee prior to connection.

Why is this happening?

Over the years, a majority of the septic systems have fallen into a state of disrepair. As a result, septic system overflows create a pathway for human exposure to raw sewage, and it can enter groundwater and public water bodies. The project area is adjacent to the Spring Branch tributary of Stevenson Creek which flows into Clearwater Harbor, an Outstanding Florida Water, and ultimately to the Gulf of Mexico. Spring Branch and Stevenson Creek are verified by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) as impaired for fecal coliforms and dissolved oxygen.

Septic system failures and overflows from the Idlewild/The Mall area are contributing to the degradation of local waters. Therefore, the City of Clearwater has elected to provide sanitary sewer service to the area in place of the septic systems.

How will it affect me?

City of Clearwater Residents

Those residents who live in this area and are currently on septic systems will be able to connect to the proposed city sanitary sewer system. The existing septic systems will be abandoned in accordance with state requirements.

Unincorporated Residents of Pinellas County

Pinellas County residents who live in the area can be connected to the new sanitary sewer system if they annex into the City of Clearwater, or sign the Agreement to Annex when the property is contiguous with City of Clearwater properties.

How long does construction take?

The project is anticipated to start Spring 2013 and end Spring 2015 for the entire area. Hours of construction will be from 7 a.m to 5 p.m., unless there is work required by Pinellas County to be done at night.

How long will I be inconvenienced?

Inconveniences always occur during construction. However, the inconvenience will be kept to a minimum by having the construction team move from one street to the next. In general, the contractor will be required to complete small groups of streets in their entirety before moving to other sections of the project area.

I'm a renter. Who pays for this?

The property owner/landlord is responsible for paying the impact fee of \$900. Once the property is connected to the sewer system, the occupant/renter will see a sanitary sewer availability fee of \$23.46 appear on their Clearwater utility bill, as well as charges for sewer usage for services used at the property.

What are the costs?

The earlier a property owner commits to connecting to the system, the less the connection costs will be. Below are the owner's costs, depending on when they connect:

1. Connect during construction. The property owner pays the impact fee of \$900 only. The city will cover costs of the connection fee and tank abandonment fee.
2. Connect within a year after construction is complete. The property owner is responsible for the impact fee of \$900, plus the connection and tank abandonment fees, less a \$450 credit. (The connection fee and tank abandonment fees can total as much as \$2,800 combined.)
3. Connect after one year from construction completion. The property owner is responsible for everything. This includes the impact fee of \$900, connection fee (which is \$1,800), and septic tank abandonment fee (which can cost as much as \$1,000).

Monthly charge for sewer service will be billed according to current utilities rate. For properties that opt not to connect at all, there will be a monthly availability charge. As of Oct. 1, 2012, the minimum monthly charge will be \$23.46 for single family residences served by a water meter less than 1-inch. Other rates are available online at <http://www.myclearwater.com/gov/codes/index.asp>.

What does the impact fee cover?

Impact fees are collected and retained by the City of Clearwater and can only be used to expand wastewater plants to treat the additional flow brought about by additional connections to the wastewater system or expansion of the collection system itself, like this project.

I can't afford this right now. Are there financing options?

Financial hardship assistance is available to those who qualify, in order to defer the cost of the impact fee over a period of time. To request a payment arrangement, the property owner should call Laura Cameron at (727) 562-4960 ext. 7228 for more information and to start the process.

What will happen to my utility bill after I connect?

Property occupants who use water and sewer at the property will see a monthly sanitary sewer availability fee of \$23.46 included on their bill, sewer usage charges, and a monthly stormwater fee of \$13.59. Unincorporated residents will also see the following surcharge amounts for those receiving these city services: water (25 percent), sewer (25 percent), solid waste (25 percent), recycling (10 percent).

Do I have to connect? What if my septic is new and I don't want to connect now?

Property owners are not required to connect to the system. However, they will have to pay for the monthly minimum availability fee (\$23.46 as of Oct. 1, 2012) once they're put on notice after one year once construction is completed. According to Amendment to Code of Ordinance 8307-12, Section 32.182:

- (i) Properties with functioning on-site septic systems will not be required to connect to the system. The City has the right to request inspection of the system to verify a determination that such connection is not required in the public interest due to public health considerations. However if the property connects for service at the time of construction of the system, the City will utilize the assessed impact fee (\$900.00 for single family residence) to offset costs associated with construction by a licensed plumbing contractor to install a sewer lateral between the city cleanout and the house cleanout. Additionally, these funds can be used to offset costs associated with proper abandoning of the septic system.
- (ii) If during a time period of up to one (1) year after completion of the City expansion project, the property owner that has opted not to connect has a septic system fail, the property owner can apply for and receive an incentive of one-half of the assessed impact fee (\$450.00 for single family residential properties) to offset costs associated with construction by a licensed plumbing contractor to install a sewer lateral between the city cleanout and the house cleanout. Additionally, these funds can be used to offset costs associated with proper abandoning of the septic system. The \$450.00 is a maximum value that will be reimbursed to the property owner's utility account upon verification of the documented costs.
- (iii) After a period of one (1) year from the date of project completion of a City expansion project, those properties that have elected to not connect to the Unified Sewer System will receive notice of a requirement to connect. The property owner will have ninety (90) days to comply with the terms of the notice after which time the property will begin to be billed for the minimum monthly charge for sewer service, even if the connection to the system has not been made.

What happens to my septic tank after I get sewer service?

It is abandoned in place in accordance with Florida Department of Environmental Protection regulations. Essentially, the contents of the tank are emptied, the tank bottom is punctured to assure it will no longer hold water, and it is filled with approved soil.

I still have questions. Who can I talk to?

- Sewer service and connection: Glenn Daniel, (727) 562-4960 ext. 7249
- Annexation and other city services: Lauren Matzke, (727) 562-4547
- Financial hardship assistance: Laura Cameron, (727) 562-4960 ext. 7228
- Hispanic liaison: Robin Gomez, (727) 562-4550



Annexing Into the City of Clearwater: What You Need to Know

What is annexation?

Annexation is the process set forth in the Florida Statutes that allows properties outside the current city limits to become part of the city. Annexation allows businesses and residents to join the City of Clearwater and receive municipal services that are available to properties located within city limits.

What is an agreement to annex?

When a property owner wants to receive city services such as sanitary sewer or solid waste pick-up but does not qualify for annexation because the property is not contiguous to city boundaries, the owner and city can enter into an Agreement to Annex. This legally binding document allows the property owner to receive available services in advance of annexation. It specifies that once the property becomes contiguous, the city will notify the property owner and initiate the annexation to complete the process.

Why is the city initiating my agreement to annex?

Staff routinely studies areas in the city with Agreements to Annex to identify the properties that have become eligible for annexation and then moves forward with the provisions of the agreements for these properties.

How will this affect my taxes?

The City Council establishes the annual tax millage rate for city residents, as Pinellas County does for unincorporated areas. The city has some franchise fees that the county does not have. These fees may be offset by the elimination of any city surcharges for city services already received. In addition, when a property is annexed, the county's Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) is removed from the tax bill.

How will my services change?

Utilities

Sanitary Sewer: City code requires that residences connect to the city's sanitary sewer system if it is "reasonably available." If the system is available and you are not already connected, you will be provided notice and given 90 days to connect. If you are already receiving sanitary sewer service, any surcharges for previous sanitary sewer service outside the city limits - upon annexation - will be eliminated.

Solid Waste: In addition to twice-weekly garbage collection, Clearwater provides once-weekly trash and yard waste collection. You will be allowed to conclude your current contract with your private solid waste provider before receiving solid waste services. Clearwater Customer Service will work with you to determine when your contract ends and when the city will deliver a black barrel and a yellow recycling bin to you to begin collection. You may opt to cancel your private service sooner and initiate city Solid Waste services upon annexation. Please contact Solid Waste/General Services for current rates at (727) 562-4920.

The city also provides a full-service, citywide residential curbside recycling program. Please call (727) 562-4920 or learn more about the City of Clearwater's recycling guidelines by going to www.myclearwater.com or www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/municipal/clearwater.pdf.

Water: If you are receiving city water, surcharges for out-of-city use will be eliminated. Annexation will allow you to connect to the city's public water system if your property is currently on a private well and you choose to connect. If you are already in an existing Pinellas County water service area, your water provider will remain the same.





Utilities (cont'd)

Stormwater Utility: Stormwater utility fees are used for engineering services, operation and maintenance of the stormwater infrastructure, and capital improvements to control flooding and improve water quality. The stormwater management system collects, treats, and conveys stormwater. These utility fees are also used to pay for drainage system maintenance and to plan for future collection systems. Upon annexation, your utility bill will reflect the addition of this fee. It is currently \$13.04 per month per residential unit with an increase to \$13.40 as of Oct. 1, 2012.

For more information on utility billing and customer support, please call (727) 562-4600 or visit Customer Service's list of frequently asked questions at www.myclearwater.com/services/customer_service/faq.asp.

Public Safety

Police Department: City of Clearwater Police provide patrol, law enforcement, crime prevention and other related services. The department reaches out to Clearwater's residents through community meetings and the department's website.

Police patrol operations are currently divided into geographic districts. Each is under the command of a lieutenant who is the district commander and your primary point of contact for non-emergency questions or concerns. However, in an emergency, always call 9-1-1. Visit www.clearwaterpolice.org for more information on the City's Police Department, its programs, and services.

Security Systems: All home alarm systems in the City must be registered with the Clearwater Police Department. If you have a home security system, please call Clearwater Police at 562-4450 to get it registered.

Fire & Rescue Services: You will continue to be served by Clearwater Fire & Rescue for fire and emergency medical services. The department serves the community through eight fire stations strategically located throughout the city. To learn more or to determine which station is closest to you, visit www.myclearwater.com/gov/depts/fire/index.asp.

Leisure

Parks and Recreation: You will have access to recreational programs offered by the city such as athletics, senior, cultural, aquatics, camps, fitness, dance, and nature programs at the city's recreation facilities at a resident rate. For more information regarding parks and recreation services, please visit www.myclearwater.com.

Library: The Clearwater Public Library System is part of the Pinellas County Public Library Cooperative, which serves residents in its member cities. For information on the Clearwater Library System, including frequently asked questions, please visit www.myclearwater.com/cpl.

Who should I call if I still have questions?

Please call the city's Planning & Development Department, Long Range Planning Division at (727) 562-4567.



Published by the City of Clearwater
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