



City of Gulf Breeze

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS City of Gulf Breeze Septic to Sewer Conversion Project

Where will new public sewer infrastructure be installed within the project area?

The project is currently in the data collection phase, with only preliminary design having taken place to-date. Specific locations of proposed infrastructure are undetermined at this point; however, all public sewer infrastructure will be installed within existing rights-of-way, easements, and City-owned properties. As the design progresses, a project website will be developed to share details of the design and other project updates with residents.

What type of public sewer infrastructure is anticipated?

Typical septic to sewer conversion projects utilize one of two options for public sewer infrastructure.

Option #1 is conventional gravity sewer, consisting of 8" sewer pipe installed between new manhole structures within the rights-of-way. This option is dependent on having a suitable point of connection to other existing gravity sewer infrastructure, or having a suitable site available for the installation of a new public lift station. With conventional gravity sewer, all residences that opt in to the STS conversion program will be connected to the public system by a 4" gravity sewer lateral extending from the location of the existing private septic tank (which will be abandoned) to the gravity main in the right-of-way.

Option #2 is low pressure sewer, consisting of small-diameter (typically less than 6") force main pipe installed within the rights-of-way. This option has a smaller footprint of impacts and is typically utilized where the impacts from a gravity sewer installation are deemed too severe, or where there are other factors that limit the feasibility or effectiveness of gravity sewer installation. With low pressure sewer, all owners that opt in to the STS conversion program will have a new grinder station installed on their property at or near the location of their existing private septic tank (which will be abandoned) and a new small-diameter low pressure service pipe (typically 2" or less) will connect the grinder station to the public low pressure main in the right-of-way.

After receipt of the survey, geotechnical, and other supporting information, a determination of whether to implement conventional gravity, low pressure sewer, or a combination of the two will be made based on engineering recommendations.

What is a grinder station and how big is it?

A typical grinder station consists of a small manhole-type structure that houses a single float-controlled pump. Sanitary flow out of the residence is discharged into the structure and, when triggered by an internal float, a grinder pump turns the sanitary discharge into a slurry that is pumped into the public low pressure system. The grinder package itself will be on the order of 24" in diameter and 36" in depth. After installation, only the access lid of the grinder package will be visible on the ground surface. Pictures of a conventional grinder package construction and finished installation are included at the end of this FAQ.



City of Gulf Breeze

Where will the grinder station be located?

Typically, the location of a grinder station will be somewhere along the route of the existing sanitary sewer discharge pipe between the residence and the existing septic tank. The exact location along that pipe can generally be adjusted as required to protect existing improvements or to accommodate a homeowner's specific preference. The final location of the grinder station will be based on the location of the existing sanitary discharge pipe, site-specific constraints, and location of the power source, as agreed upon by the Owner, City, and Engineer.

Does a grinder pump operate continuously?

No. The grinder pump is controlled by a float inside the grinder package structure, and only operates when the level of flow inside the structure reaches the point that requires the structure be emptied. After the structure is emptied, the pump automatically shuts off and the cycle of filling and emptying begins again. The exact timing of the grinder cycle is determined by the amount of water used at each residence. Assuming a typical three bedroom house uses roughly 350 gallons of water per day and a typical grinder package has a capacity of between 20 and 40 gallons, the pumping cycle would repeat itself approximately 10 to 20 times per day.

Who pays for power to operate the grinder pump?

Installation of the physical components required to power the grinder pump is a project cost and will be covered by the City at no cost to the Owner. The party responsible for paying for power at the residence (Owner, Tenant, etc.) will be responsible for power utilized by the grinder pump after installation as part of their monthly power bill.

How is a grinder pump wired to the existing electrical system?

Grinder pumps are typically powered by a conventional 3-prong plug that connects to a GFCI receptacle fed from a 2-pole electric breaker. These components will be installed by the City at no cost to the Owner. Specific equipment selection and electric service details will be determined during the design phase.

Who pays for repairs to sod, trees, landscape, and other improvements that are disturbed during construction?

During the Construction Phase, disturbances within private property will be limited to locations where new pipe is installed between the right-of-way and the residence, the location of the new grinder package (if utilized), and the location of the abandoned septic tank. All disturbed areas will be restored to a condition that matches or is better than the conditions prior to disturbance. Work will begin within the rights-of-way to install the public infrastructure and service connection lines extending to each residence. This work may require the landscape in the right of way in front of your home to be disturbed or removed. The City will make every effort to coordinate the relocation of landscape features from the right of way onto your property, but some items may be required to be removed to accommodate the proposed improvements. Similarly, any pavement, driveways, or sidewalks that are temporarily removed to facilitate construction will be replaced. It is likely that traffic may be reduced to one-lane or detoured during certain phases of the construction.



City of Gulf Breeze

How much notice will be given to Owners and Residents before work commences?

The project is currently in the design phase, and construction is estimated to begin in 2024. A project website is being developed that will provide the most up-to-date scheduling information, and the City will utilize its typical notification methods (mailers, social media, etc.) to keep the public informed on project details and schedule.

If I opt out of this septic to sewer conversion opportunity, how much would it cost for me to hire my own contractor to perform this conversion at a later date?

Multiple site-specific factors influence construction cost, such as the location of the existing septic tank, distance between the tank and the point of connection to the public infrastructure, type of grinder package selected, and electrical service requirements. In addition to these site-specific factors, other variables such as availability of labor, equipment, and materials, price fluctuations, and market demand will influence costs. Given all of these variables, it is difficult to provide a reliable estimate of costs for an owner-initiated septic to sewer conversion.

If I opt out of this septic to sewer conversion opportunity, will I pay a different impact fee if I choose to convert at a later date?

The City's sewer impact fee is not expected to increase. The impact fee is a mechanism through which residents share in the costs of infrastructure necessary to collect, transmit, treat, and dispose of sanitary sewer flows. Florida Statutes require the City to evaluate its impact fees on a regular basis to ensure the fees reflect recovery of actual cost incurred by the City. The City evaluated its sewer impact fee in September 2021 – at that time reducing the fee from \$5,200 to \$4,314 per household – and anticipates reevaluating the fee again in the next three to five years.

See the following pages for pictures representative of a typical grinder package installation.



City of Gulf Breeze



Image 1: New sewer lateral (white pipe) being installed between residence and new grinder package (black structure)



Image 2: New grinder package (black structure with green cover) being installed adjacent to existing structure.



City of Gulf Breeze



Image 3: Grinder package after installation is complete. Only the access cover is visible from the surface.