



Silver Sands Septic System Replacement Overview

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Subject: Silver Sands Septic to Sewer Evaluation of Sewer Connection Options

Project Background and Purpose

In December of 2023, New Smyrna Beach Utilities (NSBU) was awarded \$7.5 million in grant funding for the conversion of private residential septic systems to municipal sanitary sewer within the Silver Sands area. Additionally, in early 2025 NSBU was awarded \$11 million for construction expenses and \$2 million in funding to offset the abandonment and connection costs required of the homeowners. Silver Sands is located in the southern portion of New Smyrna Beach, between the Atlantic coast and the intracoastal waterway. This septic to sewer conversion project will decommission approximately 554 residential septic systems and connect those properties to a centralized sewage collection system to be owned, operated, and maintained by NSBU. Once the residents are connected to the sewer system, the wastewater generated will be conveyed to NSBU's water reclamation facility (WRF) through a lift station and gravity collection system.

In preparation of this septic to sewer project a review of sewer connection options was conducted. This review included options for homeowners to connect to the centralized wastewater system, septic system abandonment, as well as funding and repayment options. A summary of the connection options, process for septic tank abandonment, along with financial and repayment options is presented below.

Connection to Central Sewer

Grant funding has been awarded to NSBU to help alleviate the fiscal burden placed on the property owner for connection costs. However, the \$2 million awarded will likely only cover half the cost of private connections and septic tank abandonment, leaving the remaining financial responsibility on the property owners.

In general, there are three options for homeowners to connect to the proposed wastewater collection system. Each option has benefits as well as challenges that may be faced.

These options for connecting to the proposed wastewater collection system include:

1. Homeowner will be responsible for installation of a lateral line to connect to the gravity main.

This option would include NSBU's general contractor, who is constructing the centralized wastewater system, installing a stub-out to each property during the construction of the wastewater collection system. The installation of a lateral line from the home to the stub-out would be left up to the homeowner. While this would be the least expensive and least time-consuming option for the utility it could also be the most challenging. Leaving the final connection to the homeowner could result in homes not connecting to the system and would require NSBU to enforce the mandatory connection ordinances in place within the City and County.

2. The contractor installing the wastewater collection system will be responsible for connecting each house to the system.

This option would include the general contractor for the project installing the centralized wastewater collection system to also install the lateral lines and connect each property to the system. This option would be expensive for NSBU and would require significant scheduling and coordination between the contractor and property owners.

3. NSBU will provide homeowners with a list of pre-qualified plumbers and an incentivized unit cost to connect to the collection system.

This option will include NSBU developing a list of prequalified local plumbers to provide to property owners for connection to the collection system. This will include NSBU collaborating with the prequalified plumbers to determine a discounted installation that can be offered if property owners use their services and connect within a pre-determined timeframe.

Septic System Abandonment

As previously stated, NSBU has been awarded \$2 million to assist with private connection costs. However, this funding will likely only cover half the cost for private connection and septic tank abandonment, leaving the remaining financial responsibility on the property owners.

Based on state regulations, once a property is connected to a centralized wastewater collection system, the property owner will have 90 days to abandon any existing septic systems.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) sets specific actions that must be taken to abandon a septic system, these steps are outlined below.

1. Property owner must apply for a permit from the FDEP to abandon the existing septic system and submit the required permit fee.
2. Once the permit is received, the septic tank should be pumped out by a permitted septage disposal company. This disposal company should provide a receipt or written certification to the FDEP.
3. The bottom of the tank should be opened, ruptured, or the entire tank collapsed to prevent the tank from retaining water.
4. The tank should be filled with clean sand or other suitable material and completely covered with soil.

5. Finally, an inspection of the system abandonment should be conducted either by FDEP staff, the utility, or the plumbing authority performing the system abandonment.

Funding and Repayment

NSBU has been awarded \$2 million in grant funding to help alleviate property owner fiscal burden for connection costs. However, the grant funding will likely only cover half the cost of private connections and septic tank abandonment, leaving the remaining financial responsibility on the property owners.

All connection and septic system abandonment costs to be paid by property owner will be dependent on the amount of funding received. Ideally, the full project cost, including property connection and septic tank abandonment will be covered by grants. However, if full funding is not received, NSBU could collaborate with the City and County to place assessments on the homes within the project area. This would allow homeowners to pay back any costs associated with the system construction and connection over a 20-year period as part of their property tax. Additionally, NSBU could also place an assessment on all sewer bills for the area to receive payment for the construction and connection of the wastewater collection system.

Additionally, this project will result in new fees and bills for the properties within the project area. Included in these fees would be a connection fee, this would need to be paid by the homeowner, regardless of whether they connect to the system or not. NSBU could offer an incentivized connection fee rate during a set period of time after the collection system is constructed. In addition to the connection fee homeowners will begin receiving a monthly wastewater bill. This bill will be determined based on the established NSBU domestic wastewater rates as well as the metered gallonage of water consumed at each property. NSBU must determine how soon after the completion of the collection system the first monthly bills will be sent out and send written notifications to all sewer customers.