

NSBU Important Updates: November 2026
SILVER SANDS SEPTIC-TO-SEWER PROJECT

Background and Purpose of the Septic-to-Sewer Conversion Project

In 2023, the Florida legislature passed House Bill 1379, Chapter 2023-169, Laws of Florida, representing a significant step toward improving water quality and protecting Florida's environment. The legislation establishes requirements for certain properties using septic systems to connect to a central sewer system or upgrade to a nitrogen-reducing septic system by July 1, 2030. The Indian River Lagoon Protection Area is included in the legislation and as a result, *Silver Sands residents are impacted.*

In response to citizen requests, New Smyrna Beach Utilities (NSBU) secured approximately $18.9 million in grants to help fund construction of a central sewer system. Subsequently, NSBU hired an engineering firm to develop project plans and identify a location for the lift station, a necessary component of the sewer system.

In December 2025, homeowner members of the Silver Sands Civic Association (SSCA) had the opportunity to vote on whether a designated portion of the SSCA property could be donated for the lift station, allowing the project to move forward. Of the 210 members who voted at the December 2025 meeting, 190 (90%) supported NSBU to use the designated portion of the property for the lift station.

Proposed Special Assessment and Estimated Costs to Homeowners

Despite the grant funding secured to date and continuing efforts to secure additional grant funds, the project currently has an estimated funding shortfall of approximately $9 million. A special assessment on Silver Sands properties is therefore anticipated.

The current estimated assessment is $15,000 to $20,000 per property. This amount could decrease if additional grants or other funding sources become available, or if the project is completed under budget. NSBU is actively pursuing additional grants to assist in project funding.

The special assessment is expected to be placed on the Volusia County tax roll, allowing homeowners to pay the assessment in installments over a period of up to 20 years. For example, if an assessment of $15,000 to $20,000 were spread evenly over twenty years, the homeowner would pay approximately $750 to $1,000 per year, plus any required interest. The actual annual amount will depend on the final assessment amount and applicable terms.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is a special assessment?**
   - A special assessment is a charge a local government places on a specific property to help pay for an improvement or service that directly benefits that property, in this instance, the new sewer project. Unlike regular property taxes, which are based on your property's value and support general government services, a special assessment is tied to the benefit your property receives, and the cost is divided fairly among all the properties that benefit. It appears as a separate line on your annual property tax bill and is paid at the same time as your property taxes.

2. **What does the proposed special assessment cover?**
   - The special assessment will include the project costs that exceed available grant funding, the private side connection to the central sewer system, the abandonment of the old septic tank for each parcel of property, and capital connection fees. Each Silver Sands resident will be responsible for paying the special assessment once the central sewer system project is complete.

3. **What is the estimated cost for homeowners who choose to upgrade to a nitrogen-reducing septic system?**
   - Those seeking the option of upgrading to a nitrogen-reducing septic system are encouraged to contact local septic installation companies directly for an estimate. Note that in addition to the higher cost compared to traditional septic systems, the nitrogen-reducing septic systems require a different maintenance and testing schedule.

   - Also, for homeowners choosing this option, any costs to connect to the central sewer system in the future will be the financial responsibility of the homeowner, and grant funds to reduce those costs will not be available.

4. **What will be the monthly estimated sewer fee after project completion?**
   - Once connected to the central sewer system, homeowners will be charged a monthly sewer base fee plus consumption rates. The wastewater consumption charge is based on potable water consumption. Current rates can be found on our website, www.nsbufl.com. The wastewater charges will be added to their existing monthly NSBU electric and water billing statement.

- Every property will be provided with a sanitary sewer cleanout connection to the new central sewer system, whether the homeowner connects to the central sewer system or opts for a nitrogen-reducing septic system. Because every property receives this connection, homeowners who opt for a nitrogen-reducing septic system will still be charged the monthly sewer base fee.

5. **What does the septic-to-sewer project include?**
   - The project is designed to provide all Silver Sands residents with significant infrastructure improvements, including:
     - New sanitary sewer mains and laterals serving Silver Sands properties
     - Repaving of existing roads
     - Private plumbing connections necessary to connect properties to the central sewer system
     - Demolition and abandonment of existing septic tanks
     - New potable water mains.

6. **Is new home construction in Silver Sands required to install nitrogen-reducing septic system prior to the completion of the centralized sewer project?**
   - House Bill 1379 indicates that, effective January 1, 2024, homeowners applying for permits to construct new septic systems within the Indian River Lagoon Protection Program must install specialized nitrogen-reduction systems rather than traditional septic systems.

7. **If a homeowner's current septic system malfunctions before the sewer project is complete, is the homeowner responsible for upgrading to the nitrogen-reducing system?**
   - Volusia County has confirmed that a property will be exempt from the upgrade requirement, **and may make necessary repairs to its existing septic system**, provided the property is within the area that is to receive central sewer service through a fully funded project. The Silver Sands Septic to Sewer project will be fully funded when Volusia County approves the assessment.

   - If the septic system must be repaired or replaced *before the sewer project is fully funded*, the homeowner will be required to upgrade to a nitrogen-reducing septic system. Routine maintenance that does not require a county permit, such as pumping the septic tank, may generally proceed without upgrading to a nitrogen-reducing system at this time.

   - For guidance specific to your property, contact the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County at (386) 424-2061 and request a written determination regarding permitting category before authorizing any work.

- **Important reminder:** Homeowners who choose not to connect to the central sewer system in Silver Sands must upgrade to a nitrogen-reducing septic system by July 1, 2030, as required under the applicable law, and will be charged the assessment and regular monthly sewer base fees on their utility bills.

8. **Will homeowners who do not connect to the central sewer system still have to pay for the special assessment?**
   - Yes. The special assessment applies to all Silver Sands properties, whether or not the homeowner elects to connect to the central sewer system. Every property in the project area benefits from the new sewer infrastructure and will receive a sanitary sewer cleanout connection, so the assessment is charged to all properties. Homeowners who instead upgrade to a nitrogen-reducing septic system will still pay the special assessment, along with the monthly sewer base fee.

9. **Why are the estimated assessment costs of the project for homeowners higher than previously reported to Silver Sands residents?**
   - NSBU is currently carrying a 20% contingency in the cost estimate. Prior Engineer's Opinion of Probable Cost estimates were completed at 30%, 60%, and 90% design. The largest cost drivers in these estimates were due to the restoration cost, the cost to repair, and rebuild and repave the affected roadways, sidewalks, and rights-of-way. As NSBU moves toward 100% design, additional project specific detail will be obtained that provides a more complete estimate of anticipated project costs. The 100% Engineer's Opinion of Probable Cost is expected to be available in December 2026. Actual pricing won't be available until bids are opened and Contractor pricing is received, which is anticipated to occur in April/May 2027.

10. **Will the assessment be transferrable? What will the interest charge be?**
    - The assessment is tied to the property. Anyone who later owns the property or lends against it is bound by the assessment. If you sell your property, the buyer normally takes over the remaining yearly assessment payments, unless you and the buyer agree on something different (for example, you paying it off at closing). Some lenders will require the assessment to be paid off before they close a loan on the property. We anticipate the County's borrowing cost to be 5% annually. Early payoffs will not be subjected to an interest charge. The County Council makes the determination of the loan terms, 10, 15 or 20 years.

Please contact Ellen Fisher, Communications Manager at NSBU, with additional questions. (386) 424-3003; efisher@nsbufl.com