



AMERICAN LAKE GARDENS / TILLICUM SEWER EXTENSION PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Updated May 2009

Why has the City Council decided to build sewers in American Lake Gardens and Tillicum?

The City recognizes that sewer infrastructure is needed in order to allow businesses to grow and provide direct services to the residents in these areas. A sewer system will promote development of future land uses that are identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan and encourage economic revitalization of these two neighborhoods. Residents will be able to use their property to its fullest potential without adverse impacts to the environment from the failing septic systems.

What does the project include?

This \$17 million project constructs the sanitary "back bone" system including pipes and pump stations that will tie into Pierce County's system 1 ½ miles away near the intersection of Gravelly Lake Drive and Pacific Highway. (see project map).

Phase 1: includes 3 pump stations (two in Tillicum and one in American Lake Gardens) & sewer pipe along the Union Avenue (Berkeley to Maple), Berkeley Street, Portland Avenue, Spruce Street, 146th Street (Murray to Spring Street), Spring Street, and 150th Street (Spring Street to 7200 block).

Phase 2: includes sewer pipe between North Thorne Lane and Pacific Highway (north east of Gravelly Lake Drive).

In addition, the City will be updating the storm drainage system within the entire sewer project limits.

Lakewood Water District is replacing water main in the bulk of the Tillicum (sewer) project limits.

What has happened so far?

The environmental review was completed in July 2007. The Phase 1 project design, plans, and specifications were completed in March 2009. The City successfully advertised and awarded the contract to the lowest responsible bidder in April 2009.

What is happening now?

The City is preparing for construction of Phase 1 to begin in June 2009. Phase 2 design is being completed with expected construction start in November 2009.

Where is the funding for the project coming from?

The total project cost of \$17 million comes from a variety of sources:

- \$7.2 million – Washington State Public Works Trust Fund Loan (paid by current Lakewood sewer customers via rate surcharge)
- \$1.5 million – U.S. Economic Development Administration Grant
 - \$600,000 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Grant
 - \$400,000 – U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant
- \$ 5.7 Million – City of Lakewood Surface Water Management Fund
- \$ 700,000 - Lakewood Water District
- \$900,000 – City of Lakewood "In-Kind" Services

Why is Pierce County involved?

Pierce County operates the sewer system within the city of Lakewood, and effluent from the system is treated at the Chambers Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

When will I be able to connect to sewer service?

The construction of the sewer system is expected to be completed in December 2010, which is the earliest you could connect. However, the sewer cannot be "turned on" until a minimum flow of 80,000 gallons per day is achieved. The City is optimistic that the minimum required flows may be achieved without implementing a mandatory connection policy, and therefore the City is proceeding with the project on a voluntary connection policy.

Do I have to connect to the sewer once it is constructed?

As long as your septic system continues to function properly, at this time, you will not be required to connect to the sewer. Properties with failing septic systems within 300 feet of the sewer line will be required to hook up to sewer (unless a hardship exception is granted). In addition, properties that redevelop will be required to hook up to sewer.

If I choose to connect to the sewer, how much would I have to pay?

It is too soon to have an exact figure. Total cost for a single-family home for connecting to sewer ranges from \$5,000 to \$7,000 which includes \$1,800 for connection charges and permit fees to Pierce County, and \$3,000 to \$5,000 for constructing the side sewer from the street to the building. Monthly costs for sewer service to a single-family home are estimated to be about \$24. Costs for multi-family and commercial property connections and monthly fees can be higher.

What about my septic tank?

If you receive sewer service, your septic tank will need to be disconnected and abandoned so it does not become a safety hazard for you, other residents, or the environment. The septic system decommissioning process is coordinated with Tacoma – Pierce County Health Department according to their regulations.

Will there be grants available for sewer connections?

The City has secured money via a WA State Public Works Trust Fund loan in order to provide low interest loans and grants for sewer connections. More information will be available in early 2010 as the loan / grant program is developed.

If I'm not part of this project, how and when will I get sewer?

Future sewer extensions could be accomplished through the use of either a Utility Local Improvement District (ULID) or Local Improvement District (LID). The ULID or LID is a process that enables Pierce County (ULID) or the City of Lakewood (LID) to use long term tax-exempt financing to construct utility improvements to serve properties in a specific area. The cost of the extension is borne in whole or in part by special assessments on the benefiting properties and allows for low-interest rates and up to 20 years to pay for the cost of improvements.

What are the construction impacts?

The City expects the sewer would be constructed over a 18 month period beginning in June 2009. The City will provide regular updates of the contractor's proposed order of work. Temporary road closures and detours will be required for the construction and the City will work with property and business owners to minimize the disruption.

If I have concerns, what can I do?

As a resident of Lakewood, you are encouraged to express your issues and concerns to your elected officials and staff. The Council meets every Monday evening at 7:00 PM at City Hall. You may also write a letter or email your questions or concerns and send it to:

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