



Side Sewer FAQs: Connections, Construction and Rates

In July of 2007, Mason County Commissioners passed Ordinance 91-07 establishing that properties within 500 feet of the sewer alignment in the Belfair Urban Growth Area will be required to hook into the sewer system as it becomes available.

Where will my sewer connection be located?

Properties required to hook into the system have been provided a “stub” in the road right-of-way to build into. Each stub location is property-dependent, but generally speaking locations were selected based upon location of nearby underground utilities, driveways, etc. Property owners will need to build a side sewer from their building to the stub in the right-of-way. More information about side sewers is available on our Side Sewer [Fact Sheet](#). Mason County will provide property owners a map confirming the exact location of their side sewer stub in early 2011.

What if my property is not located adjacent to the roadway?

The county has provided a stub for all properties, regardless of whether your property abuts the roadway or not. If your property is not located adjacent to a right-of-way (i.e. there is another property between you and the main roadway where the sewer main is located), you will need to identify an easement via a driveway or utility right-of-way to locate your side sewer. If you don't have an existing easement, you will need to coordinate with your nearby neighbors. If you have property specific questions about your side sewer connection, call our project hotline at 360-801-2482.

Do I get a stub if my property is currently vacant?

Yes. All properties required to connect to the system have been provided a stub. If your property is currently vacant, you will not be required to connect until your land is developed. A map of your side sewer stub will be filed with the Mason County Planning Department. If you decide to develop your property, you will receive a copy of the map when you file for a building permit. Vacant properties will be assessed the current connection fee at the time they are developed.

What is the timeline for building my side sewer?

The county is asking property owners to be ready for side sewer construction starting in spring 2011 and have their side sewers ready for operation by the end of 2011 (December 31, 2011). Mason County will be in touch with individual property owners in early 2011 to provide additional information about side sewer construction and payment and financing options.

What if I decide not to build a side sewer? What happens?

Properties that do not meet hook-up policies may be subject to decertification of their septic tank and increased connection fees. As of January 1, 2012, if your property is subject to Mason County Ordinance 91-07, you will be charged a higher connection fee if you do not connect

during this initial hook-up phase. The health department has the authority to condemn your septic tank; thus making your property “uninhabitable” under current health standards.

How much will a side sewer cost to build?

Property owners are responsible for construction of their side sewers. Construction costs are largely property-dependent, and will vary based on the length of your connection and the geographical constraints of your property. On average, we estimate that a typical single family side sewer will cost approximately \$4,000. Commercial and multi-family buildings will cost more.

What will the connection fee be for hooking into to the sewer?

Mason County is in the process of setting the fees for connecting to the new wastewater system. Connection fees will be based on the water use of an Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU). A single family home (2.5 people) is typically considered one ERU. Businesses and institutions will likely be multiple ERUs.

The current connect fee estimate for properties that connect to the system in 2011 is \$3,000 per ERU. This fee is available to:

- Property owners required to connect during this [first phase](#),
- Existing developed properties that cannot connect during the first phase for logistical reasons, and
- Existing developed properties in [Phase 2](#) of the wastewater system.

After startup of the sewer system, any new development and existing properties in [Phases 3 and 4](#) of the wastewater system will likely be charged a \$15,000 conversion fee per ERU, however this fee is currently in review. More information about connection fees will be available as a final rate ordinance. Final connection rates will be determined through a rate ordinance passed by Mason County Commissioners in fall 2011. A public ordinance review process is anticipated.

How many gallons are in an Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) in Belfair, and how did you determine that figure?

Every community has a unique gallons per day usage. After reviewing Belfair Water District data and adjusting for peak water periods (summer months, June - August), 135 gallons per day was determined as average for typical residential use in Belfair.

Do I have to pay the connection fee all at once?

These details will also be part of a rate ordinance passed by Mason County Commissioners.

What will the monthly costs be after connecting to the sewer?

The county is still in the process of estimating rates for the new sewer system. Rates will be based on a property’s ERU, and are currently estimated at \$96 per month, per ERU. Commercial properties and businesses will likely be multiple ERUs based upon water usage.

Who should I hire to build my side sewers?

Each property owner can individually select a licensed contractor to build their side sewer. A permit and inspection will be required by Mason County. The county has a list of qualified side sewers contractors to assist property owners in selecting a contractor, available on the project website: www.masoncountywastewater.com. We encourage best practices in hiring a contractor for private property work, including getting multiple bids and checking references.

Will there be a county-subsidized side sewer construction program available?

Mason County is currently developing a county-run hook-up program where property owners would elect to have a county-hired contractor build their side sewer. By hiring a contractor to build multiple side sewers, the county may be able to lower the construction costs for property owners. If you elect to participate in the county-run hook-up program, you will also have the opportunity to finance the construction costs of your side sewer through the county. A list has been developed, and more information will be available to property owners soon to evaluate if participating in this program is a good choice for them.

Can I build my own side sewer?

Yes, however, Mason County encourages the use of a licensed contractor. All side sewers will require an inspection by Mason County before they can become operational. If your side sewer fails to meet inspection by the county, you may be required to pay for additional inspections and will be required to accommodate any modifications necessary to make the system compliant.

Do I have to pay for a grinder pump?

If you own a single family home on the low-pressure system, Mason County will provide you with a standard grinder pump. If you are located along the gravity system and you need a pump to get the wastewater from your home to the main in the street (i.e. your home is lower than the street), you will have to purchase your own pump. Commercial properties and businesses will also be required to purchase their own grinder pumps because they may require a larger pump than the one the county will provide for single family homes. See the [Project Map](#) to locate the gravity and low-pressure systems.