



Northeast Creek Residential Septic to Sewer Cost-Share Project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – April 2022

For more information, visit the project web page: <https://www.durhamnc.gov/4592>.

You may send questions to the project email address: SepticToSewer@durhamnc.gov.

You may also contact the project manager, Jonathan Baker, at Jonathan.Baker@DurhamNC.gov or (919) 560-4326 ext. 30211.

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ANSWERS:

1. Where is the Northeast Creek watershed located?

The Northeast Creek watershed is in the southeast part of the City of Durham. I-40 passes east to west through the middle of the watershed and NC-55 runs north to south through the watershed. For instructions on finding your watershed, visit <https://www.durhamnc.gov/706/Find-Your-Watershed>.

2. How do I qualify for the project?

You have to meet the following requirements to qualify for this project:

- the property must be connected to a septic system, and
- the property must be zoned as residential, and
- the property must be within the City of Durham limits, and
- the property must be within the Northeast Creek watershed boundary, and
- a City of Durham sanitary sewer line service must be available for the property.

3. How do I qualify for financial hardship?

If you are eligible for the Septic to Sewer Cost-Share Project, you may also be eligible for additional funds under the financial hardship criteria. You must be a resident of the City of Durham for at least 90 days and one of the following:

- Enrolled in a Durham County property tax relief program, or
- Household income (accounting for household size) is less than or equal to 200% of the most recent Federal poverty income guidelines, or
- Household income is less than or equal to Durham County's median household income for the most recent year of data available

4. How do I apply for the Septic to Sewer Project?

- Go to the project webpage at <https://www.durhamnc.gov/4592> to download the application and agreement form.
- Fill out and sign the application and agreement form.
- Send the application and agreement form to the Public Works Department using one of the following methods:
 - Email: SepticToSewer@durhamnc.gov
 - Mail: Residential Septic to Sewer Cost-Share Project, Attn: Jonathan Baker, City of Durham, Public Works Department, Stormwater & GIS Services, 101 City Hall Plaza, Durham, NC, 27701
 - Deliver in person: Public Works Department, Stormwater & GIS Services, 3rd Floor, 101 City Hall Plaza, Durham, NC 27701

5. If I am approved for a cost-share amount, how much time do I have to install my sewer lateral and remove my septic system?

The septic to sewer conversion needs to be completed within 18 months from the date you are approved for the Septic to Sewer Project. The Public Works Department reserves the right to deny the cost-share amount if the homeowner does not connect to City sewer and does not remove the septic system within this timeframe.

6. What does the cost-share amount cover?

The Septic to Sewer Project will cover the cost of one or more City and County fees to lower a

homeowner's cost to switch from a septic system to a connection with the City's sewer system. The base cost-share (first level) for approved applicants will cover the County's System Development Fee. This fee differs based on the number of bedrooms in your house. If you are approved for the financial hardship cost-share (second level), the County's System Development Fee and the City's Sewer Connection Fee will be covered. Find out about the total estimated costs under question #10.

7. What are the benefits of switching from a septic system to a connection to the City's sewer system?

- Replacing a septic system with a connection to the City sewer system saves time and money as well as helps keep your watershed healthy!
- Minimizing the number of septic systems within the Northeast Creek Watershed helps improve the water quality of local groundwater, creeks, and lakes including drinking water reservoirs.
- A connection to our safe and reliable sanitary sewer system greatly lessens required long-term maintenance and costs.
- The responsibility for maintenance of a private sewer system falls solely on the homeowner, but the upkeep of the majority of the public sewer system is the responsibility of the public utility.
- This project provides a cost-share that will make the switch even more affordable.

8. What are the steps for removing a septic system?

Please follow the guidelines for abandoning a septic system from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. For more information, go to <https://ehs.ncpublichealth.com/oswp/docs/HowToAbandonASystem.pdf>.

9. What are the steps for connecting to the City's sewer system?

- Contact the Public Works Department's Engineering Services Division at PWEngServ@durhamnc.gov. The applicant should indicate that they would like to connect to the City of Durham's sanitary sewer system and provide the address of the property to be connected.
- Engineering Services will provide a quote and application for sewer line service to the applicant.
- The applicant will hire a plumber to apply for a plumbing permit through the City-County Inspections Department.
- The applicant will return the application with a valid plumbing permit number and payment.
- Engineering Services will process the application and forward the Service Request to the Water Management Department's Water and Sewer Maintenance Unit for installation.
- The sewer line service installation process may take up to 4 to 6 weeks.

10. What other costs do I need to consider when switching from septic to sewer?

It may cost \$10,000 or more to switch from a septic system to a connection with the sanitary sewer system. The following costs are the responsibility of the homeowner:

- Septic system removal or abandonment (estimated cost is \$1,500).
- Durham County System Development Fee (the fee starts at \$1,242 for a 2-bedroom house). For more information, go to <https://www.dconc.gov/county-departments/departments-a-e/engineering-and-environmental-services/utilities-division/fee-schedule>. *This fee is covered if you are approved to participate in the Septic to Sewer Project.*
- Durham City Sewer Connection Fee (\$3,147 for the fiscal year 2022). *This fee is covered if you are approved for financial hardship with the Septic to Sewer Project.*

- Durham City-County Plumbing Permit Fee (\$65).
- Private sewer lateral installation (cost varies depending on the distance from your house to the City sewer main).
- Monthly City sewer service bill (cost varies depending on monthly water consumption).

11. How can I find out the cost of a monthly sewer service bill for my house?

You can view water & sewer service rates and calculate your monthly bill on the City's website at <https://www.durhamnc.gov/1040/Current-Water-Sewer-Rates>.

12. What are other options for homeowner financial assistance?

The organizations listed below are potential options for financial assistance. Each organization has specific eligibility requirements to participate in its programs.

- Habitat for Humanity of Durham – Repairs Program
Office: (919) 682-0516
Website: <https://www.durhamhabitat.org/services/repairs-program>
- Rebuilding Together of the Triangle – Home Repair and Renovation Services
Office: (919) 341-5980
Email: info@rebuildingtogethertriangle.org
Website: <https://www.rttriangle.org/>
- North Carolina Housing Finance Agency – Urgent Repair Program
Office: 919-877-5700
Website: <https://www.nchfa.com/current-homeowners/repairing-your-home>

13. What is the goal of the project?

The main goal of the project is to improve water quality in Northeast Creek by encouraging homeowners in the City of Durham to replace their septic system with a connection to the City's sewer system.

14. What is the total budget for the Septic to Sewer Project?

The project budget is \$100,000.

15. When does the Septic to Sewer Project end?

The project is scheduled to end in June 2026. The project could end sooner if the funds are expended before June 2026.