



**SEWER CONNECTION STATUS MAPS**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)**  
**(Updated 11/21/24)**

**1. Q: Why is the County requiring property owners to connect to County sewer?**

A: The short answer is because it is required by law. State law, state regulations, and the Cecil County Code all say, in effect, that abutting property owners are required to connect to public sewer where and when it is available. Cecil County Sanitary District Policy Memorandum # 2: Connection to County Sanitary Sewer System (posted on the County website) outlines the criteria that must be met for a parcel to be considered served by sewer, and hence required to connect. For additional information on the underlying laws, regulations, and the Cecil County Code, you can consult the following (all of which are available on-line):

- Environment Article, Title 9-512(b);
- Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 26.04.02;
- Cecil County Code, §97-12.

**2. Q: Why is it better to be connected to public sewer than a septic system?**

A: A modern, well-maintained and operated wastewater treatment plant treats wastewater to a much higher level than do septic systems. That means that wastewater treatment plants remove more of the nutrients (typically nitrogen and phosphorous) from the wastewater before it is discharged back into the environment. This provides a greater degree of protection for public health and the environment. There are additional benefits as well. Connecting to public sewer relieves the property owner of responsibility for maintaining and, eventually, replacing the septic system, and connection to public sewer can also increase property values, particularly if the existing septic system is failing or nearing the end of its useful life.

**3. Q: What do the different colors on the Sewer Connection Status Maps mean?**

A: the legend on each map sheet explains what each of the colors means, but here is a more complete explanation:

- If a property is shown in color (i.e. yellow, orange, gray, or red), it is within the County's sewer service area. If it's not in color (i.e. it's shown in white or is not on the map), then it is outside the County sewer service area and is not subject to the County's sewer connection policy.
- If a property is shown in yellow, that means that it has been determined to be served by County sewer, it's developed (i.e. has a house or other structure on it), and is already connected to County sewer.
- If a property is shown in orange, it has been determined to be served by County sewer, is developed (i.e. has a house or other structure on it), should have been connected to County sewer previously but, for some reason, has not been connected. The property is subject to the County's policy regarding sewer connection and will have to be connected to sewer when a triggering event occurs or the ten-year grace period expires, unless a variance is requested and approved. (See Cecil County Sanitary District Policy Memorandum # 2: Connection to County Sanitary Sewer System for more details.)
- If a property is shown in gray, it has been determined to be served by County sewer, but it is not currently developed. If/when a house or other structure is built, it will have to be connected to County sewer as a condition of the building permit, unless a variance is requested and approved.
- If a property is shown in red, it lies within the County's sewer service area, but is not currently served by sewer.

**4. Q: Is the County going to connect me to public sewer? If not, what contractors do this type of work, i.e. connect a house to County sewer?**

A: In cases where the County is extending sanitary sewer service to an area for the primary purpose of safeguarding public health and the environment, immediate connection will be required and the connection will be made by the County as part of the project, and a Benefit Assessment will be levied on property owners to fund the project, in whole or in part. If the sewer line has already been installed and your house or other structure is either new or, for some reason, was not previously connected, then you, the property owner, will be responsible for making the connection. Licensed plumbers do this type of work, as do some utility contractors who also hold the necessary plumbing licenses.

**5. Q: What is involved in connecting to County sewer?**

A: Once the necessary permits and approvals are obtained, there are three basic components or steps in connecting a house or other structure to County sewer:

- Installing a buried pipe (called a sewer lateral) from the house/structure out to the County sewer main and connecting that lateral to the sewer main;
- Disconnecting the house plumbing from the pipe that goes to the septic tank and connecting it, instead, to the newly-installed sewer lateral;
- Formally abandoning the septic system as more fully described in Question 9 below.

In most cases, the sewer lateral will be a gravity line that will slope from the house or structure down to the sewer main, but under certain circumstances (i.e. if the ground slopes such that the point where the drain line exits the house sits below the elevation of the sewer main) a small pump (called a grinder pump) may be needed to pump the sewage from the house or structure up to the sewer main. The sewer lateral and the grinder pump (if required) are owned by, and the responsibility of, the property owner.

**6. Q: What permits and/or inspections are required to connect to County sewer?**

A: In most cases, A County sewer allocation and two County permits are required: a Wastewater Permit and a Plumbing Permit. Sewer allocation is issued by the Development Plans Review Division of the Cecil County Department of Land Use & Development Services (DLUDS), and serves to reserve capacity at the County wastewater treatment plant for your particular property. The Wastewater Permit is also issued by Development Plans Review Division and constitutes approval to physically connect to the County sewer main. Plumbing Permits are issued by the Permits & Inspections Division of DLUDS and alert the County's plumbing inspectors that the work is being performed so that the installation of the sewer lateral can be inspected. The Wastewater Permit will trigger an inspection by the Department of Public Works of the actual physical connection of the lateral to the sewer main and of the installation of the sewer cleanout. The Plumbing Inspector will also inspect the formal abandonment of the septic system as part of the Plumbing Permit.

**7. Q: How much does it cost to connect to County sewer?**

A: Costs associated with connecting to County sewer can be broken down into two components: County fees and contractor costs to actually do the physical work of installing the sewer lateral and abandoning the septic system. County fees include permit fees and a Major Facility Fee (MFF); there may also be a Benefit Assessment as well. There is no fee for a Wastewater Permit. There is a fee for a Plumbing Permit; the fee depends on what work is actually going to be done. Contact the Permits & Inspections Division of DLUDS for more information about Plumbing Permit fees. The MFF is a one-time charge for new sewer customers which helps to offset the capital costs of wastewater treatment plants and other components of the County's sanitary sewer infrastructure. It is charged on an Equivalent Living Unit (ELU) basis with one ELU being assumed equal to the sewage flow from one single family home. At the present time, the MFF for a single family home requiring one ELU is \$12,000. Benefit Assessments are additional one-time charges which are intended to have the actual beneficiaries of the project fund all or part of the project cost. You should contact the Development

Plans Review Division of DLUDS to see if your property is subject to a Benefit Assessment. Contractor costs to install the sewer lateral and abandon the septic system will depend on multiple factors such as the distance and depth of the pipe. It is recommended that you solicit written estimates from several qualified contractors before selecting one to do the work.

**8. Q: Is the County going to pay to connect me to sewer? Are there grants and/or financing options available to help cover the cost?**

A: The property owner is responsible for the costs associated with connecting to County sewer, although financing options are available for payment of Major Facility Fees and may be available for payment of Benefit Assessments as well. Contact the Finance Department for more details about financing options. Grant funding may be available, contact the Development Plans Review Division of DLUDS at (410) 996-5225 for more details.

**9. Q: What happens to my septic system once I'm connected to County sewer?**

A: In addition to requiring connection to County sewer where and when available, §97-12 of the Cecil County Code requires property owners to formally abandon their existing on-site disposal system (typically a septic system) upon connection to public sewer. This is typically done by pumping out the septic tank, punching or otherwise making holes in the bottom of the tank to permit drainage, filling the tank with crushed stone, and then regrading and otherwise restoring the area that was disturbed in the course of the work.

**10. Q: My septic system is working properly. Do I still have to connect?**

A: Unless you receive a variance, you will have to connect to public sewer at some point, but you may be able to defer connection under certain circumstances. Cecil County Sanitary District Policy Memorandum # 2: Connection to County Sanitary Sewer System specifies circumstances or events which will trigger the requirement to connect, as well as procedures for requesting a variance. If you don't have a triggering event, you can defer connection for ten (10) years. At the end of that ten (10)-year period, if your existing septic system is still functioning properly, you can request a variance to extend the deadline to connect by an additional ten (10) years. Consult Policy Memorandum # 2 for details.

**11. Q: The Sewer Connection Status Map shows that my house is served by County sewer, but it is not currently connected. I intend to sell my house. Do I have to connect to County sewer in order to do so?**

A: Yes, unless you receive a variance. As outlined in Cecil County Sanitary District Policy Memorandum # 2: Connection to County Sanitary Sewer System, with one exception, title transfer constitutes a triggering event which requires connection to County sewer and abandonment of the existing septic system within 90 calendar days of closing. (The exception is if the transfer is the result of an inheritance or divorce settlement, and is intended to prevent such transfers from causing undue financial hardship.) The policy does not specify whether it is the responsibility of the buyer or seller to make the connection; the intent is that that would be negotiated and then incorporated into the contract of sale. Failure to make the connection could delay closing and/or settlement.

**12. Q: My property is served by County sewer, but I'm not currently connected. I have had, or am going to have, a triggering event that will require me to connect. How do I get started?**

A: The first thing we recommend is to read all of the answers to these FAQ's, as they will provide you with helpful information regarding the requirements and process. Second, we recommend you contact the staff of Development Plans Review Division of the Department of Land Use & Development Services at (410) 996-5225 who will provide you with additional information and help to get you started.

**13. Q: I live in the Town of Elkton (or Rising Sun, Perryville, Chesapeake City, or Cecilton). Does the County's policy apply to me?**

A: The short answer is no. The towns of Elkton, Rising Sun, Perryville, Chesapeake City, and Cecilton own and operate their own municipal sanitary sewer systems and have, or should have, their own policies regarding connection to those systems. Consult with your municipal government for more information regarding town policies. The County is the sewer service provider in the towns of North East, Charlestown, and Port Deposit, as well as certain unincorporated areas of the County lying within designated sewer service areas. The general rule is that if your property is shown in yellow, orange, gray, or red on one of the Sanitary Sewer Connection Status maps on the County website, then the County's policy applies; if not, then it doesn't.

**14. Q: Who can I call for more information?**

A: Contact the following County departments or agencies for additional information:

- DLUDS Development Plans Review Division at (410) 996-5225 for questions regarding:
  - Requests for sewer allocation;
  - Wastewater permits;
  - Major Facility Fees (MFF);
  - Benefit Assessments (BA);
  - Criteria and availability of grant funding.
- DLUDS Permits & Inspections Division at (410) 996-5235 for questions regarding:
  - Plumbing permits;
  - Plumbing inspections;
- DPW Wastewater Division at (410) 996-6260 for questions regarding:
  - Sewer cleanout inspections;
  - Sewer Connection Status Maps;
- Department of Finance at (410) 996-5385 for questions regarding:
  - Financing options;
- Department of Public Works, Office of the Director at (410) 996-5259 for questions regarding:
  - Cecil County Sanitary District policies;
  - Variance requests.