

# Septic Tank Elimination Program (STEP)

More than 17,000 homes in Marion County are served by private septic systems. Septic systems have a limited life and eventually fail, leaching human waste into groundwater, backyards and neighborhood ditches and streams. Septic systems are linked to high E. coli bacteria counts in many small neighborhood streams and ditches during dry weather, when children are most likely to play in them.

## The Solution

To address health hazards in our neighborhoods, Citizens Energy Group is continuing the city's efforts to convert many neighborhoods on septic systems to the sanitary sewer system.

Between 2009 and 2013, 7,000 homes in Indianapolis and Marion County have been or are planned to be taken off septic systems as part of STEP. Connecting these homes to the sanitary sewer will address approximately 25 percent of the homes on septic systems.

## The Benefits

The benefits of STEP are far-reaching:

- Reduced health hazards from dangerous bacteria exposure due to septic system failures in yards and ditches

- Cleaner area streams and neighborhood drainage ditches
- Future cost savings for repair and/or replacement of septic system (estimated between \$3k - \$10k)
- Potential increased marketability of property

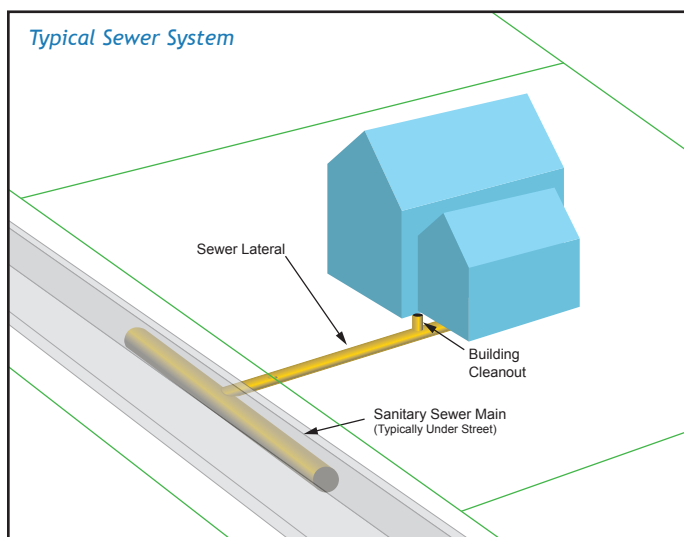
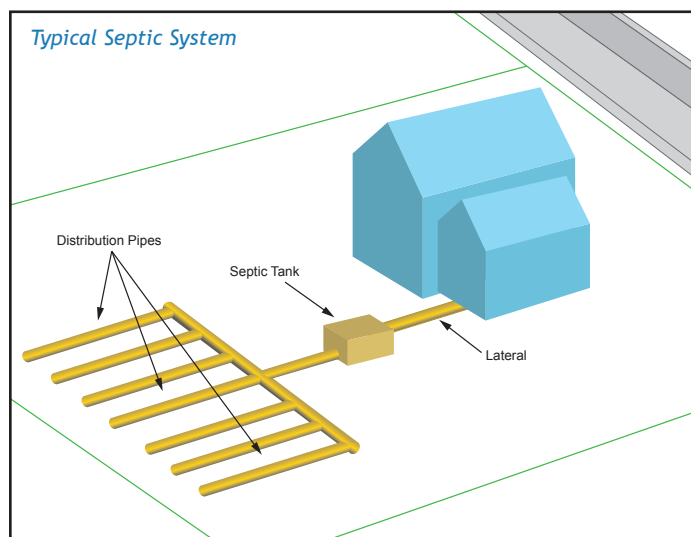
## The Costs

In 2005, the city of Indianapolis stopped using the state's Barrett Law to construct sewers in areas with septic systems. The Barrett Law often forced homeowners to pay more than \$12,000 to connect to the sanitary sewer system. Instead, the city began funding STEP through wastewater rates. Today, Citizens is continuing the city's approach to STEP.

As a homeowner, there are three main costs to connect to the sewer:

1. Construction costs to abandon your septic tank and install a sewer lateral on your property to connect your home to the sanitary sewer. You must hire a licensed and bonded general contractor or plumber to perform the work, and costs for these services are approximately \$2,000 to \$5,000, but vary per property.

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2. A one-time connection fee of \$2,530 for single-family homes. The fee is paid in either one lump sum or over five years if the homeowner qualifies for the STEP Financial Assistance Plan.

Citizens requires the sewer connection fee and any other permitting fees and charges be paid before construction permits are issued.

If the connection fee is not included in your contractor's bid for the work (the other permitting fees and charges are typically included in contractor's bids), then you may pay the connection fee using one of the methods described in the section titled "How to Pay the Connection Fee."

3. Your monthly sewer bill, which you will receive from Citizens Energy Group, previously provided by Indianapolis Water.

Cash, personal checks and money orders are accepted, as well as Visa and MasterCard with a valid photo ID. Checks and money orders must be made payable to Citizens Energy Group.

2. Homeowners may also apply to participate in the STEP Financial Assistance Plan. Citizens Energy Group offers the Financial Assistance Plan to help lower-income residents in STEP project areas pay the connection fee over time. The Financial Assistance Plan only covers the connection fee and does not include the construction cost to abandon your septic tank and install your lateral. A resident with no dependents that has an annual gross household income at or below \$46,050 may be eligible for the plan. Additionally, residents will receive a credit of \$3,700 for each household dependent.

The Financial Assistance Plan is not a loan. It is an installment plan that allows qualified residents to pay \$50 per month, including administrative fees, over 60 months (five years).

To apply for the Financial Assistance Plan, call (317) 927-4328 and request an application.

## Agencies Involved in STEP

Citizens constructs sewers in the public right-of-way, oversees STEP project implementation and the Financial Assistance Plan, which allows residents to pay the STEP connection fee in installments.

Citizens Energy Group will issue permits to licensed contractors to perform the necessary work on private properties to connect residents to the sewer system. *(Previously a function of the Department of Code Enforcement)*

The Marion County Health Department notifies property owners when they are required to connect to the sewer system and will enforce sewer connections.

## How To Pay The Connection Fee

If the connection fee is not included in the contractor's estimate to connect your home to the sanitary sewer, homeowners may pay the connection fee to Citizens Energy Group directly by using one of the following methods:

1. Pay in person. If you choose this payment option, you must make arrangements with your contractor when you hire him or her to do the work. Make your payment in person at Citizens Energy Group, 2020 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Your contractor must have already applied for a permit before you make your payment. Permitting applications may be completed by your contractor online at [www.CitizensEnergyGroup.com/Permits](http://www.CitizensEnergyGroup.com/Permits) or by calling (317) 927-4328. A permit will not be issued until the connection fee is paid.



Typical Construction Area