

ULID QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions have been raised during the formation of previous Utility Local Improvement Districts (ULIDs). In an effort to inform the residents prior to the formation of a ULID, Southwest Suburban Sewer District has prepared the following answers. If your questions are not answered after reading this information, please contact the District at (206) 244-9575.

1. **Question:** **What is a ULID?**

Answer: A ULID is a process whereby the property owners vote for sewer service by signing a petition circulated by parties interested in receiving sewer service. In order for the vote to be valid, the petition must be signed by the owners according to the records of the office of the county auditor of at least 51% of the land within the limits of the ULID to be created.

The signature of a record owner, as determined by the records of the King County auditor, shall be sufficient without the signature of the spouse. (RCW 57.02.010)

Where a corporation or investment company is concerned, all owners must sign the petition unless verification of Power of Attorney accompanies the signature. (RCW 57.02.010)

2. **Question:** **How will I know the ULID is going to be formed?**

Answer: When the Board has determined the petition is sufficient, it shall proceed to adopt a resolution declaring its intention to order the improvements. The resolution will include the boundaries of the ULID, estimated cost and expense of the improvement, the proportionate amount to be borne by each property and setting the date, time and place for a public hearing on the formation of the proposed ULID. Notice of the adoption of the resolution will be published in at least two consecutive issues of a local newspaper of general circulation, the date of the first publication to be at least 15 days prior to the public hearing. A notice of the public hearing and preliminary assessment will be mailed to each property owner as shown on the tax rolls at least 15 days prior to the public hearing. A notice will also be sent to renters of properties within the proposed ULID. At the hearing, the Board will consider all public testimony and other information in determining whether or not to create the ULID or to consider any other changes in the proposed ULID.

After the hearing, the Board shall have the jurisdiction to proceed with the improvement. A notice of formation of the ULID will be published in a local newspaper of general circulation. When the required notice of formation is published, property owners will have 30 days from the notice to file a lawsuit challenging the jurisdiction or authority of the sewer district to proceed with the improvements and creating the ULID. If after the 30 day appeal period has expired and no lawsuit is filed, the formation is conclusive and cannot be contested or questioned in any manner.

3. **Question:** **How do I know my area needs sewers?**

Answer: Nothing is more basic to public health and disease prevention than vigilance and thoroughness of environmental sanitation. For most of the urbanized portions of King County, there is no way of meeting these needs without a complete sewer system. The Seattle/King County Department of Public Health and the King County Council have identified your area as one they expect would receive sewer service. Because of known septic drain field problems and soil conditions, they hope that service would be extended at the earliest possible time and that such extensions would be planned in the most cost effective manner. Southwest Suburban Sewer district is the local government and the tool by which to help you accomplish this need.

4. **Question: How is the project financed?**

Answer: The Sewer District finances the project through the sale of municipal bonds or self-financing. The property owners then pay the cost of the sewer improvements through assessments against their property and monthly service charges. The term of the assessment is fifteen years at an interest rate set by the Board of Commissioners. All assessments are billed to the property owner by the King County Department of Finance on an annual basis.

5. **Question: How are assessments established?**

Answer: Prior to the formation hearing, preliminary engineering is performed to establish the estimated total project cost, the estimated assessment to be charged for each property within the project. During the preliminary engineering work, one or more construction layouts are developed. These alternative layouts are analyzed for their capability in providing service to the properties involved, for their relative cost comparisons, maintenance and operation cost, and total project cost. Final sewer line locations are not selected in this preliminary stage.

6. **Question: How and when are the final sewer line locations established?**

Answer: At ULID hearings, property owners' input is requested to aid the District and the Engineer in the final design. During the final design, investigations are made on the preliminary alternatives to develop sufficient detail to select the best layout. This selected alternative will be investigated, modified, or adjusted due to items such as easement requirements, basement elevations, side sewer requirements, other utility conflicts, permit requirements, cost minimization and other significant factors such as road restoration, environmental disturbances, etc. If you feel you have a sewer service problem, please contact the District during the design phase of the project.

7. **Question: How are assessments computed?**

Answer: The first part of your assessment is comprised from the total cost of construction, engineering, inspection and administrative costs. The total cost is then allocated to each lot served by one of the following methods: a) per lot (equally divided), b) frontal footage, c) square footage or d) a 50/50 basis whereby the total assessment cost is divided into halves with half allocated equally to each lot and the second half allocated on a square footage basis. Lots situated on corners are assessed on one side only; typically the short side.

All assessment methods are approved by the District's Board of Commissioners prior to the final assessment roll being filed with King County.

General Facilities Charge - The second portion of your assessment is the General Facilities Charge (GFC). The GFC is the charge for buying into the sewer system and pays for maintenance items such as upgrading Primary Treatment Facilities, Interceptors, Pump Stations and future improvements to these facilities. At present the charge is \$3,402.00 per property.

8. **Question:** Will my assessment amount change after the formation of the ULID?

Answer: Generally, no. In most cases, the project estimate is sufficiently accurate such that assessments do not change. However, if the construction bids vary significantly from the construction estimates, one of the following may occur:

a. If the construction cost is lower than the estimate, your assessment may be reduced.

b. If the construction bid is higher than the estimate, your assessment may be increased to cover the additional costs. However, if the additional cost is more than 10% higher than the construction estimate, the District may terminate the project if it is determined by the people within the area of the ULID that due to the 10% increase in cost, sewer service is no longer desired.

9. **Question:** When will I know what my final assessment will be?

Answer: When construction is complete and the final project costs are determined, the District will hold a final assessment roll hearing. A notice of the hearing will be published two times in a local newspaper and notice will be mailed to each property owner at least fifteen days prior to the public hearing. The notice will also include your final assessment.

10. **Question:** If the ULID is terminated, will the property owners be obligated to any costs?

Answer: No. If the project is terminated by the District, no assessment or cost will be levied as an obligation on the properties within the proposed ULID.

11. **Question:** If the project is terminated by the District, how can the project be reinstated?

Answer: Once termination has occurred, the entire ULID formation procedure must be re-instituted. Since the normal reason for termination is cost, it is obvious the new ULID would proceed forward until new assessments are re-computed, assessment notices re-mailed, and accepted by the affected property owners.

12. **Question:** How do I pay my assessment?

Answer: The assessment roll is generally filed with King County near the time construction is complete. At the time of filing, King County notifies all assessed property owners of the assessment being filed and provides two methods by which to pay the assessment.

a. The first method is full payment in cash within 30 days of notification. If so paid, no interest charges will be applied.

b. The second method allows the assessment to be financed over 15 or 20 years and collected by King County. The first installment will be due one year from notification of the assessment filing. Each year, a pro-rated share of the principal amount plus simple interest on the principal balance will be due.

The interest charged is 1/2% above the interest charge paid by the Sewer District for the bond sale to finance the project.

c. Assessment payments can only be made to King County, not Southwest Suburban Sewer District.

13. **Question:** Are there any government programs to assist a property owner in the payment of assessment and/or side sewer costs?

Answer: Possibly, provided funds are available and you qualify. King County, with Housing and Urban Development funds, has a loan and/or grant program to assist low income residents with side sewer costs. Southwest Suburban Sewer District has a ten and fifteen year installment plan by which side sewer installation costs can be financed. Also, the State of Washington has a program to defer assessments for senior citizens that qualify. You can contact the District Office for information on assessment deferral and low income assistance.

14. **Question:** What is the monthly sewer service charge after the project is installed?

Answer: All single family users of the sewer system pay a monthly fee of \$32.75 billed bi-monthly. Multi-family users pay a monthly fee of 32.75 billed bi-monthly. Commercial users are billed on their previous years water consumption averaged over a one year period also billed bi-monthly. Vacant properties do not pay a monthly sewer service charge. The District also has a low-income assistance program available for the monthly sewer service charges.

15. **Question:** When do I have to start paying the monthly sewer service charge?

Answer: Property owners do not pay a monthly sewer service charge until such time that they have connected to the sewer system.

16. **Question:** What easements are necessary for the project?

Answer: Generally the sewer lines are installed within King County streets and rights-of-way. When construction necessitates installing lines on private property, a permanent easement is

needed by the District. The permanent easement gives the District the right to install and maintain the sewer line on private property. The easement restricts construction of permanent structures over the sewer line. However, surface usage such as landscaping, driveways, patios, etc., are generally not restricted. The District requires that full restoration be made by the contractor. Should the District ever have to re-excavate to maintain the sewer line, full restoration will be made.

Temporary construction easements are also needed for the project when it is found that the contractor activities necessitate encroachment on private property. The temporary easement however, is only for the period of construction and as with the permanent easement, requires full restoration by the contractor. Upon completion of the installing contract, the temporary easement will no longer be valid.

17. **Question:** **How does the district obtain easements?**

Answer: The District obtains easements through contact with individual affected property owners. Because the cost of easement acquisition is borne by the ULID and therefore by the property assessments, the District desires to obtain the easements without cost which in turn will minimize the assessment costs for all ULID properties. Full property restoration is required in all cases. The District does have the right to acquire the easement, failing successful negotiations, by way of condemnation. Since condemnation is expensive it is only used as a last resort to obtain the required easements.

18. **Question:** **What will happen to the streets and roads due to the sewer project?**

Answer: Any construction disturbance to the roads caused by the sewer installation will be corrected to restore the roads to at least as good as, or better than, the condition prior to the sewer project.

19. **Question:** **Where does the District install the stub to which I connect my side sewer?**

Answer: The District terminates its construction five feet inside your property line, or the edge of the easement. The stub is generally located so that it can serve two adjoining properties. During construction, the property owner will be contacted to coordinate the installation of the stub at the owner's requested location.

20. **Question:** **What construction is the property owner responsible for after the District has constructed the sewer mainlines?**

Answer: The property owner is responsible for the cost of the side sewer, which may be installed by the property owner or contracted with a licensed side sewer contractor. Any contractor installing side sewers will need to be approved by the District prior to installation. You should have your contractor contact the District to arrange for approval.

A side sewer permit must be obtained from the District by the owner or his contractor prior to the installation at a present cost of \$120.00 for a single family residence, \$240.00 for a

commercial structure and for multi-family \$150.00 for the first unit plus \$20.00/unit thereafter.

All side sewer connections must be inspected by the District prior to backfilling.

21. **Question:** **Can I install a side sewer to be used both by myself and my neighbor?**

Answer: Yes, often property owners find a cost savings by sharing a common side sewer with their neighbor. The process requires a joint maintenance agreement to be executed between the two neighbors. This standard agreement is available at the District Office, and there is no additional charge to do so.

If there are circumstances which are unique to your property or which have not been addressed in the above questions and answers, we encourage you to contact the District at 206-244-9575.

22. **Question:** **How will property owners be kept informed about the process of the ULID?**

Answer: At significant points, owners will receive “project update letters” to keep them informed on the progress of the ULID; i.e., formation/preliminary assessment hearing, construction activities, final assessment hearing/acceptance.

PROCEDURE SCHEDULE

ULID SUMMARY

Time Required

1.	Formation initiated by Property Owners	?
	Certification of Signatures	2 weeks
2.	Preliminary Project Engineering by District Engineers	1 month
	Prepare and accept Additions and Betterments Resolutions	2 weeks
3.	Proponent/Protest Verification and Public Hearing of formation and preliminary assessment role by District	2 to 4 months
4.	ULID formation by district	1 month
5.	Project Engineering and Construction Bidding	3 to 5 months
6.	Cost evaluation and Public Hearing on Assessment by Bidding	1 month
7.	Construction	4 to 6 months
8.	Public hearing on Final Assessment Roll	1 month
9.	Acceptance by District	1 month
	TOTAL	12 to 18 months