

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

### General/Residential

I want to build a house on a vacant lot in Chapel Hill/Carrboro. How can I learn if potable water and sanitary sewer services are available?

- Contact a Technician in the Engineering and Planning department. Parcel data is regularly updated for our Geographic Information System (GIS).

If water (and/or sewer) service is not available to my property, will OWASA extend mains?

- No. Benefiting parties are responsible for main extension.

My vacant lot is in the OWASA Service Area. How much will it cost to have water and sewer service when I build my house?

- Fees are based on size of meter and size of house (heated square feet). A 5/8-inch meter is typical for a single family home. A list of Service Availability Fees is available on our website at <http://www.owasa.org/Data/Sites/1/media/customerService/summary-of-previous-and-oct-2015-rates-on-11-by-19.5-sheet-for-website-pdf.pdf>. Water and sewer Service Availability fees will apply.

Will OWASA install water and sewer services to my house?

- We can complete a water service installation from a main to, and including, the meter box. A licensed plumber or utility contractor will need to install the private service from the meter box to the house.
- For sewer services, OWASA will only make the service tap at the main. A licensed plumber or utility contractor will need to install the service line from the main to a clean out port at the edge of the road Right of Way or easement, and from the clean out port to the house.

If my property is inside the OWASA Service Area but there are no water or sewer mains available for connection, how can I get water and service?

- Extension of public mains is required. Water main extensions must be made all the way across the parcel if there are neighboring properties which could be served by an extension. For sewer, the main must be extended only to be adjacent to the parcel. An easement must be reserved if adjacent parcels can be served by a future extension.

How wide are easements? Can I plant or build anything there?

- Easements are normally 30 ft wide and need to remain clear of any structures or plantings which would impede access to mains and manholes. Certain types of plantings are normally allowed along the outer edges of easements. Contact staff of Collections and Distribution if you would like to build or plant near an existing main.

My house is not near a sewer main. Can I connect to my neighbor's service line?

- No, new combined services are not allowed. Each house or building must have a separate service line from the sewer main.

If I get permission from my neighbor, can I install a private service line across his property from the main line to my house?

- No, not for new construction. This condition would violate the policy for service. Mains must be adjacent to properties to be served. Variances will be considered for failing

septic systems and for situations where there may be no benefit from an extension of the water or sewer system.

I already have water and sewer services to my house and I would like to install an irrigation system. Can I branch a connection from the private section of my water service line?

- No. A separate tap, service line, and meter will be required. Irrigation services also require installation and annual testing of a backflow prevention assembly. Assemblies must be installed above grade in an insulated enclosure. However, 1-inch and larger service lines may be tapped into or 'split' for construction of a domestic and irrigation meters. One inch services that are already being utilized as a dual service for domestic service (i.e. already have two 5/8" meters connected) cannot be further 'split' for installing an additional irrigation meter.

My house is lies at the bottom of a hill, much lower than the road where the sewer main connection must be made. Can I install a pump?

- Yes, privately pumped connections are allowed but discouraged due to maintenance requirements. Options for a traditional, "gravity" sewer service should be thoroughly explored.

## Property Development

I need to extend water and sewer mains to my project. How do I get started?

- Contact the Engineering Associate for Plan Review to meet and discuss the project before design drawings are created.

What is required on drawings?

- Refer to Sections #3 and #4 in our Standards and Specifications, available on our website at [http://www.owasa.org/Data/Sites/1/media/whatWeDo/spec/2015-version-owasa\\_standards\\_and\\_specs.pdf](http://www.owasa.org/Data/Sites/1/media/whatWeDo/spec/2015-version-owasa_standards_and_specs.pdf)

How long will it take for you to review my drawings?

- Our goal is to respond within 15 working days of submission.

What fees will I have to pay and when?

- Plan Review and Construction Observation fees are usually paid to OWASA when the construction drawings are approved. The amount is based on the lengths of main extension and are subject to change each year.
  - Currently, Plan Review fee is \$3.63/ft and Construction Observation is \$3.69/ft.
- Checks for fees to NCDEQ are submitted with permit application packages.
  - Current fee water main extensions less than 5000-ft is \$150, \$200 if longer
  - Current fee for sewer main extension is \$480
- Contractor normally pays fees associated with construction activities, such as tapping of water/sewer mains and temporary meters, during the construction phase.
- Service Availability fees are paid when it is time to set meters.
- Fees are evaluated annually. Current rates and fees are available on our website at <http://www.owasa.org/rates-fees-charges>

We are planning a very large project. Can your system take significant, additional water and sewer demands?

- System capacity will need to be evaluated for each project. Developers are responsible for any improvements necessary to accommodate the new project.

After my drawings are approved, when can we begin construction?

- Approval by OWASA is only the first step. Applications must be submitted to and approved by the appropriate section of the Division of Water Resources within the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality if public main extensions are planned. After approval is issued, OWASA must issue a Permit to Construct. The developer must have a preconstruction conference with the OWASA Construction Inspector before utility work, or any work which may impact existing mains or services, can begin.

How can I get water for construction?

- A temporary meter can be installed for an existing service connection. A temporary meter can also be installed on a fire hydrant.

When construction is complete, when can I get my meter?

- All close-out documentation, including the Engineer's Certification(s), Asset Letter, Dedication Letter, and record drawings must be received by OWASA and NCDEQ.
- Upon acceptance of close-out documentation, an invoice must be paid before a meter can be set.

Who installs the water meter?

- OWASA will install smaller meters. Meters 3-inch or larger must be installed by the contractor under supervision by OWASA.

## **Commercial Projects**

I plan to open a restaurant in a building where water and sewer service is already established. How do I obtain approval from OWASA?

- A grease interceptor or trap will be required for the sewer service. Submit information required by our policy for Grease and Oil Control, on our website at <http://www.owasa.org/Data/Sites/1/media/grease-oil-control-2015-01-29.pdf>
- A backflow prevention assembly is required for the water service.

I plan to open a business. Are there any special requirements for water and/or sewer service?

- Yes, a backflow prevention assembly is required for the water service.
- Other requirement may apply to certain types of businesses. All discharges must be within the limits listed in our Sewer Use Ordinance, on our website at <http://www.owasa.org/Data/Sites/1/media/conservation/sewer%20use%20ordinance%20adopted%20december%2014,%202006%20rev%205-18-07.pdf>

Can I install a backflow prevention assembly inside?

- Yes, if drainage requirements can be met. For more information, review the Ordinance and Policy on our website at <http://www.owasa.org/developers-contractors-and-engineers>