



## Orange Water and Sewer Authority

OWASA is Carrboro-Chapel Hill's not-for-profit public service agency delivering high quality water, wastewater, and reclaimed water services.

### Frequently Asked Questions and Answers For Homeowners and Developers

#### General/Residential

1. 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 Systems Development Technician in the Engineering and Planning Department for assistance. Parcel data is regularly updated for our Geographic Information System (GIS). The property to be served must be adjacent to the water and sewer mains.
2. If water and/or sewer mains are not available or adjacent to my property, will OWASA extend the water and sewer mains?
  - No. Agreements between all the founding members of OWASA at its inception require that benefiting parties be financially responsible for main extensions: growth pays for growth.
3. If my property is inside the OWASA service area but there are no water or sewer mains adjacent to my property and 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 a future extension. For sewer, the main must be extended only to be adjacent to the parcel. An easement must be reserved, however, if adjacent parcels could be served by a future main extension.
4. My vacant lot is in the OWASA service area and water and sewer mains are adjacent to my lot. Will OWASA install water and sewer laterals to serve my house?
  - OWASA shall make all taps onto OWASA mains after the property owner's contractor prepares the site, and the property owner is responsible for paying for the installation of the laterals.
  - Water- For a fee, OWASA can complete a water service installation from the water main up to, and including, the meter box. A licensed plumber or utility contractor will need to install the private water service from the meter box to the house.
  - Sewer- 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.
5. How much will it cost to have water and sewer service when I build my house?



- OWASA 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 <https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/19-10-01-summary-rates-schedule.pdf>. Water and sewer Service Availability Fees will apply. OWASA fees are in addition to the costs to the benefitting party of completing any necessary main extensions and the service connections noted above.
6. 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.
7. My house is not near a sewer main. Can I connect to my neighbor's service line?
- No, new common sewer laterals are not allowed. Each lot must have a separate service line from the sewer main.
8. I have water and sewer service already. Can I add water and sewer service for an accessory building on my property?
- In certain circumstances, it is permissible to connect an accessory building on the same lot to the sewer lateral serving the main building. Both buildings must be "deemed permitted" under the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's 15A NCAC 02T rules. Water service for an accessory building may be connected behind the meter to the water service for the main building if there is only one service there currently (no irrigation or pool service). Contact a Systems Development Technician in the Engineering and Planning Department for assistance.
9. If I get permission from my neighbor, can I install a private service line across their property from the OWASA main line to my house?
- No, not for new construction. Water and sewer 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.
10. 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.

11. 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 and the possibility of sewage flooding the home. Options for a traditional, “gravity” sewer service should be thoroughly explored.

### Property Development

12. 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.
13. What is required on drawings?
- Refer to Sections #3 and #4 in our Standards and Specifications, available on our website at [https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019-version-owasa\\_standards\\_and\\_specs.pdf](https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019-version-owasa_standards_and_specs.pdf).
14. How long will it take for you to review my drawings?
- Our goal is to respond within 15 working days of submission.
15. What fees will I have to pay and when?
- Plan Review fees are paid at the time that the drawings are submitted for OWASA approval. Construction Observation fees are usually paid to OWASA when the construction drawings are approved and must be paid prior to scheduling the mandatory preconstruction conference. 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. The minimum charge is \$100 each for water, sewer, plan review and construction observation, making the minimum total charge for a project with water and sewer \$400.
  - 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 prior to OWASA setting a meter.
  - Fees are evaluated annually. Current rates and fees are available on our website at <https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/rates-and-fees-schedule-oct-2019-final.pdf>.
16. 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.
17. After my drawings are approved, when can we begin construction?
- Plan approval by OWASA is only the first step, and will be issued only after all required documentation is received. See [https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Checklist-for-Development\\_091019.pdf](https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Checklist-for-Development_091019.pdf) for details. 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.
18. How can I get water for construction?
- A temporary water meter can be installed for an existing service connection. A temporary meter can also be installed on a fire hydrant.
19. When construction is complete, when can I get my meter?
- Once the contractor has completed all punch list items, the OWASA Inspector has issued tentative acceptance, and all close-out documentation- including the Engineer's Certification(s), Asset Letter, Dedication Letter, onsite easements, and record drawings - have been received and accepted by OWASA and NCDEQ, and invoice for the meter will be issued. The invoice must be paid before a meter can be set.
20. 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**

21. 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 <https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/grease-oil-control-2015-01-29-1.pdf>. A backflow prevention assembly is required for the water service.
  - Depending on the age and expected condition of the sewer lateral, you may be required to collect video (CCTV) footage in the lateral to determine if it is fit for service.
22. 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 [https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Approved-Sewer-Use-Ordinance\\_Updated-2020-1.pdf](https://www.owasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Approved-Sewer-Use-Ordinance_Updated-2020-1.pdf)

23. Can I install a backflow prevention assembly inside?

- New assemblies shall be installed exterior to the building as close to the meter vault as possible. A variance may be requested in developed areas where exterior locations create safety concerns. New development shall provide adequate space. For more information, review the Ordinance and Policy at the bottom of the page on our website at <https://www.owasa.org/developers-contractors-engineers/>