



January 3, 2018

Dear Resident,

As you may be aware, earlier this year the City of Cleveland Heights entered into a Partial Consent Decree (Agreement) with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This Agreement, reached after more than two years of negotiations, directs the City's efforts to improve and modernize our sewer system.

When the City's sewer system was built one hundred years ago, it was designed to prevent backups of sanitary sewage into homes during heavy rains. The sewer system was designed and constructed in accordance with accepted engineering principles at the time. However, current standards require updating the early 20th century sewer system. The Clean Water Act requires systems like the Cleveland Heights sanitary collection system to operate without overflows that sometimes occur during wet weather.

The City remains committed to protecting our environment and our residents. City officials have recognized the need to upgrade practices and to carefully study the improvements that might be necessary in order to remediate this century-old system to today's requirements and standards. The City has already made several improvements in the system where recurring problems existed.

As part of phase one of the Agreement with the EPA, the City has begun a study and overall project that will require an investment of \$12 million between 2017 and 2021. This required investment will have an impact on sewer rates for the residents of Cleveland Heights. A new rate of \$4.103 per 100 cubic feet of water consumed was enacted earlier this year and became effective October 1, 2017. Quarterly bills that will be issued starting in January 2018 will reflect the increased rate. The increase will average approximately \$18.73 per month for the average customer. The City believes this investment will significantly reduce the ultimate cost of controlling sewer overflows and improve the efficiency of system improvements required to comply with the EPA mandates.

Recognizing that some in our community may not be able to afford the extra fees, the City has implemented a new payment assistance program. The Homestead Program for eligible senior residents will continue and a program to assist low income households has been created. Any household that is currently qualified for the Affordability Program through the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) is eligible for assistance. Applications are available online at www.clevelandheights.com or in person at City Hall.

For further information visit our website: www.clevelandheights.com/sewerplan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tanisha R. Briley".

Tanisha R. Briley
City Manager

Cleveland Heights Local Sewer Rate Increase

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Why is the city's sewer rate increasing?

The City entered into a Partial Consent Decree with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to meet certain requirements resulting from legal action against the City. Under this agreement the City is required to update its 100-year-old system by performing the following:

1. Implementing a Capacity Maintenance Operations and Maintenance (CMOM) program that requires cleaning and televising the City's entire sanitary sewer system over the next four (4) years along with implementing best practice initiatives to reduce and control sanitary sewer overflows (SSO's)
2. Perform a Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Survey (SSES), which is an engineering evaluation to determine how the system is working and what improvements need to be made
3. Comply with the Clean Water Act of 1972

What is the Partial Consent Decree?

The City negotiated for two years with the EPA to meet its requirements. Since the City's sewer infrastructure is somewhat unique, the EPA has agreed that the City is able to implement required changes in two phases, which is why we have a partial decree. Phase one requires a \$12 million dollar investment and is an evaluation phase that must be completed by 2021. Phase two is the capital improvement part of the consent decree and will not be determined until phase one is complete.

Did the City Cause the Sanitary Sewer Problems?

No, the City did not cause the sanitary sewer problems. The Clean Water Act of 1972 requires systems like our sanitary system to operate without overflows that occur during rainy weather. When the Cleveland Heights sewer system was built 100 years ago, it was designed to prevent backups into homes by going into storm drains during heavy rain. This design was acceptable then, however, since that time the City has grown and regulations and practices have changed. These changes require the City to update its system to today's standards that will protect the environment. EPA is requiring these same actions in cities throughout the country.

Cleveland Heights Local Sewer Rate Increase

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

When will my bill increase?

As a result of the Partial Consent Decree, Council enacted a rate increase that is effective for your 4th quarter 2017 bill. You will see this increase on the bill you receive in January, 2018.

How much will my bill increase?

The rate increase will be approximately \$18.73 per month for the average residential customer.

If I pay the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) for sewer service, why do I have to pay the City?

The City is responsible for maintaining the local sewer system infrastructure. NEORS is responsible for treating water that leaves your home before it goes to the lake and maintaining their underground storm sewer infrastructure.

Will the City offer any cost savings programs?

Yes, the City will offer two programs: The Homestead Program and a new Affordability Program.

The City will continue to offer the Homestead Program. If you are currently on the Homestead Program, you will receive the homestead discount. Recognizing that some in our community may not be able to afford the extra fees, a new affordability assistance program has been implemented.

How do I apply to the cost savings programs?

The City has streamlined the application process. If you are currently qualified for the Homestead or Affordability program with Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS), you will qualify for the City's program. You will have to fill out a City application and provide proof of participation. To learn more about application and eligibility requirements, please visit our website at www.clevelandheights.com/sewer-affordability or visit the Utilities Division at City Hall.

City of Cleveland Heights

Local Sewer Cost Savings Programs

The City of Cleveland Heights offers two cost savings programs to assist income eligible residents with their local sewer bill.

The Homestead Program

The Homestead Program offers a lower rate to residents that meet the following criteria:

- Must be 65 years or older or totally and permanently disabled;
- Must own and live at the property
- Household income of \$33,000 or less

The Affordability Program

The Affordability Program offers a 40% discount on local sewer charges for residents whose annual household income is at or below 200% of the poverty level and live at the property.

Residents that qualify for either of these programs with the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS D) will qualify for these programs with the City of Cleveland Heights.

To apply, please follow the following process:

1. Apply and get qualified for the program at NEORS D. Visit neorsd.org for more information.
2. Apply at the City of Cleveland Heights and provide your approval form documenting you have met the qualifications at NEORS D. Visit our website at www.clevelandheights.com/sewer-affordability to download an application form or apply at City Hall.

Residents cannot be enrolled in both programs.

For more information on sewer updates visit us at www.clevelandheights.com/sewerplan.