

# Utilities

## November 2, 2023 UAC Review Draft Staff Proposed Revisions


### **Managing Wastewater Effectively**

The purpose of Olympia's Wastewater Utility is to protect public and environmental health by ensuring that wastewater is collected and conveyed to treatment and disposal facilities with minimal risk.



Olympia provides wastewater collection service to 17.5 square miles of the City and about eight square miles of Urban Growth Area in unincorporated Thurston County. However, many neighborhoods and individual lots within the City are still using septic systems. By 2035, Olympia expects public sewers will be extended to serve most of the Urban Growth Area.




Olympia crew members maintaining the sewer system to ensure proper functioning.

All wastewater collected by Olympia is conveyed to LOTT-owned transmission mains and treatment facilities for treatment and disposal. Treatment and disposal is managed by the [LOTT Clean Water Alliance](#) , which is a partnership of the cities of Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County.

Wastewater Utility activities are guided by the [Wastewater Management Plan](#) .

The [LOTT Clean Water Alliance](#)  developed and actively manages its own Plan, known as the [Wastewater Resource Management Plan](#) , which it updates every year. The Plan addresses the treatment and disposal needs for all of its partners.

The Wastewater Utility coordinates a number of activities with the [LOTT Clean Water Alliance](#) , including maintenance, condition assessments, and pre-treatment program efforts. These activities are all required under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit, which covers both the City's wastewater collection system and LOTT-owned facilities. This shared responsibility requires continuous communication between the two entities, at both the operation and planning levels.



Installing a deep sewer manhole on Henderson Boulevard as part of a planned capital improvement project.

The Wastewater Utility faces the following key challenges over the next 20 years:

- **Maintaining existing infrastructure.** More than half of the City's wastewater infrastructure has passed its design life or is susceptible to corrosion. Given the need to protect public health, repair and replacement of failing sewer systems typically cannot be deferred.
- **Reducing septic systems.** Many septic systems, especially in older parts of the City, are beyond or approaching their design life. This presents the potential for failure and risk to public and environmental health. [The Budd Inlet Dissolved Oxygen TMDL includes Priority Implementation Actions related to converting septic systems to sewer.](#)
- **STEP Systems.** [The use of Septic Tank Effluent Pump \(STEP\) systems present ongoing challenges, including high lifecycle costs, odor control,](#)


and corrosion damage to other sewer infrastructure.

- **Fats, Oils, and Grease.** Significant utility staff time is spent on tasks associated with Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG), including educating customers on proper disposal methods, responding to wastewater system blockages and coordinating with LOTT.

## Goals and Policies

**GU8** The ~~City and its growth area are served by a City-owned wastewater collection and transmission system that is designed and operated to minimize leakage, overflows, infiltration and inflows~~ so as to minimize long term costs, provide sufficient capacity for projected demand, promote equity, and protect the natural environment.

**PU8.1** Extend the wastewater gravity collection system through both public and private development projects.


**PU8.2** Prohibit new community and individual septic systems within City limits, except when specifically allowed by the [Olympia Municipal Code](#) .

~~**PU8.3** Limit and ultimately phase-out community septic systems in the Urban Growth Area.~~

**PU8.34** Encourage septic system owners to connect to the City wastewater system by offering incentives, cost-recovery mechanisms, pipe extensions and other tools.

**PU8.4** Prioritize future septic to sewer conversion projects in coordination with Thurston County in support of the Priority Implementation Actions in the Budd Inlet Dissolved Oxygen TMDL.

**PU8.5** Limit and ultimately phase-out the use of individual STEP systems for development.

**PU8.65** Prohibit new individual STEP systems, except when specifically allowed by the Olympia Municipal Code  Permit new STEP systems only for individual lots in neighborhoods currently served by STEP systems.

**PU8.76** Require the conversion of septic systems to the City-owned wastewater collection system upon septic system failure or building use change, whenever

feasible.

**PU8.87** Separate combined wastewater/stormwater pipes in conjunction with stormwater and road improvements or residential repairs, when economically feasible.

**PU8.98** Evaluate the capacity and structural integrity of aging wastewater facilities and ~~repair and maintain~~ maintain, repair, or replace as needed.

PU8.9

**~~GU9 The Utility will facilitate the implementation and use of new technology and management systems.~~**

**~~PU9.1~~** ~~Allow conditional use of alternative systems, such as composting toilets and greywater systems when potential benefits are clear and there is not risk to public or environmental health.~~