

A COMMUNITY SOLUTION TO A COMMUNITY PROBLEM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1 - How much of the disconnection bill will be covered by the City of Grand Rapids?

The City will pay all reasonable expenses up to \$4,500. There are provisions in place that will cover some expenses over the capped amount. These will be determined on an individual basis in accordance with the sewer ordinance in the footing drain disconnection program.

2 - When will this ordinance go into effect?

The ordinance was adopted by the Grand Rapids City Commission in September of 2010.

3 - How long will I have to notify the City of my decision to opt-in or opt-out of the Footing Drain Disconnection Program?

Upon notification by the City, you will have 90 days to make a decision.

4 - Why did the City choose to start this program in the East Leonard Heights and Maryland Estates neighborhoods?

A "Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study" was performed in each of these neighborhoods and both studies concluded that corrective actions for problems associated with basement backups in these areas were needed. The studies also concluded that the Footing Drain Disconnection Program (FDDP) was the appropriate corrective action for these neighborhoods. Another possible option considered was the replacement of the existing sanitary sewer pipes with larger pipes but, the residents in these two neighborhoods agreed that the FDDP is a greener, less expensive and more effective solution to the problem.

5 - My basement doesn't flood, so why do I need to participate in this program?

The wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is designed to collect and treat wastewater, not stormwater or groundwater. The addition of stormwater and groundwater to the system can overload the system, causing backups in lower lying homes and/or partially treated discharges to the Grand River. The expense of clean up for damaged homes is charged back to the sewer users and any fines imposed by the Department of Environmental Quality for partially treated discharges will also fall back to all sewer users. Additional costs of treating storm water include larger pipes to carry the additional flow, future expansion of the WWTP, sewer repair and maintenance, administration for back up calls and more. The program is being initiated as a community solution to a community problem.

6 - Will I need to take care of the contractor bill and then be reimbursed or will the City pay the contractor bill for the disconnection work?

The City will pay the contractor bill when the work is complete, so long as the contractor is on the list of pre-qualified contractors.

7 - What work will be done at my home for the disconnection project?

The work will include:

- Disconnection of footing drain, installation of a check valve in backup susceptible areas
- Parts and labor for a standard sump and sump pump installation
- Parts and labor for a backup sump pump installation
- Parts and labor for installation of discharge piping to a stormwater system, which could include a new curb storm drain
- Basic restoration of interior and exterior work areas including lawn reseeding and if necessary restoring the floor, ceiling surface or drywall patching

8 - How long will the construction at my home last?

The work will last approximately 2 to 3 days, however inspections on the work may require additional visits to make sure that the work is being done in compliance with all building codes.

9 - What happens if I chose not to participate in this program?

The program is designed to assist the entire community with the costs of wastewater treatment and reducing the effects the treatment of storm water and ground water has on that cost. If you choose to continue with the use of your home's footing drains (if they are discharging into the sanitary sewer system) you will be required to pay for the costs to treat your storm water.

10 - What will be the cost for choosing to continue with my current system that treats my home's storm water?

The cost is set by the Water Sewer Rate Study and is subject to change annually. The Rate Study can be viewed at <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Water-System/Water-and-Sewer-Rate-Studies>

11 - I currently experience water in my basement; will the disconnection program solve this problem?

The disconnection program is designed to provide some relief for lower lying homes that experience problems as a result of heavy rain events, when the sewers are overloaded. The disconnection program will not solve problems associated with leaks in basement walls or floors, poor site drainage or blockages in footing drainage pipes.

12 - Do I have to use a contractor selected by the City?

The contractor must be on a pre-qualified list of contractors determined by the City. There will be several options and you are free to choose any contractor from this list.

13 - May I choose a contractor that is not on the pre-qualified list?

No. The reason for a pre-qualified list is so that the City of Grand Rapids can be very clear on the methods and materials for construction. If you chose a contractor that is not on the pre-qualified list, the City cannot guarantee funding for your project.

14 - As a homeowner, may I perform the work myself?

Yes. Homeowners can perform the work themselves, provided they secure all necessary permits and comply with the specifications the City requires for the project. Reimbursement will be for materials only in this case and only after the final inspection is conducted by the City. The initial inspection must still be made by an "Approved Contractor".

15 - What will this cost me as a homeowner?

The City will cover all costs necessary for disconnection of the pipes from the sanitary sewer, installation of sump and basic restoration, up to \$4,500. Homeowners may choose to pay for additional items to meet their desires for more security and enhance restoration. For example, some homeowners may choose to have additional landscaping work at their own expense.

16 - Will the City provide restoration in terms of making my home look like it did before the project?

The City will provide basic restoration of the home both inside and outside. Basic restoration may include replacing and smoothing concrete, replacing tiles with "closest match" tiles, work site cleaning and clearing, filling holes outside the home and grass restoration.

17 - How will my yard be affected?

A small amount of excavation and disruption of the yard is often required in this project. However, every effort will be made to minimize these effects. The least amount of yard disruption would be a small hole near the foundation wall where the discharge line exits your home. For more difficult installations, a trench across the lawn may be needed. The funding from the City does include restoration of the homeowner's lawn.

18 - How will this affect the radon levels in my basement?

Everything that is installed in the basement will be sealed, protecting the home from any additional radon exposure.

19 - Will my floor drain still work?

Yes. The floor drain will still be operational, unless it drains into the footing drains, then it must be abandoned per plumbing code.

20 - Will storm water in the Maryland Estates Area be drained to the Sanctuary?

No. The "Footing Drain Disconnection Program" storm water will be directed to the storm water system which will convey these flows to the Grand River. The water will not make its way to the Sanctuary.