



# Lower Richland Sewer Project

## **Background**

For the last several years, Richland County has been working on plans to construct a regional sewer system to serve the Lower Richland community. The project consists of building a collection system to transfer sewage to the County's recently upgraded Eastover wastewater treatment plant and would be partially funded through grants and loans from the USDA Rural Development Program.

This project is crucial to addressing several ongoing water quality issues. The availability of a public sewer system in the area will allow residents with failing septic systems to connect to a reliable wastewater system. Additionally, the Lower Richland Sewer Project will resolve major environmental issues in the Hopkins Community by allowing the elimination of several wastewater facilities that are having trouble meeting SCDHEC regulations.

Following are frequently asked questions with clarifications:

### **Will I be required to connect to the new sewer system?**

No. The Richland County Ordinance amendment approved on May 19, 2015 authorizes that "The County may, but is not required to, deny access to public sewer system based on operational needs or other issues, including but not limited, insufficient capacity, public safety, environmental issues or property owner-applicant provided onsite wastewater system alternative that meets or exceeds SCDHEC standards for such systems and which the owner - applicant retains the responsibility to maintain in proper working order."

### **Will the sewer project change the rural character of Lower Richland?**

The sewer project will not change the rural character of Lower Richland because Richland County Council was proactive in adopting policies and proposing initiatives to prevent such a change. Protecting this unique part of Richland County has been a priority of two major planning efforts: the Lower Richland Master Plan (adopted in 2013) and the Countywide Comprehensive Plan Update (adopted in March 2015). Both plans, which were developed with extensive public input, reflect the desire to protect much of the rural land in Lower Richland from sprawl and development.

### **Is this project mainly for the benefit of the City of Columbia?**

No. The City of Columbia serves several Lower Richland properties because Richland County does not provide sewer service. When County service is available, these areas will be transferred to Richland County as originally intended. The added revenue from these existing areas will help lower the user fees for the rest of the Hopkins community. If the new sewer system is not put in place by Richland County, the County loses control of the area, and the City of Columbia may run the sewer line and annex the area.

**Will all area residents be required to install and maintain pumps (STEP system) on individual properties?**

No. There would be no need to do so. Presently, Richland County intends to provide gravity sewer service to the Hopkins residents/lots identified in the project area Phase 1. All customers in the project area Phase 1 are expected to be able to connect to the public sewer system by gravity soon after the commissioning of the first phase of the project. Six small lift stations will be constructed, operated, and maintained by Richland County to serve the best interest of greater Hopkins area.

**Do pump stations emit a foul odor?**

There are many sewer pump stations of this type located throughout Richland County without any odor issues.

**Will these pump stations be placed next to schools, churches or homes?**

There may be pump stations located near some of these facilities. Lift station sites are selected based on the most cost-effective location that can receive sewage flow by gravity. The proposed sewer system will eliminate several school and neighborhood wastewater lagoons that can no longer meet the conditions of their environmental permits. This will improve conditions at these schools and neighborhoods.

**Is the project being funded solely by tax dollars?**

No. The project is being funded by multiple grants and funds.

**How much is the sewer tap fee?**

County Council has waived the tap fees and the connection costs for the Lower Richland Sewer project prior to the commencement of construction of the project. However, if a resident applies for a tap after the start of construction, Richland County will charge the associated fees/costs in line with county policies and procedures.

**Will the county take my property if I do not pay my monthly sewer bill?**

No. Richland County ordinance does not allow imposing a lien or taking over a property for failing to pay a sewer bill.

For more information,  
call the Richland County Utilities Office at 803-401-0050.

