



Type 1 Is Dead

What Miami-Dade's septic rules mean for a parcel with no sewer at the street

If you are under contract on a Miami-Dade parcel with no sewer at the street, four requirements decide whether that parcel can be developed as you intend. All four can be tested from a desk, before your inspection period closes. None of them are the requirements most budgets assume.

If your budget assumes a conventional septic tank and drainfield, it assumes a system the county will not permit for new construction.

THE FOUR FACTS

1

Conventional (Type 1) septic systems are prohibited for new construction and complete replacement.

Only Type 2 secondary, Type 3 advanced secondary / nutrient, or Type 4 nutrient treatment systems are permitted. What you are buying is a treatment plant, not a tank and a field.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Miami-Dade County Code Sec. 24-42.7(2); DERM OSTDS Guidance Manual v1.0

2

36 inches minimum separation to the wet-season high water table.

Measured from the bottom of the drainfield, against 24 inches statewide, and it must be shown by surveyed elevation on a cross-section. A foot of elevation decides whether a lot works without fill or a mound.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Sec. 24-42.7 | compared against **STATE RULE** - F.A.C. 62-6.006

3

100 feet to surface water and to potable wells.

The state minimum is 75 feet. Miami-Dade also requires 50 feet to the property line where the site is served by a well. Small, canal-side and waterfront lots that look fine on a survey fail here.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Sec. 24-42.7

4

Minimum land area: 15,000 sf for a single-family residence on public water.

20,000 sf for a duplex on public water; 20,328 sf and 29,040 sf respectively on a private well. Other uses are generally limited to 1,500 gpd per unsubmerged acre on public water and 750 gpd per acre on a well. This is a pure desktop test - it disqualifies parcels before any design money is spent.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Miami-Dade County Code Sec. 24-43.1(5)



WHY THE RULES ARE WHAT THEY ARE

The rock under the lot is classified unsuitable.

F.A.C. Chapter 62-6, Table III classifies oolitic limestone, fractured rock, gravel, and coarse sand with a high water table as severely limited to unsuitable for a standard drainfield. The Miami Limestone that Miami-Dade is built on is that material, and it lies over the Biscayne Aquifer - a designated sole-source aquifer.

STATE RULE - F.A.C. Chapter 62-6, Table III

Rapid infiltration is not treatment. Ground that takes water fastest is the ground that treats it least. That single physical fact is why the county writes a stricter separation, a longer setback, and a minimum lot area than the state - and why the conventional system is off the table rather than merely discouraged.

Separation is the treatment. Everything else is arrangement.

EPA's onsite treatment manual reports that pathogen retention and die-off occur largely within the first 2 to 3 feet of unsaturated soil, and that 2 to 4 feet is generally adequate for fecal coliform. That is why an extra foot of elevation - not equipment - is usually what decides a Miami-Dade parcel.

NATIONAL REFERENCE - U.S. EPA Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems Manual, EPA/625/R-00/008 (public domain)

TWO TRAPS THAT SURFACE AFTER CLOSING

TRAP 1

Sewer availability may already have decided this for you.

Connection to public sanitary sewer is mandatory where an approved gravity sewer or force main is available and operative in an abutting right-of-way or easement, or where sewer is within the feasible distance computed under Sec. 24-43.4 on total building area. DERM's guidance is explicit: do not submit plans that include an onsite system in that case. A septic budget on such a parcel is not a cheaper option - it is the wrong option.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Miami-Dade County Code Sec. 24-43.1(7) and Sec. 24-43.4; DERM OSTDS Guidance Manual v1.0

TRAP 2

Your garage counts - and the parcel is measured twice.

The Chapter 24 feasible-distance and lot-loading calculation uses gross roofed area: every level, covered patios, closets, elevator areas, garages. That is a different and larger number than the net building area used for F.A.C. 62-6 sizing. Two calculations, two numbers, and both are required on the plan. Using one number twice is a common reason a package comes back.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Miami-Dade County Code Chapter 24 | STATE RULE - F.A.C. Chapter 62-6

And there is no default relief: Miami-Dade does not accept F.A.C. 62-6 drainfield-size or setback reductions by default. An alternative must be specifically allowed and demonstrated, signed and sealed, to give equal or better pollutant reduction.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Miami-Dade County Code Chapter 24; DERM OSTDS Guidance Manual v1.0



WHAT IT CHANGES FOR A PARCEL UNDER CONTRACT

What triggers county review

DERM review is triggered by new construction; a new or completely replaced system; a repair that requires complete replacement; a bedroom addition to a single-family residence that requires replacement; and any addition or change of use requiring a new or completely replaced system. Repairs, modifications and partial replacements are not. Submittal is electronic only, through the RER EPS portal.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Miami-Dade County Code Chapter 24; DERM OSTDS Guidance Manual v1.0

What a permitted system actually is now

Because Type 1 is off the table, a new system is mechanical treatment with an ongoing obligation. Type 3 and Type 4 systems generally require a remote telemetry unit reporting at least every 15 minutes; single-family and duplex are exempted under 2023 guidance. Units must be NSF/ANSI 40, 245 or 350 certified, or a third-party equivalent approved by the Director. Budget the operating obligation, not just the installation.

LOCAL OVERLAY - Miami-Dade County Code Chapter 24; DERM OSTDS Guidance Manual v1.0 (standards cited by number only)

The state number most budgets get wrong

F.A.C. Chapter 62-6, Table I sets residential design flow on the greater of two bases - bedroom count or building area. A three-bedroom, 2,800 sf house is 400 gpd, not 300. Design flow drives tank size, drainfield area, and the lot-loading test on the previous page, so the error does not stay small.

STATE RULE - F.A.C. Chapter 62-6, Table I

WHICH LAYER GOVERNS

Most bad septic budgets in Miami-Dade come from applying the right number from the wrong layer. A statewide rule of thumb is not a local requirement here.

AUTHORITY LAYER	SOURCE	WHAT IT DOES FOR THIS PARCEL
NATIONAL REFERENCE	U.S. EPA onsite manual	Explains the mechanism - why separation, not equipment, does the treating. It is not a requirement anywhere.
STATE RULE	F.A.C. Chapter 62-6	Sets Florida's design flow, tank, loading-rate and soil-suitability requirements. This is the floor.
LOCAL OVERLAY	Miami-Dade County Code Ch. 24	Governs on this parcel, and it is stricter on every number in this brief. It is the layer that decides.

FIVE QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BEFORE THE INSPECTION PERIOD CLOSES

1. Is an approved sewer available and operative in an abutting right-of-way or easement - or within the Sec. 24-43.4 feasible distance computed on total building area?
2. Does the parcel meet the Chapter 24 minimum land area for the intended use, on public water or on a well?
3. Does the intended gross roofed area pass the Chapter 24 lot-loading limit for that use?
4. Can 36 inches of separation to the wet-season high water table be demonstrated by surveyed elevation, without fill or a mound?
5. Do the 100-foot setbacks to surface water and potable wells - and the property-line setback where a well serves the site - fit the buildable area, with a reserve area left over?

If any answer is "we assume so," it is not an answer yet.



THE NEXT STEP

Miami-Dade Septic Feasibility Screen

A desktop screen of one specific parcel against the requirements in this brief, delivered as a dated PDF. It is built to be finished inside a normal inspection period, and to be read by a lender, a partner, or a seller's agent.

RUN ONE WHEN

- You are under contract, or about to be, on a parcel with no sewer at the street.
- You are pricing an addition, a bedroom, or a change of use on a property already served by septic.
- You are relying on a listing, a survey note, or a contractor's assurance that "septic is fine here."

WHAT YOU RECEIVE

- Sewer availability and feasible-distance evidence
- Chapter 24 lot-area and loading test on gross floor area
- Wet-season high water table and 36-inch separation screen
- Setback fit, reserve-area fit, likely treatment type
- A red / yellow / green determination, with the specific evidence still required

WHAT TO SEND US

- Folio number and property address
- Intended use, unit count and bedroom count
- Survey and any available elevation data
- Site plan or intended footprint, with gross roofed area
- Your inspection-period or decision date

Fixed fee, quoted after a short scope review - MasterBuild's standard basis for every engagement.

1 SCREEN

Desktop test of the parcel against the four requirements, with a red / yellow / green finding.

2 DESIGN

On a green or yellow finding, proceed to the OSTDS design and the evidence the submittal needs.

3 OPERATE

A permitted treatment system carries an operating permit and a maintenance entity. Plan for it.

SCOPE BOUNDARY

Utility and agency evidence is obtained in writing, not assumed. A feasibility screen is an engineering opinion on the evidence available at the time; it is not an agency determination and it does not establish that a permit will be issued. A favorable finding is a decision to proceed to design, not an approval.

Send the folio number and your decision date.

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Informational only. Not a permit, agency determination, product approval, or engineering design, and not a substitute for a site-specific evaluation by the Engineer of Record. Requirements vary by jurisdiction and change over time; verify current F.A.C. Chapter 62-6, Miami-Dade County Code Chapter 24, and the applicable agency's current guidance. Information current as of August 30, 2026. MasterBuild Contractors & Engineering Services LLC (public brand: MasterBuild Consulting).