



# City of White Bear Lake

4701 Highway 61 N.  
White Bear Lake, Minnesota 55110  
651-429-8531 | [www.whitebearlake.org](http://www.whitebearlake.org)

November 8, 2023

RE: City Project No.: 24-01  
**Residential Sanitary Sewer Wye Replacement Program**

Dear White Bear Lake Resident,

As we prepare for the 2024 Pavement Rehabilitation Project, one of the first steps is reviewing and investigating the condition of underground utilities (sanitary sewer, watermain, and storm sewer infrastructure). Prior to each year's Pavement Rehabilitation Project, the City performs a television inspection of all of the existing City sanitary sewer mains on that year's project. That inspection can reveal problems where the pipe is damaged or is experiencing tree root intrusion. For anyone who was able to attend the Public Information Meeting, you may recall hearing about the **Residential Sanitary Sewer Wye Replacement Program** and seeing pictures of this inspection and the problems roots can cause.

As pipes age, they tend to become more brittle and are more susceptible to cracking as the ground shifts around them. In many cases, there are not mechanical fittings holding sections of pipe together, rather it is the soil compacted around these pipes that holds them in place. Minor shifts in soils over time may cause these joints to separate slightly. Both cases of cracking and joint separation can create an opening in a pipe that becomes attractive for tree roots seeking water. It may begin as a hairline root, but these grow and multiply, causing the crack in the pipe to become larger. Soon, a large mass of roots can develop inside a sanitary sewer pipe. The roots grow so tightly together that they can significantly block the flow of water in a pipe, creating the potential for a backup. This can happen in a service pipe as well as a City main and while the City keeps the mains clean and flowing, it is the responsibility of individual property owners to keep their service line clean.

*Do you know what happens to wastewater once it goes down your drain?*

- All of the drain pipes in your house are connected to one central sanitary sewer drain that goes through the foundation and out to the City main in the street.
- The pipe coming out of your house is generally referred to as a "service" and is the responsibility of the property owner from the house to where it connects with a larger "main" under the street.
- Typically the main is the responsibility of the City or Metropolitan Council. The City and Metropolitan Council maintain a vast network of underground sanitary sewer pipes to convey wastewater to regional treatment plants.





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## **HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A PROBLEM?**

Problems tend to occur at the point of connection where the individual service meets the main. This connection is commonly referred to as a “wye”. In the past few years, an increasing concern has become the presence of tree roots in private sanitary services. Recognizing this concern, the City developed the **Residential Sanitary Sewer Wye Replacement Program** to assist property owners with replacement of their sanitary sewer wye connections in conjunction with the pavement rehabilitation program.

The **enclosed DIAGRAM** illustrates the televising of the City sanitary sewer mains. During the televising of the sewer mains, the camera is also able to turn to provide a picture of the service connection, but does not allow us to see the whole length of the service all the way to the house. This diagram includes an example of an *ideal* service connection (Service A) and one that contains *severe* roots (Service B). These pictures were captured on the same segment of sewer main, only about 100 feet apart. As we have described previously, roots like those seen in Service B can potentially cause serious problems. **Enclosed with this letter is a picture of YOUR individual service connection.** You can see where your service ranks compared to the examples, with a rating indicated from *none* to *severe*.

\*\* Please note that the Residential Sanitary Sewer Wye Replacement Program is **VOLUNTARY** and you are not required to participate.

## **TELEVISIONING YOUR PRIVATE SERVICE**

**(FOLLOW THE ENCLOSED FLOWCHART)**

1. In order to determine if problems exist beyond this connection point, you may wish to have your entire sanitary sewer service televised. If you have experienced problems in the past or your service



has roots (see attached picture), we recommend having your service televised. This televising can be performed by the City’s Public Works Department for \$90, or can be done by a private plumber. You **MUST** have your service televised in order to participate in the **Residential Sanitary Sewer Wye Replacement Program**.

2. If you are interested in having your service televised, contact the Engineering Department to set up an appointment. Prior to this appointment, **you must locate and open the access cover to your sewer service cleanout**. If you are unable to open the cap, a plumber (or friendly neighbor) should be called to assist with this. A picture of what this cleanout might look like can be seen in the enclosed

**FLOWCHART**



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3. The Public Works crew will then arrive at your home for the scheduled appointment and televise the service from inside the house out towards the street. They will discuss their observations and recommendations with you on site, and provide you with a video for your records.



### **HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?**

Deadlines for participation in the Sanitary Sewer Wye Replacement Program are below. Requests received after the specific deadlines will not be accepted due to scheduling requirement.

If you are interested in having your sewer service line televised, please contact the Engineering Department at 651-429-8531 or email [cvermeersch@whitebearlake.org](mailto:cvermeersch@whitebearlake.org). Please let us know that you are part of the pavement rehabilitation project. All televising requests need to be made by Friday, December 1, 2023.

**Appointments will be scheduled between 7:30 AM and 3:00 PM, Monday – Friday from December 4 to December 15, 2023.**

***NOTE:*** Please notify the City **as soon as possible if you would like your service televised**. This will allow sufficient time for City staff to accommodate televising requests as personnel and resources are also being used on regular City maintenance during this time.

### **REPAIR OF THE WYE**

If repairs to your service pipe and wye are needed, the failing portion of the pipe should be replaced by digging it up.

- It is highly advantageous to repair damaged sanitary sewer service wye during Street Projects when it can be coordinated with other work thereby reducing the mobilization and restoration cost and disruption of performing such repairs.
- Having your private sanitary sewer wye replaced during the project allows you to avoid paying the street restoration costs, which can range from \$3,000 - \$5,000 if the repair is done outside of a reconstruction project.
- After televising the service line, if the City's Engineering department determines that the sewer connection is in good shape, the City will not partner with the home owner in this program.
- If there is damage beyond the 10 feet, responsibility of these repairs fall completely on the homeowner. You may need to hire your own contractor to do this work.



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Once construction is underway, there is little more you need to do. While working on your service, the contractor will request that you not use any water. This is typically a short duration, usually less than two hours.

## **HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?**



If your property is within the Pavement Rehabilitation Project area you can have your sanitary sewer service connection and a portion of your sanitary sewer service replaced. The City Council has adopted a policy to assist property owners with replacement of failing sanitary sewer service connections and **up to 10 feet** of service pipe. **The City will assist with funding the individual residential sanitary sewer service connection repairs so that residential property owners pay 50 percent of the cost, in an amount not to exceed \$1,700.** The remaining cost will be paid by the City.

You have two payment options:

### **BY CHECK**

Please make checks payment to:  
City of White Bear Lake  
4701 Highway 61  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

**\$1,700** payment must be received  
By **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2024**

### **BY ASSESSMENT**

You may also have the \$1,700 cost assessed against your property. A letter requesting this assessment must be signed by the same date, **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2024.**

The Engineering Department has form letters available for anyone interested in this payment method.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter, please contact the Engineering Department at (651) 429-8531.

Sincerely,

Paul Kauppi, P.E.  
Public Works Director/City Engineer

Attachments