

This handout provides an overview of problems that occur in sanitary sewer services. The information focuses on 1960s construction and the materials used during that period. The handout outlines the type of failures that occur, how a customer can recognize those failures and what alternatives are available for making repairs.

What is a sanitary sewer service?

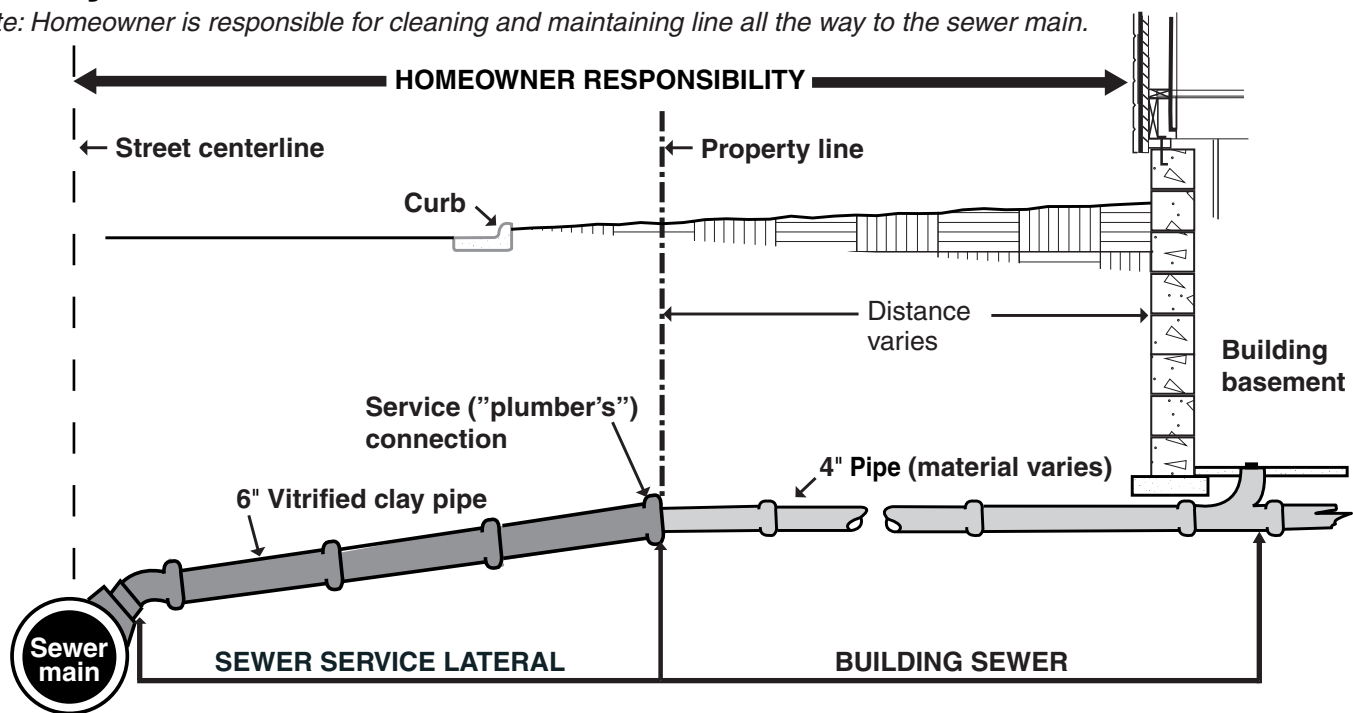
The sanitary sewer service connects the building to the sanitary mainline in the street. Sewer cleaners call the service line “the main.” It has two components: the sewer service lateral and the building sewer. *See illustration below.*

The building sewer coming from the home connects to the sewer service lateral at a point called the service connection or “plumber’s connection.” This connection was made when the building/home was originally built or when a septic system was abandoned and the building/home was connected to City sewer. The tar compound commonly used in this joint during the 1960s tends to shrink and is a primary source of failure resulting in tree root intrusion.

Bloomington City Code section 11.33 states, in part, “Each owner shall be responsible for maintaining, cleaning, repairing and replacing of the sewer lateral from the house to the sewer main.”

Sanitary sewer service

Note: Homeowner is responsible for cleaning and maintaining line all the way to the sewer main.

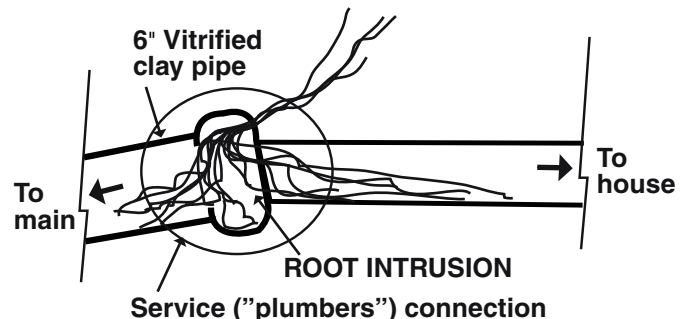


Recognizing the Problem

The following is a detail of the service connection where roots have intruded into the service pipe. Although root intrusion can take place at any point in the service line, the service connection is one of the most common points where failure occurs. One way to evaluate this is to ask the sewer cleaning contractor questions about where they encounter problems during the cleaning process. If a sewer-cleaning contractor has commented that they have hit an obstruction near the property line, this may be the source of the obstruction. In many cases the roots mass has grown so large within the pipe that normal cleaning does not remove the roots but just temporarily relieves the

stoppage by cutting a small hole in the root mass. In this case, excavating the line for repair may be necessary.

Root intrusion

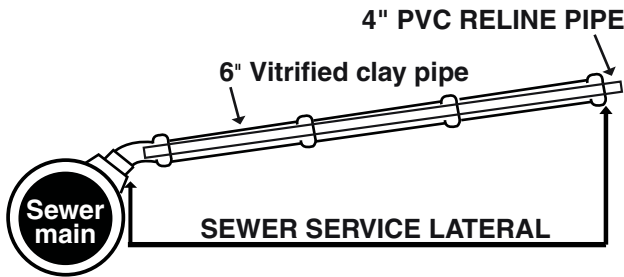


Repair and maintenance alternatives

A repair to your service line may not be required if you have the line cleaned periodically. If the root intrusion can be controlled by cleaning, it may be a cost-effective alternative to excavation and repair.

If a repair is required, the typical repair for root intrusion is at the “plumber’s connection” which involves excavating the connection and removing the old pipe and the root mass that may be present. *See previous illustration.* Other types of repair include replacing all or part of the service line. Another repair that minimizes excavation is called a “reline.” This option improves the property owner’s service line as it continues out to the City’s mainline sewer without excavating in the street. A “reline” is done by placing a 4 inch PVC pipe inside the 6 inch clay pipe and then connecting that 4 inch pipe to the building pipe. It is the responsibility of the homeowner to determine which option is best suited for the particular problem in their service line.

Repair option: Reline



Procedure for proceeding with a repair

Follow these steps:

1. A property owner is responsible for initiating any repair or maintenance of their sewer service line. The City will assist the owner by providing information and history on their sewer service. **This information is very important in evaluating the condition of the service.**
2. The owner may use any plumber licensed to work in the City of Bloomington to make the repair. The owner of homesteaded property may also do the work. This does not include hiring a non-licensed contractor. The procedure and permit requirements are the same in both cases. The City cannot recommend any specific contractor but **owners are highly encouraged to get competitive bids.**
3. After a plumber applies for a Utility Repair Permit, they may proceed with the needed repairs and call for an inspection upon completion.

Contact the Utilities Division first before proceeding!

Utilities Contacts

Travis Schlagen
Customer Service Specialist952-563-8775

Eric Schoon
Customer Service Supervisor952-563-4909