

## FAQs Continued:

### **Q: What is a cleanout?**

**A:** A cleanout is an access point to your sewer lateral at ground level. This access can be used for cleaning, cutting roots and televising. A cleanout is generally located within two feet of where the sewer lateral exits the building foundation. In newer areas, additional cleanouts are also located at the property lines.

### **Q: Does my home have a sewer lateral cleanout outside next to the foundation?**

**A:** Not all homes will have a cleanout because older plumbing systems were constructed before installing a cleanout was required.

### **Q: What steps should a property owner take to minimize problems with their sewer laterals?**

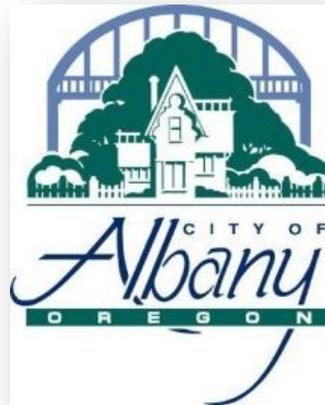
**A:** The simple answer is to not put anything down the drain or toilet that could cause problems; this includes fats, oils and grease, medications, wipes and hazardous liquids. Fats, oils and grease clog sewer lines, and medications and hazardous liquids pose challenges for the sewage treatment process and can corrode pipe material.

### **Q: What if my sewer lateral crosses another property?**

**A:** You would need written permission and/or an easement to enter the property.

### **Q: What is a sewer maintenance easement?**

**A:** An easement granting the perpetual right to enter upon a property at any time for construction, maintenance, evaluation and/or repair purposes; and the further right to remove trees, bushes, undergrowth, and other obstructions interfering with the location and maintenance of the said public utilities.



## For More Information:

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P.O. Box 490  
Albany, OR 97321  
(541) 917-7676  
[www.cityofalbany.net](http://www.cityofalbany.net)

<http://go.usa.gov/TfJd>

[http://www.permitsprotect.info/cities/tool-kit/\\_docs/brochures/Do\\_I\\_Need\\_A\\_Plumbing\\_Permit.pdf](http://www.permitsprotect.info/cities/tool-kit/_docs/brochures/Do_I_Need_A_Plumbing_Permit.pdf)



## Sewer Laterals:

# Who Is Responsible?

### **WHAT IS A SEWER LATERAL?**

A sewer lateral is generally a privately-owned sewer pipeline that connects private property, such as a home or business, to the publicly-owned sewer main. The publicly-owned sewer mains are typically located in the middle of the street or along the back property line.

### **COMMON TYPES OF STRUCTURAL FAILURE IN A SEWER LATERAL**



**Pipe Collapse**



**Root Penetration**



**Offset Joints**



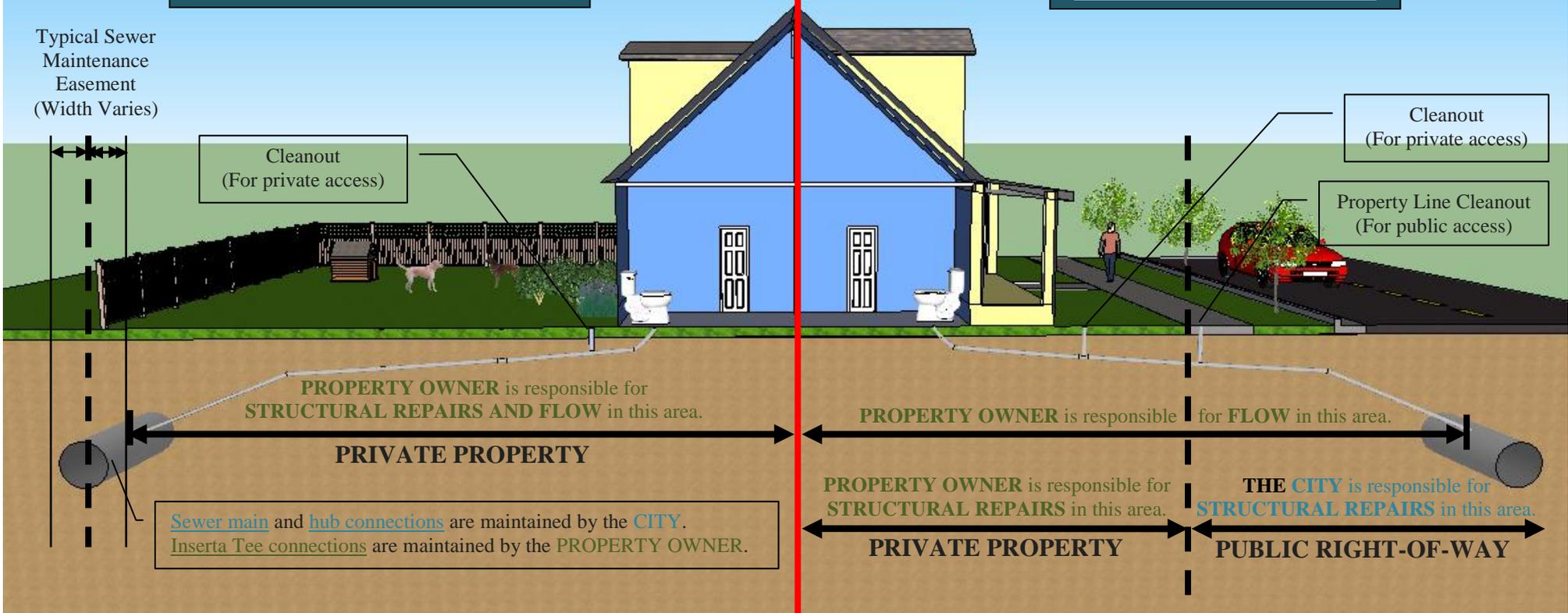
**Pipe Belly**

### **DETECTION AND ACTION**

Most homeowners do not tend to think about the sewers until there is a backup in their plumbing. Anyone who has ever had a sewer backup would agree it is an unpleasant problem that can be costly if ignored. Often the question is asked “where does the responsibility of the property owner begin, and where does the responsibility of the City start?” Hopefully the drawing within this booklet and the responses to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will help answer that.

## BACK OF LOT SEWER SYSTEM

## STREET SEWER SYSTEM



## FAQs:

### **Q: Who is responsible for maintenance and repairs to the sewer lateral?**

**A:** Property owners are responsible for maintaining flow along the entire length of the sewer lateral. The City is responsible for structural repairs that are within the public right-of-way.

### **Q: Why is it important to properly maintain a sewer lateral?**

**A:** As private laterals age they can develop leaks, become clogged by fats, oils and grease, and become clogged by roots. This situation can lead to sewer overflows that threaten public health and the environment. Defective sewer laterals affect us all.

### **Q: Are improperly maintained sewer laterals a more severe problem during winter rains?**

**A:** Yes. During wet weather, groundwater enters through cracks in the pipe, allowing large amounts of stormwater to enter the public sewer system. This extra water can collectively lead to sewer overflows and overload of wastewater treatment process.

### **Q: Should I have my sewer lateral inspected before purchasing a property?**

**A:** Yes. Before purchasing any property, we recommend you have the lateral lines inspected by a licensed plumber. Faulty lateral lines can be costly to fix and can also lead to backups and spills.

### **Q: When do I need a plumbing permit?**

**A:** The internet path below describes when a permit is needed; [www.permitsprotect.info](http://www.permitsprotect.info) / Permits Project Tool Kit / Brochures and Flyers / When do I need a Plumbing Permit?

### **Q: Is it necessary for only licensed contractors to repair laterals on private property?**

**A:** A licensed contractor is required to perform work within two feet of the building foundation. We do recommend that you hire a licensed contractor to perform the repairs needed. Prices to perform the work can vary greatly, so we recommend that you receive multiple quotes. There are two common practices for replacing a sewer lateral – ‘open trench’ and ‘pipe bursting.’

### **Q: How much does it cost to inspect and repair a lateral?**

**A:** Inspections should generally cost about \$300. Repairs are typically about \$100/foot, but costs vary depending on circumstances. In the long term, the expense of proper maintenance and repair is well worth it, similar to roof or other structural repairs you might perform on your home.