

Sewer Easements: Your Questions Answered



What is an easement?

An easement is a legal right to use another person's land for a specific purpose. Property owners commonly grant easements for public utility lines such as power, gas, water, or sewer. A utility easement is attached to the property deed so that services can be provided to that property. Thus, easements pass on even when the property is transferred or sold.

Why does Central San need easements?

Central San maintains more than 1,500 miles of underground sewer pipes to serve nearly half a million local residents. Wastewater from your neighborhood flows through these pipes to our treatment plant in Martinez to be cleaned. While most of our sewers are located under public streets, some are located on private property based on engineering requirements. Easements restrict building in that part of the property to help prevent damage to sewers and ensure Central San can access them for necessary maintenance and repairs.

What is allowed or restricted by a sewer easement?

You may make use of the land over an easement if it does not result in significant interference with the easement. For example, modest landscaping and improvements such as lawns, small shrubs, driveways, and sidewalks are generally allowed. However, you may not plant trees in the easement area or construct permanent structures such as a house, garage, swimming pool, deck, retaining wall, tennis court, etc.

Why are trees restricted in a sewer easement?

Trees can develop deep and extensive root systems, which may grow into sewer pipes in search of water and nutrients. Root intrusion can damage or clog the pipes, potentially causing sewer back-ups in your home, street, or local waterway.

What if my property has existing improvements that encroach on the easement area?

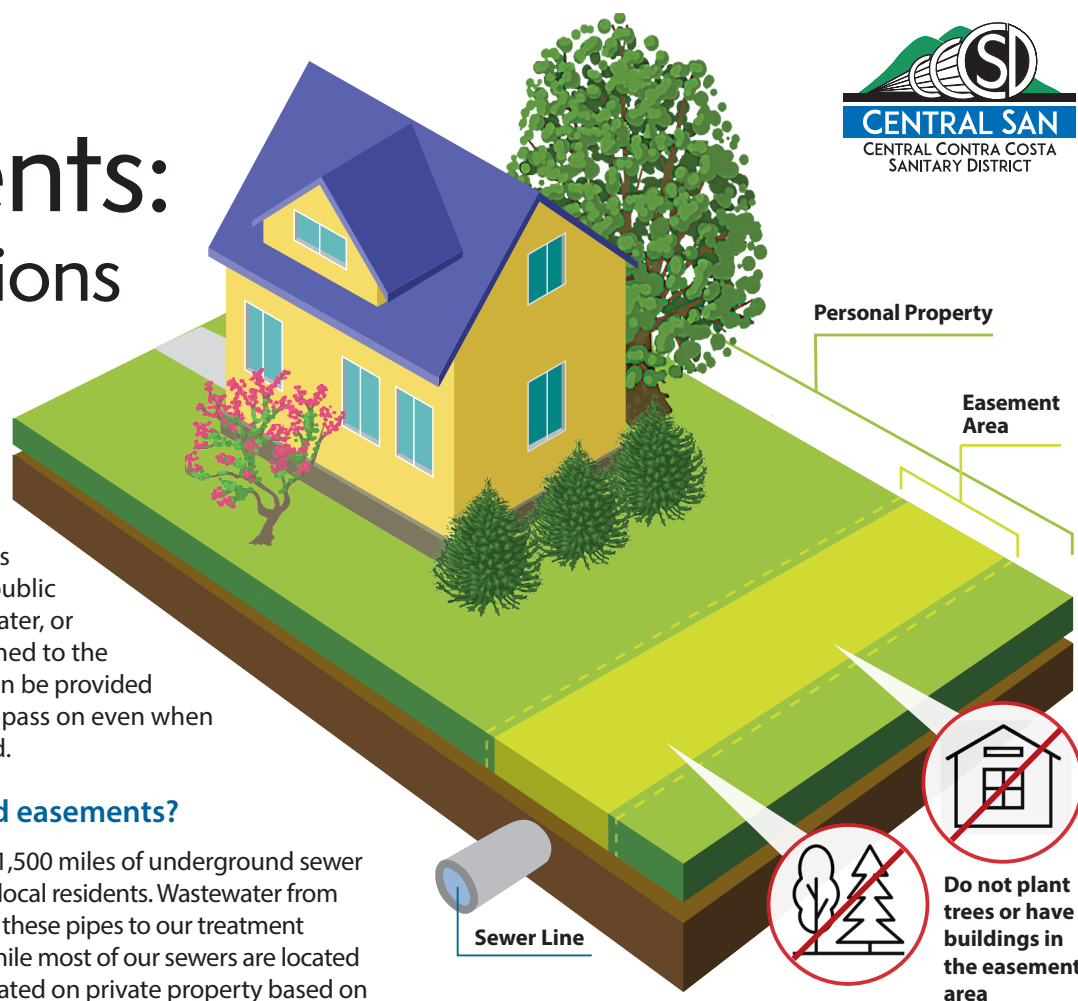
Depending on the nature and extent of the encroachment, you may apply to have the encroachment permitted or "grandfathered" as part of a new easement deed. Each encroachment is unique and handled on a case-by-case basis. Please contact us to discuss your particular property.

What should I do if I am planning a project that may impact the easement area?

If you are planning to plant trees or build permanent structures such as a building, pool, deck, or retaining wall on your property, please contact us beforehand so that we may review your plans and mark the location of the sewer. Central San's review of your plans is required by local city/county agencies. Early review by Central San will help you speed up the process and avoid issues with your planning.

Who should I contact if I have questions about the sewer easement on my property?

Email permits@centralsan.org or realproperty@centralsan.org.



3 TIPS... for Keeping Your Sewer Lateral in Tiptop Shape

While Central San is responsible for taking care of our more than 1,500 miles of public sewer mains, property owners are responsible for taking care of their private sewer laterals. The private sewer lateral is the pipe that runs from your house to the public sewer main located under the street or in the easement on your property.

Each property owner is responsible for the entire lateral from the house to where it connects to Central San's sewer line. This includes the portion of the lateral on your property as well as any portion located beneath the sidewalk and street up to and including the point where the lateral connects to the public main.

There are a few simple steps you can take to help your lateral do its job:

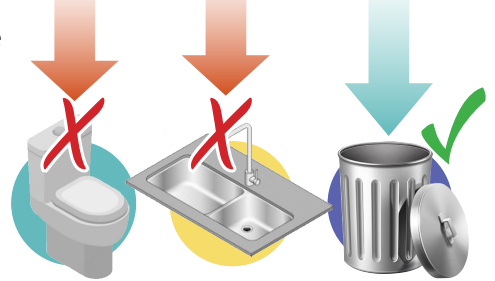
1 Keep your pipes free of clog culprits.

IN THE KITCHEN, keep fats, oils, and grease out of the drain.

Compost food scraps or dispose of them in the garbage, never the garbage disposal.

IN THE BATHROOM, flush only human waste and toilet paper. Never flush wipes (even if they claim to be flushable—they're not), feminine hygiene products, dental floss, condoms, kitty litter, or other plastic or debris. Put them in the trash can.

Disposing of FATS, OILS, GREASE & WIPES



2 Tend to your roots.

ROOT INTRUSION is the leading cause of sewer backups.

Keep your private sewer lateral clean and clear by planting trees and shrubs well away from the pipe. If there are trees near your lateral, have it inspected/cleaned by a professional plumbing service at least every other year.

3 Install an overflow protection device (OPD) on the cleanout of your home's private lateral.

AN OPD PROVIDES COST-EFFECTIVE

PROTECTION against the mess and expense of a sewer backup by providing an emergency escape route for sewage, allowing the overflow to occur outside your home rather than inside. You can find these inexpensive devices at plumbing supply stores. We recommend that you have a licensed plumber install your OPD since elevation and location are critical for proper function. Once it is installed, be sure to keep the device clear of obstructions that might interfere with its operation, such as dirt or vegetation.

NOTE: An OPD will not help if a clog occurs between it and the house drains, so keep your pipes free of clog culprits (see #1). For more information about OPDs, please call our friendly Permit Counter staff at 925-229-7371.

