

Eligible/Ineligible Repair Activities

Most homeowners experience sewer problems in the side sewer line. The side sewer, also known as a lateral sewer, carries waste from your home toilets and drains to the County's main sewer line. The private side sewer line begins two feet from the residential structure and ends at the property line where the stub connects to the public sewer line. Maintaining and repairing the side sewer line is the responsibility of the homeowner.

The private side sewer line is the only component eligible under the Residential Side Sewer Conversation Loan program. Below are some typical residential side sewer repair and replacement activities.

Eligible Repair Activities

Funding is available for the following activities through the loan program. Other items may be allowed by the Sewer Division Manager and the Planning and Public Works Department Director.

Cracks and Fractures

Damages to side sewer pipes can be caused from poor installation, poor soil bedding, root damage or aging pipes. Minor cracks/fractures become worse over time and affect how the side sewer works. Severe cracks/fractures can result in collapse and full failure of the pipe.

Holes in Pipes

Holes in side sewers can cause surrounding soils to enter the pipe. This can result in empty space forming around the pipe, leading to sink holes at the ground surface. In addition, soils can cause buildup in the pipe and cause backups and flows to seep out of the pipe.

Root Damage

Roots are a common problem in side sewers. Older concrete and clay pipe side sewers that were not constructed with watertight joints are especially at risk for root damage. Root intrusions will likely increase in severity over time. Roots can crack pipes and cause sewer backups and flows to seep out of the pipe.

Offset Joints

Side sewers are constructed by using several segments of pipes connected together by joints. If the joints do not perfectly match up, soil and debris can build up and eventually lead to sewer backups and leaks. If the offset joints are exposed, the soil around the pipe can erode and wash away, leading to empty space around the pipes. The empty space around the pipes can be instable and eventually lead to sink holes.

Sagging Pipes

Side sewers are constructed at a slight slope of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch per one foot of pipe. This slight slope allows for wastewater to take advantage of gravity's force and move debris through the pipe. Sags are typically only a problem if they are severe enough to cause debris to settle and collect in the pipe. Settling debris may eventually result in sewer backups.

Ineligible Repair Activities

The following repair and replacement activities are not covered under this program.

Exposed Aggregate

Some side sewers are constructed from concrete pipes. Concrete pipes are made of a mixture that includes cement and aggregate (rocks). As the interior cement wall erodes away, the aggregate becomes exposed. As the aggregate continues to erode, the structural stability decreases and flows will seep out of pipe. Critical defects related to exposed aggregate is not common in Pierce County's sewer service area and therefore are not eligible for repair or replacement under this program.

Debris and Grease

Debris can build up in a side sewer pipe and block the flow of the sewer. Examples of debris items that should not be flushed are baby wipes, "flushable" wipes, paper towels, and feminine hygiene products. Grease can cause a side sewer to drain very slowly or cause a complete blockage of the side sewer. Even very hot grease cools quickly once it reaches an underground pipe and sticks to the walls of the side sewer. To avoid accumulating grease in your side sewer, compost all food waste in your food and compost bin instead of using the garbage disposal. Critical defects related to debris and grease build up in the side sewer pipe are not eligible for repair or replacement under this program as this type of problem does not meet the program objectives.