



SEWER EASEMENT

“What is an EASEMENT?”

The maintenance of the sanitary sewer system is required to ensure that it operates properly and wastewater is not discharged to the environment. Sanitary sewer mains are primarily located underground and are connected by a series of manholes that are either at or slightly above ground level. To maintain the system, Collier Township must be able to have access to the manholes and lines at all times. These will either be located in public right-of-way or in easements on private property. Easements are dedicated portions of private property dedicated for public use. Sanitary sewer easements overlay the location of a sewer main on a property and provide the Township right of access to the property for inspection and maintenance purposes. They are developed at the time the utility is constructed or when a piece of property is subdivided for use. Sewer easements are often shown on property surveys and descriptions of land such as a deed. It is your responsibility to determine the exact location from documents available in the Department of Real Estate of Allegheny County or by conducting appropriate surveys of your property.

“OK, so there is a sewer going through my yard. How does this affect how I use my yard?”

Commonsense applies. You are not permitted to construct anything over or on top of a sanitary sewer easement except for a sidewalk or driveway. No buildings, sheds, porches, walls, decks etc. may be constructed over or on the easement. Do not dig up your yard where the sewer is. Do not build or place anything that could block access to the sewer. Do not plant trees or bushes in that area. We need to get our vehicles and equipment to the manholes for routine maintenance. How frequently depends on the location and previous problems in that area. Most likely, a crew would check the manholes every couple of years. The worst-case scenario would be a drastic failure of the sewer itself, usually a break or collapse of the pipe. Whenever possible, we try to repair it from the inside out and avoid digging. However, it is possible that the sewer may have to be dug up and replaced. If you have a shed, garage, or other structure within the right-of-way, you may lose it at your expense. Structures that overhang over the easement, such as decks or patio roofs, may interfere with the equipment that could be used in the right-of-way. Again, there may be a chance of damage at the property owner's expense.

Why didn't the Township keep all the sewers in the streets and avoid easements?

Cost effectiveness. When a sewer system is planned out, the engineers try to use gravity for flow of sewage. Pumping stations are very expensive to build and very expensive to operate and maintain. These pumping stations require large horsepower motors which are costly in electricity. Additional people would have to be hired by the Township to maintain the pumping stations. Collier Township is located in a hilly area. To have a sewer system totally within roadways would have been costly and might have resulted in much higher sewer bills.