

Water and Sewer Services: Property Owner Responsibility

The City of Durango Utilities Department is responsible for maintaining and replacing water and sewer mains throughout its service area, while property owners are responsible for the service lines their service address. This document provides as a guide for property owners to understand the provisions of City Code regarding Utility Services and what responsibility each party has in the maintenance and care of these systems.

Water damage can cost you

Water or sewer damage may or may not be covered separately from a typical homeowner's insurance policy. To verify whether water damage is covered in your policy, contact your insurance agent. The City of Durango is not responsible for water damage caused by a property's water or sewer service lines or internal plumbing.

Access to Water and Sewer Appurtenances

City of Durango Utilities staff bearing proper credentials issued by the City are authorized to access or enter any premises where City utilities are provided for the purposes of inspecting, observing, installing, maintaining, repairing, or replacing equipment which is utilized by the City to provide utility service. Where possible, City staff will make appointments with property owners to gain access, however if access can be gained without entering a building on the property (for example access to a meter pit, or curb stop) the Utilities staff will proceed with the necessary access. When access is requested for in building review, such access shall be granted within a reasonable timeframe following a request, and should be allowed as immediately as is possible.

If an emergency arises, including but not limited to water main breaks or sanitary sewage overflows, where access is immediately necessary to complete remediation and avoid public health and safety hazards, City staff will make efforts to inform the property owner but will proceed in accessing necessary water and sewer appurtenances. In all cases utilities staff will take due care to avoid damage to property, however access to all items referenced in this document may be necessary and the City will not be responsible for damage caused gaining access when such care is taken.

Service lines

The City of Durango maintains all water and sewer main lines (mains) throughout the water and sewer service areas. Water and sewer service lines between a main and a home or business are an integral part of any home or commercial building improvement. Accordingly, responsibility for maintenance and replacement of these lines lies predominately on the property owner - those users directly benefitting from their connection with the public water and sewer utilities.

Where after inspection of a water or sewer service line by the City, any section of service line which is the property owner's responsibility is found to be in disrepair, the City may inform the property owner of necessary repairs and water service may be discontinued until such repairs have been made.

When a building is constructed new or expanded/remodeled, all water and sewer service lines must be installed or improved pursuant to the City of Durango Engineering Specifications. The City does not take ownership of any service lines lying under a public right of way until final building inspection and signoff from the City inspection teams occur.

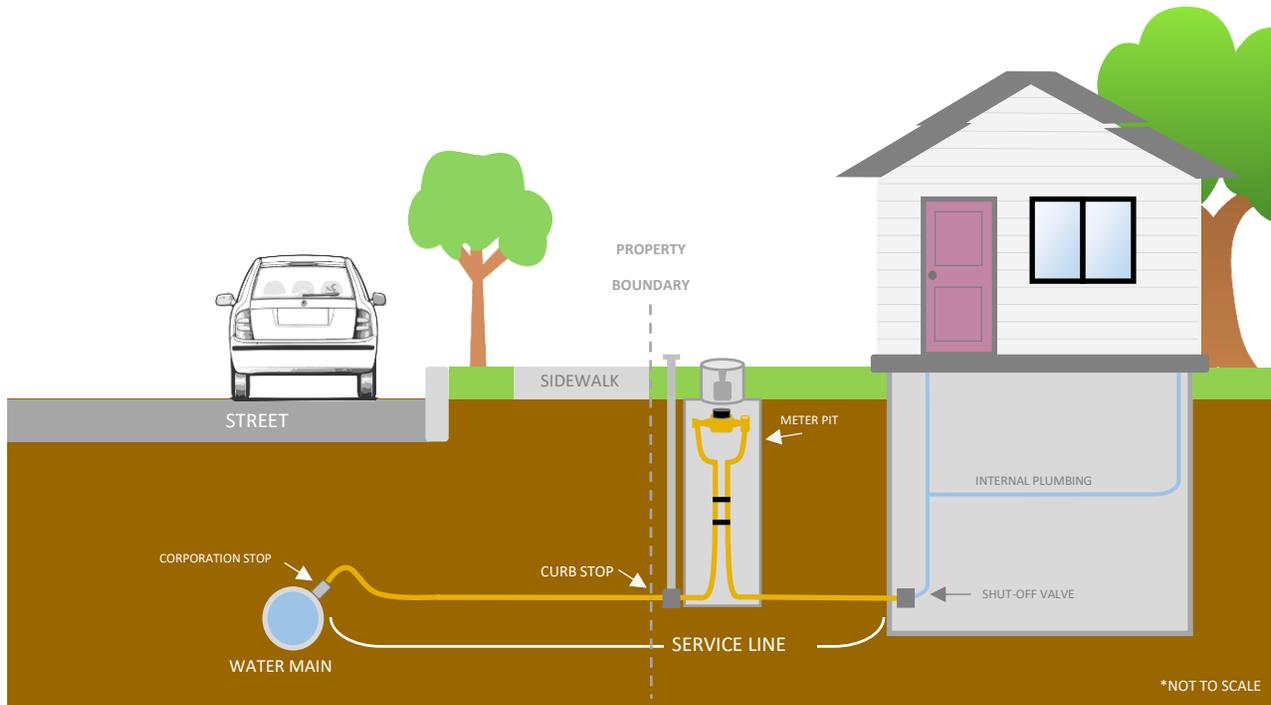
Where a property owner initiates a water or sewer service line replacement or repair and must be in the City Right of Way, an excavation permit is required. Once initiated, the property owner and their plumber are responsible to complete the installation or repair for the entire service line length if it is necessary to resume service. The scope of this may include replacement or repair of the service line, meter pit and appurtenances therein, curb stop, corporation stop including potential abandonment of the previous tap, sewer cleanouts, and sewer tap which may include repair or replacement of a section of sewer main where the tap is being made. This may also include appropriate backfill, replacement of curb, gutter, sidewalk, and asphalt.

Water Service Lines

The dividing point between The City of Durango responsibility for service lines and the service line responsibility of the property owner is where the public right-of-way and property line intersect (generally the property side of a sidewalk – see diagram below).

The service line lying under any privately-owned property outside of the public right-of-way, including within any easement, is owned by and the responsibility of the property owner. When leaks or breaks occur in the line within the public right-of-way, with few exceptions, the City Utilities Department will repair or replace that section of line.

When completing a repair or replacement, the Utilities Department may determine a need for the remainder of the service line to be repaired or replaced. In such cases the property owner will be notified of such need and water service may be discontinued until such repair or replacement is complete.



All new service lines, taps, meter pits and all metering appurtenances installed for new construction or remodeling are required to be installed per City Engineering Specifications at the cost to the property owner. Following inspection and acceptance, the City will take ownership and responsibility for items in City right-of-way, and the meter pit, curb stop, and equipment therein in accordance with this guidance.

Frozen Water Service Lines

In the case of a water service line freezing, it is the responsibility of the property owner to maintain the entire service line, from the main to the building, to keep from freezing. All reasonable procedures to avoid freezing should be followed, including but not limited to dripping water through a faucet, installation of a UL labeled heat tape, insulation or temporary use of a drop light within a meter pit or other solutions.

When a service line does freeze, it is the responsibility of a homeowner to thaw the entire length of the line. The Utilities staff may investigate to determine if the meter and meter pit are thawed and functioning, and in cases where a meter is frozen will repair or replace the meter upon the first occurrence of freezing. Any subsequent frozen meters necessitating repair or replacement will be charged back to the property owner.

Meter pits

In addition to the service line, City standard provides for a meter pit, meter, setter, dual check and radio for water service installations. In most cases, these items are located within a meter pit, which protect them from the elements.

Meter pits are usually located in the front yard, and are sometimes installed in a sidewalk or driveway. The pit appears as a round metal plate about 12 inches in diameter, and usually says “Water Meter” on it. Radios are mounted underneath these lids where possible, but in some cases are mounted on posts in the vicinity.



Meter pits are not designed to support the weight of a vehicle. Meter pits installed in driveways or parking areas often experience damage that can be very expensive to repair. In cases where meter pits are damaged in this manner the property owner will be responsible for repair or replacement.

The City of Durango owns the meter pit and contents and will maintain and repair these devices when they fail due to normal wear and tear, but it is the property owner’s responsibility to protect them from damage from lawn mowers, traffic, freezing and vandalism.

Meter pits must comply with specifications in the City of Durango Engineering Standards, including requirements dealing with proper materials, frost and freeze protection and the pit being set to and maintained to 3/4 inch above the finished grade of the ground or surrounding property.

Never place any objects on the meter pit lid. This includes placing gravel or other landscape rocks over the top of the meter pit lid. Do not plant bushes or other plants within 2 feet around the meter pit lid (grass is OK). Do not install walls, fences, mailboxes or other obstructions within 5 feet of the meter. Never place a fence or a wall between the water meter and the street.

Meters that are inside of a building must be kept accessible by the owner or resident. Do not place any items within 5 feet of an indoor meter. If you wish to enclose the meter in a finished space, leave an access panel or door at least 36 inches wide that extends from the floor to the gate valve above the meter.

Curb Stop Box and Valve

Most water services have a stop box (generally called a “curb stop”) on the street side of the meter pit (or near the front property line for inside meters). This top of the box is usually a 3-inch to 4-inch diameter disk (see picture below), with a tube extending downward to a valve that is about 4 ½ to 6 feet deep. This valve helps the property owner and City of Durango control the water flow if there is a leak in the service line or plumbing on the property. To serve its purpose,

the stop box must be level with the ground around it and accessible to City of Durango Utilities crews.

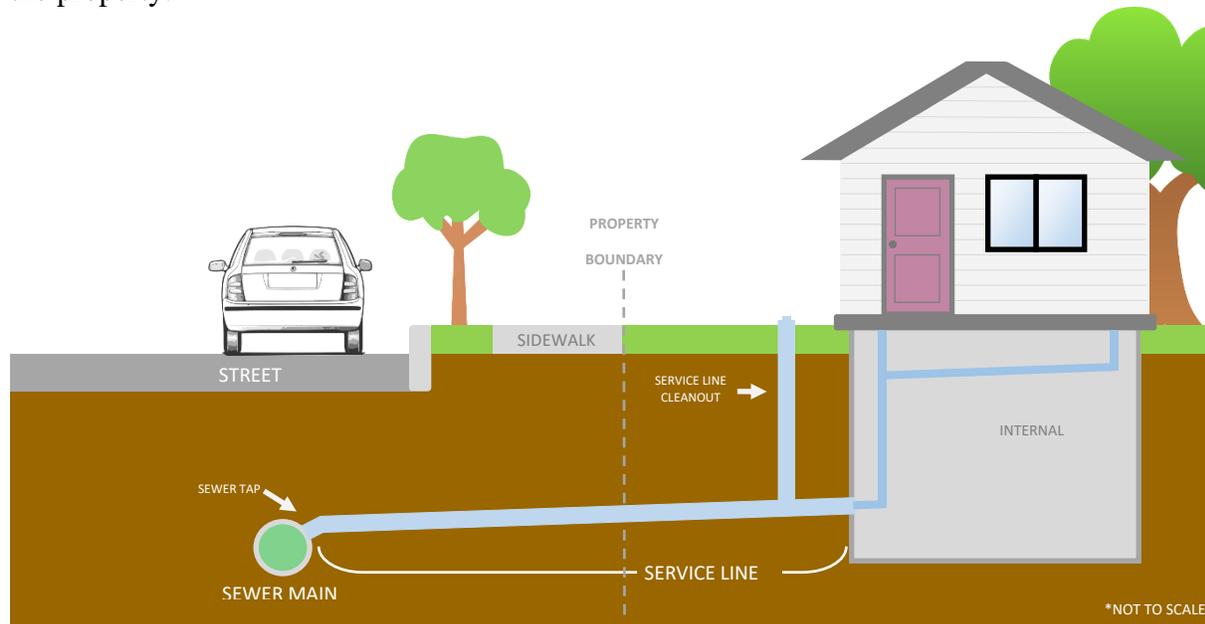
There must be at least 2 to 5 feet of space around the stop box free of shrubbery, walls, or other obstructions that would interfere with turning the valve key. If a curb stop box fails due to age, the City of Durango will replace the box. If the box is damaged as a result of a property owner (e.g. hitting with a lawnmower, driving over with a vehicle, etc.) The City of Durango will request it be repaired by the property owner. All repair and replacement by a property owner must be completed under the direction of a licensed plumber.



Over time, curb stop valves will wear out and become hard to operate, or the operating nut may break off. If the City of Durango Utilities crews are unable to operate the valve, they will repair or replace the curb stop valve as deemed necessary.

Sewer Service Lines

Sewer service line maintenance, ensuring flow through the length of the service line, is the responsibility of the property owner. This includes keeping the line clear of material obstructions including but not limited to grease, root intrusion, and other debris coming from a building on the property.



As with water service lines, the dividing point of responsibility for repair or maintenance of sewer service lines themselves is the public right-of-way (see general “property boundary”).

When City staff deem it necessary due to line damage because of pipe crushing or settlement, the City will repair or replace the service line within the public right-of-way.

When a service line has a blockage, the property owner has the responsibility to demonstrate that the point of disrepair in a sewer service line lies beyond the property boundary in the public right-of-way, and that the obstruction is not due to grease, debris from the property or root intrusion. Such evidence may include measurement of the line to the obstruction or video footage of the line.

When a sewer service line fails due to age (all types of service line material have a functional life), the City will replace the service line lying within the public right-of-way and charge the property owner for such replacement.

Reference

Provisions of this document are derived from [Durango City Code Chapter 25 Article I](#), Sections [25-3](#) and [25-4](#) available on the City website: durangogov.org.