

Fall 2024

Kennydale Lakeline Sewer System Improvement Project



Frequently Asked Questions

Property Easements

What is an easement?

An easement is a property right that allows a person or entity to use another person's property for a specific purpose. It does not grant ownership of the land, but rather a right to use property only in the ways described in the easement. In this case, the easement will allow the city to relocate, operate, maintain, and repair a new sewer system. This will ensure continued sewer service for you and the Kennydale community. Not all properties have existing easements for the operation and maintenance of the current Lakeline system. Updates to these easements reflect the new system and its access needs. The updated easements will provide clearer rights to protect both property owners and the city.

Why does the city need access to my property?

The city needs access to your property to conduct work related to the new sewer system. An easement is the legal document that allows the city access to your property. Easement documents that have gone out to property owners are considered "blanket" easements that cover the entire property but allow for access by the city only for reasons related to the new sewer line including a) minor adjustments during construction, b) modifications in the future should the homeowner desire to make changes to how they use their property (an addition to the home that conflicts with the new system is a good example), and c) during an emergency. This work includes documenting existing conditions of your property. Once the new sewer line is installed, the city will also need access if a pump needs repairs or maintenance. City staff will only enter your property after providing advance notice, except in the event of an emergency. The city intends to provide as much advance notice as is practical before performing regular maintenance on the new system. However, there may be situations where fast action is required to make urgent repairs to prevent property damage or address an immediate health concern.

How often will the city need access to my property?

The city's anticipated routine maintenance and inspection schedule will require about two visits per year. For each visit, the city will provide a minimum of 24-hour notice prior to entry for regular maintenance.

What is the process for reviewing the easements needed for this project?

The city has provided easement documents to each property. Every homeowner will have a chance to review these documents. The city will reimburse homeowners up to \$750 for an independent legal review of the easement if that is of interest. The City of Renton's project team has been meeting with individual homeowners this summer and fall to discuss the new documents and answer questions. After property owners have met with the project team and completed their review, a signed and notarized easement document needs to be returned to the city so it can be recorded with King County. The city needs all easement agreements in place by December 31, 2024. This deadline is crucial to keep the permitting process on track and allow necessary access to obtain information for final design.

What happens if I do not sign the easement?

The Lakeline sewer system is failing and poses a serious risk to your property and the environment. A major breakdown could occur at any time, leading to sewage backups, service disruptions, and potential environmental damage to Lake Washington. All 57 homes and Kenndale Beach Park would be without sewer service for months until the repair is completed. Lack of sewer service would render your property uninhabitable until repairs could be made.

To prevent this, the city intends to construct a new system funded by the city's Wastewater Utility rates charged to customers. This project will secure sewer service for your home, provide ease of maintenance, and reduce potential environmental damage to Lake Washington. Because of the risks associated with the existing Lakeline sewer condition and potential consequences, completion of this project promptly is absolutely necessary.

If you don't sign the easement, we cannot install the new system on your property. The city intends to decommission the old Lakeline system shortly after completing the construction of the new grinder pump system. This means you'll lose sewer service when the old system is shut down, making your home uninhabitable. You would then be responsible for connecting to the new system later.

Grinder Pump System Overview

Who will be responsible for the grinder pump station?

The city will own, operate, and maintain the grinder pump system, including pump stations on private property. The city is responsible for preventative maintenance, planned corrective maintenance, and 24 hour/day emergency maintenance.

How will the grinder pump be powered?

The system will connect to external power provided by the city's new centralized electrical system. This power system will include a dedicated backup generator for this pump system.

What happens if the grinder pump serving my property fails?

Control panels will monitor the individual grinder pumps for any issues, and a warning light, audible alarm, and an automatic cellular alert will notify the affected property owner, city staff, and maintenance providers of any issues. We are evaluating response times but anticipate a response within 4 hours of notification.

Where will the systems be installed in my yard?

The location of grinder pump systems will vary by property and the location of the existing side sewer connection point. A schematic layout of the system was provided in the easement package prepared for each property. We have been meeting with property owners to answer questions, discuss easement needs, and gather feedback on the layout where we have some flexibility in location. Our goal is to incorporate feedback on preferred location where possible.

How is the size of the pump station calculated?

The system is sized based on the size and number of bedrooms in the home. This ensures that changes in how many people are living in the house are accounted for. We also looked at historical water usage based on water meter data over the last three years. This analysis found that there is too much variation in use between individual properties (e.g., those with irrigation systems, filling hot tubs, plumbing leaks) for the data to be useful in sizing the stations. The permanent standby power generator means the pump stations do not need to store flows for extended periods as is needed for other systems (like those that do not have backup power). The backup power and prompt emergency response allows for smaller stations to be installed, leading to less impact on each property. The city is responsible for ensuring emergency storage is sufficient since the grinder pump and related system will be owned and maintained by the city.

How does the project improve sewer reliability at my property?

Many people think of the existing Lakeline sewer system as a traditional gravity system. However, it is actually a low-pressure system that relies on pumps at both ends of the Lakeline to function. In a power failure, city crews must bring a trailer-mounted generator to the site to ensure sewer service. The existing system also requires continuous flow from end to end to flush debris through the main. A blockage anywhere along the Lakeline could result in a loss of service to all properties as repairs to the existing systems could take months to design, permit, contract and access.

The new grinder pump system has many benefits compared to the old system. The new system will be supported by a dedicated central backup generator to ensure uninterrupted service to residents. It will not be located in the lake and it will have improved access. Also, with the new pump system, if one pump goes offline for any reason it will not impact sewer service at other residences in the system.

What if everyone is using their pump station at the same time?

The system is designed to have multiple pumps running at the same time. The storage of each grinder pump station ensures that at least 70 gallons of water (or 43 standard toilet flushes) provide uninterrupted service to each home, even during Super Bowl halftime when use is at a peak.

Repair and Maintenance

What happens when the power goes out?

If power fails, the electrical system has an automatic transfer switch that will turn on the backup generator. The backup power generator can be refueled by city maintenance staff as necessary for continued operation.

What happens if my or my neighbor's pump has a problem?

An audible and visual alarm at the control panel will notify residents of any issues. At the same time, an automatic cellular alert will notify the city and maintenance staff so they can respond to the problem. To expedite repair, failed parts will be replaced with further investigation performed off site. The grinder pumps function independently, so single pump issues will not affect other homes that do not use the failed grinder pump.

What is the city's standard level of service?

The city currently provides uninterrupted sewer service to +19,000 customers through 235 miles of sewer main using 20 lift stations. For all of our customers, the city provides 24/7 emergency service including holidays, nighttime, and during extreme weather events. One of the 20 lift stations and a pump station currently serve the properties impacted by this project. The goal of this project is to allow the city to continue to provide uninterrupted service. If the existing Lakeline fails, we will be unable to provide this service.

Who will make repairs if needed?

The city is responsible and will maintain all aspects of the system that fall under its ownership.

How long will repairs take?

City wastewater operations staff are on call 24/7, on holidays, and during extreme weather events to respond to issues anywhere in our system. A typical repair for a grinder pump system involves a brief diagnostic followed by replacing a pump or electrical component. Further evaluation of the failure will occur offsite and after the system is back online. A technician will provide a same-day response to an alarm.

Noise and Property Impacts

What noise will I hear from the system?

The noise level of the pump is about 70 decibels – equal to the sound of an average washing machine. However, since the pumps are underground, most of the noise will be absorbed by the soil. The control panel has an alarm that can reach 93 decibels from two feet away – similar to the noise a lawnmower makes. When there is a system failure and the alarm goes off, there is a button at the bottom of the panel to silence the sound. Silencing the alarm will not affect the pump or alarm light.

Pumps will run an average of 10 to 30 minutes per day for single-family residential homes. They are designed to turn on and off throughout the day (20 to 40 times for a single-family home), for approximately one to two minutes each time. This will vary with water use — the more water you use, the more often the pump will turn on.

What will the grinder pump system look like?

Grinder pumps are installed underground so that only the 2.5-foot diameter lid is visible. Landscaping in the surrounding area or decorative rocks on top of the lid can disguise or minimize the appearance of the lid. To maintain access for repairs and maintenance, lids cannot be covered up with permanent landscaping features. Depending on property owner preferences, the control panel will be either mounted on a post near the grinder pump station or wall-mounted on the outside of the house like a utility box.



Example of a grinder pump station and control panel at a home located in Soos Creek. These homeowners opted for a decorative rock to conceal the lid. The control panel is located on the side of the garage.

Restoration

Will this project also address drainage and pavement issues on Mountain View Avenue N. and the access road from Lake Washington Boulevard N.?

The city will repair areas impacted by the new system installation and will improve drainage wherever possible. Bigger stormwater fixes that may need new outfalls to the lake or special permitting may be deferred to a future project. You can submit specific requests to the city's Surface Water Utility Engineering Division.

Will the city restore my property after installing the grinder pump?

The city ("Grantee") will restore each property as part of this project and is stated in the easement agreement as follows:

"In the event private improvements in the Easement Area are disturbed or damaged by any of Grantee's activities described above, upon completion of such Work, Grantee shall restore the improvements to a similar condition to that of the surrounding area, provided that such restoration shall not interfere with Grantee's intended use of the easement area."



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