

# CENTRAL SAN HOME GUIDE

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## 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 pipes, property owners are responsible for taking care of their private sewer laterals. The **private sewer lateral** (also called a side sewer) is the pipe that runs from your house to the public sewer main located under the street or in an 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), period products, dental floss, condoms, kitty litter, or other plastic or debris. Put them in the trash can. Teach kids never to flush toys.

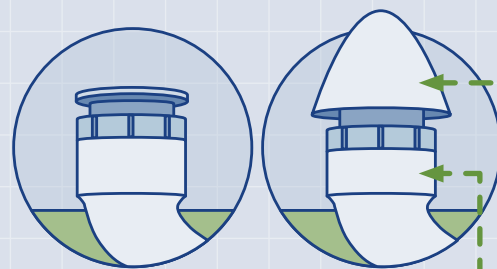
### 2. TEND TO YOUR ROOTS.

**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 licensed plumbing service if you experience sewer problems (see next page).

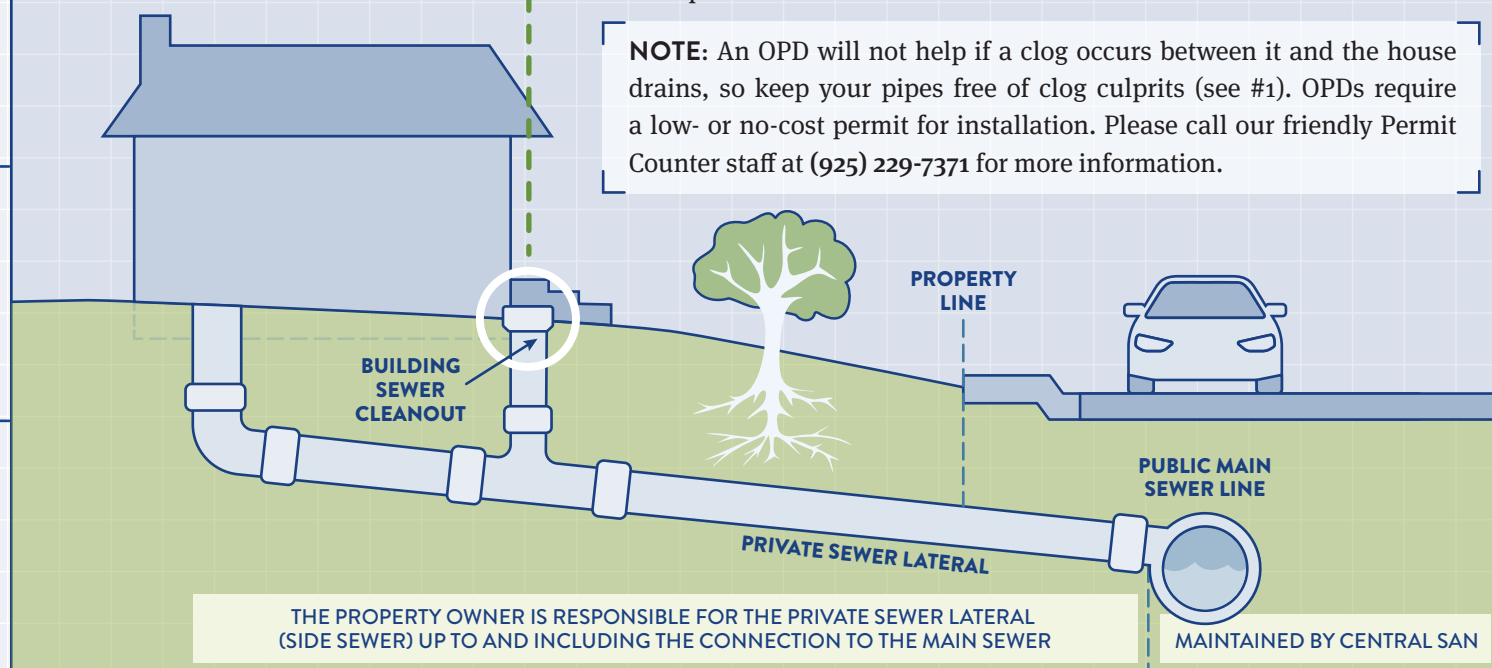
### 3. INSTALL AN OVERFLOW PROTECTION DEVICE (OPD) ON THE CLEANOUT OF YOUR HOME'S PRIVATE LATERAL.

**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 your local plumbing supply or hardware store. 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 landscaping or improvements.

**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). OPDs require a low- or no-cost permit for installation. Please call our friendly Permit Counter staff at (925) 229-7371 for more information.



THE TWO MOST COMMON TYPES OF OVERFLOW PROTECTION DEVICES (SHOWN ON CLEANOUT)



## HOW TO HIRE THE RIGHT SEWER CONTRACTOR

**PROPERTY OWNERS** are responsible for maintaining the private sewer lateral (side sewer) that connects their household plumbing to our public sewer system. Unfortunately, we sometimes hear from customers who have been overcharged when having work done on their lateral. While sewer lateral repair and replacement can be expensive, follow these tips to ensure you find the right contractor at the best price for the job:

**1. ASK FOR RECOMMENDATIONS** from family, friends, or neighbors who've had sewer work performed, or check online reviews. Interview and get estimates from at least three properly licensed plumbing contractors. The more quotes the better to give you an idea of the **true market cost** for the work.

**2. ASK ABOUT ALTERNATIVES.** When interviewing potential contractors, ask about the different options for sewer repair methods (such as open-cut or trenchless) available for your situation.

**3. ASK ABOUT REQUIRED PERMITS.** Apart from routine cleaning, **all other work done on a lateral requires a permit from Central San** before work begins to ensure the connection to our system is done to code. This is required even if you or the contractor has a building or plumbing permit from the city or county. If the lateral repair involves digging in a street or other public right-of-way, you will also need an encroachment permit from your city.

**ALERT:** Do not hire a contractor who says the sewer repair work can be done without a permit! The fee for working without a permit is significant and ultimately the responsibility of the homeowner. Plus, no one wants sewage leaks on their property!

**4. READ THE CONTRACTOR'S PROPOSAL CAREFULLY** and make sure it explains all work to be done, the required permits, who will obtain and pay for the permits, how the site will be restored and cleaned up, and payment terms. Note that while a deposit may be required before work begins, State law limits deposits to 10% of the proposed cost of the work or \$1,000, whichever is lower.

**5. DON'T GET PRESSURED.** Some contractors may try to pressure you into signing a contract immediately by insinuating that the situation is an emergency, or that they have limited time and won't be able to schedule your job if you seek other bids. Most repairs are not emergency situations. Pressuring you could be an attempt to discourage you from getting multiple bids or gaining further knowledge about what repair work is actually needed. Spending the time to get multiple bids could save you money and help avoid pressure tactics.

**ALERT:** The above guidelines are for sewer work. Other local agencies and utilities may have additional requirements before work is performed on your property. Be sure to do your due diligence!

Once you have selected a reputable contractor and the Central San permit has been obtained, our inspectors will make sure the job is done to District code.

Remember, we're here to help! Always check with us if you have questions about permits. Call our expert Permit Counter staff at (925) 229-7371.

### IS YOUR LATERAL IN NEED OF CLEANING OR REPAIR?

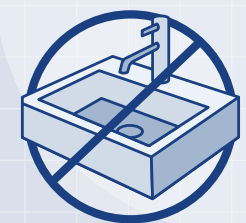
Nothing lasts forever, and sewer laterals are no exception. As pipes age, they may crack or deteriorate. They also can become clogged by roots or an accumulation of grease and debris (such as single-use wipes). Have your sewer lateral inspected by a properly licensed plumbing contractor if:

- You have a sewage backup
- A toilet or household drain empties more slowly than usual
- Patches in your yard are always wet

FATS, OILS, AND GREASE



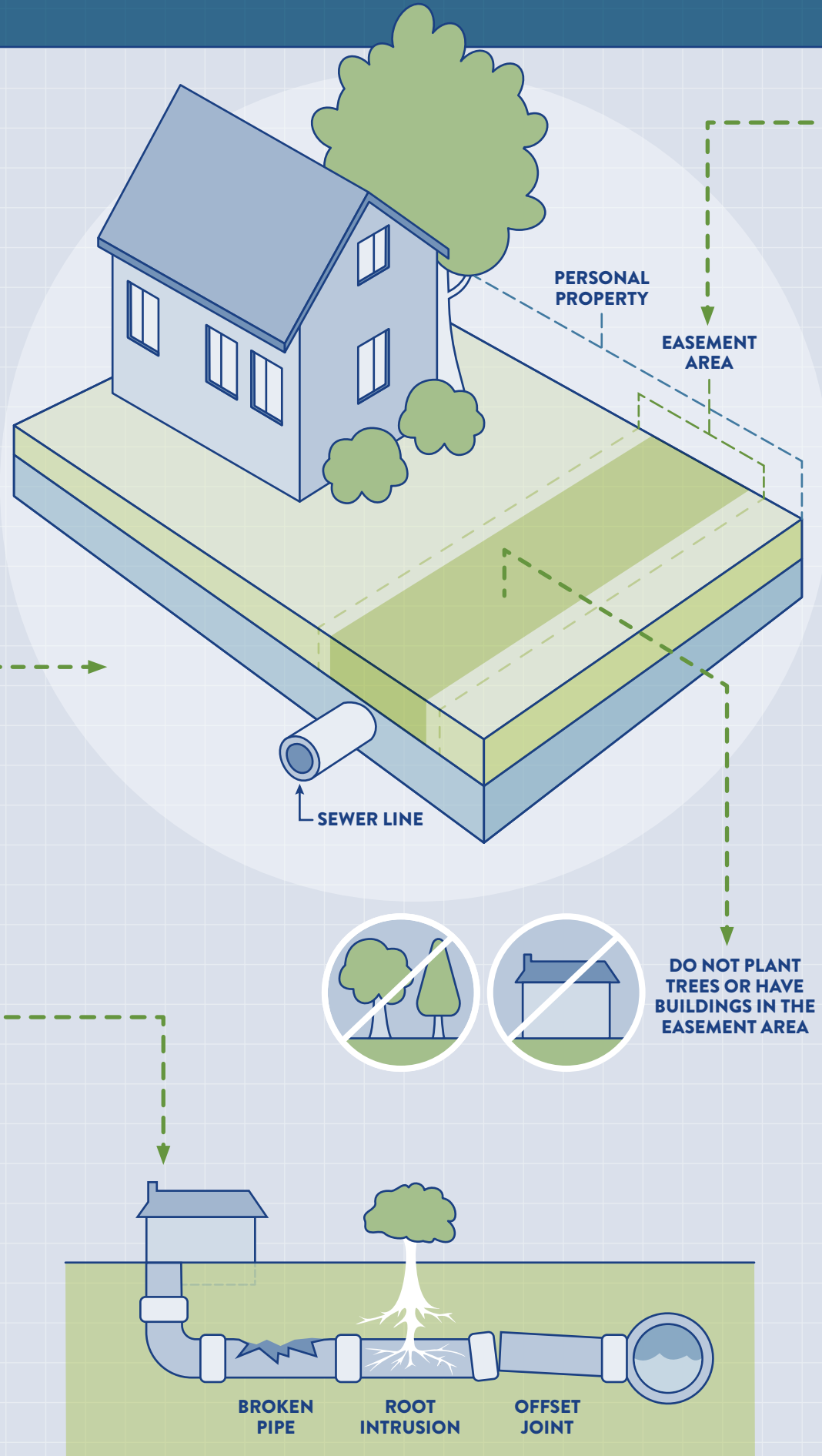
WIPES



# BUYING OR SELLING A HOME? DO YOUR SEWER DUE DILIGENCE

WHEN BUYING OR SELLING A HOME, it's important to do your homework so you're aware of any structural problems or financial risks either before listing your home or before you remove inspection contingencies during the sale. While performing your due diligence, remember to check for any potential sewer issues:

- 1. CONFIRM THAT THE PRIVATE SEWER LATERAL (SIDE SEWER) HAS A CLEANOUT AND OVERFLOW PROTECTION DEVICE (OPD).** The cleanout provides your plumber with easy access for cleaning and maintenance. An older home may lack a cleanout. OPDs are required by Central San and help protect your home in the event of sewage backup in the lateral or the public sewer main. If the lateral is missing these critical features, you should have them installed.
- 2. CHECK IF ANY SEWER OR OTHER UTILITY EASEMENTS ARE ATTACHED TO THE PROPERTY DEED.** An easement may limit the type of improvements you can make in that part of the property, so you'll want to be aware of any restrictions. You can easily identify if you have a sewer or utility easement in the Preliminary Title Report you receive when escrow is opened. You also can contact our Permit Counter to check if there is a sewer easement attached to the property. Learn more about sewer easements on the next page.
- 3. IF THE PROPERTY HAS AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU), CHECK THAT IT IS PROPERLY PERMITTED,** including sewer permits. If there's an existing ADU that needs to be brought into compliance, you can reach out to our Permit Counter for an estimate of any sewer permit, sewer service charge, or capacity fees you'll need to pay. Learn more on page 5.
- 4. HAVE A LICENSED PLUMBER DO A VIDEO INSPECTION OF THE PRIVATE SEWER LATERAL** to check for cracks, breaks, offset joints, or root intrusion. While Central San does not require a point of sale lateral inspection, it is recommended. For a few hundred dollars, this inspection can alert you if the lateral requires cleaning, repair, or replacement. It also will tell you the type of material used. Older laterals are typically made of vitrified clay, which is particularly susceptible to roots. If you discover a problem with the lateral before close of escrow, you can negotiate with the seller to cover the cost of repairs. Replacing a defective lateral or repairing damage caused by a backup can cost thousands of dollars, so it's worth taking a little precaution up front.



# FAQS: SEWER EASEMENTS

WHILE THE MAJORITY OF CENTRAL SAN'S SEWER PIPES are located under public streets, about 40% are located on private property. Sewer easements help protect our pipes and ensure we can access them for necessary maintenance and repairs. If you have a Central San sewer easement on your property, here's what you need to know:

## WHAT EXACTLY 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 recorded and attached to the property deed, so it passes on even when the property is transferred or sold. If you have a Central San easement on your property, our professionals may access your yard for sewer 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, and sidewalks are generally allowed. However, you may not plant trees in the easement area or construct permanent structures such as an accessory dwelling unit, garage, swimming pool, deck, gazebo, retaining wall, or tennis court.

## 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 sewage backups in your home or yard.

## WHAT IF MY PROPERTY HAS EXISTING IMPROVEMENTS THAT ENCROACH ON THE EASEMENT?

Depending on the nature and extent of the encroachment, you may apply to have the encroachment permitted as part of a new easement deed. Each encroachment is unique and handled on a case-by-case basis. Contact Central San 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 on your property, please contact us beforehand. Central San's review of your plans is required by local agencies. Early review will help speed up the planning process and avoid potential problems down the line.

If you have questions about a sewer easement on your property, please contact us at [permits@centralsan.org](mailto:permits@centralsan.org) or (925) 229-7371.

## DOES YOUR ADU NEED A SEWER PERMIT?

**NEW STATE LAWS** are making it easier than ever for homeowners to add accessory dwelling units (ADUs). ADUs are separate living spaces with kitchen and bathroom facilities that can be attached to or detached from the primary residence (for example, an in-law unit or backyard cottage).

Because each ADU is unique, if you are considering building an ADU or if you have an existing unit that needs a sewer permit, please reach out to our friendly Permit Counter staff. We are committed to serving your needs and making the process as efficient as possible.

### CALL US BEFORE YOU BUILD!

While new state regulations limit certain fees and relax zoning requirements for many ADUs, your project may still require sewer connection/capacity fees, sewer service charges, and permits from Central San. It all depends on the type, size, and features of the unit you're planning to build. Central San charges a lower capacity fee—about half the cost of other multifamily dwellings—for projects that meet specific criteria for ADUs under state law.

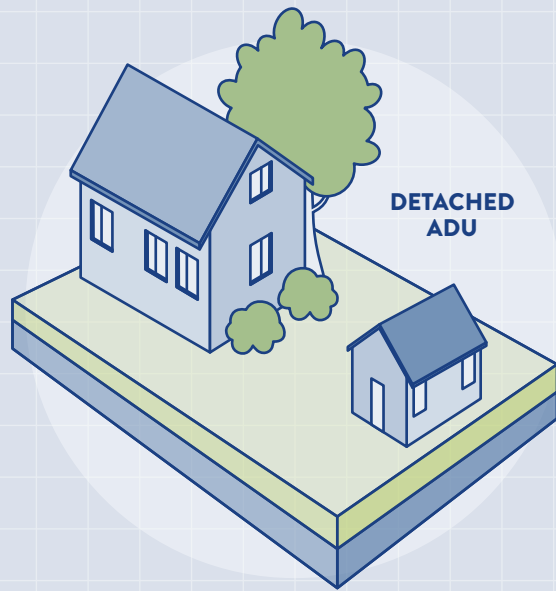
We want to help you avoid unwanted surprises. Before preparing plans, contact our Permit Counter to learn more about sewer installation requirements and options for connecting your ADU to our system. We can prepare an estimate of fees and charges for your particular project and answer your questions about the sewer permitting process.

### LEGALIZE AN EXISTING ADU

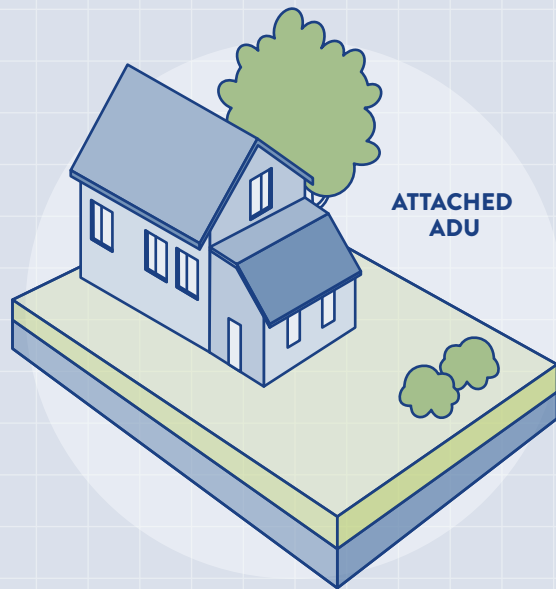
Do you have an existing ADU that lacks a sewer permit? Or are you unsure if your ADU is properly permitted? Good news! It's now more affordable than ever to bring an existing ADU into compliance. Under an ordinance adopted in June 2023 by Central San's Board of Directors, property owners pay a lower capacity fee specifically for ADUs, regardless of when the unit was constructed. This can mean thousands of dollars in savings for homeowners who are trying to do the right thing by legalizing their ADUs.

As part of the permitting process, Central San will inspect any exterior sewer work associated with your ADU to make sure it is properly connected to the public sewer system. This could help save you the hassle and expense of dealing with sewage backups, leaks, and other problems caused by an improperly connected ADU. Having the proper permits on file can also make it easier to sell your property in the future.

For more information, visit [centralsan.org/permits](https://centralsan.org/permits), or contact us at [permits@centralsan.org](mailto:permits@centralsan.org) or (925) 229-7371.



DETACHED ADU



ATTACHED ADU

### WHAT ARE CAPACITY FEES?

All new houses or buildings that connect to Central San's sewer system are required to pay a one-time capacity fee. This capacity fee is based on an equity buy-in approach where new customers pay for their share of the infrastructure needed to collect and clean wastewater, which was paid for by existing customers.

## COME VISIT US!

**BEYOND COLLECTING AND CLEANING WASTEWATER**, Central San offers a variety of services to help our customers manage their homes, prevent pollution, and conserve water. Best of all, all of these services are **FREE** for our residential customers.

### HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION FACILITY

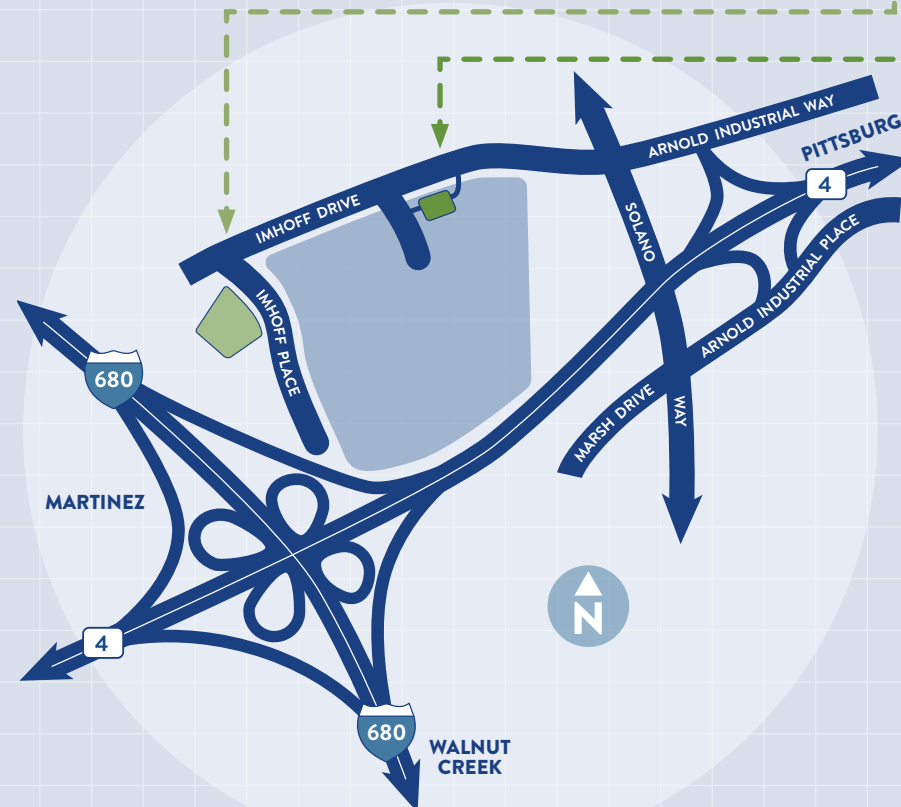
- 4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez
- Residents: Monday – Saturday, 7 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Businesses: Monday – Saturday, by appointment
- [centralsan.org/hhw](https://centralsan.org/hhw)
- (800) 646-1431

Bring us your unwanted paint, oil, pesticides, fluorescent light bulbs, and other household hazardous waste, and we'll take care of the rest. Every pound of waste brought to our collection facility helps keep pollutants out of sewers, storm drains, and landfills. Even better, we reuse or recycle about 90% of the materials we collect.

### REUSE ROOM

- Monday – Saturday, 7 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

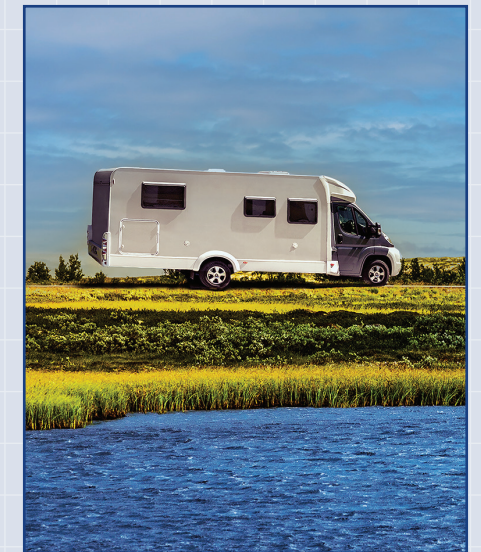
In need of household or garden products? Our Reuse Room is stocked with items brought in for disposal that are still in usable condition. The inventory changes regularly but often includes paint, wood stain, garden products, and a wide variety of cleansers. Drop in, browse, and you might find just what you need!



### RESIDENTIAL RECYCLED WATER FILL STATION

- Monday – Saturday, 7 a.m. – 2 p.m. (Closed during periods of rain; please call ahead to confirm we're open.)
- [centralsan.org/recycledwater](https://centralsan.org/recycledwater)
- (925) 335-7717

Keep your garden happy while helping save our precious drinking water supplies! Our recycled water is ideal for hand-watering your trees, flowers, lawns, and container plants. Visit our website for step-by-step instructions on how to use the fill station.



### NEW! RV WASTE DISPOSAL STATION

- 5300 Imhoff Drive, Martinez
- Daily, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.
- [centralsan.org/rv](https://centralsan.org/rv)

Our self-service recreational vehicle (RV) waste disposal station provides a convenient, no-cost way to empty your RV tanks and safely dispose of the wastewater. By properly disposing of your RV waste, you can help us protect our local waterways and public health.

# WHO WE ARE

**WE'RE YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD SEWER UTILITY ... AND SO MUCH MORE!** The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (Central San) has been protecting public health and the environment since 1946. Today we collect and clean wastewater from nearly 500,000 residents and more than 3,000 businesses in central Contra Costa County, California. Whatever goes down your drains travels through our 1,500-mile sewer system to our treatment plant in Martinez, where we clean about 13 billion gallons of wastewater every year. We also operate a popular Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility, provide recycled water for landscape irrigation and industrial use, and promote pollution prevention through a variety of education, outreach, and inspection programs.

**CONTACT US:**  
**CENTRAL SAN**  
 5019 IMHOFF PLACE, MARTINEZ, CA 94553  
 (925) 228-9500  
 CENTRALSAN.ORG



- WASTEWATER COLLECTION & TREATMENT; HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW) DISPOSAL.
- WASTEWATER TREATMENT & HHW DISPOSAL IN CONCORD & CLAYTON BY CONTRACT.
- HHW DISPOSAL ONLY.
- CENTRAL SAN HEADQUARTERS, TREATMENT PLANT, HHW FACILITY & RESIDENTIAL RECYCLED WATER FILL STATION.