Engineering Division
Alder and Resident Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) & Answers

Jim Wolfe, City Engineer

CITY OF **MADISON**

FAQ Overview

Frequently Asked Questions

Alders and residents commonly ask our agency the following questions:

Questions
What construction is happening on my street? What's the project schedule?
My street floods. What can the City do?
What do I do about a plugged storm inlet?
I am experiencing basement flooding. What can I do?
Why do I pay a stormwater utility bill if no water runs off my property?
How can I reduce my stormwater utility bill?
My sewer is backing up in my basement. What should I do?
The sewer back up in my basement was caused by a problem in my sanitary lateral. What can the City do for me?
Where can I report issues about a sewer access cover issue?
What do I do about a sink hole?

Frequently Asked Questions

Alders and residents commonly ask our agency the following questions:

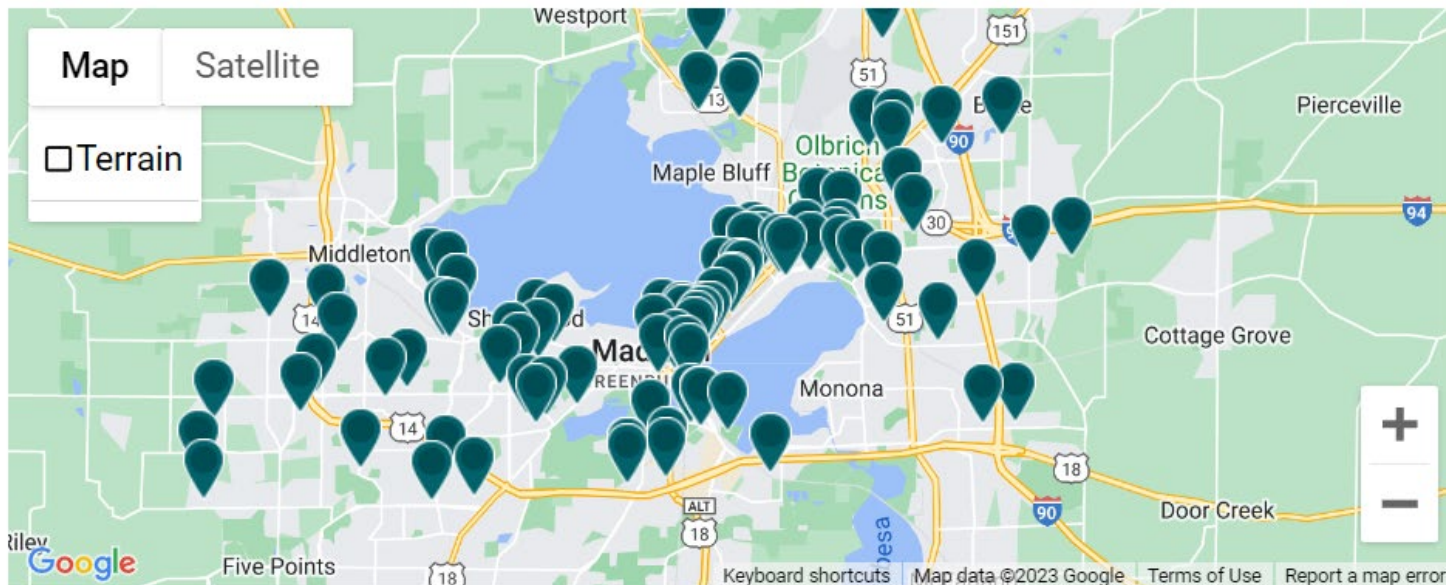| Questions |
| --- |
| Who picks up dead animals in the street? |
| What are the colored markings/flags on my street or in my yard? |
| How do I find a City prequalified contractor to replace my driveway apron? |
| I'm remodeling my building and adding additional tenant spaces, what is the new suite number? Or: I'm combining 2 spaces into 1, which address should I use? |
| We want to pull the permit for a new building. Building Inspection said the address is not available in the permitting system. What can we do? |
| Why do the parcels shown on line in the mapping application and DCI Map appear to not match a survey of my property? |
| I live in Madison, but my mailing address is Middleton WI 53562. Why is this? |
| Where can I find/how do I get your mapping data? |
| "You're probably not the right place to call, but …" |

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FAQ Answers

People - Places - Possibilities

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Question: What construction is happening on my street? What's the project schedule?

- Check out our City of Madison website, which has a list of updates and information about all active projects happening in the City of Madison Engineering Division: [Construction Projects](#)

Active Projects

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Question: My street floods. What can the City do?

- **Emergencies:** If you or someone else is at risk or needs help, or if the maintenance item is an emergency condition, please call **911**.

- **Stormwater Emergencies**: If clogged grates or blocked waterways are causing an imminent threat to your property, please call (608) 266-4430

- **report non-emergency flooding issues** on-line at https://www.cityofmadison.com/flooding/report/. We can then let you know if we are already aware of the problem and if we have programmed a fix.

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Question: What do I do about a plugged storm inlet?

- The City's storm drainage system includes more than 27,000 "inlets". Inlets are open grate structures that allow storm water to enter the drainage system. In the winter these can be blocked by snow or ice; in the fall by leaves.

- Many residents take it upon themselves to clear the inlet abutting their property to assure rain and melting snow can reach the inlet and drain away. Residents can report via the City's Report-A-Problem site or by calling Engineering Operations at 608-266-4430.

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Question: I am experiencing basement flooding. What can I do?

- The Engineering website has a link with lots of suggestions on what you can do and what order to do them in: https://www.cityofmadison.com/flooding/resources/prevent-basement-flooding

- If you have questions after looking at the City of Madison Flooding website, give us a call.


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Question: Why do I pay a stormwater utility bill if no water runs off my property?

- All properties in the City of Madison (including public land) pay a stormwater charge based on the amount of impervious (hard surface) and pervious (grass) area on each lot.

- While your property may not run off during most events the storm sewer system is generally designed for an event that has a 10% chance of occurring on any given day (we used to call this the 10 year event). During that type of event almost all types of land (even grass) runoff water into the drainage system.

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Question: How can I reduce my stormwater utility bill?

- On a single family residence the best way to reduce your bill is to construct (yourself) a rain garden that treats the majority of your roof.

- Residents should contact City Engineering before starting the work so we can help you optimize your design.

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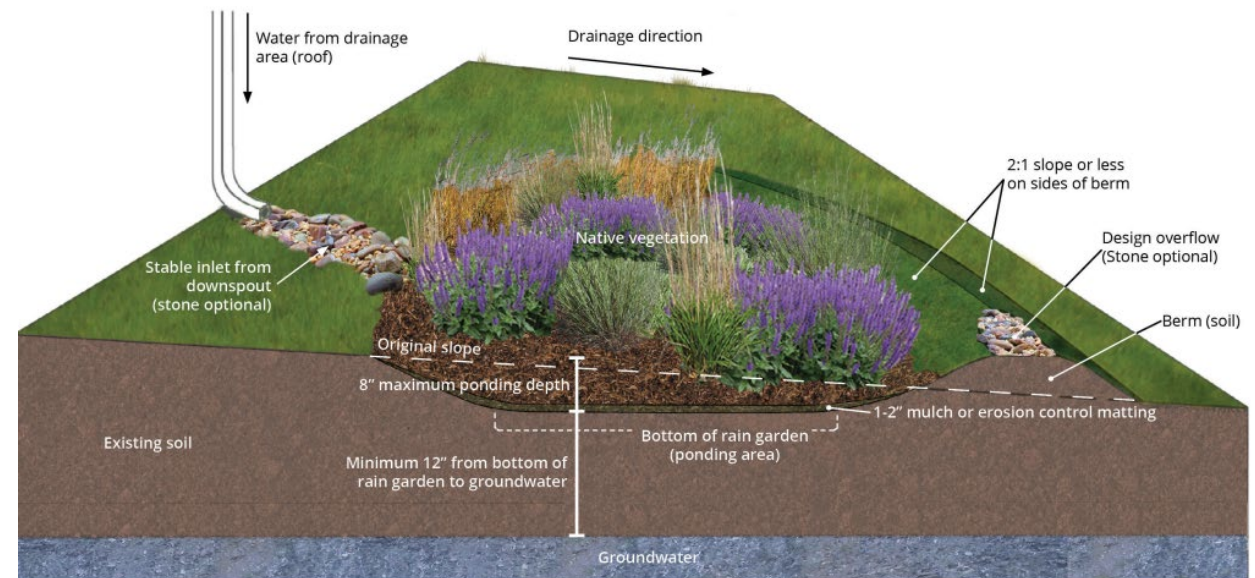
Question: My sewer is backing up in my basement. What should I do?

- Residents experiencing a sewer back up should contact Engineering Operations at 608-266-4430. Crews are available to respond to sewer back ups 24/7/365.

- Upon arrival the crew will check the public sewer main to determine if it is the cause of the problem. Even if the main is not backed up the crew will clean the line as the cleaning action can sometimes draw out a blockage in the private lateral and relieve the home owners' problem. The crew will contact the resident who called in with the sewer back up to let them know what we found. If the problem was not in the public sewer main the property owner will be advised to contact a private sewer cleaning company or plumber to address the problem in the private lateral.

- The City does not charge the property owner for its response. The property owner/resident is, however, responsible for paying the private contractor to address problems in the private lateral.

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- The majority of sewer back up calls we respond to are caused by problems in the property owner's private sewer lateral. The property owners owns the private sewer lateral and is responsible for its maintenance and repair. The private sewer lateral is the pipe that connects the home's internal plumbing system to the public sewer main.

- Proper use of the sewer is important to preventing sewer back ups. More information on preventing sewer back ups is available at https://www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/sanitary-sewer/education/sewer-backups

- Older homes (pre-1980s) typically have clay laterals which are subject to root intrusion. In this case we recommend that you have your lateral cleaned annually by a private firm.

- If you have a backup during rain events, the City has a backwater valve program that will partially fund the installation of a backwater valve on you lateral. More details about the backwater valve program can be found here. https://www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/sanitary-sewer/programs-initiatives/backwater-valve-program.

- Contact City Engineering for more information.

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Question: Where can I report issues about a sewer access cover issue?

- Between the sanitary and storm sewer systems there are nearly 30,000 access structures. Concerns about noisy structure covers can be reported residents can report via the City's Report-A-Problem site or by calling Engineering Operations at 608-266-4430.

- If a cover is ajar or missing please contact Engineering Operations at 608-266-4430. Crews are available to respond to these types of issues 24/7/365.

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Question: What do I do about a sink hole?

- A sinkhole is a depression or hole in the ground caused by some form of collapse of the surface layer. This is different from a pot hole.

- The Engineering Division investigates sink hole complaints to determine the cause. First, the site is secured to protect the public. Next an emergency locate request is submitted to Diggers Hotline. This allows us to identify utilities who have underground facilities in the vicinity of the sink hole that could be its cause. Each utility then assesses it underground facilities to determine if they are damaged. If any damaged facilities are found they are repaired and the site restored. If no damaged utilities are identified the sink hole is filled and the site restored.

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Question: Who picks up dead animals in the street?

- The Engineering Division is responsible for collection and disposal of dead animals located in the public-right of way. Residents can use the City's Report-A-Problem site or call Engineering Operations at 608-266-4430 to report dead animals in the street.
  - An Engineering crew will typically respond and remove the carcass within 24 hours. Note This excludes car-killed deer.
  - If we collect a pet with a collar and tags we will contact the owner. If you are missing a per you can contact Engineering Operations at 608-266-4430 and we can let you know if a pet matching the description you provide has been collected.

- The City has a private contractor collect and dispose of car-killed deer at a WI-DNR approved facility. CKD can also be reported via the City's Report-A-Problem site or calling Engineering Operations at 608-266-4430. Please note that the contractor collects deer reported by the City on Tuesdays and Thursdays so there may be a delay from the time the deer is reported until it is collected.

- The City is unable to enter private property to remove dead animals. Options for residents are:
  - Relocate the animal to the terrace in front of your property for pick up by Engineering;
  - Place the animal in your trash container for pick up with regularly scheduled trash collection;
  - Hire a private service to enter your property to remove and dispose of the animal. Such services are listed in the yellow pages under "Animal Removal Services".
  - Once the animal is relocated to the terrace residents can report via the City's Report-A-Problem site or by calling Engineering Operations at 608-266-4430.

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Question: What are the colored markings/flags on my street or in my yard?

- Utilities are required by law to locate and mark their underground facilities in response to locate requests submitted to Diggers Hotline by excavators.

- Utilities follow a national standard using specific colors marking symbols for identifying facilities.

Color	Facility
White	Proposed Excavation
Pink	Temporary Survey Markings
Red	Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit, and Lighting Cables
Yellow	Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum, or Gaseous Materials
Orange	Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables, or Conduit
Blue	Potable Water
Purple	Reclaimed Water, Irrigation, and Slurry Lines
Green	Sewers and Drain Lines

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Question: How do I find a City prequalified contractor to replace my driveway apron?

- [We have a list of prequalified contractors](#) on the City's website.

- Contractors performing work in the public right of way or publicly owned lands, including public works contracts, installing utilities or performing work for residents or property owners on public property are required to be licensed to be prequalified to perform work. Licenses are good for 2 years and expire on March 1st of the given 2-year cycle.

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Question: I'm remodeling my building and adding additional tenant spaces, what is the new suite number? Or : I'm combining 2 spaces into 1, which address should I use?

- Provide a PDF copy of the floor plans.

- Label the tenant spaces and show the current address numbers in use.

- We will create an addressing plan and provide the new address.

Question: We want to pull the permit for a new building. Building Inspection said the address is not available in the permitting system. What can we do?

- The development has a new parcel that is being created to accommodate the project. The land division needs to be recorded, and the Address, Parcel and Ownership information entered by the Assessor's office and the ward, zip code and other information entered by Planning prior to the address being available for the permit. This process takes a few days after the land division has been recorded at the Register of Deeds. No permit can be issued until the address has been made available.

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Question: Why do the parcels shown on line in the mapping application and DCI Map appear to not match a survey of my property?

- Essentially, our mapping is a representation of the parcels and land information within the City of Madison. It was compiled from previous maps and records that were available when the mapping was built. As new land divisions and survey information becomes available, we adjust areas that are most in need of corrections and adjustments. GIS mapping is not survey grade mapping. The only accurate way to determine the location of the boundaries of a parcel is to engage a Professional Land Surveyor.

Question: I live in Madison, but my mailing address is Middleton WI 53562. Why is this?

- You are physically located within the Madison municipal city limits, however your property is served by the Middleton US postal branch office.

- The mailing city and zip code represent which branch office of the USPS delivers your mail.

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Question: Where can I find/how do I get your mapping data?

- The City has an Open Data portal with City datasets that are available to the public at no cost. The link is as follows: https://data-cityofmadison.opendata.arcgis.com/

Map Applications

View popular datasets transformed into interactive applications.

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Question: "You're probably not the right place to call, but …"

- We are more than happy to help residents get connected with the correct person to answer their question.

- If we are not the agency that handles a particular issue we will find out who is and direct the resident call to the appropriate person.

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How Our Agency Provides Customer Service

People - Places - Possibilities

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We Provide Customer Service By…

- Website
  - Report a problem: https://www.cityofmadison.com/reportaproblem/
  - Report flooding: https://www.cityofmadison.com/flooding/report/
- Telephone
  - Main Office (608) 266-4751
  - Engineering Operations Facility (608) 266-4430
- Email us!
  - engineer@cityofmadison.com
- In-person
  - Main Office - City-County Building, 210 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd #115, Madison, WI
  - Emil Operations Facility, 1600 Emil Street, Madison, WI
- Project Specific Public Engagement
  - Listening sessions, Public Information Meetings, Neighborhood Meetings, Pre-Construction Meetings, and more public engagement and community engagement typically is posted to our project specific pages, and the first meetings are typically virtual via Zoom.
- Site visits
  - By request and project specific. Property owners can reach out to specific project managers by finding contacts on the projects page to request a site visit.

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Stay Connected!
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