San Diego sewer lateral quote comparison checklist

For a San Diego property with a sewer lateral problem and more than one quote on the table. Mark each line against each quote: stated, left out, or vague. A line a quote leaves vague is a question to ask before you sign.

Method, length and where the work stops

Two quotes can carry similar totals and describe very different jobs. Put each quote next to these lines and mark what it states, what it leaves out and what it leaves vague.

- [ ] The method: lining, pipe bursting, a spot repair, trench replacement, or a combination, and which length of the line gets which.
- [ ] The length of pipe included, in feet, and where it starts and ends (cleanout, property line, or the connection at the main).
- [ ] Whether the quote stops at the property line or continues under the sidewalk and street to the main. In the City of San Diego the owner is responsible for the whole lateral.
- [ ] The depth the line runs at, and whether shoring is included for a trench 5 feet or deeper.
- [ ] Whether a cleanout is added, and where it goes.
- [ ] For lining: what happens at bends, offsets and size changes, and how the camera footage shows the pipe is suitable.
- [ ] For any sag that holds water: whether the quote regrades it or leaves it in place.

Permits, the street and inspections

These lines show who carries each step with the City. Outside the City of San Diego, the city or district that owns the main sets its own permits.

- [ ] Who pulls the plumbing permit for the private side (in the City, the Simple No-Plan permit for most single-family and duplex repairs), and whether its fee is in the price.
- [ ] For a historic property, whether historic review is expected and who handles it.
- [ ] For street or easement work: who obtains the Right-of-Way Permit, the construction plan and traffic control, and whether the City inspection fee is included.
- [ ] Whether the street has been resurfaced recently, and if so who handles a moratorium waiver and the resurfacing it requires.
- [ ] Which inspections are scheduled before the trench is backfilled and who books them.
- [ ] The contractor's California licence number and classification, so it can be checked with the Contractors State License Board.

Contractor licence lookup: California Contractors State License Board, www.cslb.ca.gov/

Restoration and what is left behind

Restoration is often where quotes differ most, and it is the line most often left vague.

- [ ] What the quote restores over the trench or pits: lawn, planting, concrete, pavers, a driveway or a wall, and to what standard.
- [ ] Who resurfaces the street and sidewalk, and to which standard drawing.
- [ ] What happens to trees or roots in the path of the line.
- [ ] How soil is backfilled and compacted, so the trench does not settle later.
- [ ] Whether old pipe is removed or left in place, and what happens to excavated soil.

Footage, records and the finished line

The finished job should leave a record you can use the next time someone asks about the line, including at a sale.

- [ ] A camera run through the finished line, with the footage handed over.
- [ ] The before footage, with each defect and its distance from the cleanout noted.
- [ ] Copies of the permit and the final inspection sign-off.
- [ ] A sketch or note of the line's route and depth, and where the cleanout is.
- [ ] What the contractor warrants on the work, in writing, if anything.

Before you request quotes

Fill this in first, and give every contractor the same information.

Property address and city or district:

Building type (house, duplex, multifamily, commercial) and roughly when it was built:

What is happening (backup, slow drains, roots, wet yard, scope finding):

Where the cleanout is, if there is one:

Camera footage available (yes/no, date):

What is over the line (lawn, concrete, driveway, trees):

Any deadline (escrow, inspection, insurance):

This checklist is general information, not an inspection or legal advice. Permit rules and fees are set by the City of San Diego, or the city or district that owns the main, and can change; confirm them for the address before work starts.