



PUBLIC SERVICE DEPARTMENT  
ENGINEERING DIVISION  
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**TO:** Warren Property Owners  
**FROM:** Todd Schaedig, P.E. Acting City Engineer  
**RE:** Rear Yard Drain Issues  
**DATE:** 5/1/11

Important facts regarding rear yard drainage in the City of Warren.

1. Warren is an extremely flat city. Water only flows if it is made to flow by the creation of high and low spots.
2. Most of Warren sits on heavy clay which does not let water seep into the ground very well or at all.
  - a. Wet back yards in the spring are quite normal and usually dry out after the weather warms up.
  - b. There may be a few weeks in April and May when you may not be able to mow your grass because of the standing water or soft ground. This is tolerable for most residents, but not acceptable for others.
3. Most of the neighborhoods in Warren were built in the 60's and 70's, and the requirements at that time were for the developer to install one back yard drain (catch basin) for every eight subdivision lots.
4. Most rear yard flooding is caused because of changes that have occurred to the grade along the back property line of resident's lots.
  - a. Planting trees and shrubs which grew on top of the clay base and created high points near the trunks that prohibit water from flowing through as it used too.
  - b. Installing a shed along the back property line that does the same.
  - c. Installing a garden or planting bed that raised or changed the original grade.
5. The changes noted above could be on your property or on your neighbor's property.
6. Residents are permitted to bring in dirt to level their backyards, fill low spots, or plant gardens.
  - a. Residents can bring in up to 50 cubic yards without a permit (the equivalent of five tandem axle dump truck loads. Over 50 yards requires a permit and approved grading plan.
  - b. residents are to grade their lot in such a manner as to maintain drainage along the rear lot line, and the side lot line even if a permit is not needed.

7. Your backyard is private property as is your neighbor's backyard. If you think your neighbor is causing flooding in your yard, that is a civil matter and not one that the City can mediate. Most rear yard flooding problems are this type of situation.
8. The City's responsibility.
  - a. To keep existing drains in backyards functioning. If you have a drain and it is not working, you can call the DPW to have them repair it.
  - b. To enforce Section 32 of the Warren Code of Ordinances as it relates to the 50 cubic yard limit on dumping dirt.
  - c. To make sure that new development will not negatively impact existing properties by causing flooding.
    1. Residents do not realize that vacant properties usually collect water from developed areas until those vacant properties are developed.
    2. The city requires internal drainage of all new developments so that water is not "shed" from new parking lots or roofs on to adjacent properties.
    3. Site plan approval tries to take into account runoff from existing properties so that water is not retained on them after construction is completed.
9. Resident's responsibilities.
  - a. If you have a catch basin in your backyard, do not block flow to it. Don't raise the grade around it or cover it up with something like a planter or a wishing well.
  - b. Don't change the grade at your side lot line or rear lot line. If you need to fill your yard, do it so that the yard slopes to those lot lines. Do not fill along your fence!
  - c. Talk to your neighbor if you think his/her activities are impacting your property.
  - d. If you have a sprinkler system, don't over water along your property line, and make sure your sprinkler heads face your yard only.
  - d. Install a new drain in your backyard if the situation cannot be tolerated.
10. What will the City do to help you if you have a flooded yard.
  - a. An engineering representative will meet with you to see if the flooding problem can be rectified and make recommendations on how to fix the problem.
  - b. If the problem involves installation of a new drain in your yard, the Engineering Division will put you on list for installation of a new connection point for the rear yard drain, into the public storm sewer system. The City will also hire a contractor to perform the work needed in the public right of way at no cost to the resident. This is the most expensive part of the installation.
11. Perpetual standing water.
  - a. If there is standing water that persists into the summer and it obviously becomes a nuisance (smells, breeds insects, etc.) property owners can be ticketed and made to rectify the situation by the health officer for the City.
  - b. Those types of complaints should be made to property maintenance or the building division.