



ELEVATE



Sylvia Taylor: The Complex Story of Water Reconnections

In 2006 after her parents passed away, Ms. Taylor turned off the water service at her family-owned building in Englewood. No one was living there at the time, and she didn't want the pipes to freeze. But over the next few years Ms. Taylor continued to receive growing water bills for the home even though water was no longer being used, since the property didn't have a water meter to measure usage.

Eventually Ms. Taylor tried to move back into her family's home, but in order to have the water flowing again Ms. Taylor needed to pay the bills that had accumulated and address costly plumbing repairs. After years of working to have her water restored, Ms. Taylor was connected with Elevate to begin the necessary plumbing repair work. Ms. Taylor's water had been turned off for 14 years.

"When I was told that Elevate could turn the water on, I still didn't believe it until I actually met them and they started making these improvements happen," said Ms. Taylor.

Reconnecting water service at Ms. Taylor's building

turned out to be very complicated. Turning the water back on at the building revealed multiple leaks, which were extensive enough that Elevate needed to replace all of the plumbing in the building.

Additionally, the building no longer had gas service to allow for heat and hot water at the home. Elevate set up a gas meter and rerouted gas lines in the home to restore service. After repairing the gas service, the Elevate team replaced the broken furnace and hot water heater at the building.

Before Ms. Taylor could use her reconnected water, it also needed to be tested. When water sits stagnant in pipes for a long period of time water quality issues often follow, such as high concentrations of lead in water and Legionella, a disease-causing microorganism. Because of this, the City of Chicago conducts water quality testing after water reconnections are completed. Ms. Taylor's water test came back with safe levels, and she was able to move into her home again.

"I'm living on the second floor now, and I plan to

Next page ►



ELEVATE

Sylvia Taylor: The Complex Story of Water Reconnections



rent out the first floor. It's nice to be back in the building that I grew up in, I told my neighbors I would be moving back and they were very welcoming. Here in Englewood we care about each other.”

Buildings are designed to be lived in, and turning off a critical service like water can create a myriad of related challenges. Reconnecting water is not as easy as flipping a switch – it often requires repairs and replacement of plumbing as well as other parts of the building that are affected. Policies and programs that prevent water from being shutoff in the first place save on the time and resources that goes into reconnections. And importantly, it allows people to stay in a safe and healthy home, keeps buildings from becoming vacant, and contributes to the growth of vibrant communities.

Property Overview

- Two-story home in Englewood, Chicago

Upgrades Completed

- Replaced plumbing with new copper pipes
- Replaced gas lines
- Installed new high efficiency furnace
- Installed new high efficiency hot water heater
- Tested water quality

Project Cost and Funding

- About \$20,000

Want to learn more?

Elevate works with municipalities and water utilities to research water affordability challenges and explore strategies for tackling the challenges in those communities. Visit ElevateNP.org/Water-Affordability to learn more about our latest research.