

## Plumbing: Common Element Stacks, Back-ups and Maintenance

- Each unit's address ends in 01 to 09 and each of those nine units per floor shares vertical stacks--in the kitchen and in the bathroom. (We also have a main laundry stack located in the laundry room.). At the time GT was built (1960), all of the pipes were made of cast iron. Over time, cast iron flakes--due to lack of water running through the pipes or other usage--and can turn a four-inch pipe opening into a one-inch passage, impacting proper operation.
- Here's an example (left) of the pipe in kitchen stack 2 that "gurgled" and backed up in October 2013. According to Mr. Daniels of Daniels Plumbing, some 55 years of usage required a "special head with gnarly grinders to churn up the debris that was harder than wood." Over the years, Daniels' explained, using acids, such as Liquid Plumber, Drano and Clobber Drain Opener, as well as bleach, "probably helped to turn the mush of grease and food stuffs into rock. These acids crystallize in the drain." He added: "Acids also eat the seals of pipes, which can do some damage. Bleach, as some soak garments in bleach in their sinks, for example, *should never be used* because bleach eats copper drain materials, too."
- Daniels also let us know that laundry stacks are sometimes worse. After washing, the soap products turn into a paste in the pipes. "It's like Noxzema with fur," he joked, with the fur coming from the lint in the clothes during washing. This process occurs in newer PVC pipes, too, "but the material does not fester into a rock; it comes off easier," he said. "We have a tool when we hydro clean that 'filets' or lifts off the material so the pipes are not damaged."
- You might be wondering why we do not replace all the pipes now or all at once at GT. One, it is a very expensive endeavor. More importantly, conventional wisdom and best practices per plumbing pros and engineers suggest waiting until the "pipes talk to you," as Association Manager Jennie Byram likes to say. *In other words, if you hear a gurgle, report it immediately to the association office.*
- The 09 kitchen stack has been replaced totally with PVC and will serve owners well for quite awhile. The rest of the cast iron pipes will be hydro jetted and/or replaced with PVC in phases according to the strategic plan, when an issue arises, and when owners renovate their kitchens and notify the office.