

Frequently Asked Questions: Adjusted Stormwater Utility Fee

What is stormwater?

Stormwater is the runoff from natural precipitation, such as rain water, snow melt, or other surface drainage that is transported by conveyances (streets, sewers, gutters) to streams, rivers, and reservoirs.

Why do we need to manage stormwater?

Impervious surfaces, such as roads, driveways, sidewalks and patios, increase the quantity and volume of water entering storm sewers and waterways. They also increase the amount of pollution that is carried to waterways. Stormwater runoff transports sediments, toxicants, nutrients, and pathogens to local waterways. According to the EPA, stormwater is a leading source of water pollution to nearly 40% of water bodies in the U.S. Revenues from the stormwater utility help to improve stormwater quantity and quality management throughout the City of Fishers.

What does the stormwater utility fee pay for?

The stormwater utility fee is a service charge for water quality, drainage, and storm sewer maintenance throughout the city associated with stormwater drainage across your parcel. Major services include storm sewer improvements and maintenance, drainage/flood control projects and studies, street sweeping, water quality improvement projects, waterway cleanups, recycling days, National Flood Insurance Program Management, construction project plan review and inspection, private drainage and water quality issue matching grants, the free rain barrel program, and city-wide stormwater related environmental compliance.

What is the reason for the proposed rate adjustment?

Over the past 10 years, there has been no increase in the utility fee; however, costs have continued to increase for maintenance and necessary improvements to Fishers' stormwater system as the city has expanded and grown. A study was recently conducted by Policy Analytics to evaluate the City's stormwater utility fee. It was determined that the current rate will not support continued capital improvements to the stormwater system. An increased fee was recommended and a Capital Improvement Plan was created to address current and ongoing stormwater issues in the community. The plan is comprised of projects totaling \$8.3 million, including drainage, maintenance, drainage and floodplain studies, equipment, and water quality improvements.

How is the stormwater utility fee calculated?

Rates are determined by the contribution that each property makes to the total amount of stormwater that the City's storm sewer system must handle. This is calculated based on the average square footage of impervious surface area on the property. Based on a representative sample of more than 1,900 residential properties, it was determined that the average residential lot has a total of 3,318 square feet of impervious surfaces. This average square footage of impervious surface area is known as an equivalent residential unit (ERU). Since 2008, each residential property within the City has been charged for one ERU per month at a rate of \$4.95.

Non-residential properties have also been charged based on the amount of impervious area on their property. The total amount of impervious surface area on a non-residential parcel of land is divided by 3,318 square feet (one ERU) to determine the number of ERU's associated with a given parcel. For example, a commercial property with 9,954 square feet of impervious area would be charged for 3 ERUs (9,954sq.ft./3,318sq.ft.) and would pay a monthly utility fee of three times the residential rate, or \$14.85.

The City also has two other property type classifications, one for condominiums (0.60 times the residential rate), and another for properties with very small impervious surface amounts (small non-residential, one third of the residential rate). The existing monthly rates for these account types are \$2.97 and \$1.65 per month, respectively.

What is the proposed rate adjustment?

The City proposes a base rate increase of \$1.71 per month per ERU to support stormwater capital improvement projects. This raises the existing monthly rate per ERU from \$4.95 to \$6.66. The condominium, unimproved, and small non-residential rates will also increase from \$2.97, \$1.65, and \$1.65 per month to \$4.00, \$2.22, and \$2.22 per month, respectively.

| Classification | Current Rate | | Proposed Rate | |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Residential | \$4.95/mo. | \$59.40/year | \$6.66/mo. |
| Condominium | \$2.97/mo. | \$35.94/year | \$4.00/mo. | \$48.00/year |
| Unimproved | \$1.65/mo. | \$19.80/year | \$2.22/mo. | \$26.64/year |
| Small Non-Residential | \$1.65/mo. | \$19.80/year | \$2.22/mo. | \$26.64/year |
| Non-Residential | \$4.95/ERU | Variable based on Impervious Area | \$6.66/ERU | Variable based on impervious area |

Who has to pay the stormwater utility fee?

All properties within the City of Fishers served by, directly or indirectly connected to or contributing to the stormwater drainage system have been and will continue to be subject to the stormwater fee. Different property classes pay monthly rates based on the amount of impervious surfaces located on a given property. In addition, all unimproved properties (properties with no impervious surfaces) have been and will be charged for one third of an ERU per month. Unimproved properties are still required to pay a stormwater fee because even though they may not contain impervious surfaces, they still contribute to some stormwater runoff and owners of the parcels are still responsible for contributing towards public education and other city-wide services associated with stormwater.

What services do I receive as a result of the stormwater utility?

Fees collected through the stormwater utility fee have been utilized to support staff and resources necessary to implement and comply with mandated stormwater pollution prevention programs and to maintain and improve the storm sewer system. Services include storm sewer improvements and maintenance, drainage/flood control projects and studies, street sweeping, water quality improvement projects, waterway cleanups, recycling days, National Flood Insurance Program Management, construction project plan review and inspection, private drainage and water quality issue matching grants, the free rain barrel program, and city-wide stormwater related environmental compliance. The revenue from the increased rate will fund capital improvement projects for the stormwater system throughout the city. The full list is available at www.fishers.in.us/140/Stormwater-Utility.

If I rent an apartment, home, townhome, or condominium, do I have to pay a stormwater utility fee?

No, renters of any property are not legally responsible for payment of the stormwater utility bills associated with those properties. Owners of rental properties are responsible for the bill payment.

Do I have to pay the stormwater utility fee if my property is tax exempt?

Because Fishers' stormwater management operation is a utility and all properties are served by, directly or indirectly connected to or contribute to the stormwater drainage system, fees apply to both traditionally taxable and tax-exempt properties.

I pay a drainage fee to Hamilton County. Do I have to pay the City fee as well?

Yes. City residents currently paying ditch or other assessments to Hamilton County will continue to pay those assessments. The Hamilton County Surveyor's Office is responsible for maintenance of County Regulated Drains, even when they are within the City. Revenues from Ditch Assessments are paid solely to the County for management of regulated drains under their jurisdiction. These county fees do not cover city costs associated with city owned storm sewers, environmental compliance, drainage

improvements, or other city stormwater related services associated with rain water runoff management and control.

Revenues from the stormwater utility fee are solely for the management and maintenance of City owned and operated stormwater facilities, infrastructure, and programs.

Why do I have to pay both a sewer utility fee and a stormwater utility fee?

The sewer utility fee is for your sanitary sewer service. Sanitary sewer water from inside your home is treated by the local wastewater plant and thus requires a fee for conveyance and treatment. Some residents pay a sanitary sewer fee to the City and others pay their fee to a private utility called Hamilton Southeastern Utilities, depending on the service area of each utility. That charge is specific to sanitary sewage related treatment and conveyance. The stormwater utility fee is a different fee that provides funding for the storm sewer system that routes rain water runoff. Water in storm sewer systems is not treated in the traditional sense before being discharged to local water bodies. The stormwater utility fee covers the City's costs associated with keeping local waterways clean and improving local flooding by providing stormwater management in the form of water quality, drainage, and storm sewer maintenance, public education and awareness, illegal dumping enforcement, construction plan review and site inspection, stormwater quality unit inspection, municipal good housekeeping operations, and drainage capital.

How does the Fishers' stormwater utility fee compare with other stormwater utility fees?

Across the state, many communities have established a separate stormwater funding mechanism. These utilities are currently being implemented by municipalities as small as the City of Cicero and as large as the City of Indianapolis. Other local communities such as Westfield, Anderson, Brownsburg, Plainfield, Carmel, Avon, Danville, McCordsville, Fortville, and others also have stormwater utilities. Currently, the average stormwater utility bill per ERU is \$5.47 per month for local and surrounding communities. As more and more communities begin to deal with new issues, stormwater management requirements and programs, it is likely that more and more communities will begin implementing stormwater utility fees.

Who do I contact if I have a question about the stormwater utility?

For additional information contact the Stormwater Utility Hotline at 317-567-5056 or at stormwater@fishers.in.us.