

Storm Water Fee FAQs

1. What is a Storm Water Drainage Utility (SWDU)?

A Storm Water Drainage Utility is a user-fee based funding mechanism for costs related to the City's drainage system. Previously, funding came from monies taken from the City's General Fund. Two significant advantages over the continued reliance on the General Fund are: 1) the establishment of a dedicated, long-term funding stream that can only be used to cover costs specifically related to the drainage system; and 2) customer equity by implementing a fee structure proportional to the demand placed on the system by a given property.

2. Do other cities have Storm Water Utility fees?

Yes. There are currently over 85 Texas cities that have created Storm Water Drainage Utilities. There are also hundreds of other similar SWDUs in cities across the U.S.

3. How will the fee revenue be used?

Revenue generated by the fees will be used to cover the costs of complying with an unfunded mandate known as the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. This mandate requires the City to maintain a permit issued through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and implement measures to increase the quality of surface water leaving the City.

4. How is my Storm Water Utility fee calculated?

Fees are assigned to property parcels based on storm-water runoff characteristics, not property value. Because the placement of impervious cover (i.e. surfaces that tend to repel rainwater) on land, such as rooftops, driveways, walkways, and parking areas, increases both the flow rate and volume of storm water runoff; it is the single most significant land use characteristic when determining the impact to a drainage system. Therefore, the amount of impervious cover is used to calculate Storm Water Utility fees to all developed properties, both residential and commercial, within the City.

5. What is the fee structure?

The fee structure is divided into two categories: residential and non-residential. Residential properties are charged a flat monthly rate, regardless of the size of the property. Non-residential properties are charged a monthly rate on an individual basis according to the total impervious area on the property. Undeveloped or exempt properties are not subject to a Storm Water Utility fee. For current rates, reference City Code of Ordinances: Appendix B - Schedule of Fees

6. Why am I being charged for storm water when I already pay for water and sewer service?

The drinking water and wastewater services at your property are part of distribution and collection networks completely separate from the drainage system. Unlike wastewater, storm water that leaves your property and enters the drainage system receives no treatment prior to its discharge into downstream waterways.

7. What is the big deal about storm water runoff? How harmful can rain really be?

It's not necessarily the rain itself that's harmful. It's the volume of runoff generated by development, and the waste and pollutants that rainwater collects after it hits the roofs, driveways, roads, parking lots, and other impervious areas in developed communities.

Even pervious areas like grass lawns or landscaped areas can contribute to the pollutants found in storm water runoff.

Below are some common pollutants found in or carried by storm water runoff:

- Sediments (sand, silt, dirt)
- Vegetation (leaves, grass clippings)
- Litter
- Fertilizers
- Pesticides and herbicides
- Animal/pet waste
- Oil
- Fuel
- Phosphates (i.e., from soap used in car or pet washing)

That storm water - and all of the pollutants it collects - eventually flows into the city's storm water management system, which then leads to Patrick Bayou and Armand Bayou.

8. When does the fee go into effect?

The Utility and associated rate structure was approved on September 18, 2012, and has an effective date of October 1, 2012. The fee will begin to appear on water statements during the October billing cycle.

9. How will the fee be collected?

Generally, the fee will be included on the City's monthly utility billing statement along with water, sewer, and other utility fees.

10. Can I request a review of my fee?

Yes. Non-residential property owners who feel their fee is in error may file an appeal of their fee in accordance with the process detailed in the Storm Water Utility System Ordinance.