

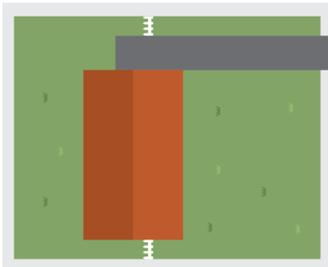
FUNDING A BETTER TOMORROW

Frequently Asked Questions: Stormwater Utility

By investing in smart, natural stormwater solutions, we will create a beautiful, sustainable future for Peoria. Learn about the stormwater utility and how it will improve our community.

What is a stormwater utility? A stormwater utility is an enterprise fund created to finance wet weather management. Similar utilities exist for water, sewer, electricity and other services. Funds raised by the stormwater utility will only apply to wet weather needs and may not be used for any unrelated purposes.

How is the stormwater utility fee calculated? Impervious surface areas, like rooftops, sidewalks, walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots, sheds and more, don't allow stormwater to do what it normally does—soak into the ground. The stormwater utility fee is based on the amount of impervious surface area on a property. Each billing unit will be initially set at \$3 per 1,000 square feet of impervious area.



$$\begin{aligned} & \text{[Brown Box]} + \text{[Grey Box]} = 2,600 \text{ SF Impervious} = \\ & 2.6 \text{ Billing Units} \times \$4 \text{ per Billing Unit} = \\ & \$10.40 \text{ per Month (Average Home)} \end{aligned}$$

Homeowners will be able to apply for credits if they are able to successfully manage runoff on their property. More details about credits will come soon.

Peoria's Stormwater Utility Code established the initial rate of \$3.00 per billing unit for years 2018 and 2019. Section 31-164 of the SWU Code also established the rate for years beyond 2019. The rate increases to \$4.00 on January 1, 2020 and \$5.00 on January 1, 2021. Beginning on January 1, 2022, the SWU billing rate will increase annually equal to the cost of inflation established by the US Department of Labor Midwest Urban Area Consumer Price Index.

Why is the stormwater utility based on impervious surface area? Stormwater runoff directly correlates to the amount of impervious surfaces on a property. Impervious surfaces allow the water to fill up our pipes and streams faster, increasing the potential for street and/or storm system flooding during heavy rains and increasing maintenance and repair requirements of the storm sewer system. Each property owner will pay for the water their property contributes to the system.

How is this fee different from a tax? Unlike a tax, a utility is a fee for service. Just like we pay water bills for the amount of water we use, or electricity fees for the amount of electricity we use, the stormwater utility fee is based on the impact that a property owner's impervious surface has on the community's stormwater system as a whole.

All properties participate. Everyone who uses the system contributes financially.

What do you mean by “stormwater system”?

Many elements make up our stormwater infrastructure, including ditches, creeks, pipes and culverts, ponds and lakes, curbs and gutters, inlets and manholes, wetlands, rain gardens and bioswales. Almost all properties use the stormwater system.

Why was a stormwater utility chosen as the right funding solution?

A stormwater utility fee is the right option for Peoria for a number of reasons:

- » A fair solution: The stormwater utility fee is based on the amount of runoff you contribute to the system. This approach, rather than increasing property or sales tax (which has no relation to the runoff that a property contributes), is the most equitable way to fund the stormwater program.
- » Competition for funds: The City currently funds a portion of stormwater management through the General Fund. The problem is that a lot of important programs are funded through the General Fund, and these different priorities—roads, fire, police—compete with one another. With this dedicated funding stream, we will ensure that the appropriate amount of monetary support and attention is given to our wet weather needs.
- » Accountability and transparency: Because user fees are dedicated to funding specific programs, citizens can see exactly how the City is using the revenues that are collected.

What does the stormwater utility fund?

The stormwater utility will fund the following:

- » System planning and asset management
- » Infrastructure maintenance and replacement
- » Runoff and pollution reduction
- » Stream/channel improvements
- » Public Works equipment
- » Private property drainage program
- » Total capital and maintenance expenses
- » Green infrastructure maintenance

Will this pay for the combined sewer overflow (CSO) fix?

The total CSO fix will cost Peoria \$200-250 million. The City Council will ultimately decide how this will be funded. The stormwater utility will pay for a portion of the CSO solution, namely the maintenance of green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is not only good for the combined sewer area, it benefits our whole community.

Why now?

We must address the ever-growing backlog of stormwater projects (like erosion, failing culverts and blocked inlets) now before they worsen into emergencies. We need to reduce pollution in our streets and streams, and we must address the outdated and decaying pipes that pose a risk to public safety. By making positive changes now, we can stop responding to these issues reactively and become proactive in protecting our river and bettering the health of our community.

The U.S. EPA has mandated that we eliminate combined sewer overflows, which is when raw sewage is dumped into the Illinois River after heavy rain or snowmelt. The stormwater utility will help fund the maintenance of green infrastructure that will not only help us address CSOs, but alleviate the burden on our stormwater system.

How will the stormwater utility benefit our community?

There are many benefits of the stormwater utility. Not only will we have the funding needed to repair crucial infrastructure, we will be able to beautify and strengthen our community. The stormwater utility will help us maintain green infrastructure, like rain gardens, permeable pavers, bioswales and more. These elements have co-benefits, including:

HEALTHIER STREAMS, RIVER AND WILDLIFE

Rainfall and snowmelt pick up whatever chemical compounds and/or trash lie on pavement and flow directly into our creeks, streams and river. The stormwater utility will help us restore the natural hydrologic function we disrupted with pavement and other impervious surfaces, and would slow, cleanse and recharge groundwater once again. This reversal would not only benefit people, but also the animals and fish that rely on those water sources.

LESS FLOODING

The stormwater utility will help Peoria afford more street sweeping, preventing flooding from pollution-clogged inlets. Also, green infrastructure will help absorb and retain water, lessening the occurrence of flooding.

POSITIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT

We will increase surrounding property values by improving public rights-of-way and repurposing vacant/blighted lots. We will also spur reinvestment and increase economic activity, including tourism, for nearby businesses by creating green spaces and roads that encourage multiple types of transportation.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A portion of the stormwater utility will be used for green infrastructure maintenance, which would provide a scale and scope of design and construction work that could be met by local companies. Green infrastructure could create a demand for workforce training and education to build capacity for these public and private jobs.

PEACEFUL GREEN SPACES

Using green infrastructure (bump-outs, bioswales, green streets, rain gardens) to address CSOs and stormwater runoff will beautify areas of town, especially parts of older neighborhoods. Studies have shown that green spaces are linked to improvements in mental health, stress reduction and can foster community.

CRIME MITIGATION

We can create landscape designs that maintain sight lines, define public and private spaces, control access and encourage residents to spend time outside interacting and building stronger community ties.

Do other Illinois communities charge stormwater utility fees?

There are at least 16 other cities in Illinois that have adopted similar fees, including:

- » Morton
- » Eureka
- » Bloomington
- » Normal
- » Champaign
- » Urbana
- » Moline
- » Rock Island
- » Rolling Meadows
- » And more

How do I calculate the amount of impervious surface on my property?

We will calculate the amount of impervious surface on properties using geographic information system, or GIS, data. This information will be available online soon.

Are any properties exempt from the stormwater utility fee?

All properties are subject to the stormwater utility fee except the public right-of-way. Public streets are designed to be part of the stormwater system and therefore are exempt from the fee.

When and how will I receive my bill?

The utility will go into effect June 1, with the first billing being mailed out summer 2018. There will be an option to pay your stormwater utility bill online.

Nobody likes new fees, but the cost of ignoring our wet weather issues will be much higher for our community—and far less equitable or predictable.

How can I reduce my fee?

We are currently exploring credits and incentives that make sense for our community. These fee reductions will be given to property owners who lessen their properties' runoff by making positive changes, like installing a rain garden or using permeable pavers.

Do you have ideas for possible credits and incentives? Please contact Public Works; we are open to suggestions.

How can I get involved?

There are many ways you can make a difference. Take steps to reduce runoff and pollution on your property by exploring sustainable solutions, like rain gardens, permeable pavers, porous concrete, green roofs and other options.

Where can I learn more?

To discuss specifics related to your property and its stormwater contribution, please contact Public Works at stormwater@peoriagov.org. To learn more about these wet weather issues, please visit PeoriaStormwater.com.