



**City of Alexandria**  
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**Engineering Division**  
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**1. What is a Stormwater Utility Fee?**

Just like water, sewer, gas, and other vital utility services, users would be charged a fee for the service of controlling stormwater. The stormwater fee would apply to all developed properties, including homes, businesses, and non-profit organizations. These fees would be a dedicated revenue stream, which would be restricted for use only on stormwater system maintenance and operations, planning and construction. The City will consider whether or not to adopt a stormwater utility fee in conjunction with the adoption of the FY 2011 City budget in May of 2010.

**2. What would the Stormwater Utility fee pay for?**

The Stormwater Utility would provide funding to minimize flooding and drainage problems by implementing new programs for preventive maintenance, repair and improvements to the City's storm drain system. With these programs, entire storm drain systems in large areas of the City of Alexandria would be systematically cleaned on a more frequent basis before serious flooding problems occur. Funding from the Stormwater Utility would also allow for improvements that directly target local flooding problems.

**3. What is stormwater runoff?**

Stormwater runoff is the portion of rain and melting snow that does not soak into the ground. It runs off driveways, parking lots, roads, and other impervious surfaces that do not allow the water to soak through to the ground below.

**4. What is an impervious surface?**

Impervious areas are surfaces that have been paved or otherwise covered with material that is resistant to infiltration by water, therefore hindering infiltration of rainwater into the ground. Impervious surfaces are mainly constructed surfaces - rooftops, sidewalks, roads, and parking lots - covered by impenetrable materials such as asphalt, concrete, brick, and stone.

## **5. Why do we need a stormwater utility?**

A stormwater utility yields a dedicated funding source which will provide the City with many benefits:

### **For residents:**

- Improved public health and safety
- Improved customer service and a reduced backlog of customer complaints related to flooding and drainage
- Reduction of long-term capital costs for the stormwater system through proactive maintenance
- Protection of property value
- Resources to help mitigate flooding

### **For business:**

- Improved city services related to stormwater
- Cleaner and safer streets, which help improve the business climate
- Support of economic development objectives

### **For environmental quality:**

- Healthier habitats for the Potomac River and associated tributaries
- Cleaner waterfront and park areas.
- Reduces chance of sewer back-ups
- Reduces threat of West Nile Virus

## **6. Isn't there already a fund for stormwater or drainage issues?**

Historically, money from the City's General Fund has provided limited funding for stormwater program. However, these funds are used for many other City programs and the funds are not adequate for the necessary improvements and maintenance to the stormwater system and the reduction of potential pollutants into our streams and creeks.

## **7. Is this being done elsewhere?**

Yes, there are approximately 400 stormwater utilities nationwide and several in Virginia, including the Cities of Portsmouth, Richmond, Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Hampton, Chesapeake, and Newport News. The municipalities that adopted stormwater utilities selected this approach because it is both fair and equitable.

## **8. Who would have to pay?**

All developed properties would be charged a stormwater fee. Properties paying the fee would include residential properties, commercial and industrial properties, and whether or not schools and tax exempt properties are charged is under evaluation.

**9. How would the fee be billed to me?**

The fee would be included with the annual real estate tax bill.

**10. Would properties be eligible for credits or reductions for the fee?**

Yes, a program could be developed to allow property owners to apply for partial credits if they have private systems in place on their property to minimize the impacts of stormwater on the City's infrastructure.

**11. What is Low Impact Development (LID)?**

The practice of using techniques in building and construction that minimize the effect that development will have on the quality of the surrounding environment.

**12. Would tax exempt properties have to pay?**

Most jurisdictions with a Stormwater Utility apply the fee to all developed properties, including tax exempt properties because the Stormwater Utility Fee would be assessed based on how much the property contributes to the amount of stormwater runoff. This issue is under evaluation.

**13. Would I have to pay for any undeveloped properties that I own?**

No, if there is no impervious area associated with your property.

**14. Would I have to pay for any unoccupied developed properties that I own?**

Yes, if that property contains impervious area.

**15. Would I have to pay when I do not have any drainage problems?**

Everyone in the City of Alexandria benefits from the stormwater maintenance program. If stormwater runs off your property, the City must have a program and funding to manage the increase in runoff and pollutants. Direct benefits include protecting your property from upstream runoff, protecting properties downstream from your runoff, and improving water quality in the Potomac River.

**16. Why is the Stormwater Utility being considered?**

1. **A more equitable system:** all the contributors to stormwater runoff share the costs of maintaining and improving the storm drainage system.

2. **A stable level of funding:** ensures that stormwater management receives adequate support, independently of the City's tax rate and General Fund.
3. **A dedicated fund:** revenues are used solely for management of the stormwater system.

As with any new program, it will take time for the full effect of the stormwater utility to show. However, you should be able to see the effects of ongoing improvements in drainage and maintenance.

#### **17. When are storm drains cleaned?**

The Department of Transportation & Environmental Services regularly cleans and clears the storm drain system by following a bi-yearly cleaning schedule for over 10,000 City maintained inlets and catch basins. Some have a history of problems and are cleaned monthly. Storm drain inlets may not have debris on or around them, but the pipes underground may be clogged, causing a water backup and flooding. The Department of Transportation & Environmental Services welcomes calls from the public notifying us of problem storm drains and encourages residents to help by keeping storm drains near their homes and businesses clear of debris. To report a problem, please call 703.838.4488.