



## Stormwater Utility Fee

### Frequently Asked Questions

This list of questions and answers is prepared to help resolve questions and clarify issues related to the implementation of the Stormwater Utility in Wilson.

**What is an Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU)?** An ERU is the amount of impervious surface (measured in square feet) on a typical, single family, residential (SFR) property in Wilson . That amount is 2,585 square feet. The ERU was determined by performing detailed measurements of impervious surfaces contained on a sample of SFR properties selected at random across all areas of the City. The resulting data was analyzed and the median impervious surface value for the data set determined the ERU value.

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**What constitutes impervious area?** Impervious area is any surface which inhibits infiltration of rainfall into the soil. This includes pavement (asphalt, concrete, brick pavers, etc.), rooftops, non-wooden decks and patios (wooden decks with slotted surfaces are deemed pervious unless the underlying surface is impervious), and graveled surfaces. Graveled driving surfaces generally have been compacted to the point of being impervious. Graveled landscaping is generally underlain by an impervious membrane. Swimming pools are considered pervious because they typically retain any rainfall which falls on them. Paved decks adjacent to pools are considered impervious.

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**How are impervious surfaces determined?** Impervious surfaces are measured from aerial photographs that have been processed to produce scaled images from which accurate measurements can be made. In certain cases, the City has verified or augmented photographic measurements using field measurements or data supplied on site plans. Where a customer disputes the amount of impervious area on a property, that customer can appeal the stated amount by presenting to the City Stormwater Program Manager a digital drawing of a site survey, prepared and sealed by a registered Professional Land Surveyor or registered Professional Engineer, showing and summarizing impervious surfaces on the site.

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**How will residential properties be billed?** Each residential property will be charged for one ERU. The fee will appear on the City utility bill.

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**How will non-residential properties be billed?** Each non-residential property will be

measured (see #3 above) to determine the amount of impervious area on the property. That impervious area will be converted to ERUs based on one ERU per 2,585 square feet of impervious area. All partial ERUs will be rounded up to the next whole number and the property will be billed the amount of the number of ERUs times the Stormwater Service Fee rate (currently \$2.94/ERU/month). The fee will appear on the City utility bill and no bill will be for less than 1 ERU.

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**How will partial payments (or non-payment of the Stormwater Service Fee) be handled?**

Partial payments of the City utility bill will be applied to charges on the bill in accordance with the City's payment application schedule as maintained by the Finance Department. This procedure applies to all charges on the utility bill. Collection procedures for non-payment will follow the standard City process for collection of any delinquent utility bill.

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**How will mobile home sales lots be billed?** Mobile home sales lots will not be charged for mobile homes waiting to be sold. Only permanent impervious areas will be used to determine the number of ERUs for the property. The permanent features will include parking lots, sales offices (mobile or otherwise) and outbuildings (mobile or otherwise), etc.

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**How will rental properties be billed?** For residential rental properties, generally, the party responsible for the City utility bill will receive the Stormwater Service Fee. In some special residential cases, the fee will be billed to the property owner or manager. For non-residential rental properties, the fee will be established in accordance with item 5 above and the bill sent to the party receiving the utility bill in the case of single tenants. Where multiple, non-residential tenants are present, the bill will be sent to the owner, property manager, or whoever is responsible for the tax bill. Special arrangements will be made for properties which do not have other City utility services. In these special cases, the bill can be sent to the owner, renter, or some other responsible party such as a mortgage company or trustee. In cases of disputed responsibility, the owner of the property will ultimately be responsible for payment of the service fee. Where desired and approved by the City Stormwater Program Manager, special Per Account Billing can be set up to have the fee billed to non-residential tenants. To implement Per Account Billing, the owner or designated representative must apply through the Stormwater Program Manager.

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**What period of time will the Stormwater Service Fee cover?** The Stormwater Service Fee will apply to the calendar month in which it is billed. There will be no pro-rating of service fees for partial months. For example, a service fee billed in July will cover the entire month of July, even if the property was vacated half way through the month.

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**What happens when a residential property becomes vacant and all other utility services are cut off?** A property's impact on stormwater quantity and quality doesn't change

significantly because of occupancy, therefore the Stormwater Service Fee applies whether or not the property is occupied. Once a residential, rental property becomes vacant and other utilities are cut off, the owner will have a grace period of 6 months to re-rent the property and resume Stormwater Service Fee payment. Since the service fee covers the entire month in which it was billed, the 6-month grace period will start on the first day after the last paid bill. Stormwater Service Fees for the vacant period will be waived so long as service payment is resumed within 6 months. If the grace period is exceeded, the Stormwater Service Fee will be assigned to the property owner and will accrue from the date of last payment. If the grace period is exceeded, water, sewer, gas and electrical services will not be connected until the back Stormwater Service Fees are paid and the account is brought up to date.

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**Will City property taxes go down as a result of this Utility?** The City Council is responsible for setting and adjusting City taxes and no changes are anticipated as a result of this Utility. The revenue from the Stormwater Management Utility will be used only for stormwater management within the City of Wilson . City tax revenues are not sufficient to support the City's Stormwater Management Program and the services to be provided by the Utility-funded Stormwater Program far exceed any the City has provided in the past.

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**What happens when a non-residential property becomes vacant and all other utility services are cut off?** A property's impact on stormwater quantity and quality doesn't change significantly because of occupancy, therefore the Stormwater Service Fee applies whether or not the property is occupied. When the property becomes vacant and other City utility services are cut off, the Stormwater Service Fee will be assigned to the property owner for payment. The City's standard collection procedures will apply if the owner is delinquent.

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**Will tax-exempt properties, such as churches, non-profit organizations, local, state and federal agencies, and public utilities have to pay a Stormwater Service Fee?** All properties with impervious areas, including tax-exempt properties, increase stormwater runoff and contribute to stormwater pollution. All properties are required to pay the Stormwater Service Fee.

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**Are railroad tracks and roadbeds impervious?** Railroad tracks and roadbeds are pervious due to the gap-graded ballast used in construction which allows stormwater infiltration. Paved surfaces and buildings associated with railroad yard and facilities are impervious in the same way as other properties.

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**How is billing for new properties initiated?** New properties will begin paying the stormwater fee when a certificate of occupancy is issued by the City Inspections Department. This coincides with billing of utility services such as water, sanitary sewer, gas and electricity. New residential properties will be billed a single ERU. New non-residential properties will be

charged based on the amount of impervious area reported as required on the site plan which must be reviewed and approved by the City.

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**How is billing data developed for properties which do not fit typical residential or non-residential properties?** The City Stormwater Program Management staff is responsible for obtaining impervious area measurements for all properties. Atypical properties may require additional research to obtain impervious areas, compute ERUs, and determine billing responsibility. The City Stormwater Program Manager is responsible for obtaining and providing this information to the Finance Department so that accurate bills can be generated, sent, and collected.

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**Why are partial ERUs always rounded up to the next whole number for non-residential properties?** Rounding up of partial ERUs is a policy decision and is not based on mathematical correctness. The policy is implemented to 1) simplify the management of impervious area data, and 2) to recognize that the actual impervious area on a site will almost always be greater than what is charged. The added accuracy of rounding up or down to a whole ERU or charging based on fractions of an ERU does not justify the cost to achieve and maintain the data. This is a policy that many utilities use.

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