

Frequently Asked Questions

The following series of questions and responses is designed to answer questions about the City of Lakewood's Stormwater Management Utility. For more information, call 303-987-7500.

1. What are the needs for additional stormwater management work?

There are 12 major drainageways which run west to east across Lakewood and need improvements. The improvements will reduce flooding of structures and real estate, reduce street flooding, and stabilize channels to prevent further erosion. Approximately \$70 million is needed to solve major drainageway problems.

In addition to the major drainageways there are localized problems throughout the City which cause local flooding, ice problems in the winter, and other impacts. Approximately \$20 to \$25 million is needed to solve these problems.

Prior to the utility, the City's drainage maintenance program was limited to emergencies and specific complaints. Consequently, the large investment made in existing drainage facilities was being ignored and the facilities were deteriorating and becoming less effective in conveying stormwater. Some portions of the system are decades old metal pipe that have corroded resulting in collapses and property damage. Collapses have occurred in private parking lots such as at Colfax and Newland, and in public streets such as Lamar Street between 14th and Colfax, and near Lakewood Place and Reed Street.

Finally, the Federal Government requires Lakewood to create and enforce a variety of stormwater quality programs.

2. I live on high ground, why should I pay?

Drainage problems in Lakewood are attributable to property development which has occurred throughout the City. Every developed property has stormwater run-off which contributes to the existing problems and to the need to maintain and operate the system. The driveways, parking lots and roof tops in every part of the City contribute to the amount of water which must be managed.

3. Do all properties have to pay the fee?

Since all developed properties contribute to stormwater run-off, all will help pay for managing the stormwater. Properties paying the fee will include privately owned parcels, nonprofit organizations, as well as commercial, industrial, office, government and residential uses. The fee is for operating, maintaining,

constructing and replacing the stormwater system. It is very similar to a sanitary sewer fee which is paid for transport and treatment of sewage.

4. Is a fee assessed against the street system?

No, the street system acts as a part of the stormwater conveyance system just as gulches and storm drains do. Without the streets, the City's stormwater system would not function. However, City owned buildings do pay the fee.

5. How can the City charge an additional tax without an election?

The Stormwater Management Utility is an enterprise fund under the state constitution and does not require an election. Rather than a tax, the revenue collected is a fee for a specific service. The service being provided is the operation and maintenance of the stormwater system. This is very similar to a sewer utility where every property owner pays another entity to collect, transport and treat its sewage before it is discharged into the Platte River.

6. Is the Utility a way to allow new development to avoid their responsibilities for managing stormwater?

No. New development is still required to follow the existing City ordinances. These ordinances limit development in flood prone areas. The regulations also require developers to build, at their expense, storm drain systems and stormwater detention facilities to manage stormwater runoff.

7. I also pay property tax to the Urban Drainage & Flood Control District for stormwater. Why am I paying twice?

The property tax you pay to the Urban Drainage & Flood Control District is a region-wide property tax used for several programs. Some of these programs assist in maintaining some segments of certain gulches in Lakewood. In addition, the District has funds available for replacement and new improvements in Lakewood. Unfortunately, the City was unable without the utility to match the new improvements money available from the Urban Drainage District so those funds went to other communities. With a Stormwater Management Utility, the City is able to receive Urban Drainage & Flood Control District matching funds and double the amount of money available for improvements in Lakewood.

8. How much do I have to pay?

The fee for the Stormwater Management Utility is \$1.98 per month for single family homes and duplexes. For other properties the fee is proportional to the amount of impervious area on each property. Impervious area includes those

surfaces where water cannot soak into the soil such as driveways, parking lots, roof tops, sidewalks, patios, etc.

The fee for properties other than single family homes and duplexes is \$1.98 per month for every 2,250 square feet of impervious area. A sample calculation is shown below:

Area of building (50' x 30') = 1,500 square feet
Area of parking lot (60' x 100') = 6,000 square feet
Area of sidewalks (3' x 70') = 210 square feet
TOTAL 7,710 square feet

$7,710 / 2,250 = 3.43$

$3.43 \times \$1.98/\text{month} = \6.79 per month

9. Why are all single family homes and duplexes paying the same fee?

258 single family lots in Lakewood were evaluated and it was found that impervious area on those lots was reasonably consistent. Ninety percent of the properties in Lakewood are single family homes or duplexes. Each single family home or duplex was assigned an impervious area of 2,250 square feet. By using this reasonable approximation, instead of spending money on measuring each single family home or duplex, Lakewood can use the money to build or maintain stormwater facilities.

10. What if my single-family property has less than 2,250 square feet of impervious area?

An appeal process is available through which you can establish with the City the actual impervious area and your fee will be proportionally reduced. The appeal process is available to all property owners.

11. What if someone else does not pay their fee?

There is a process to ensure collection of fees from all property owners including, if necessary, placing a lien on the property.

12. How often will I receive a bill?

Bills are sent out once per year to most properties.

13. Do other cities have stormwater management utilities?

Yes. More than twenty other Colorado cities have stormwater utilities.

14. How much money does the Stormwater Management Utility raise?

Approximately \$2.5 million per year.

15. Why is the Stormwater Management Utility the best solution?

The utility is the fairest method to operate and maintain the City's stormwater system, provide required water quality programs, and begin correcting the flooding problems in Lakewood. Taxes bear no relationship to the contribution each property makes to the flooding problem. Without a Utility, no improvements or replacement projects would occur and maintenance needs would not be met.

16. Who may I contact for additional information?

City of Lakewood
480 S. Allison Parkway
Lakewood, CO 80226
[E-mail](#) a question or a comment or call 303-987-7500.