



Detroit Water and Sewerage Department Drainage Charge Questions and Answers

Table of Contents

(Click on the category name to go immediately to that section)

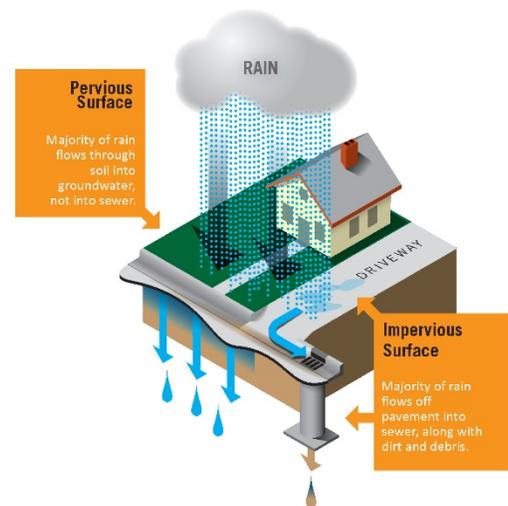
- [Understanding the Drainage Charge](#)
- [Billing and Program Implementation](#)
- [Infrastructure and Storm Water Management](#)
- [Drainage Credits and Green Infrastructure](#)
- [General Information](#)

Understanding the Drainage Charge

1. What is drainage? Why does DWSD charge for rain and snow runoff?

Each year, billions of gallons of storm water and snowmelt flow from rooftops, parking lots and similar hard, impervious surfaces into Detroit's combined sewer system. Impervious surfaces are roofs, driveways, parking lots and similar hard surfaces (including compacted gravel and soil) that limit the ability of storm water to soak into the ground. The less impervious area on your parcel, the lower your drainage charge.

Drainage that runs from impervious surfaces is contaminated with dirt and debris which flows into the same pipe as wastewater and must be treated at the city's wastewater treatment plant and our combined sewer overflow control facilities (CSOs) before it can be released back into the environment. DWSD has the largest single-site municipal plant in the world, treating 10 billion gallons of drainage each year, costing more than \$125 million annually.



3. What do drainage charges pay for? How do they compare with other U.S. cities?

Like many older communities in the U.S., Detroit has a combined sewer system. Federal and State mandates have required DWSD to invest more than \$1 billion in [CSO control facilities](#) to help prevent untreated combined sewer overflows into waterways to preserve water quality in the southeast Michigan region. Fees from drainage charges pay for capital, operations and maintenance costs for the CSOs, wastewater treatment plant and combined sewer system components.

Detroit's drainage charge is among the highest in the country largely due to strict environmental regulations, the massive amounts of storm water that enter the combined sewer system, and the decrease in population over the past several decades. Many suburban or newer communities have separate storm water systems and may charge for drainage through other sources, such as property taxes. The cost of treating sewerage and drainage is typically higher than that of water which comes from a natural source. Like most utilities, DWSD is obligated by law to incur these costs to comply with environmental regulations.

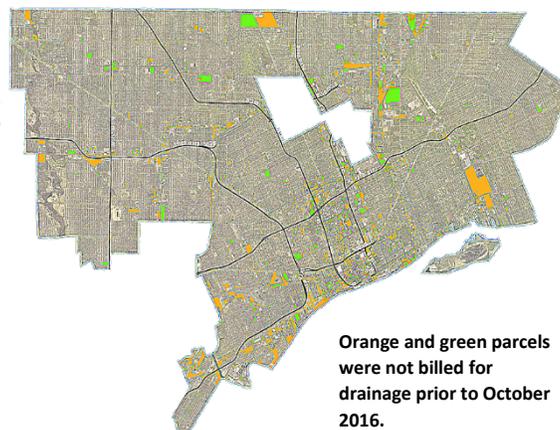
4. How are drainage charges calculated? How is DWSD changing its drainage charge billing?

Drainage charges are calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Drainage charge} = \text{Total impervious surface area of the parcel} \times \text{Impervious acre rate (dollars per acre per month)}$$

Historically, customers were billed for drainage by property class (e.g., industrial, commercial, residential). Unless updated information was available, residential customers were charged for drainage based upon meter size, which served as a proxy for parcel size. Non-residential customers were charged based on a tiered class average percentage of impervious area associated with their property.

Using City Assessor's data and flyover views, DWSD identified 22,000 parcels that had not previously been billed for drainage. Many of the parcels do not have a DWSD water account, and therefore were not in DWSD's billing system. Most of these parcels (except faith-based) will be charged \$750 per impervious acre or \$0.017 cents per impervious square foot beginning in October 2016 which will be reflected in the November, 2016 bill. The new parcels **will not be back-billed**. Billing new parcels helps create a more equitable method that will assist DWSD in maintaining lower rates allowing customers to pay less. For more information, watch the [DWSD Drainage Charge Program video](#).



By the year 2018, all DWSD customers will pay drainage charges based on impervious surface. Customers can verify their impervious acreage using the [DWSD Parcel Viewer](http://www.detroitmi.gov/drainage) available at www.detroitmi.gov/drainage. Industrial customers with billing that was based on meter size, will move to the new impervious surface rate in January 2017. Commercial properties will move to the new rate in April, 2017, and tax-exempt properties (excluding faith-based) in June 2017. Residential properties will move to the impervious surface rate in October 2017, while faith-based properties will be moved in January of 2018. Customers will continue at their present rate until the new impervious surface rates for their class takes effect. Transition credits will be applied over the next two fiscal years following specific class rate conversion to mitigate potential bill impacts.

5. Is this a new charge?

No. Since 1975, DWSD customers have been paying for drainage as part of their water and sewer bills.

6. What is the current drainage rate?

Prior to October 2016, residential customers and non-residential customers for which DWSD did not have updated property information were charged for drainage based upon meter size. Non-residential customers were charged based on a tiered class average percentage of impervious area associated with their property (see chart). For those customers who received new parcel letters, most of these parcels (except faith-based) will be charged \$750 per impervious acre or \$0.017 cents per impervious square foot with accruals starting October 2016.

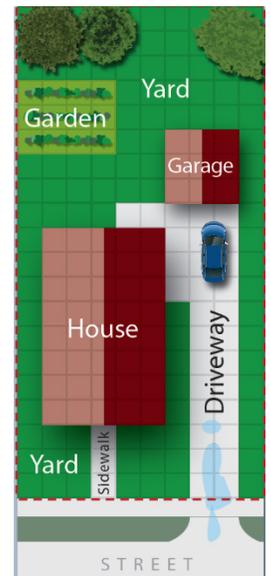
Class*	Description	Rate Per Unit (Meter Size or Impervious Acre)
Fixed Fee Low	Meter Size – 5/8” to 1”	\$20.36
Fixed Fee High	Meter Size > 1”	\$190.56
Class 1	10-24% Impervious Area	\$149.97
Class 2	25-49% Impervious Area	\$326.41
Class 3	50-74% Impervious Area	\$546.95
Class 4	Standard	\$635.19
Class 5	75 – 100% Impervious Area	\$771.91
Base Rate		\$882.19

*Wayne County and the Michigan Department of Transportation are charged drainage charges under settlement agreements.

Billing and Program Implementation

1. How does the drainage charge impact residential customers?

Most residents pay \$20.36 per month and will continue to do so until October 2017, when they are phased into the new impervious acreage rate. The average Detroit home has 0.04 impervious acres including their rooftop, garage roof and driveway. Future bill impacts will depend on the amount of hard, impervious surface on your property. Residents with the average amount of impervious area or less will see reductions in their drainage charge over the next three years, while residential properties with more impervious area will be subject to bill increases.



2. How did DWSD determine which customers would be transitioned first? Why not move all customers at the same time?

There are over 380,000 parcels in the city of Detroit and DWSD bills more than 200,000 customer accounts for drainage services. To convert all accounts to impervious acreage at once with a uniform rate could overwhelm existing customer service resources and cause expenses to increase dramatically, adversely affecting the impervious area rate for the following year. Opting for a phased-in approach which gives customers time to prepare for the new rate while not overwhelming the system, avoids adverse impact on the DWSD billing system. This includes billing of previously unbilled parcels, phased transition of billing based on impervious area basis (and not meter size), and the elimination of the property class to group customers already billed on an impervious area basis.

When is My Property Phased?



While the move to impervious area billing by property class will be completed by January 2018, the application of transition credits will extend to 2020 for customers converted later in the phasing schedule. This staging ensures all customers are treated similarly through the transitioning process.

3. Why weren't customers previously charged for all parcels?

DWSD merged City Assessor parcel data and aerial flyover data to identify all impervious surfaces in the city of Detroit. Over 22,000 parcels were identified as containing impervious surfaces that were not billed for drainage. Many customers received [letters](#) regarding to one or more of these parcels. Effective October 2016, the parcels will be charged at a rate of \$750 per impervious acre per month, or \$0.017 cents per impervious square foot per month. Customers will not be back-billed. Owners of parcels with less than 0.02 impervious acres will not be charged for drainage. Customers can verify their impervious acreage using the [DWSD Parcel Viewer](#) at www.detroitmi.gov/drainage. Bills are prepared by parcel number with a unique account number. Customers with multiple parcels may receive a bill for each parcel owned, and are encouraged to contact DWSD to consolidate their bills.

4. Why some customers are charged one way for current parcel(s) and a new way for other parcel(s)?

Starting in October, 2016, more than 20,000 new parcels will be charged a drainage rate of \$750 per impervious acre per month. Existing parcels will be billed at their current rate until their parcel type moves to the new billing under the phasing plan. Customers who have properties billed under different customer classes may temporarily pay different rates until all customer groups transition to the uniform rate. By 2018, all non-governmental customers will pay the same uniform drainage rate based on impervious surface. If an existing bill is based on acreage associated with multiple parcels and the customer receives notification letters indicating those parcels will now be billed separately, DWSD encourages customers to contact the department to [consolidate bills](#) or [change the impervious acreage](#) associated with the current bill.

5. What is the frequency of billing?

Drainage charges will be included on the customer's monthly sewer bill. Customers without a sewer bill will receive a drainage only monthly bill.

6. Can DWSD consolidate parcels?

Yes. Beginning in 2017, DWSD will be able to fully implement bill consolidation. Visit the Drainage website: www.detroitmi.gov/drainage, email us at drainage@detroitmi.gov, or call 313-267-8000 and follow the prompts to speak with a customer care specialist.

7. How does the new drainage rate impact the water and sewer components of a bill? Will the drainage bill be separate from the water bill?

The new drainage rate will be based solely on impervious acreage. It will not impact water and sewer charges. In some instances, the drainage portion of the bill will be separate. This will only occur in cases where there are no water and sewerage accounts associated with that parcel. All drainage charges are specifically identified on the bill.



8. If I disconnect my water service, can I avoid a drainage bill?

If you disconnect your water service, you will still receive a drainage bill based on the impervious area on your property which generates rain and snow runoff. However, drainage charge may be mitigated by reducing storm water flow into the DWSD combined sewer system. More information is available on www.detroitmi.gov/drainage.

9. If drainage charges decrease with the new rate, will customers receive a back-credit?

DWSD will be working forward from this point. There will only be compensation for parcels that were billed based on inaccurate data after the roll-out commenced on October 1, 2016. There will be no back billing or crediting for changes in the impervious area rate.

10. I received a three-year back bill earlier this year. Can this be reversed?

Contact DWSD at: drainage@detroitmi.gov or by telephone at 313-267-8000. Please have your bills and account information handy.

11. Why are parking lots being charged?

Parking lots have a large amount of impervious area on their property. All properties that drain to the city's combined sewer system will be charged for their share of drainage costs.

12. What is being done for gas stations?

Gas stations, like other customers, may implement storm water management practices on-site to receive drainage credits. DWSD recognizes that some customer properties like gas stations are limited in their on-site options to manage storm water. DWSD is working in future phases of the Drainage Charge Credit program to offer offsite storm water management credits for such establishments.

13. How can an apartment or condo have all drainage billed to the association?

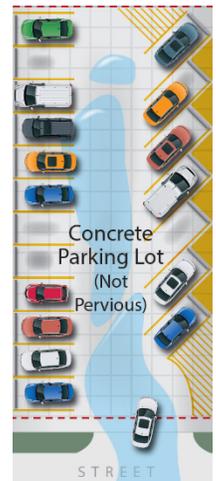
DWSD has consolidated billing solutions for apartments, condo owners and homeowner association management. Email DWSD at: drainage@detroitmi.gov with supporting documentation of all owned parcels. Be sure to include the name to which all bills should be sent to allow for a consolidated bill. Customers can also call 313-267-8000 and follow the prompts to speak directly with a drainage specialist.

14. Are multifamily apartment buildings classified as commercial?

Most apartment buildings or properties utilized as apartments are classified in the City Assessor's records as commercial. However, some properties may be classified as residential, industrial or tax-exempt. Ultimately, drainage charges for all property classes will be moved to a uniform rate based on impervious acreage. Timing of this transition will occur based on the classification of your property. For questions, call 313-267-8000 and follow the prompts to speak directly with a drainage specialist for more information.

15. How much advance notice are customers given prior to the next program phase?

The goal of DWSD is to provide customers with a three-month notice prior to receiving their first bill.



16. Can property owners challenge the rate per impervious acre? Can a site visit be arranged?

Property owners can challenge the number of impervious acres reported in their bill, but not the charge per acre. The rate has been approved by the Board of Water Commissioners. A site visit to verify imperviousness can be arranged if the customer provides a reasonable basis. Visit the [drainage website](#) to obtain a [drainage survey form](#). Email supporting documentation to drainage@detroitmi.gov or call 313-267-8000 and follow the prompts to speak with a customer care specialist.

17. Can a customer receive a refund for discrepancies associated with the reevaluation of property?

If there is a determination that the data DWSD has provided for a new parcel is incorrect, there will be a credit issued for that parcel dating from October 1, 2016.

18. Why was 0.02 impervious acres identified as the limit for not charging drainage?

Customers will not be charged for parcels with less than 0.02 impervious acres. 0.02 impervious acres is roughly equal to a 30 by 30 feet space. DWSD identified this space as a fair amount to truncate as a margin of error for flyover views.

19. What is the revenue requirement? Is this program part of DWSD's cost savings goals?

For fiscal year 2017, DWSD's drainage revenue requirement – including \$125 million-plus in operation costs and costs for implementing the program, drainage credits, etc. – will exceed \$151 million. If everyone pays their share of the drainage charge, DWSD can decrease rates and help all customers pay less. DWSD is a city retail operation focused on delivering core services to Detroit residents and businesses. Since January, 2016, DWSD no longer services wholesale suburban customers. DWSD will leverage synergies and productivity where possible.

20. Is the City of Detroit, the Land Bank, state and county properties, and roads and railroads charged?

All parcels in Detroit with impervious area will be charged for drainage services. Every retail customer is billed for drainage services using the same methodology. The City of Detroit, the Land Bank and other government owned parcels are billed in the same manner as private property. Wayne County and State of Michigan roads and highways are charged pursuant to settlement agreements entered into Federal Court in 1989.

21. Is the 83/17 CSO allocation between Detroit and the suburbs renegotiable?

The 83/17 cost allocation provision was written into a Federal Court Order in 1999. The provision states that DWSD shall charge customers within the City of Detroit 83%, and customers outside the City of Detroit 17%, of CSO related capital and operation and maintenance costs. Detroit has started conversations with appropriate parties as a prelude to renegotiation of the allocation provision.

22. Can Detroit obtain additional funding from the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) to help address this situation?

GLWA like DWSD, must establish rates that allocate cost recovery responsibilities across its different customers. The methods used to allocate the costs reflect judgments and customer demands under a zero-

sum situation where costs not collected from one customer must be recovered by other customers. Accordingly, additional funding to lower costs for Detroit will mean higher costs for other retail customers. Detroit is participating in GLWA's customer outreach processes to ensure that costs are allocated appropriately.

23. Do other communities across the U.S. and Michigan impose drainage charge rates based on impervious area?

Yes. As federal storm water management regulations become more stringent for communities across the country, implementation of storm water management and impervious surface charges become more prevalent. Detroit has charged for drainage services since 1975 and is authorized by its charter to bill for drainage services. Communities in Philadelphia, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (Cleveland), and Washington D.C. are all areas that are developing efficient systems for managing storm water and impervious area based charges.

24. What are the various debt types? How does debt impact the drainage charge?

DWSD's debt service related expense is \$59.8 million and is essentially the (GLWA held) mortgage payment on facilities that are in place to handle wet weather flows. This debt service expense relates to both municipal bond issues and to state revolving fund loans. Bad debt is simply uncollectable bills. This is a debt that DWSD likes to keep as low as possible.

25. Can DWSD adsorb bad debt costs?

DWSD is legally obligated to recover the costs, so not recovering these costs is not an option. Accordingly, if bad debt is forgiven for some customers, remaining customers will be inequitably required to pay for those that have not paid for services.

26. Once all parcels are being billed and bad debt is reduced, what is the projected annual rate?

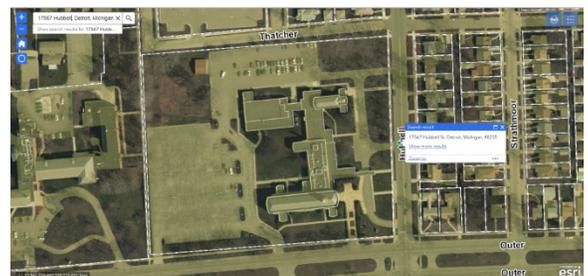
If everyone pays their share of the drainage charge, DWSD can decrease the rate and help all customers pay less. The rate is projected to decline 32% through fiscal year 2019.

27. Are there opportunities for economic development and jobs creation opportunity here?

Yes. DWSD is working with city departments and area partners to implement contractor training and provide workforce development services for implementing green infrastructure projects. As positions become available, they will be posted on the [City of Detroit website](#).

28. How often will flyover data be refreshed and updated? Are the parcel lines on flyover views that DWSD uses the same as the assessor's database?

DWSD and the City Assessor will update flyover data every other year. Customers can verify their impervious acreage using the [DWSD Parcel Viewer](#).



29. How will I stay informed about the drainage program? Is there any communications or outreach planned?

Regularly visit www.detroitmi.gov/drainage for program updates, scheduled meetings and workshops. You can always email drainage@detroitmi.gov or call 313-267-8000 and follow the prompts to speak with a drainage specialist. DWSD is implementing a comprehensive outreach and communications program for drainage. The program will include advertising, print materials, videos and presentations, press and social media. DWSD will host regular customer meetings engaging residential and non-residential customers, faith-based and nonprofit organizations, academia, business associations and community groups. Most online content is accessible via mobile devices.

Infrastructure and Storm Water Management

1. What is an impervious surface? How is impervious acreage determined? How can I customers see impervious acreage?

Impervious surfaces are roofs, driveways, parking lots and similar hard surfaces (including compacted gravel and soil) that limit the ability of storm water to soak into the ground. The less impervious area on your parcel, the lower your drainage charge.

In 2015, there was an aerial flyover of the City of Detroit. Using aerial photography, impervious areas on each property were determined. Customers can view their property's impervious area by searching your address in the [DWSD Parcel Viewer](#) on www.detroitmi.gov/drainage.

2. Are unimproved lots considered impervious? Will they be charged for drainage?

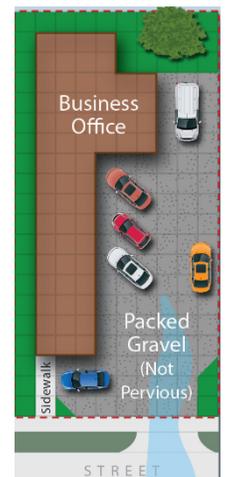
A lot that does not include impervious surfaces will not be charged for drainage.

3. Are swimming pools considered impervious?

No. Since rainfall on a swimming pool is contained, it does not count as an impervious surface. In-ground or above-ground pools do not count as impervious. However, any walkways or edgings around the pool count as impervious.

4. Is a gravel parking lot or a grass lot considered impervious?

Gravel used in parking lots are not designed to allow water to infiltrate into the soil. Most surfaces when driven on continuously, even grass and dirt, become compacted over time rendering them impervious.

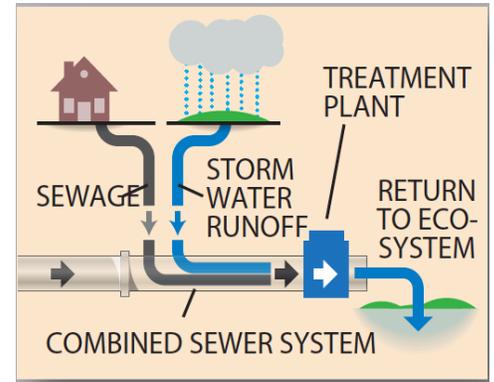


5. Is there a process to confirm whether or not a surface is impervious?

A procedure will be in place for DWSD customers who dispute the extent of impervious surfaces on their property. An onsite inspection may be considered if the property owner has provided justification.

6. What is a Combined Sewer System?

A Combined Sewer System is designed to collect both sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff. Like many older communities in the U.S., Detroit has a combined sewer system. Storm water runoff flows into the same pipe as wastewater and must be treated at the city's CSO and wastewater treatment plant before it can be released back into the environment. DWSD is obligated to incur these costs in compliance with the federal and state Clean Water Acts. For more information, [watch this brief video](#).



7. Will the city consider separating the sewer system?

Detroit's combined sewer system includes nearly 3,000 miles of sewer collection piping. The costs to effectively separate the sewer system would be highly cost prohibitive. While selective sewer separation may be an option in some parts of the City, widespread implementation is not anticipated.

8. With regard to rainfall, how much rain falls in a 100-year 24-hour storm event?

The 100-year 24-hour rainfall amount is 5.15 inches.

9. How is the term “conveyance” being defined as it is applied to city streets?

City streets, which are lower than parcels, are part of the conveyance infrastructure for facilitating the flow of storm water from Detroit properties into the catch basins, then into the combined sewer system, and then finally terminating at the wastewater treatment plant.

10. What is the total acreage of city owned/controlled property that will be characterized as a conveyance? Is the conveyance exception being applied to any other property other than city owned streets?

City owned parcels will not be characterized as conveyance. This term only applies to city streets, i.e. areas common to all that serve as storm water conveyance.

11. What are CSO costs? Is the drainage fee intended to cover the cost of building the CSO facilities?

In compliance with EPA regulations and to stop excessive pollution into our waterways, DWSD invested over \$1 billion in [Combined Sewer Overflow \(CSO\) control facilities](#). The CSO control facilities were built to help prevent untreated, combined sewer overflows from entering into waterways and to help preserve water quality. The cost was financed almost entirely through bonds which are being repaid by the drainage fee. Direct CSO costs have two components: \$25.7 million for annual CSO bond debt, and \$6.2 million in annual operating costs specific to the control facilities.

12. Can businesses disconnect from the city's system?

DWSD recognizes that there are parcels where runoff goes directly to the river through a private system. Customers who are able to verify that their parcels are completely disconnected from the DWSD system will not be charged for drainage services.

13. What can be done with offsite storm water management?

Off-site storm water credit options present a number of legal, financial and administrative complexities. In order to successfully launch DWSD's base credit program, development of offsite credit options were deferred. DWSD is in the process of developing off-site credit options. Once this process is completed, information will be made available on www.detroitmi.gov/drainage and communicated through our drainage charge customer engagement program.

14. How much money is saved by diverting drainage out of the sewer system?

According to a study conducted for the [Southeast Michigan Council of Governments](#), published in 2014, using green infrastructure to reduce 20 percent of stormwater runoff from major roads in the city of Detroit can reduce treatment costs by approximately \$2 million annually.

15. Can DWSD include the costs for drainage infrastructure in my taxes instead of my monthly drainage bill?

No. Drainage infrastructure provides parcel owners a service where costs are most equitably recovered through billings from DWSD based on the factors that cause the costs to be incurred. Detroit City Charter authorizes the Board of Water Commissioners to set rates for drainage.

Drainage Credits and Green Infrastructure

1. What is green infrastructure and how does it relate to drainage?

Green infrastructure refers to the systems and practices that mimic natural processes to infiltrate and return storm water into the atmosphere. It also refers to reuse of storm water or runoff on a site where it is generated. Green infrastructure reduces the amount of storm water that exits from properties and into DWSD's combined sewer system.

By implementing green infrastructure and storm water control measures, DWSD customers can reduce the runoff that occurs on their property. Removing impervious cover reduces the amount of storm water leaving your property and running into the combined sewer system. Green infrastructure examples include disconnecting downspouts, rain gardens, bioretention practices, installing permeable pavement, green roof designs, detention and subsurface detention and other approved practices that manage storm water volume.

Vacant lots in Detroit also offer opportunities for green infrastructure controls. DWSD is working to recognize green infrastructure efforts and will make adjustments to customer bills to reflect credits toward green infrastructure measures.



Credits are based on the components of the drainage charge and up to an 80% drainage credit can be earned based on measures used. Customers can earn up to 40% for controlling their annual volume of drainage into the city's combined sewer system each year. A maximum of 40% can also be earned by controlling peak flow rate, slowing the rate at which water leaves a surface site and enters the sewer. Credits apply only to the managed area of a parcel and do not include the 20% for fixed costs associated with maintaining the drainage charge system. The maximum drainage credit for an individual property is 80%. For more information on drainage credits, visit DWSD's Drainage Charge Credits manual at: www.detroitmi.gov/drainage.

2. How can drainage charges be reduced?

Customers should first carefully verify property and billing data to ensure all information is correct. To assist in understanding green infrastructure credits, customers should visit DWSD's Drainage Charge Credits manual at: www.detroitmi.gov/drainage. The manual will assist customers by identifying options for property owners. For example, customers may reduce storm water runoff by disconnecting downspouts, installing rain gardens, and installing permeable pavement, bioretention or detention ponds. Up to 80% credit on drainage can be applied. Residential customers will receive an automatic 25% credit on their drainage charge beginning with their move to the impervious rate in October 2017 assuming downspouts have been disconnected and storm water runoff flows into their lawn.

3. When will the drainage credit become available and applied on customer bills?

Customers can apply for drainage charge credits beginning October 1, 2016. Drainage credits for existing storm water practices will be applied to customer's account once an application has been completed and documentation required has been submitted. Applications can be found on the DWSD website at www.detroitmi.gov/drainage. For new construction, drainage credits will be applied to the customer's account as of the date of construction completion and certification. Credits will be applied for customers whose bills are based on impervious acreage.

4. How do I sign up for a credits workshop?

Non-residential workshops began October, 2016. Residential workshops are expected to begin in early 2017. Check on the DWSD website at: www.detroitmi.gov/drainage for workshop dates, times and registration details.

5. Will credits be available for low income communities? Will grants be offered?

DWSD is providing credits to recognize storm water management practices to all customers independent of a customer's financial circumstances. DWSD is working on external funding resources and grants to assist low-income customers and community groups with storm water management implementation costs. In compliance with state law, credits based on income are not available.

6. What other benefits are available from implementation of storm water management practices?

In addition to earning credits for stormwater management, green infrastructure can also increase property values and reduce the risk of flooding. How much an individual storm water management practice yields in financial returns will depend on each individual customer's specific situation including their current drainage bills, potential costs of storm water management, potential credits, applicable interest rates, etc.



Customers who are considering investment in storm water management practices should perform a financial return analyses as part of their investment evaluation process. DWSD is working to develop a simplified financial analysis model.

7. Who approves green infrastructure projects?

DWSD and its technical partners approve the green infrastructure projects for drainage charge credits. Owners must meet eligibility requirements and fulfill on-going operations and maintenance requirements. Approved practices must reduce annual runoff volume and/or control peak flow rate. Applying customers must document acceptable design and performance and comply with all applicable codes and permits. Practices must be fully installed and functioning properly to ensure they do not create a safety hazard or nuisance. All properties must be located in the DWSD's service area.

8. Can adjacent land owners partner together on large scale green infrastructure projects? Will credits be offered for managing storm water on the public right of ways?

Yes. Adjoining property owners may implement a shared storm water practice. DWSD is also interested in working with customers who wish to explore credit options on their property including partnering with others on green infrastructure projects and offsite storm water management options. Use of the street right of way for private property storm water management is not permitted. Additional information for customer clarity is being developed.

9. Is DWSD sponsoring any green infrastructure projects?

DWSD will invest \$15 million in its green Infrastructure program between years 2013-2017 to reduce 2.8 million gallons (MG) of storm water flow. A number of projects have been completed including bioretention on vacant lots in the Cody Rouge neighborhood and in Viola Liuzzo Park ([watch video](#)). DWSD also partnered with The Greening of Detroit to plant over 4,000 trees, and has hosted 64 workshops to disconnect downspouts for 440 participants. DWSD is currently working with the Detroit Department of Public Works on street projects that include permeable pavement and bioswales. Visit the [Green Infrastructure projects webpage](#) for more information at www.detroitmi.gov/dwsd.



10. Is the drainage charge credit program coordinated with codes and ordinances plus other City initiatives?

DWSD and its technical partners are implementing a comprehensive program for improved storm water management that includes three components: (1) sponsored green infrastructure projects; (2) drainage charge credits to provide incentives for implementation of storm water management practices; and (3) adoption of a post construction storm water ordinance regulating development activities.



DWSD has held stakeholder meetings including city staff, developers, planning agencies, environmental groups and others to ensure feasible concepts. The city is working to establish a sustainability office to

assist in coordination of city initiatives and DWSD is supporting the implementation of this office and related coordination efforts.

The post construction storm water ordinance or “greening” of the code is projected to be implemented in early 2017. Together with the drainage charge credits program, DWSD is looking for city developers to increasingly implement green infrastructure in new and updated development projects.

11. Is disconnecting a downspout safe for the home?

Not only is disconnecting downspouts safe, Michigan law requires Detroit residents to disconnect downspouts from sewer drains. During heavy rain storms, each down spout on a home can deliver 12 gallons a minute to the sewer system. Residential customer downspout disconnections were among the considerations that supported a 25% automatic credit applied to residential customers’ billings beginning October, 2017. Consult the Drainage Charge Credits manual on the DWSD website at: www.detroitmi.gov/drainage for information on additional credit opportunities.

12. Will a credit trading model be adopted?

A credit trading option is one of several frameworks that DWSD is exploring for forthcoming phases of its drainage charge credit system. As DWSD’s drainage credit program evolves, information will be available on the [website](#).

13. Are there approved contractors for green infrastructure projects?

DWSD is working with local organizations in the city to procure technical assistance resources. Those interested should email DWSD at: drainage@detroitmi.gov or call 313-267-8000 and follow the prompts to speak with a customer care representative.

14. Will DWSD provide an online credit calculator?

DWSD is developing a credit calculator to provide information on eligible practices and the potential drainage bill credits that may be applied. Once available, it will be posted on the [website](#).

15. Will DWSD showcase green infrastructure projects?

DWSD is planning the use of several forms of communication including social media channels to showcase projects that can help make Detroit become one of the greenest cities in America. Photographs and a brief description of individual greening projects can be sent to: drainage@detroitmi.gov.

16. Can donations to entities involved in storm water management contribute to a credit on my drainage bill?

No. Charitable contributions cannot be used as credits in DWSD drainage program. Consult your tax expert or preparer for tax deduction possibilities.



General Information

1. Where can I find answers to questions on billing?

For questions related to DWSD billing, contact www.detroitmi.gov/dwsd. For questions on DWSD drainage, visit: www.detroitmi.gov/drainage or send an email to: drainage@detroitmi.gov. Documents related to drainage can be faxed to: 313-964-9110 or call: 313- 267-8000 and follow the prompts for drainage. DWSD encourages customers to make an appointment to ensure your individual concerns are addressed. DWSD will not accept walk-ins for drainage inquiries.

Website:
www.detroitmi.gov/drainage

Email (recommended):
drainage@detroitmi.gov

Phone Number:
313-267-8000, follow prompts

2. How do I update my parcel information? How can we help DWSD improve the accuracy of billing records?

Working with the City Assessor, DWSD is transitioning its billing system to a parcel-based system. The city assessor processes more than 1,000 property affidavits a week and DWSD is continually working to update ownership and property data. It is encouraged that customers ensure individual data is correct at the city assessor's office. For additional information, visit the drainage website at: www.detroitmi.gov/drainage to obtain the necessary forms to update parcel information or to submit [the drainage survey form](#) regarding parcel(s). Customers can also send an email to DWSD at: drainage@detroitmi.gov or call 313-267-8000 and follow the prompts to speak with a drainage customer care specialist.

3. What if there is a disagreement regarding individual impervious acreage calculation or belief that the impervious acreage is wrong?

Customers may be eligible for an account adjustment if the measurement of individual impervious acreage is inaccurate. If there has been a modification to impervious surface or a direct discharge to surface waters such as the Detroit or Rouge rivers, customers can seek an adjustment. To dispute the measure of an impervious acreage, customers will need to complete an area [survey](#) of the property or properties using the form at www.detroitmi.gov/drainage. Customers can also contact DWSD to discuss the concern.

4. Are payment assistance programs available?

While there are no formal assistance program specifically for drainage charges, the [10/30/50 Payment Plan](#) is available to all customers who have fallen behind on their bill. For low-income residential customers who are eligible, the [Water Residential Assistance Program \(WRAP\)](#) is offered. The assistance programs are amongst the most robust of utility programs in the country. Visit www.detroitmi.gov/dwsd for more information.



5. Are there any consequences for a customer who refuses to pay for drainage?

DWSD has several collection options available. Water service can be terminated for failure to pay for any portion of your bill, including drainage. State and local law provides that any unpaid water, sewer, or drainage bill is a lien on the property. DWSD may also institute a legal action to recover unpaid fees. Additionally, a City of Detroit license to do business may be suspended or revoked for failure to pay a DWSD bill.

6. Are there penalties for not filing a property transfer affidavit?

Filing the property transfer affidavit is mandatory. The completed affidavit must be led by the new owner with the assessor for the city or township where the property is located within 45 days of the transfer. Owners may be subject to a penalty of \$5.00 or \$20.00 per day for each separate failure beginning after the 45 days have elapsed, up to a maximum of \$20,000 depending on the sale price of the property and its classification. Contact the City Assessor's office for more information.

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department is continuously working to improve customer experiences with the drainage program. If you believe there are errors on this Q&A, please contact DWSD by email at: drainage@detroitmi.gov or call 313-267-8000 to speak with a drainage customer care specialist. DWSD retains the right to modify all information as contained in this section.

