



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is Stormwater?

Stormwater originates from rain or melting snow. Stormwater Runoff is stormwater not readily absorbed into the ground and “runs off” across the land. Stormwater runoff is collected and treated through the City’s storm sewers, ditches, and basins until released to a natural body of water such as Pheasant Branch, Dorn Creek, Lake Mendota, or Black Earth Creek. Development greatly increases the amount of stormwater runoff because surfaces like roofs and pavement do not absorb stormwater.

## What is the Stormwater Utility responsible for?

The Stormwater Utility is responsible for collecting, conveying, storing, treating, and discharging stormwater in a manner that is safe for the public and the environment. Stormwater management is one of four major municipal infrastructure components, along with transportation, water supply, and wastewater collection. There are extensive State and Federal regulatory mandates to document, manage, and make progress toward pollution reduction goals. Construction and maintenance of facilities to properly manage stormwater are expensive and have long-term obligations. All properties within a community are served by this system and benefit from this investment.

## What is an ERU?

An ERU is an Equivalent Residential Unit, which is the average impervious area for a single-family home. In Middleton, the ERU is equivalent to 2,880 square feet of impervious area.

## What is an impervious surface?

Impervious surfaces are hard surfaces such as roofs and pavements which do not absorb stormwater. Gravel and stone surfaces are also considered impervious. Lawns, landscaped areas, and naturally vegetated areas are NOT impervious surfaces.

## What causes stormwater pollution?

Stormwater runoff collects pollutants as it runs across surfaces. Common pollutants include soil particles, fertilizers and pesticides, pet waste and bacteria, road salt, materials deposited from vehicle wear and tear and exhaust, and illicit discharges. Stormwater pollution can make our local waters unsafe for fishing, swimming, and boating and damage their ecosystems.

## What is an illicit discharge?

An illicit discharge is a release of contaminated water into the City’s stormwater collection system that should be discharged to the City’s sanitary sewers or collected and treated separately. The City has a program to search for and identify these illicit discharges and pursue solutions with the property owner.

## Who pays fees to the Stormwater Utility?

All developed properties within the City pay fees to the Stormwater Utility, including properties exempt from real estate taxes.

## How much are the fees?

The Fall 2024 referendum asks for voter approval to set the quarterly fee at \$23 per ERU. Single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, and condominiums are charged one ERU for each unit. Multi-family, commercial, industrial, and institutional sites are charged based on actual measurements of impervious areas. The charges will vary if you live in an apartment building but are typically much less than one ERU per apartment.

## How do I pay the fees?

The quarterly City of Middleton Utility Bill includes the stormwater utility fee. If you don’t pay the City’s Utility bill directly, your landlord passes these costs through to you as a part of your rent payments.





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## Why not use property taxes?

Stormwater Utility funding is more equitable than property tax funding:

Like water and sewer utilities, customers who generate a larger share of stormwater runoff pay a proportionately larger share of the costs. Stormwater utilities shift funding from residential properties to non-residential properties with more impervious areas.

All developed properties pay utility fees, including those exempt from property taxes. The revenue is predictable and must be allocated for stormwater expenses only.

## Where can I find the 2024 Stormwater Utility Rate Study and other stormwater and water resources reports?

Use the link to access the City's stormwater web page.  
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## There's a detention basin that serves my neighborhood. Do I still have to pay a Stormwater Utility fee?

Yes. A wide variety of neighborhoods and individual sites within the City are served (or not served) by publicly and privately owned detention basins or other stormwater features. All developed properties are customers of the Stormwater Utility.

## How many properties does the Stormwater Utility benefit?

Everyone benefits collectively from the entire city's system of roads and storm sewers, ditches and drainage ways, conservancy lands, regional stormwater basins, street sweeping, yard waste collection, etc.

## Who controls the Stormwater Utility and decides where the money is spent?

The Water Resources Management and Stormwater Utility Commission is responsible for charging, managing, and supervising the Stormwater Utility per Chapters 2 and 9 of the City Ordinances. The Commission prepares an annual budget for review and approval by the Common Council.

## I've heard that the City allows developers to break the rules with stormwater and then expects residents to pay the costs. Is that true?

No. All developers must comply with City Ordinance Chapter 26 – Stormwater Runoff Control and County and State regulations. There is a “fee-in-lieu” program that is often misunderstood as giving a break to a developer, but in fact, the opposite is true. Fees-in-lieu are only allowed for sites exempt from meeting specific performance requirements per County and State regulations (and most other municipal Ordinances). Middleton's Ordinance takes an extra step and requires these sites to pay a fee-in-lieu because of the exemption. The fees are placed in a dedicated account to be used collectively on regional initiatives and improvements.

## What do other communities do?

There are more than 120 communities in Wisconsin that have Stormwater Utilities. Middleton's proposed quarterly ERU rate would be lower than most of our peer communities in Dane County, see below.

Sun Prairie	\$36.15
Madison	\$35.16
McFarland	\$30.00
Fitchburg	\$25.82
Monona	\$24.15
<b>Middleton (with referendum)</b>	<b>\$23.00</b>
Verona	\$21.25
<b>Middleton (without referendum)</b>	<b>\$ 3.75</b>

