

## DRAINAGE CHARGE

# MYTH

VS

# FACT

- **The drainage charge is new.**
  - ▶ The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) has been billing customers since the 1975 City Charter authorized charging for water, drainage and sewerage services. DWSD must comply with Michigan law regarding fees for services. The charge was embedded on bills in the sewerage category until the mid 2000s.
- **Only Detroit pays for drainage.**
  - ▶ Some communities have separated sewer systems, while Detroit has a combined sewer system. Each community manages stormwater (drainage) differently, so the costs vary based on the type of facilities constructed to meet permit obligations.
- **All Detroit property owners are not charged for drainage.**
  - ▶ All customers, including government entities, are charged for drainage, except properties with less than 0.02 impervious acres or properties that discharge directly to rivers.
- **The charge is a money grab.**
  - ▶ The drainage charge is not new. It recovers the cost to capture, convey, pump, treat and safely return combined sewage back to the Detroit and Rouge Rivers – including the \$1.5 billion invested in nine combined sewer overflow (CSO) facilities and other wet weather treatment system improvements. This equates to \$150 million in annual drainage costs.
- **The rate is unfair.**
  - ▶ The rate is based on each parcel's impact on the sewer system. As of July 2018, all customers will be billed for drainage based on impervious acreage, a rate model used by many municipalities that provide wet weather treatment.
- **Rain water is clean.**
  - ▶ When rain and snowmelt runoff roofs, sidewalks, driveways, and streets, it mixes with dirt, oil and debris and flows into the combined sewer system. When this runoff is blended with sanitary waste, it must be treated before release into the Detroit and Rouge Rivers.
- **The charge should not be monthly because it doesn't rain or snow every month.**
  - ▶ DWSD bills for drainage based on annual wet weather treatment costs, determined by analyzing the volume of flow treated on dry days versus wet weather days. This equates to a simpler billing process.



DETROIT  
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Learn more at [www.detroitmi.gov/drainage](http://www.detroitmi.gov/drainage).

# DRAINAGE CHARGE

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# FACT

Only Detroit pays for drainage – the suburbs don't get charged for stormwater management.

Some suburban communities have separated sewer systems, while Detroit has a combined sewer system. Each community manages stormwater (drainage) differently, so the costs vary based on the type of facilities constructed to meet permit obligations. A sample of communities that charge for stormwater management are:



Conner Creek CSO Control Facility in Detroit



George W. Kuhn Drain in Madison Heights

Other stormwater facilities in Oakland County



**Ann Arbor:** The rate is based on “usage of the storm water system, as represented by impervious area. Examples of impervious areas include roofs, pavement, sidewalks, patios, and gravel or crushed stone surfaces.” Nonresidential properties are billed \$595.45 per acre per quarter, and residential are billed \$22.07 to \$115.85 per quarter depending on square footage.

**Birmingham:** “The Storm Water Utility Fee will be apportioned to all properties in the City that contribute storm water into the City’s sewer system, from both surface runoff and underground footing drain inflow.” The Storm Water Utility Fee per Equivalent Storm Water Unit is \$45.75 for the Evergreen Farmington District and \$59.50 for the South Oakland District.

**Huntington Woods:** “Based upon the costs of operation including ... rainfall, historical data and future projections of water use and weather, the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner sets sewage rates for a three-year period for communities in the Clinton River Watershed. This includes the cost to operate the George W. Kuhn Drain.” The wastewater cost is \$37.75.

**Pleasant Ridge:** “The stormwater flows into the sewers from the streets during rain events and mixes with sewage, and all of the runoff must be treated before it flows out to the Red Run Drain, Clinton River and into the Great Lakes.” The stormwater runoff charge is \$45.12 per Equivalent Storm Water Unit per bill.



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