

Stormwater Utility – Southport, IN

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Stormwater Utility?

A Stormwater Utility is a legal entity which provides maintenance, improvements, planning, regulation, permitting and administrative functions for the stormwater system. A Stormwater Utility provides a method of generating revenues for these necessary activities through user fees. From 2001 until 2015, property owners in Southport paid Stormwater Utility fees to Indianapolis/Marion County. Southport is establishing a Stormwater Utility in 2015 and is separating from the Indianapolis/Marion County Stormwater Utility. Utility revenues will come directly to Southport and will be used for stormwater management in Southport.

What is an impervious surface?

Impervious surfaces are hard surfaces which prevent or limit the natural entry of stormwater into the soil. Impervious surfaces include all hard surfaces such as rooftops, driveways, parking lots, patios, and sidewalks (concrete, asphalt and compacted gravel surfaces are included). Impervious surfaces increase stormwater runoff and may contribute to stormwater pollution.

What is stormwater runoff?

Since stormwater cannot be absorbed by impervious surfaces, the stormwater runs over the surface as stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff must be managed through a stormwater collection system (pipes, culverts, ditches, swales, inlets, curb/gutter, detention ponds, etc.) to prevent standing water and flooding.

What are stormwater user fees?

The proposed Stormwater Utility will charge residential and non-residential customers stormwater user fees. The user fee will be determined according to the cost of stormwater management projects and activities. These fees will be paid on Marion County property tax bills as they have been in the past, however, Southport will control how the revenue is spent.

What is an "ERU"?

An "Equivalent Residential Unit", or ERU, is a measure of the average amount of impervious surface area for a single-family residential property located in Southport and will be used to assess stormwater user fees. Much like a "kilowatt" serves as the basis for an Electrical Utility, the ERU is the base unit for a Stormwater Utility. For the City of Southport, 1 ERU equals 4,440 square feet of impervious surface. Many communities across Indiana have established Stormwater Utilities based on the ERU.

How are residential user fees determined?

Residential properties will be billed for 1 ERU per month.

How are non-residential user fees determined?

Non-residential properties (businesses, churches, schools, parking lots, City properties, etc.) will be billed at a rate that is based on the amount of impervious area on their property and then divided by the ERU.

How is stormwater affected by increased runoff?

With increased amounts of impervious surface, more runoff is produced and it travels at higher speeds. This runoff picks up and carries pollutants to the stormwater collection system and eventually to receiving waters (lakes, ponds, rivers and streams). Large volumes of quickly flowing runoff will also erode soil, damage plants, and cause waters to become clouded and murky with sediments.

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How is stormwater affected by increased pollutants?

Within urbanized areas, impervious surfaces tend to collect a variety of pollutants including cleaning products; paint; oil, grease, and toxic chemicals from automobiles; road salts; pesticides and fertilizers from lawn maintenance and gardening; pet waste; litter; and eroded sediments. Increased amount of pollutants can harm fish and wildlife, kill native plants, contaminate drinking water supplies, and make recreational areas unsafe.

Are tax-exempt properties also exempt from the stormwater fee?

No, tax exempt properties will be responsible for paying the stormwater user fee because the stormwater user fee is a utility fee and not a tax. The stormwater user fee is assessed based on impervious surface area which is directly related to the amount of stormwater runoff from the property.

Why do I have to pay a stormwater user fee?

The City is responsible for providing stormwater management facilities and services, including installation and maintenance of storm sewers, inlets and ditches, as well as ensuring that erosion and sediment controls are provided on construction sites to protect waterways.

Funding is not provided by the federal or state government for these services, so the City must establish a funding source. The revenue generated from the stormwater user fees can be used City-wide to improve the City in the following ways:

- Fund storm sewer maintenance and drainage improvement projects.
- Provide maintenance of the existing storm sewer collection system.
- Fund the federally mandated NPDES Phase II Stormwater Permit Program (commonly referred to as the “MS4 Program”).
- Minimize off-site sediment from construction sites.
- Provide education on water quality and pollution prevention.

Why isn't the stormwater management program funded by tax revenues?

Tax revenues are not a reliable source of funding for stormwater management. Taxes are used to fund many City programs. By allocating existing tax revenue for stormwater, it would require cuts to other programs. Taxes are based on assessed property value which does not necessarily correspond to the property's contribution to stormwater runoff. In the instance of a stormwater user fee, based on impervious surface area, it more accurately reflects each property's contribution to stormwater runoff. Additionally, through stormwater user fees, tax exempt properties (that have impervious surfaces) will contribute a fair and equitable share towards the overall cost of the stormwater management program.

Why do I have to pay when I do not have any drainage problems?

Everyone in the City benefits from the Stormwater Management Program. If stormwater runs off your property, the City must have a program and funding to manage the runoff and pollutants. The City's program includes keeping streets from flooding, finding and removing illicit connections to the storm system, reviewing and approving drainage plans to ensure that your property is protected from upstream runoff when development occurs, maintaining and expanding stormwater systems, and improving water quality streams.

I have additional questions. Where can I get more information?

If you would like additional information on the Stormwater Utility or have specific concerns about stormwater management issues, please contact the Clerk-Treasurer's Office at 317-786-3585.