

Stormwater Utility

Adopted [Ordinance No. 936](#) establishes a new Article 5, of Chapter 15 of the Westwood Municipal Code for a storm water utility, including the creation, administration, operating budget, revenue, appeal process, and fee collection process.



Stormwater Utility Fee Increase Planned for 2024



In 2024, residents and businesses will see an increase in their Stormwater Utility Fee. This fee is collected as an assessment on the property tax bills, in the same manner as the residential solid waste fees are collected.

The Stormwater Utility Fee was first enacted and collected in 2014. Since its enactment, the fee increased once, in 2020, from \$1 per 500 sq. ft. of impervious surface on a property to \$1.25. During the 2024 budget adoption process, the Governing Body approved increasing this fee again, to support the City's curbside leaf pickup program and increasingly expensive

maintenance costs for the City's curbs and stormwater system needs.

The new fee of \$2.50 per 500 sq. ft. of impervious surface was approved by the Governing Body. This new rate is still – on average – less than that assessed by multiple surrounding cities. For example, neighboring cities are averaging a fee of \$240 - \$340 per residence, per year, and the City of Westwood is projected to average less than \$200 per year, per residence.

The funds are scheduled to be allocated in two main areas.

- 1. Replacement of the leaf vacuum truck and improvements to the leaf collection program.**

In order to continue the annual leaf pick-up program, the City's aging leaf vacuum must be replaced. This equipment replacement has been budgeted in the Equipment Replacement Fund

for the fiscal year 2024 budget. However, due to higher-than-expected inflation, the planned budget reserves do not meet the cost of the new truck. In addition, the City did apply for a Federal Grant to help offset the cost of this purchase, but, unfortunately, it was unsuccessful based on the demographic/economic requirements of the grant.

The new leaf vacuum truck is expected to start running at the start of the 2025 pick-up season. This new truck will bring many advantages including:

- It will only take one operator to perform leaf pickup allowing staff to work in other needed areas of the City. The current truck needs two operators.
- It will have greater efficiency and capacity to make more collections through the City each fall.
- The new technology requires less scheduled maintenance, saving dollars on servicing needs.
- The new equipment will be able to be driven to an organic recycling center nearby for dumping of the leaves eliminating the need for an additional employee to reload the dumped leaves at our facility and into a roll-off container, thereby saving that employee to drive the street sweeper to clean-up leaves from the street while the new equipment is dedicated to removing raked leaves in the yards.

2. Infrastructure improvements (including curb and stormwater system needs).

The City retained an engineering firm to conduct a condition assessment of its stormwater infrastructure in 2019 and it revealed multiple segments of stormwater pipe needing replacement. The corresponding map available via the link provided below was developed to show the City's planned prioritization of these improvements through 2033. The plan is subject to shift based on funding levels and annual condition assessments, which include evaluating storm pipes and determining candidates for non-invasive pipe lining, which extends the life of pipes without needing to remove and replace pipes and disrupt landscaping.

Additionally, the City retained a specialized firm to conduct a condition assessment of its street pavement in 2022 and in 2021, the Governing Body convened a resident-led Complete Streets Task Force which developed a map of sidewalk gaps. In 2023, these maps have been married to provide an overall prioritization for street and sidewalk maintenance (or construction in the case

of sidewalks identified by the Task Force as missing). The corresponding map available via the link provided below was developed to show the City's planned prioritization of these improvements through 2033.

The plan is subject to shift based on funding levels and annual condition assessments, which include curb. This pavement management plan – as well as the City's related sidewalk plan, is funded through the City's Capital Improvement Fund, which is supplemented by the Stormwater Utility Fund and, as such, the Stormwater Utility Fee that is that fund's sole funding source. Supplementing the Capital Improvement Fund with Stormwater Utility Fee revenues allows the City to accelerate projects by creating additional offsetting revenue to cover the costs of the curbs and related stormwater costs associated with each street project.

[Click here to view the City's Pavement Management Plan, Sidewalk Plan, Stormwater Plan, and Streetlighting Plan.](#) The corresponding years displayed are subject to annual review and funding availability as evaluated during each summer's budget planning process for the following year.

FAQs

Why now?

With the ever-increasing cost of resources like concrete, other materials, and labor, it is imperative the City increase the revenues to the Stormwater Utility Fund to ensure Westwood's infrastructure stays solid. In addition, this fee helps fund the Equipment Reserve Fund as well as the Capital Improvement Fund through transfers for approved purposes.

Will you increase the fee next year?

There are no current plans to increase the Storm Water Utility fee in the near future. However, if inflation continues at its current level, the Governing Body will continue to evaluate City needs.

Are there any assistance programs for this increased fee?

Although, there are no assistance programs directly related to helping to cover the cost of this particular fee, Johnson County has many [Property Tax Relief Programs](#) that residents may qualify for. These can, ultimately, help to offset other assessments on property tax bills.

How does a well-maintained storm drainage system benefit me?

A properly maintained storm drainage system keeps surface (rain) water from flooding buildings and streets up to a to a minimum of a 10-year rain event (i.e. a rain event so impactful that it only occurs once every ten years), avoiding property damage and unsafe driving conditions. However, rain events of this magnitude are happening at a higher frequency and severity in

recent years than when these standards were created and the infrastructure designed.

Why do we have to continuously perform street and sidewalk repairs?

Staying on top of these repairs and maintenance needs will save residents money in the long term. It is often more cost-effective and efficient to make minor repairs instead of major repairs.

What is Stormwater?

Stormwater is water from the rain. As rains falls it is either absorbed into the ground or runs downhill and is collected and managed in the city's stormwater infrastructure.

Impervious surfaces, such as rooftops and pavement, prevent water from absorbing into the ground and causes runoff. Unmanaged stormwater runoff threatens public health and safety as it can carry contaminants such as garbage, heavy metals and other pollutants.



The City of Westwood has stormwater infrastructure to manage runoff, but the pipes and structures are aging and will be in need repair or replacement in the near future. The City of Westwood also operates an annual leaf pick-up program in the fall, which also helps in the management of the city's stormwater system.

Why a Stormwater Fee?



The city's stormwater infrastructure is expensive to repair and replace. In previous years, maintenance of the city's storm drains and storm sewer system as well as operation of the fall leaf pick-up program was paid out of the city's General Fund, which is primarily revenue from property and sales taxes. Since the city's budgeted General Fund pays for a wide variety of city services, the storm water system often does not receive the necessary funds to make needed improvements and maintenance.

Many area cities have created stormwater utilities to maintain and repair existing storm drainage system components (storm sewer pipes, street inlets, curb drainage, etc.) and to fund costs associated with compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act. Stormwater utilities have been used in Kansas cities since 1990.

The stormwater system in Westwood has both immediate and long term needs for repairs and maintenance. To finance this investment the city implemented a stormwater service management fee in 2013 which initially will generate about \$95,000 in revenue annually. The revenue from the fee will only be used to fund stormwater improvements such as replacing stormwater pipes, street inlets, curbs and gutters, and the operation of the city's annual leaf pick-up program.

How Does The Stormwater Utility Work?

A stormwater utility and the assessment of a fee is an attempt to spread the costs of maintaining the city's infrastructure across all entities and properties that both contribute to the drainage issues and benefit from storm drainage improvements and system maintenance. Because the stormwater drainage system's challenges are directly attributable to the amount of impervious surface, the stormwater management service fee is based on the amount of stormwater run-off that comes from each property in the city.



A stormwater service management service fee is not a tax; as such the new fee will be assessed across all properties – even those that are tax exempt such as the properties owned by The University of Kansas Hospital Authority and the Shawnee Mission School District, as well as church-owned properties and city-owned properties.

The fee is calculated based on the square footage of a property's impervious surface area. Impervious surface area includes buildings, patios, pools and driveways and other hard surface areas. Yard areas with grass and plants and other pervious areas where rain water can soak into the ground is not included in the fee calculation.

Measuring the impervious surface of individual properties is the most equitable way to determine stormwater runoff volume.

Westwood's stormwater service management fee will appear on each property tax bill, just like an assessment fee currently appears on the property tax bill for residential trash service.

Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) and Equivalent Non-Residential Unit (ENRU) Structure

The adopted storm water management service fee is based on an Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) and an Equivalent Non-Residential Unit (ENRU) structure.

The ERU and ENRU means a unit of measure that is equal to each 500-square feet of impervious surface area of a property, including buildings, accessory structures, athletic courts, swimming pools and any paved or hard surface driveways and parking lots.

Measuring the impervious surface of individual properties is the most equitable way to determine stormwater runoff volume. All properties are mapped, evaluated, and measured to establish impervious surface area. The amount of impervious surface area calculated is converted to an ERU and ENRU value.

A fee of \$1.00 per month for each ERU and ENRU was set for the FY 2014 Storm Water Utility Fund expenditures.

As an example - any residential property in Westwood with 5 ERU's, or a property with between 2,000 and 2,500 sq. ft. of calculated impervious surface area will be assessed a \$60.00 annual storm water service management fee. All of the non-residential properties are calculated on the amount total amount of impervious surface area.

How Much Is The Stormwater Fee?

Each property will pay an annual fee based on the total amount of calculated impervious surface area. The larger residential structures and those properties with extensive driveways and patios will be charged a higher rate than properties with houses that have a smaller footprint and/or minimally sized driveways.

The stormwater management service fee rate is set at \$1.00 per month for every 500-feet of impervious surface area as established by [Resolution No. 36-2013](#).

As an example - a residential property in Westwood with between 2,000 and 2,500 sq. ft. of calculated impervious surface area will be assessed a \$60.00 annual stormwater service management fee. The non-residential properties are calculated on the amount total amount of impervious surface area.

A [complete listing](#) of the calculated impervious surface area and the annual fee that will be collected as a special assessment on the property tax bills for all properties in the city

A graphic [map of Westwood](#) showing the building footprints and mapped impervious surface areas of each property can be found

What if I Disagree With The Calculations - Can I Appeal?

Any property owner who disagrees with the impervious surface area calculations, or whether their property is served by the stormwater utility may appeal the calculation or finding to the Westwood City Council by submitting a written notice of appeal to the [City Clerk](#).

The appeal needs to include information or data on the basis of the appeal. This can be derived from a land survey that provides data on the total property area, the type of surface material and impervious area as appropriate, or other sources of data.

Every property in the city has been mapped by computer to determine the impervious surface area. The calculations and surface area numbers being used to determine the fee are based on Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of each property in the city utilizing planimetric data provided by the Johnson County's [Automated Information Mapping System](#) (AIMS) department. This planimetric GIS data has been verified and updated by referencing aerial photography, and by utilizing information from the city's building permit files and georeferenced survey documents and plot plans.

It is the desire of the city for this to be a fair and equitable utility charge. The larger residential structures and those properties with extensive driveways and patios will be charged a higher rate than properties with houses and buildings that have a smaller footprint and/or minimally sized driveways. All commercial properties will be charged based on the footprint size of the buildings, parking lots, driveways and other hard surface areas.

If you believe that the calculated numbers are not correct for your property, please file a written appeal notice with the [Westwood City Clerk](#). City staff will then utilize all data sources and recalculate the impervious surface area numbers for your property.

Ordinance 936 144.77 KB

Resolution 36-2013 132.02 KB

Westwood Stormwater Fee Table 342.02 KB

Westwood Stormwater Map 201.82 KB

Westwood Stormwater Map with Aerial Photo 4.67 MB

Westwood Map with Aerial Photo 4.57 MB