

Wellesley Stormwater Utility FAQs



Why is Wellesley considering a Stormwater Utility? The Department of Public Works (DPW) has long been responsible for operating, maintaining, and improving the Town's drainage system, which includes 130 miles of pipeline and thousands of catch basins, manholes, and water quality treatment practices. A well-functioning drainage system keeps roads passable and protects public health and private property. In the last 20 years, the stormwater program has expanded to include water quality considerations under the Clean Water Act. In the immediate future, the program will need to evolve to address the impacts of climate change according to the Town's Climate Action Plan. The stormwater management program has historically been funded through the General Fund (tax revenue). **A stormwater utility that generates revenue through fees is a more equitable way to pay for this necessary work.** A stormwater utility is similar to water and sewer utilities, which allocates costs based on the amount of use. In this case, use is measured by the amount of impervious area (IA). An Enterprise Fund allows revenue to be collected from all properties (including tax-exempt) and applied directly to stormwater-specific costs.

What will be funded by the Stormwater Utility? What are the benefits? Revenue from the Stormwater Utility will fund all aspects of the stormwater management program including administration, regulatory compliance, drainage system operation & maintenance, and capital projects. A well-functioning drainage system **keeps roads passable and protects public health and private property.** The stormwater utility will provide sufficient funding to **meet EPA's¹ annual permit requirements**; this includes increased costs to **significantly reduce phosphorous in stormwater runoff discharging to the Charles River.** In the immediate future, the program will also need to evolve to address the impacts of climate change **according to the Town's Climate Action Plan.**

What is impervious area? *Impervious Surface*, as defined in Wellesley's Zoning Bylaw, is "material covering the ground, including but not limited to macadam², cement, concrete, pavement, and buildings, that does not allow surface water to penetrate into the soil." This includes walkways, pools, and rooftops. The measurement of this surface is referred to as "impervious area" (IA). Cumulatively, more impervious area causes less groundwater infiltration and increased stormwater runoff (volume and rate of runoff) that is also more polluted and warmer. This harms our wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds. See the short video [The Impervious Problem](#) on our website.

How is impervious area calculated and maintained? The Town maintains IA mapping in our Geographic Information System (GIS). The Wellesley IA data is updated approximately every five years based on new aerial photogrammetry and LiDAR.³ The DPW Engineering Division will routinely update the IA layer data. You can explore impervious area measurements for FY23 billing using the **Stormwater Property Viewer** on our [website](#).

¹ Environmental Protection Agency

² Macadam: roadway or pavement constructed by compacting a layer of small broken stone along with a binder (as cement or asphalt).

³ Lidar — Light Detection and Ranging — is a remote sensing method used to examine the surface of the Earth.



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How are fees determined? Fees are determined based on the amount of IA on a parcel. The median IA of all Single Family Residential (SFR) parcels in Wellesley is 3,105 ft². One equivalent residential unit (ERU) is represented by this median value of 3,105 ft². The total ERUs in town was determined in combination with estimated revenue requirements to develop a cost per ERU. The fee does not consider the percentage of imperviousness on a parcel. SFR parcels will be billed a tiered flat fee and Non Single Family Residential (NSFR) properties will be billed proportionally to their impervious area as shown below. For proportional fees, a given parcel is divided by the impervious area in one ERU (3,105 ft²) to determine a rounded, whole number of ERUs on the parcel.

Description	Impervious Area (ERUs)	Monthly Cost	Annual Total
Single Family Residential			
Tier 1	0.7 ERUs	\$13.13	\$157.50
Tier 2	1.0 ERUs	\$18.75	\$225.00
Tier 3	1.7 ERUs	\$31.88	\$382.50
Tier 4 (>9,300 ft ² IA)	Varies	\$18.75/ERU	\$225/ERU
– Proportional Fee			
Non-Residential and Multi-Family Residential			
Proportional Fee	Varies	\$18.75/ERU	\$225/ERU

How does Wellesley's Fee Compare to other Towns? Wellesley's fee is in the upper range of stormwater fees in Massachusetts. This is because Wellesley made the policy decision to fully fund the stormwater program with the Enterprise Fund, including administrative and overhead costs. Many towns only fund compliance program costs. Additionally, Wellesley is in the Charles River Watershed and is subject to more stringent requirements to reach phosphorus reduction targets.

Does this impact other enterprise funds? No this is a separate enterprise fund and does not impact existing utilities.

How frequently will bills be issued? Bills will be sent monthly with water, sewer, and electric use bills.

How are leased properties billed? Fees will be calculated for the parcel and will be billed to the property owner.

How are condominiums and town houses billed? The fee will be calculated for the parcel, including common area and private roads. This fee may be allocated to each unit by the Town (for condos that receive an individual utility bill) or by the homeowner association.

How can a property owner reduce their stormwater fee? All property owners will be eligible for credits and abatements. **Abatements:** An abatement process is under development that will allow a property owner to request an adjustment to their IA measurement. The owner will submit a request for review by the DPW. **Credits:** The credit policy is currently being developed, and the Town is considering a variety of options for credits and rebates for all types of properties. This provides an incentive for property owners to reduce impacts from their property. There will be opportunities to provide input on this policy during public meetings in the coming months.

More Questions? Contact the Department of Public Works at 781-235-7600 or dpw@wellesleyma.gov.

Visit our website for more information: <https://www.wellesleyma.gov/1785/Stormwater-Utility>
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