



City of Oberlin Storm Water Utility Fact Sheet

Over the last several years, the City of Oberlin has studied the possibility of creating a local Storm Water Utility. Many communities in Lorain County and throughout Ohio have implemented storm water utilities in order to provide a dedicated funding source to manage storm water.

The federal Clean Water Act requires the City to work to improve water quality. Stormwater runoff picks up pollutants such as oil and fuel from vehicles, parking lots and roads, pesticides and fertilizers from lawns, and sediment from bare soils. Our storm water is discharged to Plum Creek which flows to the Black River and on to Lake Erie. Stormwater management is important in order to maintain and to improve storm water drainage systems to minimize flooding potential of streets, homes and property.

In 2013 and 2014, the City undertook a feasibility study with the Lorain County Stormwater District to evaluate our current stormwater related expenses and to plan necessary improvements required to meet federal water quality regulations and to enhance our storm sewer system. The mission statement is:

The City of Oberlin Stormwater Utility Program will provide stormwater management utilizing a cost effective, environmentally sound approach that meets or exceeds local, state and federal requirements for the protection of public health, private property and the natural environment in the Black River Watershed.

After careful consideration the Technical Advisory Committee recommended that the City use the Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) impervious area method to establish storm water utility rates. A rate structure based on impervious area (roofs, parking lots, driveways and other hard surfaces) was found to be the best method to insure fair and reasonable distribution of costs to all property owners benefitting from the City's management of stormwater. Using aerial photography, the impervious area of a statistically significant sample of residential one- and two-family properties in Oberlin was measured. The average impervious area was calculated to be 3,600 square feet. This is the Equivalent Residential Unit or ERU. Every 1-2 family residential property will be charged the (1) ERU rate. The impervious area of every non-residential property has been similarly measured. Non-residential property owners will be charged based on the impervious area divided by 3,600 sf (1 ERU), rounded to a whole number.

In 2015, the City entered into a Phase II contract with the Lorain County Storm Water District to undertake the necessary work to implement a local storm water utility. A Stormwater Advisory Committee (SWAC), made up of key stakeholders in the community, was formed. For nearly two years, the SWAC has been meeting to review and recommend numerous policies relative to the implementation of the program including the proposed rates and the 5-year budget. Both the SWAC and the City's Public Utilities Commission recommend billing stormwater charges through the Lorain County Auditor's property tax billing system. This will save over \$300,000 in the first 5 years by utilizing the County's existing parcel-based billing system. Beginning in 2019, bills will be received by all property owners on a semi-annual basis on the property tax duplicate.



The City’s current storm water expenses are approximately \$400,000/year. These costs are borne within the City’s General Fund and the Income Tax Capital Improvement Fund. In order to meet federal water quality regulations and to accelerate maintenance, repair and improvement of the storm sewer system, the City has been planning a local storm water utility. The proposed rates will generate approximately \$250,000 in additional funding in the 1st year, increasing to about \$400,000 in the 5th year.

Proposed 5-Year Rates			
Year	ERU Rate Per Month	Annual Charge	Estimated Fee Revenue
2019	\$4.25	\$51.00	\$256,510.92
2020	\$4.39	\$52.68	\$265,225.08
2021	\$5.41	\$64.92	\$326,667.73
2022	\$6.28	\$75.36	\$379,686.71
2023	\$6.61	\$79.32	\$399,109.89

The additional revenue will be used to meet regulatory requirements intended to improve water quality in Plum Creek. This will include public education programming and opportunities for public involvement in protecting the watershed. It will include enhanced oversight of construction activities intended to control erosion and to minimize sediment and other pollution in the waterways. The City is required to have a system in place for detecting and eliminating illegal discharges to our waterways. We are also required to implement Storm Water Pollution Prevention plans for our facilities and to conduct regular inspection and maintenance of nearly 30 miles of storm water pipe, 14 miles of drainage ways and over 1,400 catch basins and manholes. Improved maintenance means fewer blocked catch basins and clogged pipes; this will help to reduce flooding in the streets and on private property. We will be developing a capital improvement plan to prioritize stormwater projects and ramping up expenditures from about \$100,000/year to \$200,000/year to improve the City’s storm sewer system.

The Stormwater Utility will account for its revenues and expenses separately in an "Enterprise Fund" that legally can only be spent on stormwater-related activities and cannot be used for any other purpose.

While we will continue to be responsible for our own infrastructure, the City plans to enhance its working relationship with the Lorain County Storm Water District as the most cost-effective means to meet our common responsibilities. Our political boundaries are artificially imposed on the watershed so it’s in our collective interest to address watershed issues with a watershed-based approach to improve water quality in Plum Creek, the Black River and Lake Erie.

For more information, please visit the City’s web-site at <http://www.cityofoberlin.com/city-government/departments/public-works/> and click on the ‘Storm Water Utility’ folder. You can also e-mail us at stormwater@cityofoberlin.com or call the Public Works Department at 775-7218.