

# FAQS – DRAINAGE UTILITY CHARGE

## What is a Drainage Utility Charge?

The Drainage Utility Charge establishes a dedicated and sustainable funding source, providing for the operation, improvement, and maintenance of the City's drainage infrastructure. The charge allows the City to maintain the municipal drainage system, which includes the ditches, culverts, and pipes that make up the City's stormwater system. Maintenance activities are necessary to help reduce street flooding and backups.

## Why does the City want to impose a Drainage Utility Charge?

Drainage and streets are cornerstones of the City's public safety, quality of life, and economic development. While the City devotes approximately \$300,000 annually to drainage maintenance, this amount is insufficient to fund all the needed capital improvements and upgrades to the City's drainage infrastructure. As the City grows and develops, stormwater runoff becomes a bigger issue. The City is in the process of establishing a Drainage Utility Fund with a Drainage Utility Charge that will generate **dedicated** funding for long-term improvements and on-going maintenance of drainage facilities.

## What is meant by "drainage"?

Drainage is stormwater that does not soak into the ground. Stormwater is any form of precipitation, such as rainfall, that flow across surfaces. Stormwater that does not soak into the ground becomes surface runoff, which drains into the City's storm drainage system and then into lakes and rivers.

Drainage can be a problem because of flooding, erosion, and impacts on water quality. The Drainage Utility Charge pays for programs that prevent, mitigate and/or correct these problems.

## Why do I have to pay this charge?

Every improved property in the City contributes to stormwater runoff, and therefore every property should support the operation, maintenance, and improvements of stormwater drainage systems in an equitable manner.

## How is the Drainage Utility Charge determined?

The Drainage Utility Charge is based on the *cost of drainage services* and the contribution of stormwater runoff by Residential and Non-Residential properties.

Residential includes single-family homes, mobile homes, and duplexes. The Residential rate was determined from a survey of the average impervious area for single-family properties in Brenham. That average is 2,685 square feet or 1 Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU). For Residential, everyone pays for 1 ERU and the same monthly fee of \$3.75.

Non-Residential includes, but is not limited to the following: commercial, industrial, multi-family, triplex, quadplex, government, institutional, non-profits, and religious organizations. The Non-Residential rate is a multiple of the residential ERU based on impervious area of the Non-Residential parcel. The minimum monthly charge for Non-Residential is \$3.75. The maximum monthly charge is \$300.

## What is impervious cover?

Impervious cover (or improved area) is any type of man-made structure or surface that does not absorb rainfall and impedes natural infiltration, increasing the rate and volume of stormwater runoff that must be collected and carried by the City's drainage system. Impervious cover includes such things as:

- Rooftops
- Patios
- Driveways, paved and unpaved
- Parking lots, paved and unpaved
- Sidewalks
- Compacted soils
- Roadways
- Gravel surfaces
- Some decks

**How does the City know how much impervious cover is on my property?**

Impervious cover is determined by a Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping survey, derived from the Washington County Appraisal District. This data is periodically updated through the City’s building permit information and/or as updates are received from the appraisal district.

**Are there any properties exempt from the Drainage Utility Charge?**

In accordance with the Texas Local Government Code, Section 552.053 and Section 580.003, the following are exempt:

1. Property with proper construction and maintenance of a wholly sufficient and privately-owned drainage system;
2. Property held and maintained in its natural state, until such time that the property is developed, and all public infrastructure constructed has been accepted by the municipality where the property is located for maintenance;
3. A subdivided lot, until a structure is built on the lot and a Certificate of Occupancy is issued by the City;
4. State agencies; and
5. Public or private institutions of higher education.

**When will the charge be in effect?**

The monthly Drainage Utility Charge will begin on the January 2020 utility bill.

**Where is the money going?**

Over the next five years (fiscal years 2020 – 2025), the City identified \$4.1 million in drainage projects, approximately \$300,000 in annual drainage maintenance, and \$911,000 in drainage equipment replacement.

**How is the ERU calculated for a Non-Residential property?**

**Example #1:** A business has 2,000 square feet of impervious cover. Divide the square feet by 2,685 (1 ERU), which equals 0.74 ERUs. Since 0.74 ERUs is less than 1.0 ERU, the *minimum* monthly rate of \$3.75 applies. The business would have a monthly Drainage Utility Charge of \$3.75.

**Example #2:** A business has 80,550 square feet of impervious cover. Divide the square feet by 2,685 (1 ERU), which equals 30.0 ERUs. Multiplying the 30.0 ERUs by the base rate of \$3.75 equals \$112.50. Since the ERUs equal 30.0 and \$112.50 is greater than the \$90.00 maximum for the tier, the *maximum* monthly rate of \$90.00 applies. The business would have a monthly Drainage Utility Charge of \$90.00.

**Example #3:** A business has 100,000 square feet of impervious cover. Divide the square feet by 2,685 (1 ERU), which equals 37.24 ERUs. Multiplying the 37.24 ERUs by the base rate of \$3.75 equals \$139.65. Since the ERU is *greater than* 30.0 *but less than* 50.00 and \$139.65 *is less than* \$150.00, the business would have a monthly Drainage Utility Charge of \$139.65.

**Example #4:** A business has 139,650 square feet of impervious cover. Divide the square feet by 2,685 (1 ERU), which equals 52.00 ERUs. Multiplying the 52.00 ERUs by the base rate of \$3.75 equals \$195.00. Since ERUs are *greater than* 50.0 and \$195.00 *is less than* the \$300.00 monthly maximum, the business would have a monthly Drainage Utility Charge of \$195.00.

**PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL AND NON-RESIDENTIAL DRAINAGE RATES**

<b>Residential</b>	<b>ERU*</b>	<b>MONTHLY FEE</b>
	1.0	\$3.75

<b>Non-Residential</b>	<b>ERU TIERS BASED ON ACTUAL IMPERVIOUS SF</b>	<b>MINIMUM MONTHLY FEE</b>	<b>MAXIMUM MONTHLY FEE</b>
	Less Than 1.0 to 10.0	\$3.75	\$37.50
	Greater Than 10.0 to 30.0		\$90.00
	Greater Than 30.0 to 50.0		\$150.00
	Greater Than 50.0		\$300.00

\* 1 ERU = 2,685 sf impervious area

**What can I do to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff?**

- Create a more sustainable landscape
- Minimize impervious surfaces
- Use the water that drains off the roof for such things as your lawn or garden
- Replace lawn areas with native plants
- Don't leave soil exposed. Cover the exposed areas with mulch or plant vegetation

**Is the Drainage Utility Charge assessed on unoccupied properties?**

Yes. Because stormwater runoff continues to occur whether the developed property is occupied or not, the charge still applies if the utility account remains active.

**What if I want to appeal?**

The appeals process is as follows:

1. Submit a written adjustment request to Utility Customer Service. The form can be found on the City website at [www.cityofbrenham.org/drainage](http://www.cityofbrenham.org/drainage) or picked up at Utility Customer Service in City Hall. Supplemental information and documentation may be required.
2. The City has 15 business days to review the appeal and respond to the requester. Adjustments are prospective AND may be retroactive for no greater than three billings prior to the adjustment request. If the City denies the appeal, you have 15 business days from date of notification to appeal the decision to the City Manager. The Burden of Proof is the responsibility of the requester.

**Still have questions?**

City staff will be available to assist you. Please contact the Public Works Department at 979-337-7560