WATER JUSTICE
NEW ORLEANS

Powered By The Water Collaborative
The Water Justice Fund is a community-built campaign and policy recommendations focused on the reparative work of fixing water inequities and climate change affecting New Orleans.

We value transparency, accountability, community voice, and financial equity to create a thriving New Orleans.
1. **Financial Equity**
   Develop a funding stream where everyone pays their fair share into the drainage system.

2. **Accountability & Transparency**
   Create a new stormwater utility with community oversight that will manage all stormwater assets.

3. **Neighborhood Safety & Quality of Life**
   Ensure funding supports green infrastructure expansion through diverse flood protection programs.

4. **Job Creation & Economic Growth**
   Expand a growing workforce in water and climate careers, establishing New Orleans as a global leader in the resiliency sector.
THOUGHT PARTNERS

THE WATER COLLABORATIVE
Project Lead, community outreach and engagement, policy recommendations, and assessments.

ADVANCING CITIES COALITION
Green infrastructure training, workforce development, and disadvantaged business support.

WATERNOW ALLIANCE
Research partners on legal precedent, green debt financing laws, and case studies from other cities.

THE PREVENTION INSTITUTE
Health and park equity expertise and technical assistance.
Provide feedback on the Policy Recommendations.

Work with WaterNow to include best practices that suit New Orleans.

Develop a strategy for passing legislation with major stakeholders.

Create an open forum for process transparency and education.

Obtained feedback from city and industry professionals.

Supported complementary policies and procedures.

Attend the 10-part workshop series and provided us with feedback throughout the process.

Provided community perspectives for the final policy recommendations.
ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION STRATEGY

Community canvassing in every district

Multimedia campaign

Community workshops and town halls

Data collection through surveys, petitions, and mapping
THE ROOTS
Workshops that discuss trauma-informed policy making, systems change, and types of equity

THE BRANCHES
Based on the roots and trunk of the tree, we'll review every aspect of the fee in separate workshops, from data to who should house the fee.

THE TRUNK

THE LEAVES
Create a community-informed WJF and policy toolkit that is rooted in equity and justice and one that is informed by best practices from around the nation.
COMMUNITY CANVASSING

THE BRANCHES
REPRESENTATION MATTERS.

WJNO talked to at least 2 people in every voting precinct in Orleans Parish to get their opinion. We talked directly to 3,298 residents.

THE LEAVES
KEEPING IN TOUCH.

Every step of the process residents are invited to take part. Over 600 yard signs are in residential homes, over 10,000 attempts at contacting the city, and next informational town halls.

THE TRUNK
AMPLIFY AFFECTED VOICES.

The communities of New Orleans deserve a voice in how their city is managed. We went to them and asked them their thoughts on stormwater.
# Community Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residents' First Priority</th>
<th>Residents' Second Priority</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair Share</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Fair Share</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 2nd Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total People</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,363</td>
<td>1,306</td>
<td>1,183</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,306</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>1,149</td>
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<tr>
<td>629</td>
<td></td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total %</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.33%</td>
<td>39.60%</td>
<td>35.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.60%</td>
<td>19.07%</td>
<td>34.84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.07%</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.26%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The governing stormwater utility is accountable to upholding good governance.

The new stormwater utility ensures neighborhoods are protected from flooding, heatwaves, and tropical storms.

The new stormwater fee rate structure is equitable and ensures everyone pays their fair share for drainage.
TIMELINE

2021 - 2022

COMMITTEE CREATION, RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

SPRING 2023

WORKSHOP SERIES AND CAMPAIGN KICKOFF

SUMMER & FALL 2023

COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

FEBRUARY 2024

FINAL POLICY RECOMMENDATION REPORT AND PRESS CONFERENCE

INTERVIEWS, DOOR KNOCKING, AND PHONE BANKING

CASE STUDIES, INTERVIEWS, PRESENTATIONS

FEBRUARY 2024

WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

2024

CITY COUNCIL ORDINANCE CREATION AND PUBLIC VOTE ON UTILITY & FEE

HB 409 Passed by Louisiana Legislature in 2023

HB 713 Passed by Louisiana Legislature in 2022

HB 713 Passed by Louisiana Legislature in 2023
# Fee vs. Tax

## Stormwater Fee vs. Stormwater Tax (Millage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stormwater Fee</th>
<th>Stormwater Tax (Millage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts for a property’s use of the system to capture its stormwater runoff.</td>
<td>Does not account for a property’s use of the stormwater system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on property size and/or amount of impervious area on a property.</td>
<td>Based on property size and property value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposed on all properties.</td>
<td>Imposed only on tax-paying properties. Excludes tax-exempt properties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9,138

5.6% of properties in New Orleans are tax-exempt

*(Tax Assessor’s Office, 2023)*

### $123 Million

The city is losing approximately

*In revenue annually*  

*(BGR, 2011)*
CREATE A NEW STORMWATER UTILITY

Create a new stormwater utility to manage projects, programs, and funding.

Reorganize roles and responsibilities to streamline leadership and management of stormwater assets.

- Transition the Office of Resilience and Sustainability to a permanent city department.
- Create the Division of Stormwater Management under the Department of Resilience & Sustainability.
- Consolidate all gray infrastructure under the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans.
- Create a Green Infrastructure and Maintenance Office under the Department of Parks & Parkways.
PROPOSED INTEGRATED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE

DEPARTMENT OF RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Office of Resilience and Sustainability will transform into a permanently funded department with the mandate to promote and implement citywide resilience and sustainability initiatives.

NEW ORLEANS CITY COUNCIL

The New Orleans City Council will oversee the finances, management, and oversight of the new Department of Resilience and Sustainability, and the Division of Stormwater Management.

DIVISION OF STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The new utility to be established by the City Council and overseen by both the Council and a community advisory group will concentrate on stormwater management and fee administration. This division will serve as the policy arm of the integrated stormwater approach, emphasizing transparency through regular project updates and reports on fee distribution.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

The Community Advisory Group can mirror the governance models of the Lower Authorities East and West, or the New Orleans Tourism and Cultural Fund.

SEWERAGE AND WATER BOARD

The utility will assume responsibility for the operations and coordination of drainage infrastructure currently managed by DPW, including all catch basins and pipes 36 inches or smaller. It's recommended that SWMO receives a set amount of funds to continue day-to-day operations for the infrastructure they'll acquire.

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & PARKWAYS

The department will receive support to integrate and maintain green infrastructure citywide on public property. Additionally, they'll receive funds for continuing their work towards referencing New Orleans tree maintenance.

BUSINESSES, RESIDENTS, NONPROFITS, AND INSURANCE

The community will be able to seek funding and resources to install green infrastructure on their properties and contribute to citywide resilience efforts. Additional funds will be used to leverage parametric insurance and support FEMA's Community Rating System Program.
Establish a dedicated, equitable, and sustainable stormwater fee to be administered by the new Division of Stormwater Management.

**Funds would be used for:**

1. Operation and maintenance of newly acquired gray infrastructure.
2. Small grant and incentive programs for green infrastructure.
3. Staffing and operations for administration of the fee.
4. Maintaining a public website of how funds are used.
5. Planning, designing, building, and maintaining green infrastructure.
The stormwater fee website should:

1. Provide calculations for individual property rates.
2. Share total revenue production.
3. Maintain a record of stormwater-related programs and projects funded through the fee.
4. Share opportunities for stormwater-related grants, incentives, and exemptions.
Ensure public transparency and oversight by creating a Community Advisory Committee and a detailed website.

The Community Advisory Committee should:
1. Be composed of community experts in related fields
2. Ensure adequate expenditure of funding
3. Ensure equitable implementation of projects and programs
4. The governance model could be based on the Levee Authorities East & West or the New Orleans Cultural Fund.
Create a dedicated fund for community improvement programs to ensure neighborhoods, businesses, and residents reap direct benefits from the new stormwater fee.

- Restoration Tree Fund
- The Pocket Park Program
- Blue/Green Workforce Program
- Community Adaptation Program (CAP)
- Parametric Insurance & FEMA Community Rating System
Require a percentage of the stormwater fee revenue to be allocated to necessary and sufficient gray infrastructure operations and maintenance.

**New Orleans Has:**
- **1,400** miles of drainage pipes
- **120** drainage pumps
- **72,000** catch basins
- **180** miles of above- and underground canals

SWBNO estimates that the city’s drainage system requires an additional annual funding of at least **$35 million** if it acquires DPW’s drainage.
Develop a phased-in approach for stormwater fees, with commercial organizations, including nonprofits and tax-exempt businesses, paying first. Transition residents and taxable organizations into the fee as millages expire.

- Designed to more equitably distribute the cost of stormwater management.
- Unburden residents and taxable companies from paying more than their fair share.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Millage Expirations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 MILL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 MILL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 MILL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Utilize a common Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) based on median parcel size in the city.

Hire a consulting firm to create a database for:
- Use in calculating and regularly updating the stormwater fee.
- Assessing the appropriate ERU and rate structure.
- Assess total fees and rate structures annually to ensure equity and adequate funding.

**Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU)**

A standardized unit of measure implemented by many stormwater utilities to equate non-residential or multi-family residential properties to a specific number of single-family residences.

**Rate Structure**

- **Single family properties**
  - Pay a simplified, three-tiered rate based on property size

- **Everyone else**
  - Pay a fee based on amount of impervious surface area on property
This data is meant to give the viewer a general understanding of an equitable rate structure and an approximate amount of revenue that can be generated from our proposed rate structure.

1. Data based on the 2023 tax rolls
2. Represents commercial properties in New Orleans that are currently tax-exempt
3. Model assumes average residential property size is 2,500 sq. ft. and that 1 ERU is equivalent to 2,500 sq. ft.
## COMMERCIAL EXEMPT - $30 per ERU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parcel Size (sq. ft)</th>
<th># of Potential ERUs</th>
<th>Monthly Fee Based on # of ERUs</th>
<th># of Properties</th>
<th>Highest Revenue per # of Properties in Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5,001</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>$30 to $60</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>$74,520.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001 to 10,000</td>
<td>2 - 4</td>
<td>$60 to $120</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>$61,800.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>10,001 to 50,000</td>
<td>4 - 20</td>
<td>$120 to $600</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>$405,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,001 to 500,000</td>
<td>20 - 200</td>
<td>$600 to $6,000</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>$2,154,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500,001 to 1,000,000</td>
<td>200 - 400</td>
<td>$6,000 to $12,000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>$252,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,001 to 2,000,000</td>
<td>400 - 800</td>
<td>$12,000 to $24,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$216,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ESTIMATED TOTAL PER MONTH** $3,163,320.00

**ESTIMATED TOTAL PER YEAR** $37,959,840.00
Superdome
Parcel Size: 2,885,013 sq. ft.
~ 1,068 - 1,154 ERUs
$32,040 - $34,620 per month

World War II Museum
Parcel Size: 195,059 sq. ft.
~ 72 - 78 ERUs
$2,160 - $2,340 per month
**Provide hardship exemptions for property owners unfairly burdened by the stormwater fee.**

**Residential Exemptions**

- Should remain in perpetuity if property owners can provide evidence annually that the exemption is needed.

**Commercial Exemptions**

- Allows property owners time to incorporate the fee into financial planning.
- Should sunset within 3-5 years to ensure adequate funding to achieve the goals of the fee.
Entities should be eligible to benefit from incentives that reduce their stormwater fees or provide stormwater fee credits. Eligible activities funded, in part, by stormwater fee revenues include:

- Increasing permeability on properties to enhance on-site stormwater retention.
- Supporting registered and approved community greening initiatives.
- Promoting reforestation efforts.
- Facilitating green workforce development.

Create incentives to encourage residents and commercial property owners to increase permeability by expanding green infrastructure on their properties and participate in community greening initiatives.
Ensuring sufficient funding for both gray and green stormwater initiatives is crucial. The minimum fee should account for future inflation rates and ensure long-term viability. Additionally, establish a low-income assistance program to maintain affordability while implementing the minimum fee.
THANK YOU