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WATER JUSTICE NEW ORLEANS

THE WATER JUSTICE FUND

City Solutions for Community Futures:

Addendum report - 2025

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- Trust for Public Land
- Philadelphia Water Department
- Baltimore Department of Public Works

FUNDERS:

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Pisces Foundation

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ABOUT THE WATER COLLABORATIVE OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

The Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans (TWC) is a 501(c)(3) community-based organization created to connect and strengthen communities and individuals who work on and benefit from the development of the urban water management and water justice sectors. Created as a grassroots movement by concerned advocates in urban sustainability, TWC has grown to serve community members, nonprofits and charities, businesses and firms, government agencies and utilities, schools and educational groups, and the many intersections of water across Louisiana. TWC serves New Orleans and surrounding parishes that comprise the Greater New Orleans Area, servicing Southeast Louisiana and beyond. TWC offers year-round programs, activities, tours, and policy advocacy initiatives to meet the growing needs of the sector and the communities the sector serves. Our work is always focused on being collaborative, accessible, innovative, and multidisciplinary so everyone can live, and thrive with water for generations.

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WATER JUSTICE FUND OVERVIEW

The Water Justice Fund (WJF) aims to transform stormwater management in New Orleans by establishing a sustainable, community-driven approach to flooding and infrastructure challenges. We seek to create a dedicated stormwater utility and implement a stormwater fee that ensures all property owners contribute fairly to the city's drainage system needs. Through extensive community engagement, research, and policy development, WJF has built a framework for a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to stormwater management, prioritizing both gray and green infrastructure to improve flood resilience.

Currently, stormwater funding in New Orleans relies heavily on drainage millages, which are set to expire in three phases: 6-mill in 2027, 9-mill in 2032, and 3-mill in 2046. These millages fund critical drainage infrastructure, including pumping stations, canal maintenance, and flood mitigation projects, but the city requires at least $54.5 million more annually to meet its drainage obligations. An estimated $123 million in potential drainage revenue is lost annually because of tax-exempt (i.e. millage-exempt) properties.

To address this looming shortfall and build long-term resilience, New Orleans needs a more stable approach to stormwater funding. A stormwater fee offers a more just and sustainable funding model than traditional millage-based taxes. Unlike a tax imposed only on tax-paying properties based on property value, a fee ensures that all property owners—including tax-exempt entities—contribute based on their use of the stormwater system. Fees are typically calculated using a property's impervious surface area, such as rooftops, driveways, and parking lots, which prevents water from absorbing into the ground and increases stormwater runoff.

Fees are calculated using Equivalent Residential Units, or ERUs, a standard unit of measurement based on the average or median size of a single-family residential property and its impervious surface area, such as concrete walkways and driveways. See Part IV for more information on ERUs for New Orleans.

Implementing a stormwater fee is central to the Water Justice Fund's vision. It creates a dedicated and equitable funding stream and shifts the city toward a system where costs are tied to impact. By ensuring that all property owners contribute to flood protection and drainage services, the city can fund long-overdue infrastructure improvements, reduce flood risk, and invest in green solutions that benefit every neighborhood. This shift marks a transition from fragmented, short-term fixes to a comprehensive, community-centered stormwater strategy.

STORMWATER TAX (MILLAGE)	STORMWATER FEE
Imposed only on tax-paying properties based on property size and value. Excludes tax-ex empt properties.	Imposed on all properties.
Based on property size and property value.	Based on property size and/or amount of impervious area on a property.
Does not account for a property's use of the stormwater system.	Accounts for a property's use of the system to capture its stormwater runoff.

The Water Justice Fund campaign has evolved through sustained research and public engagement since 2021. We have gathered feedback from over 5,000 community members and numerous elected officials, city departments, and community and business leaders to ensure our proposal is practical, attainable, and responsive to community needs.

TIMELINE

2021 - 2022

TWC engaged **10** steering committee members, **75** public advisory group members, and various advisors, organizations, and community experts to build the foundations of the Water Justice Fund. TWC worked with WaterNow Alliance to conduct case studies of **4** successful stormwater programs in other cities.

March - May 2023

TWC hosted a **10-part** workshop series for **110+** intergenerational community members from **6+** sectors to learn about and provide feedback on the Water Justice Fund. TWC held **7** focus groups to test messaging and learn from the experiences of **46** community leaders.

May 2023

TWC hosted a **300+** person community kickoff event to publicize the Water Justice Fund campaign.

July - December 2023

TWC canvassed **3,200** residents across all **5** districts (at least **2** responses from every voting precinct) to discuss drainage concerns and support for the Water Justice Fund.

February 2024

TWC released its first Water Justice Fund report with **120** community and city leaders in attendance.

March - May 2024

TWC hosted **5** town halls (**1** per district) with community partners to educate and receive feedback from **55** residents on our first report.

TIMELINE CONTINUED

July - November 2024

TWC canvassed **200+** businesses across all 5 districts to discuss drainage concerns and support for the Water Justice Fund.

August 2024 - March 2025

TWC worked with WaterNow Alliance to conduct in-depth financial analyses of over **75** stormwater utility programs across the nation.

September 2024

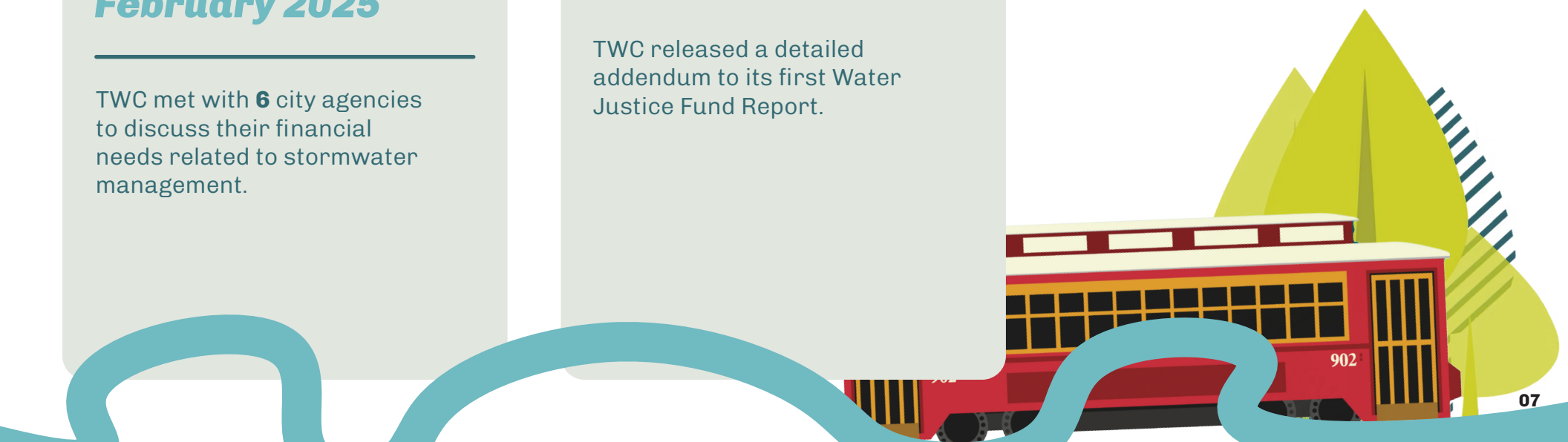
TWC employed LJR Custom Strategies to independently poll **500** residents about drainage management and the Water Justice Fund.

October 2024 - February 2025

TWC met with **6** city agencies to discuss their financial needs related to stormwater management.

April 2025

TWC released a detailed addendum to its first Water Justice Fund Report.



RENEWED RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Create a Department of Stormwater Management, with the Office of Resilience & Sustainability (ORS) to ensure interagency collaboration at the city and state levels. This initiative must be placed on a ballot for public vote.

A. Create a nature-based maintenance and workforce program and pipeline.

2

Establish a stormwater fee, administered by the Department of Stormwater Management, with an ERU of $50 to raise $50 million annually and fund implementation of both gray and green infrastructure. This initiative must be placed on a ballot for public vote per Louisiana Act 319.

3

Require the Department of Stormwater Management to maintain an up-to-date and publicly transparent website that details how the fee is calculated, how much revenue the fee produces, and how that revenue is spent.

4

Require the Department of Stormwater Management to establish a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to ensure public oversight of funding, projects, and programs.

A. The CAB shall comprise nine infrastructure, engineering, and planning professionals, and community advocates. Five members shall be selected by the New Orleans City Council (one per district) and four shall be selected by the Chief Resilience Officer, housed inside the Office of the Governor.

5

Develop a phased-in approach for stormwater fees, with tax-exempt properties, including nonprofits and tax-exempt businesses, paying first. Transition residents and taxable organizations into the fee as millages expire.

6

Require 30% of the stormwater fee revenue to be allocated to necessary and sufficient gray infrastructure operations and maintenance to enhance drainage system reliability, especially for catch basin cleaning and maintenance.

RENEWED RECOMMENDATIONS

7

When phased in, require all property owners to pay a stormwater fee based on the amount of impervious area on their parcel, with single-family properties paying a simplified, three-tiered rate based on parcel size.

8

Create incentives to encourage residents, nonprofits, and commercial property owners to increase permeability by expanding green infrastructure on their properties and participating in community greening initiatives.

10

Provide hardship exemptions for property owners unfairly burdened by the stormwater fee, with hardship exemptions sunsetting for commercial and nonprofit properties within three to five years.

9

Create a dedicated fund for community improvement programs to ensure neighborhoods, businesses, and residents reap direct benefits from the new stormwater fee. These programs should include but are not limited to:

a. *Reforestation efforts to restore and expand New Orleans' tree canopy.*
b. *A Pocket Park Program to create small green spaces in underserved neighborhoods.*
c. *Workforce pipelines, partnering with local high schools and universities to train residents in construction, design, and engineering.*
d. *The Community Adaptation Program to support elderly, disabled, and veteran residents living in flood-prone homes.*
e. *Fortified roofing, resilient housing, and new insurance models to help reduce individual and citywide insurance costs.*
f. *Access to green debt, including bonds, to fund large-scale capital stormwater projects.*

11

Require a minimum stormwater fee rate to ensure adequate operations, maintenance, and program funding.

Full policy recommendations in the original Water Justice Fund Report at waterjusticeneworleans.org

1. KEY FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

A. CITY WIDE SURVEY RESULTS

LJR Custom Strategies conducted a citywide phone poll of 500 likely 2025 mayoral election voters in New Orleans (100 persons from each district) in September 2024 to assess public opinion on stormwater management and infrastructure investments. The survey explored voter concerns, perceptions of the current system, and support for proposed reforms.

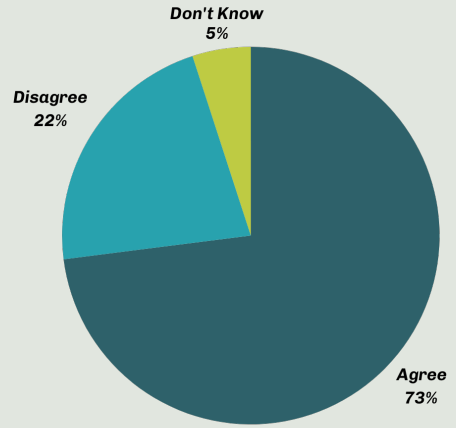
A. Survey Sample at a Glance:

i. 56% Black
ii. 58% Female
iii. 81% have lived in New Orleans for 20+ years
iv. 69% residential property owners

B. Voter Experience and Existing Concerns

i. 91% agree New Orleans needs a new approach to stormwater management.
ii. Over 50% report damage to their home or vehicle due to rain or flooding unrelated to hurricanes.
iii. 27% of respondents named sewerage and drainage among their top two concerns.
iv. 73% view flood insurance as a financial burden.

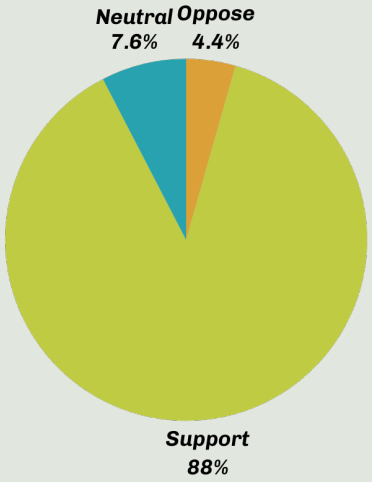
Perception of Flood Insurance as a Financial Burden



C. Support for Local Solutions:

i. 88% believe it is time for residents to take back control of the city's water systems.
ii. 85% support funding programs to assist residents, businesses, and nonprofits with drainage improvements.
iii. 91% back using the fund to create green spaces that improve quality of life and help reduce flooding.
iv. 89% are in favor of increasing green infrastructure to reduce stormwater runoff and the burden on our drainage system.

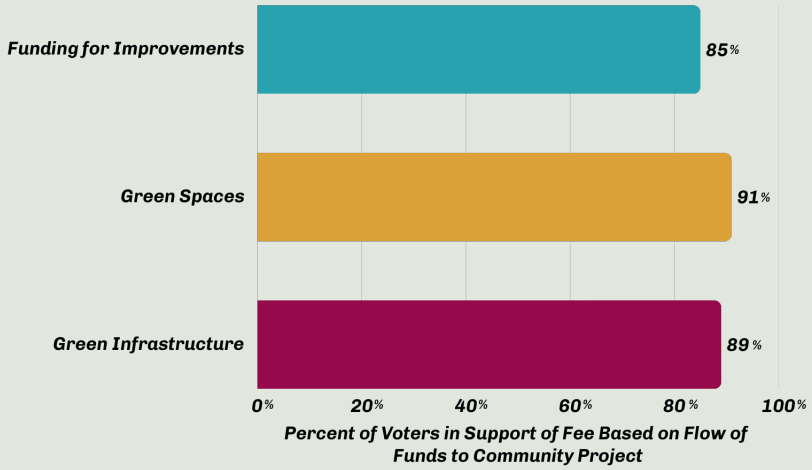
"It is time for the residents to take back control of the New Orleans systems."



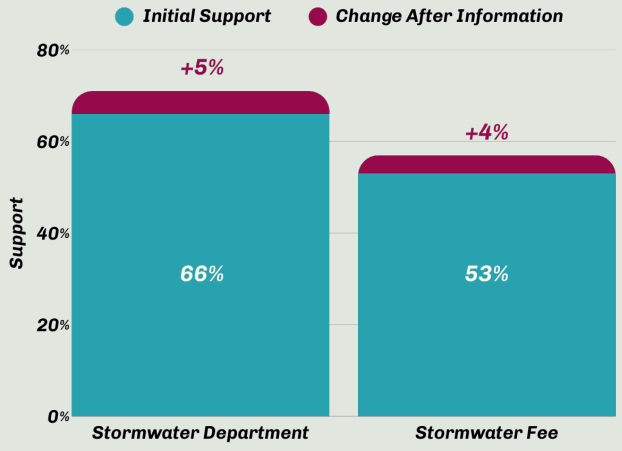
D. Support for a Stormwater Fee and Municipal Office:

i. 79% are more likely to support the department and fee if tax-exempt properties are required to contribute.
ii. Support for creating a municipal stormwater department rose to 71% (+5%) after receiving more information.
iii. Support for establishing a stormwater fee rose to 57% (+4%) after receiving more information. 71% are more likely to support the initiative if it includes a community advisory committee to ensure public oversight and transparency.

Public Support for Stormwater Initiatives



Change in Support After Stormwater Education

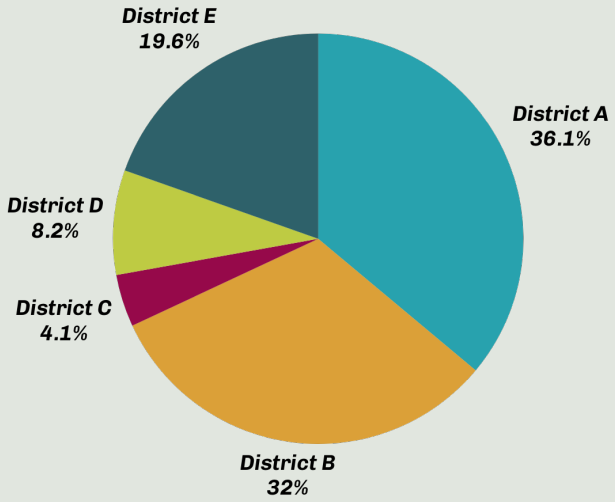


B. MERCHANT CORRIDOR SURVEY

Our Merchant Corridor Survey engaged over 200 businesses across New Orleans between July and November 2024, gathering valuable insights into the impact of water-related issues, such as flooding, storms, and infrastructure disruptions, on daily operations. Six trained interns conducted in-person surveys, ensuring direct engagement with business owners and employees.

District Breakdown of Surveyed Businesses

Based on responses from 200+ businesses



Small business owners must be represented in a new, sustainable stormwater management structure. Using the same approach as our residential engagement, we spoke directly with business owners to gather feedback, needs, and perspectives. This strategy allowed businesses to share their stories and shape stormwater policies that reflect their realities. Small businesses and tax-paying property owners have been footing the bill for an antiquated system that does not serve them to the highest potential. In our surveys, business owners spoke about the trauma and experiences of flood-related weather events, the impact on finances and business operations, and the lasting adverse effects of storms and flooding.

"All these issues are addressed with 'little bandaids,' a lot of pointing fingers, and avoidance that screws over me and my business. There's no 'safe' status quo."

- Morgan Dixon, Owner of Lab & Lounge

"Our neighborhoods make New Orleans great, and to be a good neighbor means you take care of and protect your neighborhood. It's time to make our voices heard and protect our neighborhoods from flooding and storms."

- Eric Cook, Owner and Executive Chef of Gris Gris & Saint-John

"My deep connection to water fuels my work. We need to bring joyful experiences with water back to our neighborhoods."

- Sage Michael Pellet, Organizer at Healthy Gulf

BUSINESS DISRUPTIONS

In the past 6 months, have you had to close or adjust business hours due to storms, flooding, or other water issues?

43.8% answered YES

In the past 6 months, has your job or business experienced physical flooding in the building or immediate area?

47.5% answered YES

Beyond immediate closures, business owners highlighted broader concerns, including ongoing drainage issues, delayed infrastructure repairs, and the financial burden of repeated disruptions. Additionally, many pointed to the lasting damage caused by recent storms, most notably Hurricanes Ida and Francine, as a key factor exacerbating these challenges.

Are you worried about the future of your business because of storms and other water management issues in the neighborhood?

55.5% answered YES

These findings reinforce the urgent need for resilient stormwater management strategies and infrastructure investments to support businesses and ensure long-term economic stability across New Orleans.

C. COMPARATIVE CITY ANALYSIS

A study of 76 stormwater utilities across the nation was conducted by the WaterNow Alliance on behalf of TWC. WaterNow's research was designed to inform the development of a stormwater utility in New Orleans. It summarizes common governance models, revenues and budgets, fee structures and more.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to stormwater management, several key findings were identified:

1. 74% of the stormwater utilities researched are part of a city government rather than a standalone special district.
2. Nearly 62% of stormwater utilities' fees are based on impervious surface area, and these rates tend to be higher for systems with more miles of drainage and with larger populations.
3. The majority of spending is on operating expenses. Only about 25% of stormwater fee revenues are spent on capital investments as a general rule.
4. Stormwater utilities invest a modest amount of stormwater fee revenues in GSI projects, typically on public property. However, implementing green infrastructure on private property is vital to meet citywide flood reduction goals, as demonstrated in Philadelphia's 2022 Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategic Framework.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Population Served	**377,000** residents
Stormwater Utility Governance	**The Department of Stormwater Management**, with oversight from a Community Advisory Board and City Council, will oversee and coordinate all gray and green stormwater infrastructure efforts between city departments and agencies.
Fee Structure & Billing	Non-residential fees will be based on impervious surface area and billed monthly through the Department of Stormwater Management. Residential properties would be phased in using a tiered rate structure as millages expire. Sample structure: • single-family properties would be **billed in three tiers**: Tier 1: ≤1,500 sq. ft., Tier 2: 1,500-3,500 sq. ft., Tier 3: >3,500 sq. ft. • non-Residential Properties Charged per Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) based on the total impervious surface area.
Revenue Generation	No dedicated fee currently. The proposed fee is expected to generate approximately **$50 million** annually.
Programs Supported by Funding	Beyond stormwater system operations, maintenance, and management, and capital improvement projects, the WJF will invest in: Reforestation Tree Fund, Pocket Park Program, Blue/Green Workforce Program, grant programs for residents and businesses, and Parametric Insurance to reduce flood risk and insurance costs.
Costs, Exemptions, and Credits	The WJF proposes credits for green infrastructure and stormwater retention, hardship exemptions available for low-income residents, and a minimum fee to ensure sustainable funding.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Population Served	**585,000** residents
Stormwater Utility Governance	**Baltimore City Department of Public Works** manages stormwater under the Bureau of Water and Wastewater. This department has oversight from the Mayor, City Council, and the Blue Water Baltimore Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee.
Fee Structure & Billing	• Stormwater fees are based on impervious surface area and billed monthly through the Department of Public Works as a line item on residential water bills.4 Single-family homes fall into one of three tiers: • Single-family properties are **billed in three tiers:** Tier 1 (≤820 sq. ft.) – $3.33/month, Tier 2 (821–1,500 sq. ft.) – $5/month, Tier 3 (>1,500 sq. ft.) – $10/month. • Non-single-family properties pay $5 per ERU/month, with one ERU equaling 1,050 sq. ft. of impervious area.
Revenue Generation	Revenue supports infrastructure maintenance and compliance with environmental regulations. FY2022: **$40 million** FY2023: **$39 million**
Programs Supported by Funding	Primarily funds stormwater system operations, maintenance, and management, and capital improvement projects, with allocations for right-of-way cleaning ($5M), waste removal and recycling ($565K), consumer services ($1M), and surface water management ($22M), among other initiatives.
Costs, Exemptions, and Credits	Offers fee exemptions totaling $217K in FY2023. Public education and outreach received $249K.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Population Served	**1.6 million** residents
Stormwater Utility Governance	**Philadelphia Water Department** (PWD) is governed by the City Council, with oversight from the Water Commissioner, a Stakeholder Advisory Group, and the independent Water, Sewer & Storm Water Rate Board, which oversees the utility's rate-setting process.
Fee Structure & Billing	Stormwater fees are based on impervious surface area and billed monthly through the PWD's Water Revenue Bureau. • Residential properties are **charged a flat fee** of $18.47/ month, based on the average property size and impervious area across the city. • Non-residential properties are billed based on Gross Area and Impervious Area.
Revenue Generation	Total stormwater revenue exceeds **$100 million** annually.
Programs Supported by Funding	Primarily funds stormwater system operations, maintenance, and management, and capital improvement projects. Funds also support green stormwater infrastructure projects, maintenance, public education, and outreach.
Costs, Exemptions, and Credits	Offers credits through programs like Stormwater Credits, Community Gardens, and Tiered Assistance. Credits resulted in $21M in foregone revenue in FY2018.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Population Served	**10 million** residents
Stormwater Utility Governance	**Los Angeles County Public Works** under the LA County Board of Supervisors. The Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP) serves 86 municipalities in LA County. SCWP operates with 12 Watershed Area Steering Committees, a Regional Oversight Committee, and a Scoring Committee.
Fee Structure & Billing	A **parcel tax** of 2.5¢ per sq. ft. of impervious area is collected annually through property tax bills managed by the Los Angeles County Tax Assessor.
Revenue Generation	The stormwater fee generates **$280 million** annually, making it one of the most well-funded programs in the U.S. Funds are distributed as follows: • 50% ($140M) - Regional Program for large-scale, multi-benefit stormwater projects. • 40% ($112M) - Municipal Program for local stormwater initiatives. • 10% ($28M) - District Program for workforce training, public education, and administration.
Programs Supported by Funding	Primarily funds stormwater system operations, maintenance, and management, and capital improvement projects. Funds also support reforestation, workforce training, and community adaptation projects.
Costs, Exemptions, and Credits	Credits are available for properties with infiltration basins and stormwater treatment systems.

2. CALCULATIONS & TECHNICAL INSIGHTS

The City of New Orleans needs at least $50 million annually in funding to supplement its current drainage funding.

In particular, the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans needs approximately $110 million annually for drainage operations and maintenance. Currently, it receives $65 million from three millages (i.e. property tax dollars) and $21.9 million annually from the Fair Share Agreement, and is set to receive funding from traffic camera violations to help with costs. This leaves an approximate $15 million gap in funding for the Sewerage and Water Board alone. Other city agencies, such as the Office of Resilience and Sustainability and Parks and Parkways are in need of additional funds for stormwater management. See Part III, Section C for more information on how stormwater fee funding will be spent.

A hypothetical model, using 2023 Orleans Parish tax assessor parcel data, has been created to generate an annual revenue of approximately $50 million annually from all tax-exempt, non-city owned, non-vacant land properties (hereby identified as “exempt” properties). **These numbers are estimates only, as the city must calculate the true impervious surface area for each of these properties.**

1. The average size of a single-family residential property in New Orleans is between 1,850 and 2,000 square feet. **Our model assumes an average size of 1,850 sq. ft. as equal to 1 ERU.**
2. Approximately 75-85% of urban commercial and industrial parcels are covered by impervious surface area. **Our model assumes a conservative average of 75% of impervious surface area for exempt properties.**
3. Using 2023 Orleans Parish tax assessor data, the 4,766 exempt properties in our model generated $52.84 million annually.

OUR FORMULA

[((Parcel Size x 0.75) ÷ 1850) x 50] x 12 = Annual Fee

EXAMPLES OF ESTIMATED STORMWATER FEES FOR TAX-EXEMPT PROPERTIES*

NAME	TOTAL PARCEL SQUARE FOOTAGE	ESTIMATED ANNUAL FEE
Green Light New Orleans	3,060	$744.32
Cabrini High School	13,856	$3,370.38
Broadmoor Community Church	18,490	$4,497.57
Thrive New Orleans	28,928	$7,036.54
Krewe of Iris	94,040	$22,874.59
Dryades YMCA	117,870	$28,671.08
National World War II Museum	413,943	$100,688.84
Ochsner Community Hospitals	487,374	$118,550.43
Isidore Newman School	537,252	$130,682.92
Touro Infirmary	609,575	$148,275.00
Wal-Mart Real Estate Business Trust	816,865	$198,696.89
Loyola University	1,149,118	$279,515.19
Franklin Avenue Baptist Church	1,367,249	$332,574.08
Children's Hospital	1,698,009	$413,029.22
Xavier University of Louisiana	1,952,708	$474,983.03
LA Stadium and Exposition (Superdome, etc.)	2,947,400	$716,935.14
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans	3,563,325	$866,754.73
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center	5,063,272	$1,231,606.70
Tulane University	5,507,064	$1,339,556.11

**These estimated annual stormwater fees, based on the provided formula, are purely hypothetical. They are meant to give viewers an approximate idea of what entities might pay per year. The actual annual fees could be higher or lower than these numbers.*

3. GOVERNANCE & IMPLEMENTATION

To address fragmentation in stormwater governance, we propose an integrated management structure. As shown in the figure on page 18, this model consolidates leadership under a newly created Department of Stormwater Management, introduces dedicated public oversight through a Community Advisory Board, and clarifies coordination between city agencies and community stakeholders. This restructured system emphasizes transparency, equity, streamlined decision-making, and long-term financial stability.

PROPOSED INTEGRATED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE

NEW ORLEANS CITY COUNCIL

The New Orleans City Council will oversee the finances, management, and administration of the new Department of Stormwater Management.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

The Community Advisory Board will mirror the 2007-established governance models of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority - East and West, overseeing reports, fund allocation, and project and program prioritization.

DEPARTMENT OF STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The new utility, overseen by both the City Council and the Community Advisory Board, will focus on stormwater management, fee administration, and coordinating related projects and programs across the city. This department will serve as the policy and public communications arm of the integrated stormwater approach, emphasizing transparency through regular updates and detailed reports on fee distribution.

INFRASTRUCTURE AGENCIES

Sewerage and Water Board, Department of Parks and Parkways

Operate and maintain gray and green stormwater infrastructure. The Sewerage and Water Board operates and maintains the city's gray stormwater infrastructure. The Department of Parks and Parkways implements and maintains green stormwater infrastructure on public lands.

RESILIENCE OFFICES

Office of Resilience and Sustainability. Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

Lead the city's long-term planning for emergency preparedness and environmental sustainability. These offices support community adaptation through data-driven strategies, integrated hazard planning, and public safety tools, helping New Orleans respond to current and future stormwater challenges.

RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, NONPROFITS, AND INSURANCE

New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, Chief Administrative Office

Support stormwater management through public and private property upgrades, education, and risk management. The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority operates the Community Adaptation Program. Additional funds can leverage parametric insurance and support FEMA's Community Rating System.

FINANCING TOOLS

Finance Authority-New Orleans, Green Banks

Provide critical financing tools and incentives to support green infrastructure projects. Through low-interest loans, grants, and partnerships, these institutions help scale investments across public infrastructure and private properties, making stormwater solutions more accessible and sustainable citywide.

A. CREATING A DEPARTMENT OF STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Establishing a Department of Stormwater Management will ensure dedicated leadership, coordination, and accountability for New Orleans' stormwater infrastructure. Acting as a municipal utility, the department will oversee the city's stormwater systems and fee revenue. It will work closely with the Community Advisory Board, City Council, and relevant city agencies to align infrastructure investments with community resilience goals.

The department will coordinate stormwater-related projects, policies, and infrastructure upgrades across city agencies. To support this work, a Capital Improvement Manager should be responsible for ensuring alignment of capital projects, driving implementation timelines, and holding departments accountable for effective collaboration. Key responsibilities include:

- Managing projects, programs, and funding for both gray and green stormwater systems.
- Administering stormwater impact assessments for new developments.
- Collecting and distributing stormwater fee revenue equitably across capital projects and community initiatives.
- Securing state, federal, and philanthropic funding to support long-term resilience efforts.
- Releasing performance metrics to track infrastructure effectiveness, equity impacts, and community satisfaction over time and maintaining a public website to house data and information related to stormwater management.
- Hosting public forums, advisory board meetings, and transparency initiatives to keep residents informed and engaged.

B. CREATING A COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

To strengthen public trust and ensure unbiased implementation, a Community Advisory Board (CAB) should be established as an independent oversight body. Housed within the Office of the Governor, the CAB will provide guidance on stormwater planning, implementation, and accountability.

The CAB will be composed of nine members, including infrastructure, engineering, and planning professionals, as well as community advocates. Each New Orleans City Councilmember shall appoint one member—five total—and the remaining four shall be selected by the State's Chief Resilience Officer (CRO). This balanced structure supports both local and state input and must adhere to a transparent selection rubric that ensures fair representation across relevant sectors and communities.

While advisory, the board will have the authority to issue public reports, request evaluations, and convene forums with relevant departments, meeting quarterly to carry out these functions. Members are expected to bring multidisciplinary expertise and champion nature-based stormwater solutions. Stormwater planning recommendations should reflect the disproportionate risks faced by flood-prone and under-resourced areas. The board's core functions include:

- Promoting public oversight and transparency in stormwater planning and spending.
- Offering technical, financial, and equity-focused recommendations to city leadership.
- Monitoring the distribution of stormwater fee revenues to ensure community needs are prioritized.
- Fostering opportunities for public engagement and education.

C. ROLES & SHIFTS IN RESPONSIBILITY

AGENCY	ESTIMATED ANNUAL FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS	OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION // EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	GRAY INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT
Department of Stormwater Management	**$15 Million**	$10 million annually Funding for: 1. Staff and operations. 2. A public stormwater utility website. 3. Data collection (stormwater rates, project and program tracking, citywide flooding). 4. Community engagement.	$4 million annually Funding for: 1. Capital improvement projects. 2. Set-aside funds for debt financing	$1 million annually Funding for: 1. Capital improvement projects. 2. Set-aside funds for debt financing.
Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO)	**$15 Million**	$1 million annually Funding for: 1. Employee hiring and training. 2. Community engagement.	$13 million annually Funding for: 1. Operations and maintenance of gray stormwater infrastructure acquired from the Department of Public Works. 2. Set-aside funds for debt financing.	$1 million annually Funding for: 1. At least one project per year in a select neighborhood to support existing grey infrastructure and use demonstration tools for educational purposes through SWBNO's Department of Environmental Affairs.
New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA)	**$6 Million**	$1 million annually Funding for: 1. Employee training. 2. Third-party contract development/CEA partnerships. 3. Community engagement.		$5 million annually Funding for: 1. Maintenance assistance for stormwater management improvements. 2. Expanding eligibility and geography. 3. Vital private property green stormwater infrastructure projects for residents, businesses, and nonprofits. 4. Completing 150 projects per year ($25–30K/project).

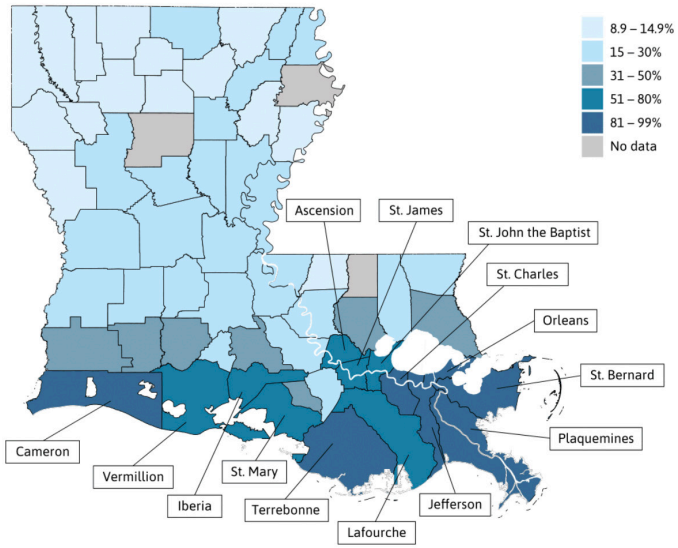
AGENCY	ESTIMATED ANNUAL FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS	OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION // EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	GRAY INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT
Office of Resilience and Sustainability (ORS)	**$5 Million**	$1 million annually Funding for: 1. Staff and operations. 2. Data collection and hazard mitigation planning (citywide challenges, pre- and post-tropical events, heat, energy production). 3. Community engagement.		$4 million annually Funding for: 1. Green infrastructure planning. 2. Collaboration with other agencies working on park and green space initiatives.
Department of Parks and Parkways (PPW)	**$3 Million**	$1 million annually Funding for: 1. Employee hiring and training. 2. Data collection (updated tree canopy calculations, green infrastructure project tracking). 3. Expanding the forestry division. 4. Third-party contractor development/ CEA partnerships.		$2 million annually Funding for: 1. Tree and green space maintenance. 2. Incorporating green infrastructure into parks and playgrounds.
New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP) – Office of Hazard Mitigation	**$1 Million**	$1 million annually Funding for: 1. Employee training. 2. Data collection (flooding metrics, flood warning systems like the WeatherStem network, underpass flood sensors, road flooding sensors). 3. Hazard mitigation planning. 4. CEA partnerships with local universities.		
Department of Public Works (DPW)	**None***	SWBNO absorbing drainage responsibilities.		

*Estimated funding based on conversations with city departments and offices, national research, and anticipated funding of $50 million annually from a stormwater fee.

4. HEALTH, WEALTH, & ENVIRONMENT

New Orleans faces growing challenges that threaten the long-term safety, health, and well-being of its residents. More frequent storms and heavier rainfall have increased the urgency for improved infrastructure and resilience planning. With 81 to 99 percent of properties in Orleans Parish at risk of major flooding over the next 30 years, neighborhoods are experiencing repeated damage, higher insurance costs, and constant disruption to daily life. Lasting solutions will require meaningful investment in stormwater systems that prioritize the communities most vulnerable to flooding and ensure every resident benefits from a safer, more reliable system.

Share of properties at major to extreme risk for flooding, by Louisiana parish
Based on 30-year cumulative flood likelihood and projected depth of flooding



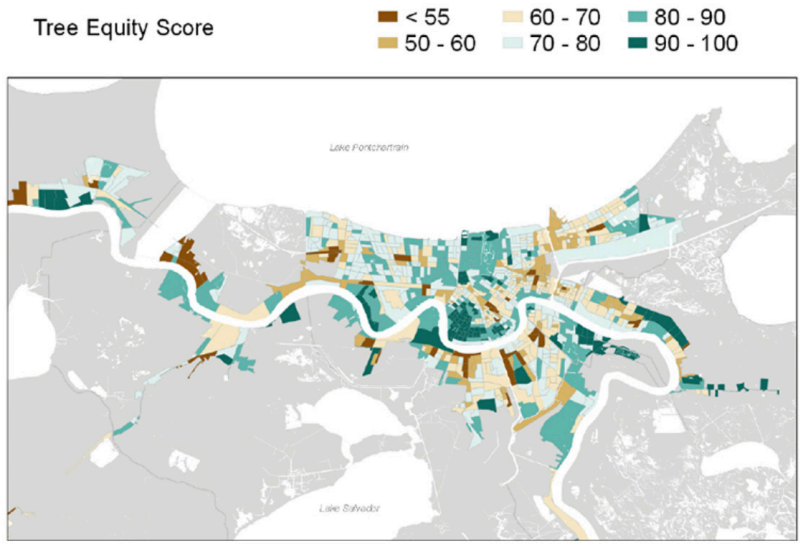
Source: First Street Foundation-Flood Model (FSF-FM).

Notes: *Properties at "major" to "extreme" risk of flooding have at least an 80 percent cumulative probability of being flooded within 30 years (at least a 5 percent chance in any given year). The FSF-FM incorporates flood protection measures (e.g. levees, flood walls, retention ponds, marsh/wetland restoration), multiple types of flooding risks (e.g. tides, rain, riverine and storm surges), as well as future environmental considerations.*

A. PUBLIC HEALTH

A stormwater fee supports public health by ensuring consistent investment in infrastructure improvements that mitigate flooding and extreme heat risks, particularly in historically underserved communities.

- Floodwater exposes communities to bacteria, mold, and hazardous chemicals when homes and businesses flood. Maintaining and upgrading storm drains, bioswales, and permeable surfaces helps reduce standing water and contamination.
- Extreme heat days in Louisiana nearly doubled from 47 in 2021 to 82 in 2023, nearly three months, putting children, seniors, outdoor workers, and low-income communities at higher risk of heat-related illness.
- Green spaces help cool urban areas, expand recreation, and reduce pollution and flooding. Yet New Orleans still has less than 20% tree canopy, falling short of recovery from 200,000 trees lost during Hurricane Katrina.



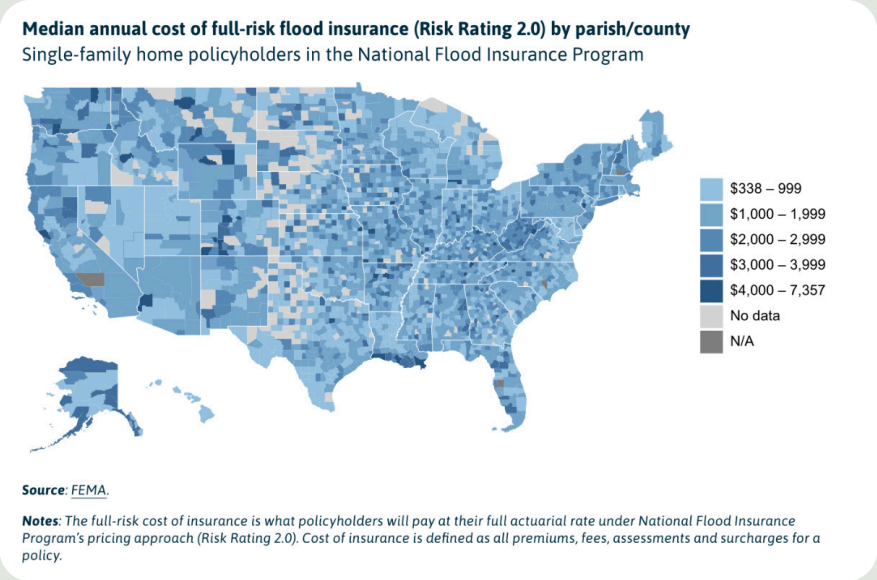
New Orleans Tree Equity Score (TES).
The average score for New Orleans is 74.
Source: Woodwell Climate Research Center, 2022

B. BUSINESS, TOURISM, & PROPERTY

Improved stormwater infrastructure helps businesses in flood-prone areas avoid closures, property damage, and loss revenues.

- Green infrastructure investments create jobs in construction, landscaping, and environmental engineering jobs,supported by workforce training programs.
- Tourism can benefit from fewer weather-related disruptions, making New Orleans a more dependable destination for events and travel.

- New Orleans' tree canopy provides an estimated $209,978 annually in runoff reduction and rainfall interception benefits.
- Flood insurance costs are rising under FEMA's Risk Rating 2.0, with Louisiana's median to increase by 87%, compared to a 64% national increase. Single-family homeowners in Louisiana will pay a median of $1,470 annually, with some parishes exceeding $3,000–$4,000.
- Improved drainage and reduced flood risk can raise property values and make neighborhoods more attractive to live, work, and invest.



Median Annual Cost of Full-Risk Flood Insurance by Parish/County

C. MITAGATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Reliable funding accelerates repairs to storm drains and pumping stations, keeping critical infrastructure operational.

- Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) reduces strain on aging drainage systems, extending their lifespan and lowering maintenance costs. Stormwater parks like the Mirabeau Water Garden show a strong return on investment, with a $6 return for every $1 spent.
- Cost-effective solutions like fee reductions, rebates, and incentives for rain barrels, permeable pavement, and tree planting should be prioritized for low-income residents.
- Residents will experience fewer flood-related disruptions, lower risk of property damage, and reduced financial strain in their daily lives.

5. CONCLUSION: BUILT BY COMMUNITY, DESIGNED FOR CHANGE

The Water Justice Fund (WJF) aims to transform stormwater management in New Orleans by establishing a sustainable, community-driven approach to flooding and infrastructure challenges. We seek to create a dedicated stormwater utility and implement a stormwater fee that ensures all property owners contribute fairly to the city's drainage system needs.

Now is the time to make moves to protect and build up New Orleans as an example of resource justice across the state, the Gulf South, and the country. New Orleans would join over 80 other municipalities around the country by creating a stormwater fee. As we know, New Orleans is not like other cities and we must adjust as such.

The WJF's proposed governance structure allows money from a stormwater fee to be dispersed to each of these entities based on project and program needs, such as green infrastructure maintenance by PPW and green infrastructure grants to residents, businesses, and nonprofits through NORA's Community Adaptation Program to reduce flooding and stormwater fees for private properties. An all-inclusive city government approach is essential to making the most effective and efficient stormwater management system.

WHATS NEXT?

STEPS TO THE BALLOT BOX IN FALL 2025

1

Find out if you'll pay a fee, and get an estimate on your bill.

SCAN TO FIND OUT!

2 & 3

Let your City Council member and state representatives know that you want to see this on the ballot in 2025!

Endorse the Water Justice Fund and tell others you care about this issue. After you endorse, we'll give you a yard or window sign so you can show off your support.

SCAN TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!

4

Host an education and feedback session with your business, organization, church or community. We'll help coordinate and get the word out, and answer questions so you know exactly what you're voting for.

SCAN TO LEARN MORE!

5

Become a volunteer and reach out to your neighbors or share on social media!

- **@nolawater**
- **The Water Collaborrative**
- **The Water Collaborrative**
- **@nolawater**
- **@nolawater**

6

MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION ON ELECTION DAY!

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

learn more - www.waterjusticeneworleans.org

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WATER JUSTICE
NEW ORLEANS

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