



## City of North Vernon

143 East Walnut Street | North Vernon, IN 47265

# Stormwater Policy Memorandum

July 2017

The City of North Vernon and Lochmueller Group, Inc. met on June 27, 2017, to make decisions on the city's stormwater utility program. This document was created to memorialize the decisions made in that meeting. These policies will be further discussed in the updated stormwater ordinance.

The City of North Vernon Stormwater Utility implemented a system with impervious area as its basis for billing stormwater fees. Impervious surfaces are associated with increased peak runoff rates and total runoff volume. Non-residential properties are assessed based on their measured impervious surface in order to calculate the number of drainage units (DUs), also referred to as equivalent residential units (ERUs). North Vernon's ordinance specifies that an ERU is equivalent to 2,500 square-feet. A non-residential property's impervious area is measured in order to calculate the number of ERUs. (Example: 7,500 square feet of impervious surface equal three ERUs.)

## **1.1 POLICY: APARTMENT COMPLEXES**

An apartment is defined as non-single family residential (non-SFR). Apartment properties are classified in the commercial property category and encompass multiple dwelling units in a single structure or multiple structures. Impervious areas in apartment complexes include individual apartment buildings, parking areas, and garages/carports.

Several methods of collection for the stormwater user fee are possible. One of these options include collecting a stormwater user fee payment from a single entity, such as the property owner, management association, landlord, or facilities manager for all impervious surfaces throughout the complex. The City has selected the option of billing the property owner as the best method for collection of fees from apartment complexes.

This simplifies the utility billing administration process and provides for continuous payment of stormwater user fees, as fees will continue to be assessed regardless of the apartment occupancy. As stated in the user fee ordinance, the apartment complex owner is ultimately responsible for payment for the user fee. This approach would minimize the administrative burden on the City. Finally, billing based on impervious surface is consistent with the basis of the user fee.

## **1.2 POLICY: CONDOMINIUMS & TOWNHOMES**

A condominium and townhome is a category of residential property that contains multiple dwelling units within the boundary of a single property and is considered non-SFR. Impervious areas in condominium / townhomes include: individual apartment buildings, parking areas, garages/carports, and amenities (e.g. tennis, basketball courts, and community building). Private streets may also be present in the development and will need to be included as impervious areas.

Several methods of collection for the stormwater user fee are possible. One of these options include collecting a stormwater user fee payment from a single entity, such as the property owner, management association, landlord, or facilities manager for all impervious surfaces throughout the complex. The City has selected the option of billing the property owner as the best method for collection of fees from condominiums / townhomes.

### **1.3 POLICY: PROPERTIES CONTAINING MULTIPLE USERS**

Non-SFR multiple tenant properties may include strip malls and office parks. This category represents commercial properties that encompass multiple offices or stores within the boundary of a single property or series of properties. The stormwater utility must determine how to equitably distribute common areas of impervious surface, such as parking lots that serve multiple businesses, onto individual stormwater user fee bills. For instance, splitting the impervious area of a parking lot that serves multiple stores and commercial facilities and placing it on the individual bills.

Several methods of collection for the stormwater user fee are possible. One of these options include collecting a stormwater user fee payment from a single entity, such as the property owner, management association, landlord, or facilities manager for all impervious surfaces throughout the complex. The City has selected the option of billing the property owner as the best method for collection of fees from multiple tenant properties.

### **1.4 POLICY: ASSESSING GOVERNMENT-OWNED FACILITIES**

North Vernon’s Stormwater Utility currently assesses a stormwater user fee to government-owned facilities. Government owned facilities have impervious areas just like other commercial facilities in the city. In development of these policies, North Vernon could have decided to make government-owned facilities exempt from stormwater user fees. However, since government-owned facilities contribute to stormwater flows and pollution, a stormwater user fee will continue to be assessed.

### **1.5 POLICY: EXEMPT PROPERTIES AND OTHER SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

This policy refers to “exempt” properties. As a point of reference, “exempt” properties are properties that are exempted from paying stormwater user fees and not a tax-exempt property such as non-profits or government-owned. The North Vernon Stormwater Utility decided that it would implement a no-exemptions policy. Under no circumstances would an improved property be granted an exemption from stormwater user fees.

### **1.6 POLICY: ASSESSING PUBLIC ROADWAYS**

Public roadways and their associated rights-of-way typically contribute excess stormwater runoff volume and pollutants to the drainage system. The public roadways and associated rights-of-way also serve as an essential part of the stormwater collection and conveyance system. The North Vernon Stormwater Utility decided that public roadways and their associated rights-of-way are an integral means of transportation and stormwater conveyance for the city. It was also determined that these facilities would be exempt from stormwater user fees.

### **1.7 POLICY: ASSESSING PRIVATE ROADWAYS**

A private roadway is defined as a roadway within the service area that is neither owned nor maintained by the City of North Vernon. Private roadways are not considered part of a stormwater drainage area of a utility and thus not a contributor to a drainage system. The North Vernon Stormwater Utility indicated that they had no

knowledge of any private roadways within the service area.

## **1.8 POLICY: GRAVEL AREAS**

Gravel areas require additional consideration when implementing an impervious surface-based user fee. Gravel surfaces have varying degrees of imperviousness and contribute excess stormwater when compared to undeveloped sites. The city decided that gravel areas will be counted as fully impervious. This eliminates the need for site visits to verify the type of gravel, concrete, or pavement on a property. There is some runoff from gravel areas that contribute to the stormwater conveyance system and will be added to the impervious areas of non-residential properties.

## **1.9 POLICY: IMPERVIOUS SURFACES WITH RESPECT TO PARCEL BOUNDARIES**

In some cases, the parcel boundary in the Geographic Information System (GIS) does not fully encompass or may not appear to encompass the impervious surface owned and maintained by a property owner. The North Vernon Stormwater Utility will handle these situations by assessing a stormwater user fee for all impervious surfaces that are reasonably associated with the improvements for the facility receiving a city utility bill.

## **1.10 POLICY: ADJUSTMENTS, UPDATES, AND ONGOING DATA MANAGEMENT**

It is understood that updates will need to periodically occur for the billing system to stay current. A property may be misclassified, changes may occur at a facility, or new development will be constructed. The city will address these issues as needed. Significant updates to the user fee ordinance and billing system will be determined at a later date.