



GLWA-Highland Park Water & Sewer Services Dispute FAQ

Will GLWA turn off water service to the city of Highland Park?

No. GLWA has no plans to shut off water service to the city.

What is the history on Highland Park's sewer and water debt?

The city of Highland Park has a history of not making timely and full payments of its wholesale sewer bills from Detroit and now GLWA. This has resulted in litigation in the 1940s, 1990s, 2014 and 2020 and judgments entered against Highland Park over the years. Currently, Highland Park is making partial payments for these sewer services because it was ordered to do so by the Wayne County Circuit Court in May 2022.

In November 2012, the state of Michigan requested that temporary water services be provided by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) to Highland Park because the state of Michigan determined the city's water treatment plant was creating a public health risk to its residents. On November 12, 2012, the State advised that the repairs to the water treatment plant were to be completed in 3-4 days. Neither the State nor Highland Park repaired the water treatment plant, which remains shuttered to this date, over a decade later.

Since November 2012, Highland Park has received water services from DWSD, and now GLWA. The City of Highland Park initially made a nominal payment over a decade ago for these services, but then stopped all payments for drinking water. Despite the continued provision of drinking water to Highland Park, the City of Highland Park has not made a water payment to GLWA in over a decade. As a result, GLWA sued both the State of Michigan and Highland Park. These lawsuits are pending.

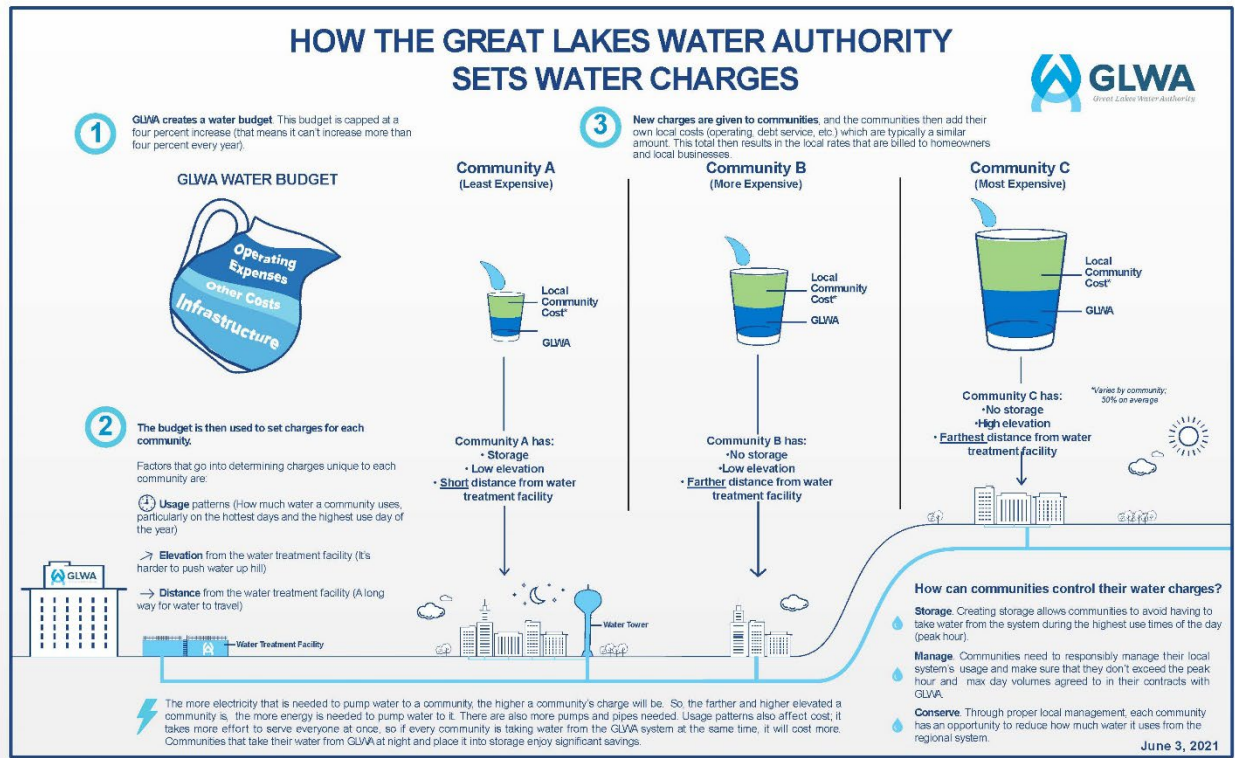
More background information is available in a [recent white paper](#) by the Citizens Research Council of Michigan.

Highland Park has claimed that its water and sewer charges are higher than others and are "arbitrary" – is this true and would charges be lower if the city had signed a long-term contract?

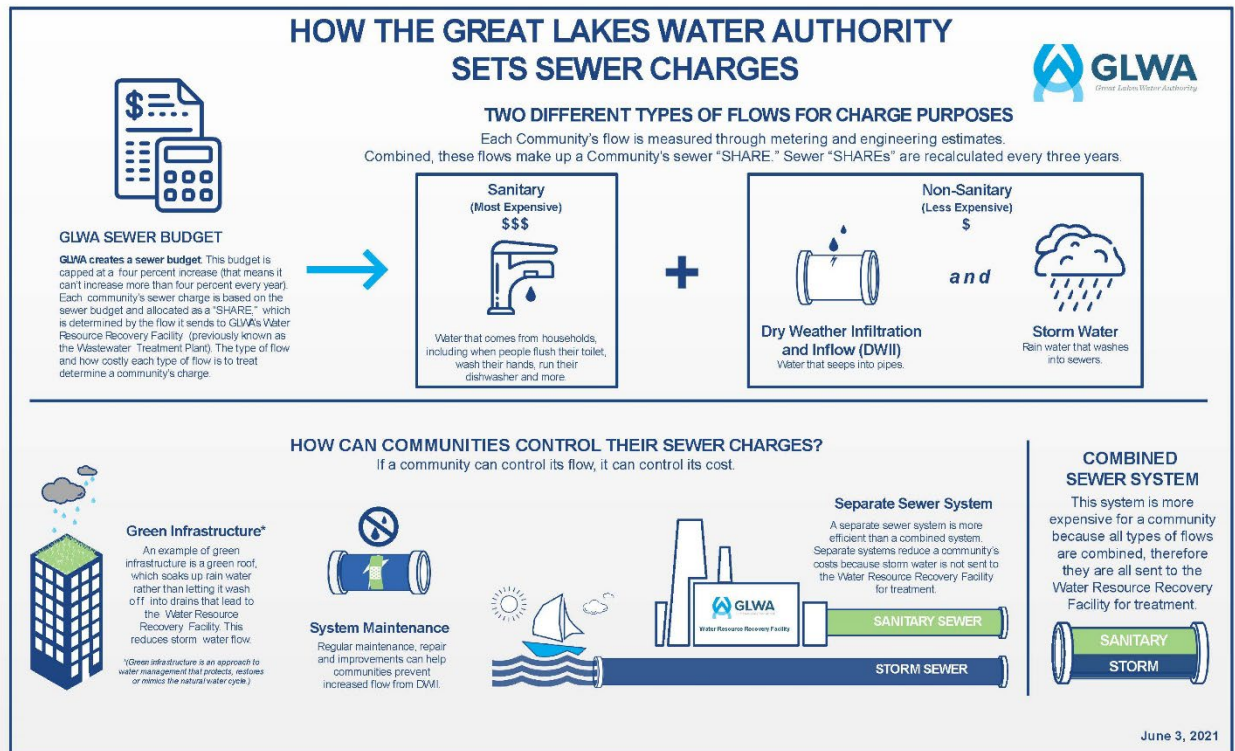
Highland Park's wholesale charges from GLWA are calculated and billed in the same manner as all other GLWA member partner communities. They are, in no way, arbitrary.

Challenges exist within Highland Park's infrastructure which contribute to the city's total cost being different from other GLWA member partners, including the amount of water lost through leaks in their local pipes. A study performed by the city of Highland Park revealed very high water loss. By comparison, the city's system loses more water out of their local water pipes each day than the amount consumed by 40 other GLWA communities individually on a daily basis. For some perspective on these daily water losses, for every gallon of water consumed by a Highland Park resident, two gallons leak out of Highland Park's water system.

How does GLWA calculate its water charges?



How does GLWA calculate its sewer charges?



How does GLWA calculate Highland Park's water charges without meters?

- **November 2012 to June 2019:** As noted above, Detroit (now GLWA) provided temporary water service to Highland Park at the request of the state of Michigan. During this period, Highland Park's usage was estimated based on historic water pumpage records from Highland Park's shuttered water treatment plant. This was the best available data to calculate Highland Park's water charges.
- **July 2019 to the Present:** GLWA commissioned a study to determine the water usage of Detroit, Dearborn, and Highland Park. All three communities do not have wholesale water meters. For Highland Park, temporary meters were installed to measure Highland Park's water usage during the study. Based on the temporary meter results, Highland Park's water charges were adjusted. When Highland Park's retail sales data is compared to the temporary meters data, it revealed a 72 percent water loss rate.

Last year, Highland Park completed its own water leak study; it revealed a 69 percent water loss rate. As noted above, Highland Park's local water system leaks more than 40 GLWA member partners use individually.

How does GLWA calculate Highland Park's sewer charges without meters?

Metered data is used to calculate a portion of Highland Park's sewer charges. Additionally, Highland Park's use of the GLWA sewer system is based on the same technical evaluation as that applied to Detroit.

Both Detroit and Highland Park are combined sewer systems. This means sanitary and non-sanitary volumes are conveyed through the same pipe. Other communities have invested to separate sanitary volumes and non-sanitary volumes into two pipes.

Highland Park's sewer charges are based on an annual flow balance report, court orders, and agreements. The flow balance report, which relies on metered data, summarizes the sanitary and non-sanitary volumes contributed to the sewer system. These volumes are used to allocate the cost of conveying and treating wastewater. Court orders and agreements determine how the cost of regional wet weather facilities are allocated.

Sanitary Volume is sanitary wastewater that homes, businesses, and industries discharge into the system. In recent years, GLWA has relied upon Highland Park's retail water meter data to determine its sanitary volumes. Prior to that, GLWA relied upon the temporary meter data and historic pumpage data from its shuttered water treatment plant to calculate its sanitary volumes.

Non-sanitary Volume is the combination of dry weather inflow and infiltration and wet weather flow entering the system and includes rain, snow melt, and groundwater infiltration. Due to the multiple sewer interconnections between Detroit and bordering cities, including Highland Park, meters are not used to measure non-sanitary volumes. These Detroit-bordering communities are referred to as "D+ communities" in the charge methodology.

By subtracting (a) metered communities' sanitary and non-sanitary volumes and (b) D+ communities' sanitary volumes from the total metered flows received at GLWA facilities, you can determine the amount of non-sanitary volumes contributed by D+ communities and infiltration and inflow into the regional sewer system pipes. An agreement was reached to split the non-sanitary volumes (50/50) between the D+ communities and the regional system. Highland Park is assigned a portion of D+ communities split of the non-sanitary volumes to determine its charges.

In addition to the costs of conveying and treating wastewater, all communities are allocated the costs of specific regional wet weather facilities. Based on court orders and agreements, these costs are apportioned 83 percent to Detroit and 17 percent to other member partners. Highland Park is allocated a portion of the 17 percent.

What are GLWA's options to collect the judgment in the 2014 case?

GLWA and Highland Park could reach an amicable resolution of the dispute. GLWA continues to participate in a confidential mediation in hopes of achieving an amicable resolution. If it cannot be achieved, Michigan law allows a judgment against a municipality to be added to the tax rolls for that community.