

# Stormwater Utility Engagement Summary

Engagement Period: March – December 2022

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# Stormwater Utility Engagement Overview

Summary of community input on the County's proposal to fund its stormwater program through a stormwater utility based on the amount of impervious area on a property instead of the current Sanitary District Tax

## Engagement At-a-Glance

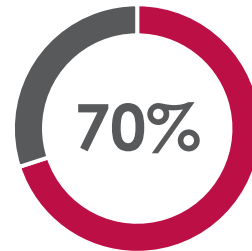
**609** Feedback form responses

**5** Stormwater Utility Community Advisory Group meetings

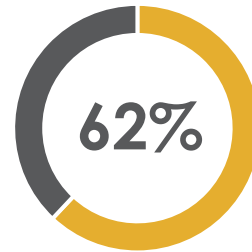
**54** Participants in sessions for faith-based and non-profit organizations

**9** Community events, including presentations and an Open House

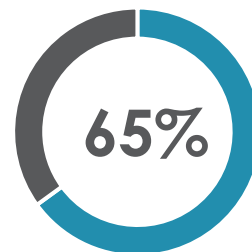
## Feedback Form Results



Believe that it is very important for the County to maintain or upgrade its stormwater infrastructure



Agree that it makes sense to charge for stormwater as a utility fee



Stated that what they pay for stormwater should be based on how much runoff they contribute to the County's stormwater system

## Key Themes from Discussions



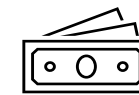
**Additional time before implementation of the utility fee** would help faith-based and non-profit organizations prepare for the new fee.



**Stakeholders are very supportive of a credit program** that acknowledges actions taken to reduce runoff or improve the environment.



**The features on a property that contribute to runoff should be the primary consideration** for calculating the stormwater utility rate.



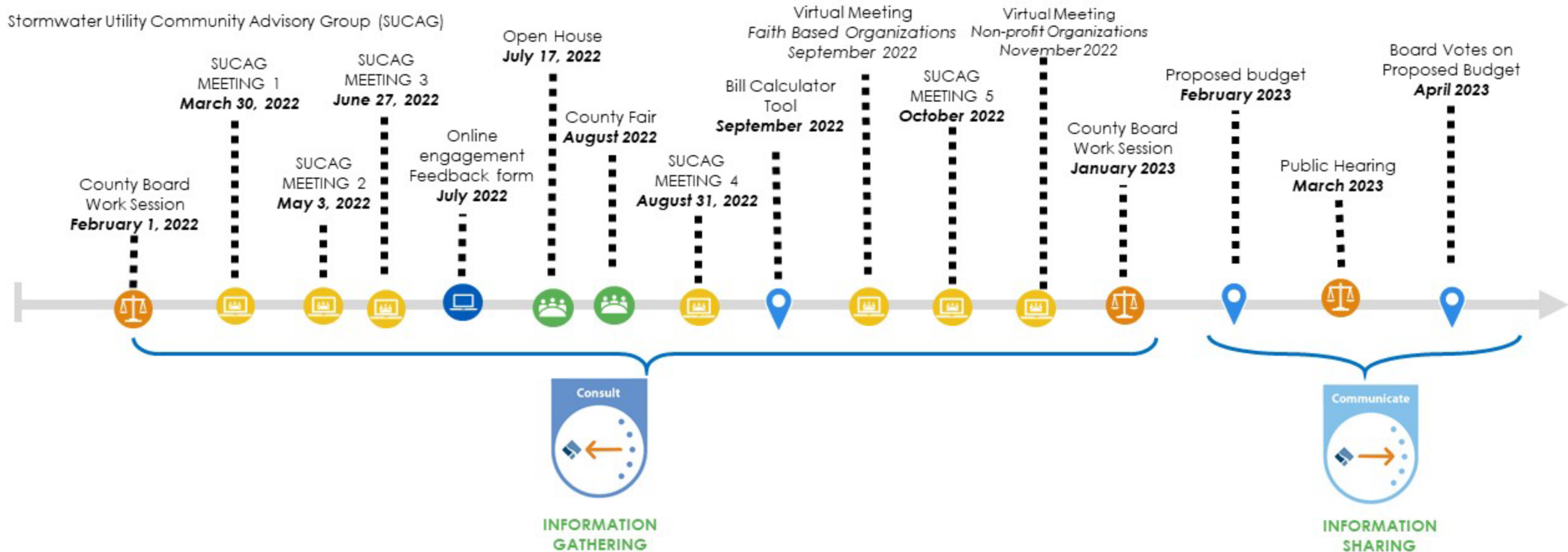
Efforts should be made to **mitigate impact of this potential change for lower income residents**


# Stormwater Utility Fee – Public Engagement Timeline


Project Contact:  
Aileen Winquist  
awinquist@arlingtonva.us


Project Funding:  
N/A

Stormwater Utility Community Advisory Group (SUCAG)



 **Online Feedback**  
(e.g. questionnaire, feedback form, etc.)

 **In-Person Engagement and Pop-Ups**  
(e.g. community meeting, roundtable, tabling, walking/bus tour, deliberative dialogue, etc.)

 **Virtual Meeting**  
(e.g., TEAMS, TEAMS live, Zoom, etc.)

 **County Board Engagement**  
(e.g. public hearing, Board work session, open door Monday, commission meeting etc.)

 **Key Milestone**

# Stormwater Utility Community Advisory Group (SUCAG) Meetings

- **Meeting 1 (March 30) – Orientation & Project Overview**
  - › Why are we considering moving from tax to fee?
  - › Goals of SUCAG
  - › Overview of stormwater program
- **Meeting 2 (May 3) – Costs & Cost Recovery**
  - › Stormwater program components
  - › Cost drivers
  - › CIP projects
  - › Tax vs. utility
- **Meeting 3 (June 27) – Rate Structures**
  - › Multi-family and Base charge options
- **Meeting 4 (August 31) – Draft Credit Program**
- **Meeting 5 (October 12) – Wrap Up**



# SUCAG Membership

Area of Interest	Organization	Member
Residential: Single Family Homes	Civic Federation	John Ford
Residential: Multi-Family	Tenant Landlord Commission Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAHA) Commission on Aging	Christopher Wimbush Jordi Fabian Herschel Kanter
Residential/ Commercial	Apartment & Office Building Association (AOBA)	Scott Pedowitz
Development Community	Commercial Real Estate Development Assoc. (NAIOP)	Scott Clarke
Environmental Community	Climate Change, Energy, & Environment Comm. (C2E2) EcoAction Arlington	Stephen D'Alessio Jenn Yates
Fiscal	Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee (FAAC)	Peter Robertson
Non-profits	Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)	Charles Meng Gabrielle Cantor
Places of Worship	Mount Olivet Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions	Jim McElfish Michael Shapiro
Institutional	Virginia Hospital Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority	Rich Krumenacker John Pearson

# Key Themes from Faith-based Organizations, Non-profits and Cemeteries

The County hosted two meetings to hear from the organizations that would be the most affected by moving from a sanitary district tax to a stormwater utility fee

## Faith-based Organizations

*September 28 session and September 29 Interfaith Alliance meeting*

- **The new fee will affect their ability to deliver community services, especially considering the budget challenges brought on by the pandemic,** such as lower service attendance, increased demand for services, and overall rising costs
- **Most have already started budget planning for 2023 and have not accounted for this change** – a deferred timeline and/or a hybrid implementation of the fee over several years would help alleviate the increased costs
- **They would apply to a credit program** to help offset costs and would like to receive credits for previous stormwater improvements on their properties and relevant volunteer activities (e.g., stream clean-ups)

## Non-profits and Cemeteries

*November 2 session*

- **How would the utility fee apply to cemeteries once they are full and no longer active?**
- **Most have already started budget planning for 2023 and have not accounted for this change** – a deferred timeline and/or a hybrid implementation of the fee over several years would help alleviate the increased costs

# Community Events and Presentations

- Civic Federation (April 12)
- Plan Langston Blvd Earth Day (April 24)
- Chamber of Commerce (June 1)
- Green Community Tour (June 4)
- BluesFest (June 18)
- Open House at Lubber Run (July 17)
- County Fair (August 19-21)
- Arlington Neighborhood Village (September 14)
- Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (Dec 15)



# Feedback Form Summary

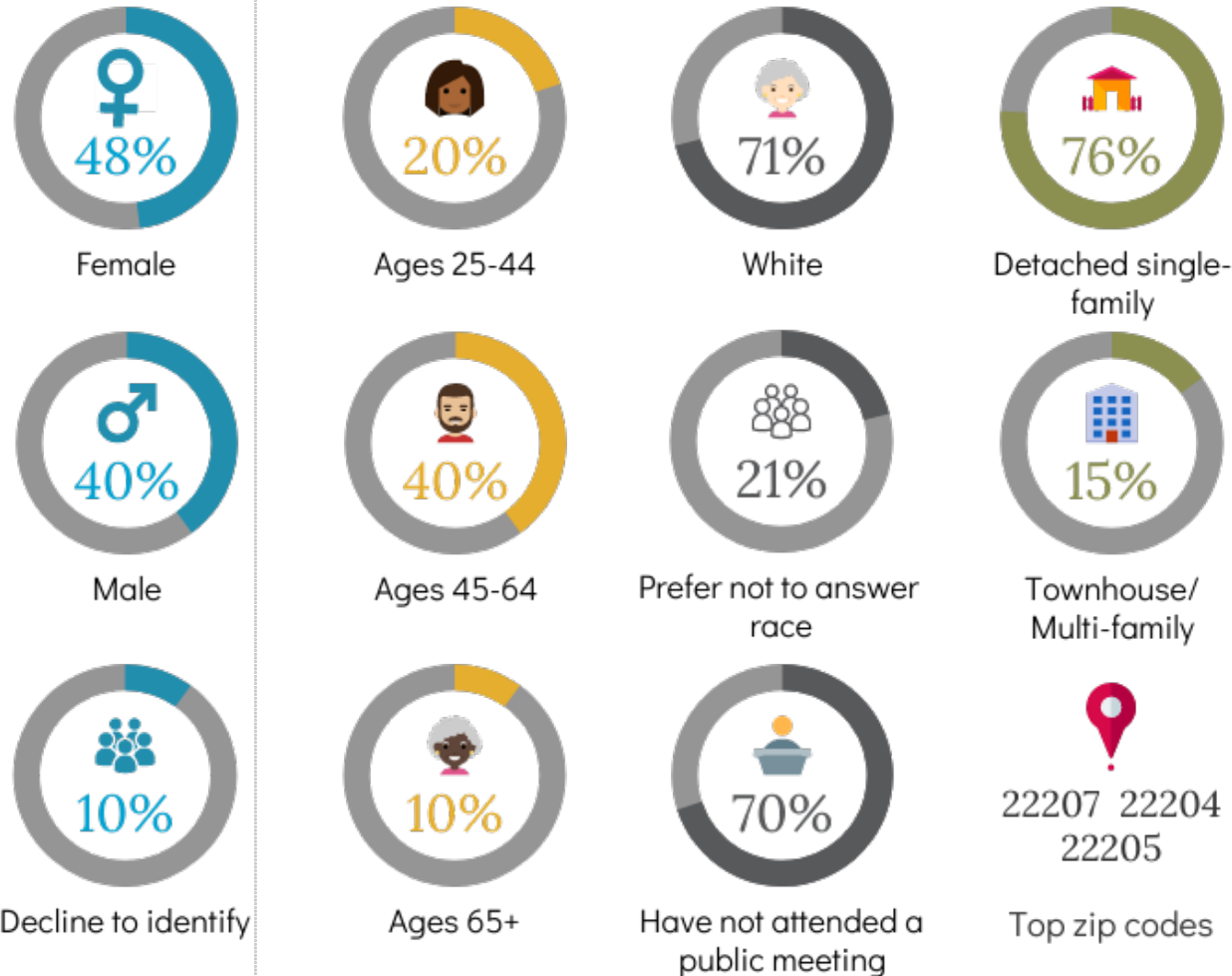




# Feedback Form Overview

The feedback form was open from June 17 – August 2 to assess residents' current understanding of stormwater and gather input on the rationale behind proposed changes

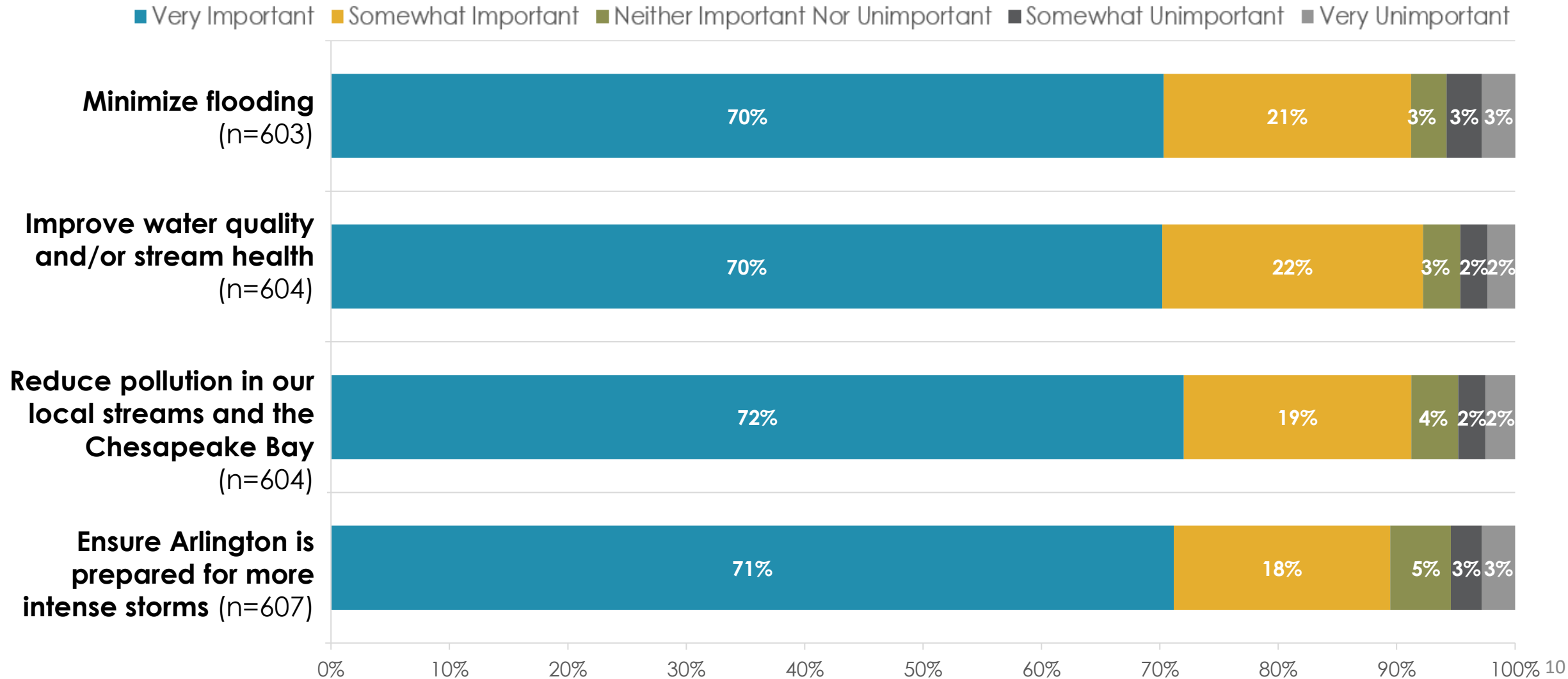
## Demographics of Respondents\* (n=609)



- **An overwhelming majority of respondents demonstrated a baseline understanding of stormwater** by correctly identifying the aspects of stormwater infrastructure (92%) and defining impervious area (96%).
- **However, most respondents (84%) do not know how they currently pay for County stormwater services** each year because the current tax is combined with the real estate tax.

\*Graphic shows only the demographic categories with the most responses. Percentages may not total 100%.

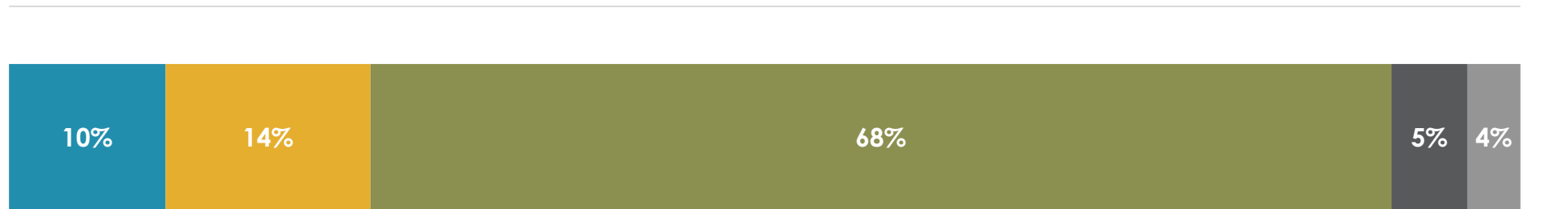
# Rate how important it is that the County maintain and/or upgrade its stormwater infrastructure to...



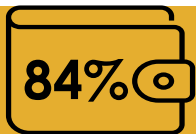
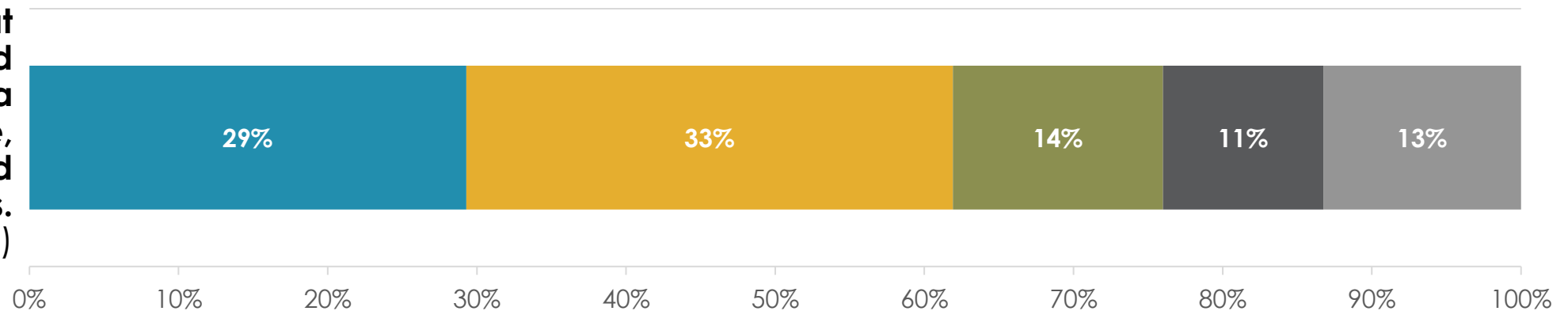
# Perceptions on Paying for Stormwater

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree ■ Somewhat Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Rate how much you agree: What I pay for stormwater is affordable. (n=598)

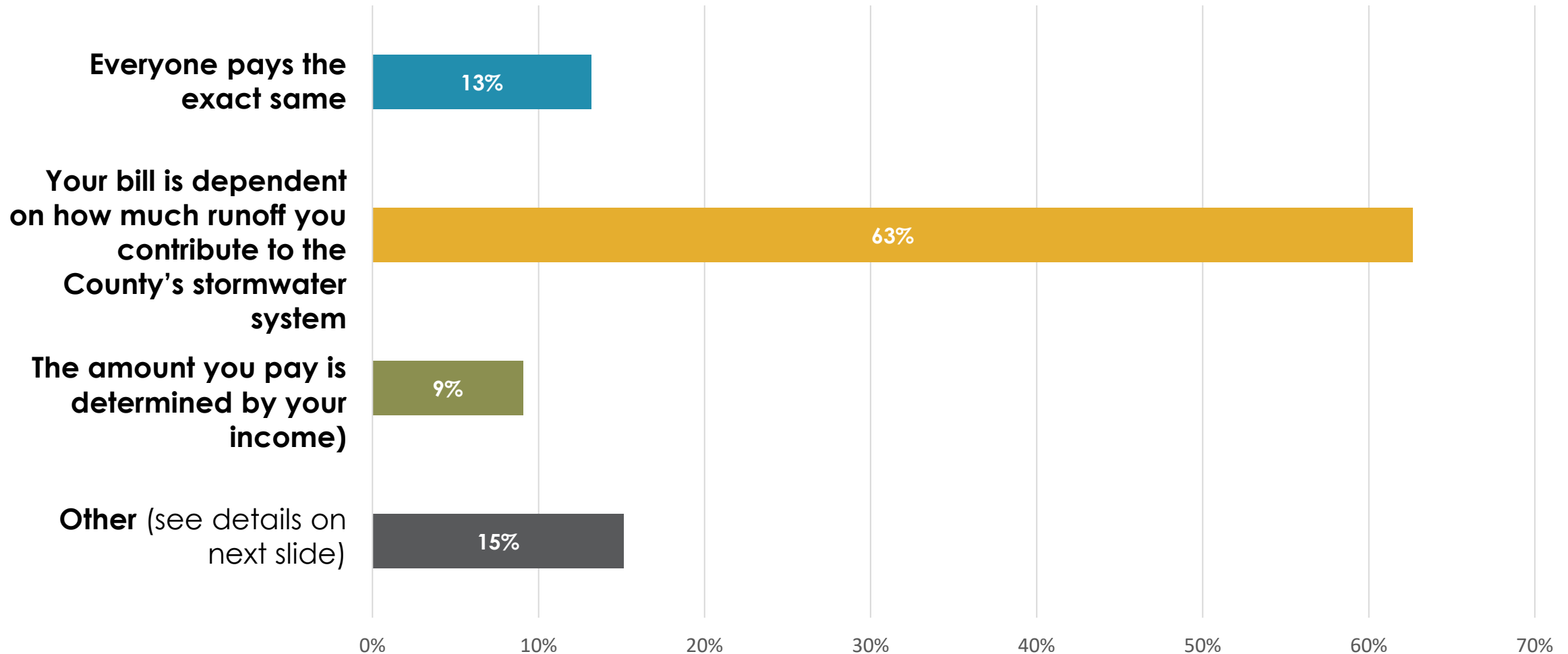


It makes sense that stormwater should be charged as a utility fee for service, just like water and wastewater utilities. (n=604)



84% Prefer more frequent, smaller increases in payments (such as on an annual basis).

# When thinking about paying for stormwater, we want an equitable rate for all. What does equitable mean to you?

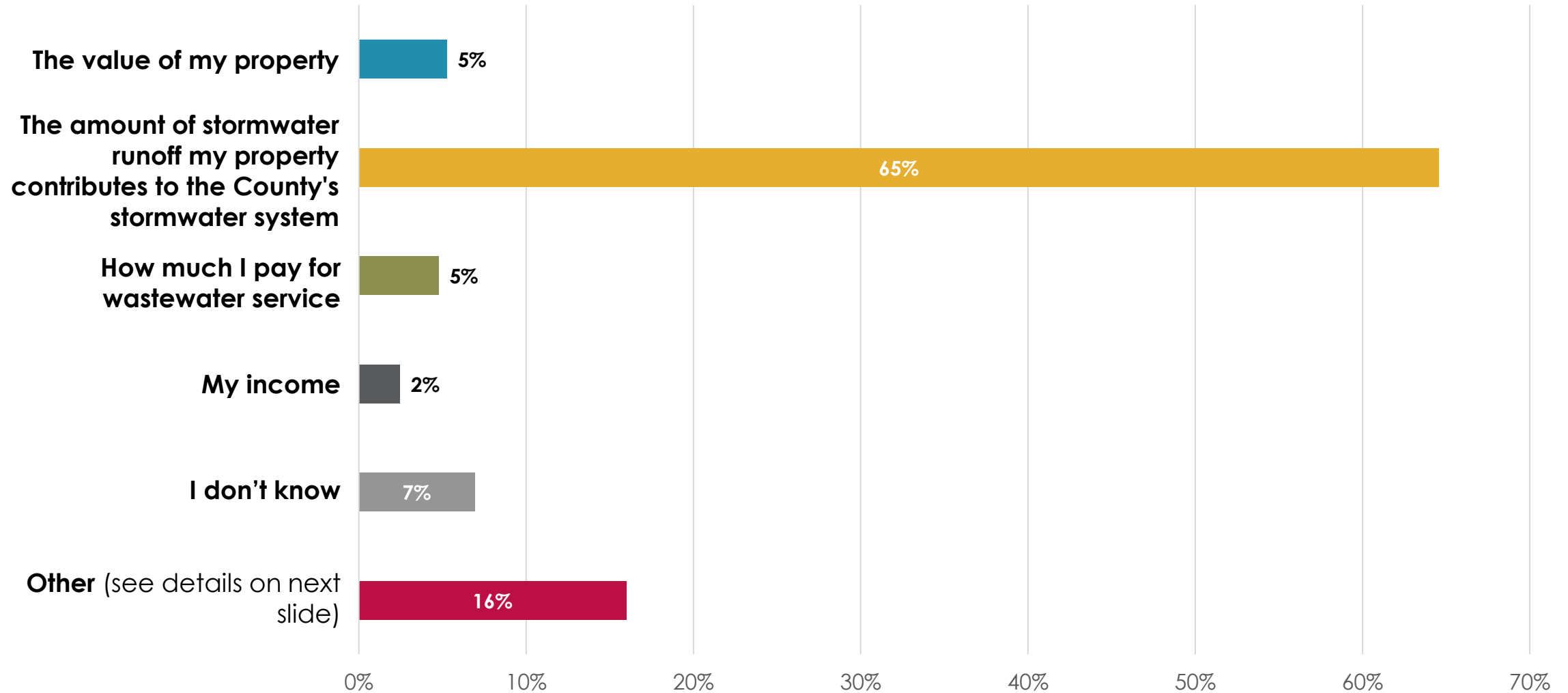


# Key Themes from “Other” Responses

When thinking about paying for stormwater, we want an equitable rate for all. What does equitable mean to you?

Topic	#	Details
<b>Equitable meaning how the rate is calculated</b>	64	Respondents elaborated on what an equitable approach to calculating the stormwater fee may include, such as accounting for <b>both the contribution to runoff and one’s income</b> (20), <b>property features contributing to runoff</b> (15), <b>the size of one’s property</b> (9), <b>the assessed property value</b> (4), <b>both the assessed property value and the amount of impervious area</b> (3), <b>the type of building</b> (3), or <b>the property’s location</b> (2). Respondents emphasized that adjustments to the rate would be necessary for equity, such as <b>accounting for previous stormwater improvements</b> (5) or <b>implementing a credit program for low-income residents</b> (3).
<b>Equitable meaning who is affected</b>	22	Respondents indicated that the fee should <u>not</u> impact <b>low-income residents</b> (10) and <b>those who do not own property</b> (6). Rather, the County should look at <b>the role of corporations</b> (3) and <b>new development</b> (3) on contributions to stormwater runoff.
<b>Equitable meaning how the stormwater program should be paid for</b>	15	Some suggested <b>paying out of the existing general fund</b> (7), <b>charging a flat rate</b> (4), or <b>not charging a fee altogether</b> (4).

# What I pay for stormwater should be based on:



# Key Themes from “Other” Responses

What I pay for stormwater should be based on:

Topic	#	Details
The impact of one’s property on the stormwater system	77	This includes individual or a combination of considerations such as <b>how the property’s features contribute to runoff</b> (26), <b>one’s income</b> (15), <b>the property value</b> (14), <b>the property size</b> (6), and <b>the property’s location</b> (3). Some respondents called for adjustments to the fee amount so that it accounts for <b>previous or planned improvements to the property</b> (13).
One’s role	21	Respondents indicated that the fee should <u>not</u> impact <b>low-income residents</b> (10) and <b>those who do not own property</b> (6). Rather, the County should look at <b>the role of corporations and new development</b> (5) on contributions to stormwater runoff.
A flat rate for all residents	19	Respondents indicated that <b>all residents should pay a flat rate for stormwater, or a flat rate with an additional amount charged based on property features</b> (15) like those listed above. Some respondents suggested charging this through a <b>tax</b> (4).
There should not be a fee for stormwater	8	Eight respondents suggested that <b>there should not be any fee</b> charged for stormwater.

# Summary of the Fee Estimator Tool Feedback

- The County released a [Fee Estimator Tool](#) in September 2022 to allow property owners to view their estimated stormwater utility fee. The County also provided a feedback form with the tool to collect user comments on the tool and to log any incorrect data.
- **26 comments** were received as of December 2022. Residents provided the following feedback on the estimator tool:
  - Support for a credit program so that they receive credit for stormwater improvements on their property
  - Question about the Equivalent Residential Units estimate for their property
  - Trouble using the calculator or not finding their property listed

The screenshot displays the Arlington County Stormwater Utility Fee Estimator web application. The header includes the Arlington Virginia logo and the title "Stormwater Utility Fee Estimator". Below the header is a "Tools" menu with icons for home, help, and other functions. The main content area is titled "Home" and "Arlington County, VA". It contains a disclaimer stating that the information is for illustrative and informational purposes only. Below the disclaimer is an "Arlington County Disclaimer" section, followed by "Stormwater Utility Fee Estimates" which explains that the fee is based on Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs) and provides a fee range of \$230 to \$250 per billing unit. On the right side of the interface is a map of Arlington County with a search bar at the top that says "I want to...". The map shows various streets and landmarks, with a search bar at the top right of the map area.