



## Understanding Your Utility Bill

Your City of Santa Barbara utility bill may consist of a variety of services including water, sewer, and trash and recycling. But what does the cost of each of those services cover?

### Water Service Charges

Water service charges consist of water usage (volumetric charge), a monthly service charge, and a utility user tax. The City's rate structure is designed so the majority of revenue comes from volumetric charges, which gives customers a greater opportunity to lower their water bills by decreasing their water usage, thus aligning the rate structure with the City's conservation goals. Water usage is measured and billed in



units of HCF (hundred cubic feet) and one HCF is equivalent to 748 gallons of water.

The fixed monthly service charge recovers a portion of the fixed costs associated with the operation of the water system that are independent of how much water is used. Capital project funding, operation and maintenance of the treatment and distribution facilities, meter reading, meter maintenance, billing, and administrative and technical support for customers are all included

in the monthly service charge. Larger meters have a higher service charge because they use a greater capacity of the water system and are therefore allocated a higher proportional share of the fixed costs.

### Sewer Service Charges

The City's volumetric sewer service rate includes the cost of collection and treatment of wastewater. As with water service, the fixed monthly service charge covers a portion of the cost to operate and maintain the wastewater collection system, seven lift stations, and the El Estero Water Resource Center where wastewater is treated before it is released into the ocean. The fixed rate also includes capital improvements, mandated standards of treatment, debt services, contingency reserves, and other financial obligations.



### Trash and Recycling Service Charges



All trash and recycling charges recover the costs of collection and disposal, as well as funding education, outreach, and programs like the Household Hazardous Waste collection site at UCSB and the MarBorg Downtown Recycling Center's collection of antifreeze, batteries, oil, and paint. Trash and recycling service charges are determined by your customer classification. Commercial accounts are all charged Business rates, while residential accounts are either designated as Small Residential if they serve one to four dwelling units, or designated as

Large Residential if they serve five or more dwelling units. Each classification has different rates, rules, and included services, as described below.

**Small Residential** customers are single family residences and small multi-unit residences with up to four dwelling units. These accounts receive a base service charge that pays for an unlimited amount of recycling and greenwaste service in carts and cans at no additional cost, two free bulky item pickups annually (which must be scheduled and can include multiple large items), and access to other programs. In addition to the base service charge, every Small Residential account must have at least 32 gallons of trash service in carts or cans, which are an additional charge based on container size and quantity. Small Residential accounts that do not want to roll wheeled carts to the curb for pickup can receive in-place service for an additional fixed cost; if an account has cans (no wheels), they may be serviced in-place for no additional charge. Small residential accounts are serviced once per week and are not currently eligible for foodscraps composting service.

**Large Residential** accounts serving five or more dwelling units are charged for every waste container, with the price of recycling, greenwaste, and foodscraps set at half the cost of the equivalent amount of trash, to encourage diversion of material from the landfill. Large Residential accounts also receive up to two free bulky item pickups per year, which can be for multiple large items, but must be scheduled by the accountholder or property manager. Wheeled carts that are serviced in-place are subject to an additional charge; non-wheeled cans and large dumpsters do not incur an in-place charge. Large Residential accounts may be serviced one to six times per week, with an additional charge for increased frequency.

**Business** accounts serve commercial properties, schools, or other non-residential facilities. They are charged for every waste container, with the price of recycling, greenwaste, and foodscraps set at half the cost of the equivalent amount of trash, to encourage diversion of material from the landfill. All containers are serviced in-place, included in the rate. Business accounts may be serviced one to seven times per week, with an additional charge for increased frequency; note that service is not provided on Sundays, so subscribing to seven collections per week will result in multiple collections on one day.



Water as well as trash and recycling services include a Utility Users Tax (UUT). This tax is a general tax levied on the use of residential and commercial utility services, including water, solid waste, electric, and natural gas. The City's Utility Users Tax rate is 6%.

The City contracts with expert rate consultants to ensure that customer rates appropriately reflect the cost of service for each customer class and are compliant with all applicable laws and industry standards. The City may only set rates based on the actual cost of providing service. The City's utility rates ensure that utility systems are properly maintained and operated to deliver reliable services to customers. For more information on the City's utility billing visit [SantaBarbaraCA.gov/UtilityBilling](http://SantaBarbaraCA.gov/UtilityBilling). For questions on trash and recycling services visit [SBRecycles.org](http://SBRecycles.org) or call the Environmental Services Division at (805) 564-5631.