



Information Regarding the Community Garden Program (Updated: 5/2024)

The Tucson Water Department is offering qualified community gardens:

- **Community Garden water rate** – The Community Garden rate is a formally adopted rate (Jan. 11, 2023), lower than existing commercial rates and without any seasonal surcharges. The rate is still subject to a monthly service charge, water resource & conservation charges and taxes. For current rate information (FY2023-2027), [click here](#).
- **Waiving the system equity fee, for up to ¾ inch service** – potential savings of close to \$2,000.
- **No upfront costs:** The City is offering to finance the installation of a new irrigation water meter and backflow prevention device, up to a 4-year period.
- **Reduction in Sewer Charges:** For those community gardens that are located on a site where the community garden is reimbursing the property owner for the cost of the irrigating, having the required irrigation meter will save more than \$3.63/ccf on the sewer volume. (Sewer volume is determined during the December to February period. If this is a period of active community gardening, the savings from this alone can be significant.)

Eligibility/Requirements

- Garden is located within the Tucson Water Service Area.
- Community Garden as defined in the City of Tucson Land Use Code: “An area of land operated not-for-profit to grow and harvest food crops primarily for the use of its members who typically cultivate individual garden plots.” Gardens located in Pima County within Tucson Water service area is subject to this definition.
- Requires an irrigation meter dedicated to serving the community garden – an irrigation meter can only be used for irrigation and is not subject to sewer charges.
- Requires the installation of a backflow prevention device – though Tucson Water will include the financing of the installation of the backflow assembly, the applicant will own the back flow assembly and be responsible for all costs associated with its maintenance.
- If the garden is located on a parcel not owned by the applicant, the applicant must provide documentation that the owner has approved the community garden request to install a separate irrigation meter on their property.
- Agree to a payment plan, if the applicant chooses to have the City finance the upfront costs.

Questions:

What is the process for community garden that is located on property not owned by the community garden?
The Community Garden will submit an application to the Tucson Water Conservation Office to determine eligibility (conservation@tucsonaz.gov). If approved and a new meter is required, the applicant will make an appointment



with the Tucson Water New Services Desk (520-791-5164) to review the best options for locating the meter, the necessary meter size and the total cost for the new service. Tucson Water will work with its contractor to install the new meter and the backflow assembly and set up the payment plan.

About How Much Will It Cost to Get a New Service: The *estimated** upfront costs are comprised of three items.

1. New service and meter installation cost for 5/8 inch meter: \$2,100
2. Installation of a backflow prevention device and the permit: \$1,800
3. CAP Resource Fee for 5/8 inch meter: \$200

If opting to utilize the payment plan, estimated upfront total cost for a typical 5/8 inch meter is about \$4,100 for a monthly cost of \$85/month over 48 months (4 year term). This is only an estimate and is likely to represent the minimum. There may be circumstances at the location which could increase costs.

**This does not include any additional cost of plumbing installation from the new irrigation meter to the garden. The community garden will be responsible for this work.*

How much does it cost to maintain the backflow? There is an annual inspection fee of about \$60. It is the applicant's responsibility to schedule the inspection. Failure to schedule the inspection can result in additional fees and service termination. In addition, backflow devices can fail and they can be stolen. It is the community garden's responsibility to pay for the maintenance or replacement of the back flow device.

How will the financing work? Once the costs have been determined, Tucson Water, will create a payment plan for the applicant. The outstanding balance will appear on the monthly bill – not the monthly payment amount. The community garden is responsible for knowing how much they are required to pay each month above the current charges for the water service to keep their payment plan in good standing.

Can I pay more than the minimum monthly amount or have a shorter term? Paying more than the minimum will result in a credit on the bill, but, it may not be applied to the payment plan. It is best to pay the same amount each month. The applicant can choose a shorter payment period or pay some or all the upfront costs. If at a later date, the community garden would like to accelerate their plan, contact Customer Service to work out the change (520-791-3242).

What if I don't pay enough to cover the minimum payment? Failure to make the minimum payment can result in late fees and potentially result in the service being shut off.

What if the Community Garden terminates service? The community garden will be liable for the balance remaining in the payment plan at the time service is terminated. The meter will then be pulled.

What if I already have an irrigation meter and satisfy the other qualifying criteria? If your application is approved, staff will change the current rate on your account to the Community Garden Rate and depending on when the change is made, should appear on your next bill.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL THE TUCSON WATER CONSERVATION OFFICE AT: 520-791-4331