



# Update on capacity charge studies

## New capacity charge rate structure approved

The King County Council has approved updates to the rate structure of the capacity charge. Effective Jan. 1, 2021, the County will use average persons per household as the new basis of the capacity charge for residential structures.

This change to the capacity charge residential rate structure will tie the amount that people pay to *the average number of people per household* by housing type, which is based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

For single family homes, the updates mean that small homes will pay less for the capacity charge and large homes will pay more beginning in 2021. The Residential Customer Equivalent (RCE) assigned to single family homes would be based on size: small (<1,500 sq. ft. = 0.81 RCE), medium (1,500 – 2,999 sq. ft. = 1 RCE), and large (3,000 sq. ft. or greater = 1.16 RCE).

The capacity charge helps to pay for the system of pipes, treatment plants and other wastewater facilities that serve a growing regional customer base.

Updates to Residential Customer Equivalent (RCE) Charges by Housing Type		
Housing Type	RCEs for connections on or before Dec. 31, 2020	RCEs for connections on or after Jan. 1, 2021
Single family home		
Small: less than 1,500 sq. ft.	1.0	0.81
Medium: 1,500 to 2,999 sq. ft.	1.0	1.0
Large: 3,000 sq. ft. or greater	1.0	1.16
Multi-unit		
Two to four units	0.8	0.81
Five or more units	0.64	0.63
Attached accessory dwelling unit	0.6	0.59
Detached accessory dwelling unit	On/before June 28, 2019 = 1.0 On/after June 29, 2019 = 0.6	0.59
Microhousing	0.35	0.35
Senior, low-income, special purpose housing	0.32	0.32
Commercial buildings (20 fixture units)	1.0	1.0

Using persons per household data will also result in small changes to RCEs assigned to multi-family units. These changes will also confirm a previous interim change for accessory dwelling units, like backyard cottages and basement apartments, and set a 0.59 RCE for those units.

**ALTERNATIVE FORMATS AVAILABLE**  
**206-477-5371 / 711 (TTY Relay)**



Having three size categories for single family homes adds some administrative complexity. King County is working with local sewer districts and will provide updated forms to record the size of single family homes that connect to the sewer system on or after Jan. 1, 2021, and assign an RCE category.

The approved changes are designed to be revenue neutral so that it does not increase the overall amount that King County collects through the capacity charge.

### Why the update?

The purpose of updating the rate structure is to respond to changing housing trends by making the capacity charge better reflect the amount of wastewater a home is likely to send to the sewer. Using average persons per household allows King County to update the basis for the capacity charge as demographics change.

Since the capacity charge program began in 1990, King County has experienced significant growth and change. Emerging trends include micro-housing, small efficiency dwelling units, accessory dwelling units, detached accessory dwelling units, group housing, adult care homes, and the installation of low-flow plumbing fixtures.

The rate design study was designed to evaluate the best approach for allocating the capacity charge in light of the wastewater demand for today's building types.

### How to stay updated

For more information, contact Eunice Lee, King County Wastewater Community Services, at [elee@kingcounty.gov](mailto:elee@kingcounty.gov) or 206-263-1614, or visit the capacity charge studies webpage: <https://kingcounty.gov/services/environment/wastewater/capacity-charge/review-studies.aspx>.



*Figure 1. All new buildings that connect to the sewer system pay the capacity charge.*