Frequently Asked Questions Re:
Proposed Water and Sewer Rates Adjustment

About the Utilities

What do the City of La Verne's water and sewer utilities do?
The City's water and sewer systems operate 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The Water Division pumps, treats, and delivers drinking water, manages reservoirs and wells, blends imported and local supplies, maintains booster stations and pipelines, and reads more than 8,000 customer meters. The Sewer Division manages 112 miles of sewer mains and two lift stations that safely carry wastewater away from homes, schools, and businesses to the Los Angeles County Sanitation District for treatment. Together, these services protect public health, allow daily routines like cooking, bathing, and cleaning to happen without a second thought, and make modern life possible at an incredibly low cost to customers.

Where does our water come from?
La Verne's water supply is split between local and imported sources. About 24 percent comes from groundwater basins beneath the Pomona Valley, pumped by City wells. The remaining 76 percent is purchased through the Three Valleys Municipal Water District. This imported water comes from two of California's largest systems: the Colorado River Aqueduct and the State Water Project. Most imported supplies are treated at the Miramar Water Treatment Plant before reaching La Verne. By blending local and imported water, the City maintains reliability even during drought conditions.

How is wastewater collected and treated?
Once water goes down a drain or toilet, it enters La Verne's sewer system, which includes 112 miles of underground pipelines. Two lift stations help move wastewater uphill when needed. The City conveys this wastewater to the Los Angeles County Sanitation District, which treats it to meet state and federal standards before releasing it back into the environment. This process protects water quality, safeguards public health, and ensures La Verne complies with strict environmental regulations.

How much infrastructure does the City maintain?
The City maintains eight wells, blending facilities, one water treatment plant, reservoirs, booster stations, and thousands of customer connections.

On the sewer side, the City operates 112 miles of sewer mains and two lift stations.

This invisible but vital infrastructure is what allows clean water to flow to your tap and wastewater to leave your home every day without interruption.

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Funding and Costs

How are the water and sewer utilities funded?
La Verne's utilities are self-supporting enterprise funds. They are not supported by the City's General Fund or taxes. Every dollar collected from customer bills goes back into the systems that provide service—covering operations, maintenance, capital improvements, regulatory compliance, and reserves.

What do my water and sewer rates pay for?
Your bill supports a wide range of essential services. More than half of every dollar funds water production—purchasing and pumping supplies. Another quarter supports capital improvement projects, such as replacing pipes, wells, and meters. The rest covers customer service, administration, maintenance, and reserves for emergencies. On the sewer side, rates support cleaning and maintaining sewer mains, operating lift stations, and paying the Los Angeles County Sanitation District for treatment. In short, rates keep safe drinking water flowing in and wastewater flowing out—something we all depend on every day.

Does the City make a profit on water or sewer services?
No. By law, Proposition 218 prohibits utilities from charging more than it costs to provide service. La Verne's rates can only recover the true cost of operations, maintenance, capital improvements, and reserves.

Are utility revenues ever used for non-utility City projects like parks or public safety?
No. Enterprise funds are restricted by law. Money collected for water and sewer service stays in those systems; it cannot be redirected to other City services such as parks, police, or fire.

Why are utility costs rising faster than regular inflation?
Utilities face cost drivers beyond normal inflation. Since 2018, the Consumer Price Index has risen 28 percent. On top of that, utility costs typically increase about two percent faster per year, adding another 15 percent. Most striking, the cost of treated imported water purchased through Metropolitan Water District has climbed more than 50 percent. Energy, chemicals, labor, and construction costs have also risen. These pressures have pushed La Verne's water utility into operating deficits, requiring the City to use reserves to cover basic costs.

How does the City account for risks like drought, emergencies, or regulatory changes?
The City builds cash reserves into its financial plan to handle emergencies like drought restrictions, main breaks, or sudden regulatory changes. Additional tools, such as drought surcharges (which can only be implemented with City Council approval), allow the City to adjust fairly and transparently without shocking customers with sudden rate increases.

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Rate Study and Adjustments

When was the last time rates were adjusted?
La Verne last adjusted its water and sewer rates in 2018. Since then, the utility has absorbed rising costs without raising customer rates, forcing the use of reserves.

How often should rate studies be performed?
Best practice is every three to five years, or sooner if conditions change significantly. Regular studies help keep rates fair, transparent, and defensible.

How are rates determined?
Rates are determined through a detailed cost of service study. First, financial needs are projected for operations, capital projects, and reserves. Next, costs are allocated to customer classes in proportion to how each uses the system. Finally, rate structures are designed to recover those costs equitably and in compliance with Proposition 218. For example, customers with larger meters pay more because they have greater capacity to draw from the system.

Who approves new rates?
The La Verne City Council reviews staff recommendations, financial analysis, and public feedback. After the Proposition 218 process—including mailed notice, a 45-day protest period, and a public hearing—the Council votes on whether to adopt the rates.

How much will rates change if the proposal is adopted?
If approved, new rates will take effect January 1, 2026, with annual adjustments through 2029. For a single-family home using 14,000 gallons every two months, the water bill would rise from about $106 to $152 in 2026. The sewer fixed charge would increase from $23.43 to $26.61. Combined, the bill would rise from about $152 to $179. Even after these adjustments, La Verne's rates remain among the lowest in the region.

Explore what changes would mean on your household's bill by using the City's online Bill Calculator.

How do La Verne's rates compare with those of neighboring cities and districts?
La Verne's water and sewer rates are currently among the lowest in the area and will stay low even with upcoming increases.

What happens if we don't adjust rates now?
Delaying adjustments means continuing to operate in the red, further draining reserves, and deferring necessary projects. That leads to more main breaks, emergency repairs, and higher long-term costs. Inaction also increases the risk of regulatory violations. Ultimately, customers pay more when problems are ignored.

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How does the City ensure rate forecasts are not inflated?
By law under Proposition 218, La Verne's rates cannot exceed the actual cost of service. Forecasts are reviewed in public through committee meetings, workshops, and community sessions, with a 45-day protest process and public hearing as safeguards. Each five-year rate study reconciles projections with actual results, ensuring rates remain transparent, cost-based, and fair.

What is the timeline for adopting new rates?
Prop 218 notices were mailed in September 2025. Community information sessions, both virtual and in-person, run through September and October. The Public Hearing is scheduled for November 3, 2025. If Council adopts the rates, they take effect January 1, 2026.

Bill Impacts

How will the proposed changes affect the average single-family household?
A typical household using 14,000 gallons every two months would see the water portion of its bill rise from about $106 to $152 in 2026. Adding the sewer charge, the combined bill would increase from $152 to $180. While this is an increase, it reflects the true cost of providing safe, reliable service and ensures the system remains sustainable for years to come.

How will low, average, and higher water users be impacted differently?
Low-use households (7,000 gallons) would see bills rise from $78 to $113. Average-use households (14,000 gallons) from $106 to $152. Higher-use households (20,000 gallons) from $129 to $186. This tiered structure is fair: those who use more water pay more, which also encourages conservation.

How are sewer charges calculated?
Single-family homes pay a fixed bi-monthly charge, which will rise from $23.43 to $26.61 in 2026.

How do combined water and sewer bills change under the new proposal?
The combined bill examples show increases across usage levels in 2026—$112 to $139 for low use, $152 to $186 for average use, and $186 to $213 for medium-high use. These increases are structured to be steady and manageable rather than sharp spikes.

How can I calculate the impact on my own bill?
The City has provided an online bill calculator, available on the rate study webpage, where customers can enter their typical usage and see how the proposed rates would affect them.

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Proposition 218 Process and Customer Rights

What is Proposition 218 and how does it affect rate setting?
Proposition 218 is a voter-approved law in California that requires utility rates to be based strictly on the cost of service. It requires public notice at least 45 days before a hearing, gives property owners the right to protest, and prevents rates from being adopted if a majority protest occurs.

What are my rights to oppose the proposed rate increases?
Property owners may file an Objection if they believe the rates are not legally compliant, or they may submit a Protest to formally oppose adoption. Objections must be submitted by October 27, 2025, and Protests by the close of the Public Hearing on November 3, 2025. Both must be submitted in writing. Complete instructions are available in the Proposition 218 Notice.

What is the difference between filing an Objection and filing a Protest?
An Objection asserts why the rates allegedly violate Proposition 218. It must be submitted by October 27, 2025, and preserves the right to a later legal challenge. A Protest is a written statement of opposition. Each property is allowed one Protest, and if a majority of property owners (50% +1) submit valid Protests by the close of the Public Hearing on November 3, 2025, the rates cannot be adopted.

How do I file an Objection?
Submit a written explanation of how the rates fail to meet Proposition 218 requirements. Objections may be mailed, delivered in person, or emailed to the City Clerk by October 27, 2025. The City will respond in writing to all timely Objections.

How do I file a Protest?
Submit a written Protest including your name, address, and signature. It must be received by the City Clerk before the close of the Public Hearing on November 3, 2025. Each property is limited to one Protest. Oral comments at the hearing do not count as Protests.

What happens if a majority of property owners submit valid Protests?
If a majority Protest occurs, the City Council cannot adopt the proposed rates.

What happens if there is no majority Protest?
If no majority Protest occurs, the Council may adopt the rates after the hearing. If adopted, the rates will take effect January 1, 2026, with future scheduled adjustments occurring on July 1 each year through 2029.

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Capital Projects and Investment

What capital improvement projects are planned for the water system?

Over the next five years, La Verne plans targeted investments in several critical areas of its water system. The program includes approximately $4 million for pipeline rehabilitation to replace or repair aging pipes before they fail, $2.7 million for an AMI meter conversion that will modernize customer meters for accuracy and efficiency, $2.5 million for upgrades at the 6th and White Treatment Plant to improve water quality and reliability, $1.4 million for well repairs to maintain local groundwater production, and about $422,000 for a SCADA system upgrade that enhances monitoring and control across the entire water system. Together, these projects strengthen water reliability, improve service accuracy, and extend the useful life of key assets.

What capital improvement projects are planned for the sewer system?

On the sewer side, the City is addressing some of its most pressing infrastructure needs. The five-year program includes about $9.8 million for sewer relining, which extends the life of existing pipes without full replacement, $2.2 million for manhole and cleanout rehabilitation, $1.2 million for pipeline rehabilitation, and approximately $200,000 for portable backup generators to keep systems running during power outages. These projects help prevent sewer overflows, reduce the risk of costly emergency repairs, and ensure that wastewater is collected and conveyed safely to the regional treatment system.

How do these projects improve reliability and public health?
Investments reduce costly emergency repairs, keep drinking water safe, and ensure wastewater is handled without harming the environment. Reliable water and sewer systems are the backbone of public health—without them, basic sanitation and safe drinking water would not be possible.

How much is planned to be invested over the next five years?
The City plans tens of millions of dollars in combined water and sewer investments between 2025 and 2030. These dollars will replace aging assets before they fail and ensure the systems are ready to serve future generations.

Customer Impact and Support

Are there rebates or programs to support conservation and efficiency?
Yes. Through programs like SoCal WaterSmart, La Verne customers can access rebates for efficient appliances, irrigation controllers, and turf replacement. These tools help households lower water use and control bills. Check out the City's water conservation page to learn more.