

Attachment 1: Implementation Framework for the Pilot Program to Subsidize Rain Barrels for Collecting Stormwater on Private Property

1) Goal

The goal of the program is to incentivize residents' use of rain barrels by providing subsidized rain barrels and downspout diverters. This is a part of a strategy to incentivize the collection and reuse of limited amounts of stormwater to promote water conservation on private property.

2) Definitions

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions apply:

Downspout diverter: A downspout diverter is a rain barrel accessory that is installed on a downspout and functions as a valve, controlling the flow of rainwater to a rain barrel to avoid overflowing during large storms. When the rain barrel is full, rainwater stops flowing to the rain barrel and is diverted to the downspout.

Rain barrel: A rain barrel is a container connected to a roof's downspout that is used to collect and temporarily store rainwater that can be used for lawn and garden watering.

3) Program Components

The program will be made up of the following components:

A) Public Education and In-person Engagement

Purpose: Improve awareness, clarify misconceptions, and educate residents on the best practices for the installation of rain barrels.

Approach: Demonstrate rain barrels at Community Environment Days and create a new City of Toronto webpage with educational content detailing the importance of water conservation and the benefits offered by rain barrels. This may include:

- Bringing a demonstration rain barrel and printed resources to Community Environment Days.
- Showcasing data on Toronto's water consumption patterns, especially during the warmer months, to highlight the benefits of rain barrels.
- Offering an online guidebook providing instructions for the proper installation of rain barrels, as well as best practices, for example, to improve on-site stormwater management.
- Sharing communications that showcase residents' testimonials and photos of their experience with rain barrels.

B) Subsidized Rain Barrel Sales

Purpose: Incentivize the use of rain barrels by residents by making them more affordable and accessible.

Approach: Organizing the sale of rain barrels and downspout diverters at subsidized rates, and at a subsidy similar to those offered for other City-run programs such as for backwater valves. Environment, Climate, and Forestry Division staff will work with Purchasing and Material Management Division to procure a supplier to supply and deliver the rain barrels and downspout diverters through the City's procurement process. The program will be delivered in a way that ensures proof of residence is confirmed for all subsidized rain barrel sales, as well as confirming tenants have obtained property owner's consent to install a rain barrel. The City will explore opportunities to offer online sales and free home delivery.

4) Timeframe

The City intends to launch the program in Q2 2026, coinciding with the start of the warm weather season. The program will run as a one-year pilot project, ending December 31, 2026 or until the budget is exhausted, whichever comes first.

The program will have an ongoing intake period for applications. Applications will remain open until the allocated incentive funding runs out, as discussed in Section 5 (Subsidy Funding Distribution) below.

5) Subsidy Funding Distribution

The City will provide a subsidy of up to eighty percent (80%) for rain barrels and downspout diverters, and will cover all delivery fees, if applicable, from a City-procured supplier. Subsidies will be limited to two rain barrels and one downspout diverter per address. Applications will remain open on a first-come, first-served basis until the total annual incentive budget for the program is depleted.

6) Applicant Eligibility for Subsidies

The rain barrel subsidies will be available to all households located in the City of Toronto. To be eligible for the subsidy, residents will be asked to show proof of residence within Toronto at the time of the purchase. As a result, personal information, such as address, will be collected from applicants in order to implement the program. The program will require that all purchasers confirm that they have obtained the property owner's consent to install a rain barrel prior to receiving the subsidy. The City will not be responsible for rain barrels or downspout diverters that are installed on a property without the owner's consent. The program website will provide resources to facilitate communication between tenants and property owners. The City will also not be held liable for any damage resulting from rain barrels or downspout diverters that are installed on a property.

7) Eligible Expenses

Subsidies will be provided for the following:

- Rain barrels
- Downspout diverter
- Delivery charges

8) Ineligible Expenses

Subsidies will not be provided for the following expenses:

- Rain barrel stands
- Hoses
- Sprinkler systems
- Downspouts
- Eavestroughs
- Installation and maintenance costs
- Downspout disconnection costs

This is not an exhaustive list, and ineligible expenses may be added to this list as required.

9) Obligations of Subsidy Recipients

The obligations for subsidy recipients include the expectation that they install the subsidized rain barrel(s) and downspout diverter on the eligible property and that they follow the manufacturer's instructions as well as the City's best practices which will be indicated on the City's webpage for the program. It is also expected that subsidy recipients will not resell rain barrels or downspout diverters after they are purchased. This program will not entail any on-site installation verification from the City.

10) Evaluation of the Rain Barrel Program

The program will be implemented as a one-year pilot and will then be evaluated to determine program continuation and/or enhancements, with a report back to Council by the end of 2028 (with the report back for the proposed program to incentivize green infrastructure for managing stormwater).

The program will be monitored throughout its implementation to evaluate its success in achieving the program goals, specifically to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the program's administration.
- Determine if public education efforts, including in-person demonstrations, were sufficient to address decision barriers that residents face when deciding if and how to install and maintain rain barrels on their property.
- Obtain feedback from residents, especially equity-deserving residents, interested in installing rain barrels on their properties to understand what key barriers remain to doing so.