

Attachment 2: Implementation Framework for the Pilot Program to Incentivize Green Infrastructure for Managing Stormwater on Private Property

1) Goal

The goal of the program to incentivize green infrastructure for managing stormwater is to enable and support private residential property owners across Toronto to implement correctly installed and properly maintained green infrastructure solutions, such as rain gardens, permeable pavement, soakaway pits, etc., that manage stormwater to reduce runoff, mitigate flooding, promote biodiversity, reduce the urban heat island effect, and enhance resilience.

The objectives of the program are to:

- A. Build general awareness and understanding of green infrastructure solutions.
- B. Expand the local landscaping industry's capacity to address stormwater issues through green infrastructure.
- C. Provide residents with access to design services from certified landscape professionals to reduce decision barriers when deciding if and how to install and maintain green infrastructure on their property.

2) Definitions

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

Green Infrastructure: In alignment with the Toronto's Official Plan, green infrastructure means natural and human-made elements that provide ecological and hydrological functions and processes while also delivering multiple co-benefits such as reducing the urban heat island effect. Examples include permeable pavement, rain gardens, or soakaway pits.

Permeable Pavement: A type of hard surface such as permeable interlocking pavers or porous asphalt or concrete that allows runoff to seep into and between the paving materials and be absorbed into the ground.

Rain Gardens: Sunken planting beds, often incorporating native perennial species, with highly permeable and nutrient-rich soils that collect, absorb, and treat runoff from roof downspouts, driveways, and parking areas.

Soakaway Pits: Underground storage systems that receive stormwater runoff on a property and allow it to be absorbed into the ground. They are typically lined with geotextile fabric and are filled with granular stone or other materials that allow water to travel through the pit.

3) Program Components

The program will be made up of the following components:

A) Public Education and Digital Resource Hub

Purpose: Improve awareness, clarify misconceptions, offer low-barrier entry points to explore green infrastructure options, celebrate early adopters, and highlight City leadership.

Approach: Create a new City of Toronto webpage with educational content on stormwater impacts and green infrastructure benefits and solutions. This may include:

- An online directory of local landscape companies with certified landscape professionals who have expertise in reducing stormwater impacts with green infrastructure on residential properties.
- Practical information for residents related to green infrastructure maintenance, costs, and potential risks.
- Information on how green infrastructure can incorporate circular economy principles (such as resource efficiency) and support native species.
- Communications to showcase success stories of green infrastructure across the city and promote climate resilience in Toronto.

B) Certification Rebate for Landscape Professionals

Purpose: Continue to build capacity within Toronto's local landscape industry to deliver correctly installed and properly maintained green infrastructure solutions on residential properties.

Approach: Provide a rebate to landscape professionals who are residents of the City of Toronto to reduce the cost of obtaining certification focused on the use of green infrastructure for holistic, systems-based stormwater management on residential properties.

C) Design Rebate for Property Owners

Purpose: Enable property owners to access expert, site-specific designs, including installation and maintenance advice, before investing in green infrastructure installations on their property.

Approach: Reduce the cost of obtaining design services from landscape professionals who have completed an approved certification course on the use of green infrastructure for holistic, systems-based stormwater management on residential properties to reduce stormwater impacts with green infrastructure.

4) Timeframe

Pending Council approval, the City intends to launch the program in Q2 2027, after new staff have been hired to develop and implement the program. The three-year pilot program will run until December 31, 2029, with funding offered annually.

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

5) Rebate Funding Distribution

Certification Rebate for Landscape Professionals

The City will provide a rebate of up to eighty percent (80%) of costs to a maximum of \$500 per individual to eligible landscape professionals for obtaining a certification which focuses on the use of green infrastructure for holistic, systems-based stormwater management on residential properties.

Rebates will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis following proof of payment and course completion as outlined in Section 9 (Rebate Application Process and Assessment), provided that applications meet the Applicant Eligibility for Rebates (Section 6) and Eligible Expenses for Rebates (Section 7) criteria outlined below, and funding remains available. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the total incentive budget of \$200,000 in 2027 and of \$500,000 in 2028 and in 2029 will be designated for landscape professionals. At the discretion of the City, and based on program uptake, if the allocated incentive budget for landscape professionals is reached in a given year but there is still demand for it, staff may choose to reallocate funding from the Design Rebate for Property Owners to the Certification Rebate for Landscape Professionals.

Design Rebate for Property Owners

The City will provide a rebate of up to one hundred percent (100%) of costs to a maximum of \$500 per property to eligible property owners who obtain design services focused on addressing stormwater issues with green infrastructure solutions from a certified landscape professional.

Rebates will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis following submission of the design plan and receipts, as outlined in Section 9 (Rebate Application Process and Assessment), provided applications meet the Applicant Eligibility for Rebates (Section 6) and Eligible Expenses for Rebates (Section 7) criteria below, and funding remains available. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the total incentive budget of \$200,000 in 2027 and of \$500,000 in 2028 and in 2029 will be designated for property owners. At the discretion of the City, and based on program uptake, if the allocated incentive budget for property owners is reached in a given year but there is still demand for it, staff may

choose to reallocate funding from the Certification Rebate for Landscape Professionals to the Design Rebate for Property Owners.

6) Applicant Eligibility for Rebates

Certification Rebate for Landscape Professionals

The rebate will be available to members of the landscape design, construction, and/or maintenance sectors who are residents of the City of Toronto.

Design Rebate for Property Owners

The rebate will be available to owners of residential properties within the City of Toronto.

Property managers may also apply on behalf of a property owner(s) for one or more residential properties that they manage within Toronto but will need to confirm that they have consent from the property owner(s) prior to receiving the rebate.

Ineligible applicants for the design rebate include:

- Tenants
- Non-residential property owners
- Property managers of non-residential properties

7) Eligible Expenses for Rebates

Certification Rebate for Landscape Professionals

Eligible expenses include enrolment costs for certification courses offered by a professional landscaping certifying body in Ontario focused on the use of green infrastructure for holistic, systems-based stormwater management on residential properties.

At this time, the only such certification course that staff are aware of is the Level III Fusion Landscape Professional (FLP) Training & Certification program¹ offered by Landscape Ontario. This approved course will be listed on the City's website for the program. If staff become aware of other green infrastructure courses, they will be reviewed by staff to ensure they meet the minimum criteria of educating landscape professionals on how to use multiple types of green infrastructure solutions to create a holistic system that comprehensively addresses stormwater issues on residential properties. The City's website for the program will be updated as needed to reflect additional approved courses. If a landscape professional would like to enroll in a course that is not listed on the website, they must first obtain approval from the City to ensure it meets program requirements. This will be facilitated through the application process as outlined in Section 9 (Rebate Application Process and Assessment).

¹ <https://fusionlandscapeprofessional.ca/>

Participants will only receive the rebate once the City receives proof of payment and completion of the course, as described in Section 9 (Rebate Application Process and Assessment).

Design Rebate for Property Owners

The design work must be completed by a landscape professional who has completed certification on the use of green infrastructure for holistic, systems-based stormwater management on residential properties. The online directory of local landscape companies with green infrastructure certified landscape professionals that will be on the City's website for the program will help property owners easily identify qualified experts. To be eligible for the rebate, the design must include one or more green infrastructure options, such as permeable pavement, a rain garden, and/or a soakaway pit, on a residential property to help manage stormwater. The design must identify existing permeable surfaces, plans to use green infrastructure to manage stormwater, and include relevant design specifications (e.g. the suitability of the lot grading and soil type, the size of green infrastructure relative to size of impermeable surfaces). There is no commitment of the property owner to follow through on the plan.

The design process may also conclude that green infrastructure is not suitable for the property. This must be provided to the property owner in writing, with an explanation, by the landscape professional.

Participants will only receive the rebate after receipts and a copy of the design plan, or a report indicating that the property is not suitable for green infrastructure, is submitted to, and accepted by, the City as described in Section 9 (Rebate Application Process and Assessment). A design rebate will be offered once per individual property in Toronto (e.g. if an individual owns or manages multiple properties in Toronto, they may apply for a rebate once for each property). The City is not responsible for evaluating the quality of design work or the effectiveness of the design completed by the landscape professional in managing stormwater to reduce runoff, mitigate flooding, promote biodiversity, reduce the urban heat island effect, and enhance resilience.

8) Ineligible Expenses for Rebates

Certification Rebate for Landscape Professionals

Ineligible expenses include:

- Certification programs that are not approved by the City, as per Section 7 (Eligible Expenses for Rebates).
- Certification program costs when the applicant did not complete, or provide proof of completion or payment of, the certification program.

Design Rebate for Property Owners

Ineligible expenses include:

- Design services provided by a landscape professional who has not completed an approved green infrastructure certification course, as outlined in Section 7.
- Any services that do not incorporate green infrastructure solutions or are unrelated to stormwater management.
- Any services that are used to incorporate green infrastructure solutions on non-residential properties.

9) Rebate Application Process and Assessment

Certification Rebate for Landscape Professionals

Eligible landscape professionals will submit an application to the City demonstrating interest in completing green infrastructure certification, including details about what the certification entails. This application will include the collection of personal information from the applicant, such as address, to confirm eligibility. Staff will review the certification course to ensure it meets minimum criteria as outlined in Section 7. Following approval, eligible applicants will enroll in the approved course. The City will provide a rebate of up to eighty percent (80%) of the certification cost up to a total of \$500 per professional. Proof of payment and course completion (including the results of any final evaluations or tests) will be required to be submitted to, and accepted by, the City prior to the City issuing the rebate.

Landscape companies located within the boundaries of Toronto, and providing service to residential properties in Toronto, that employ one or more professionals with approved green infrastructure certification, either previously obtained or obtained through the certification rebate provided by this program, will have the option of being listed in the online directory featured on the City's website for the program. This online directory will be promoted to property owners who may be interested in obtaining professional services to help them assess if and how to install and maintain green infrastructure on their property. To be added to this directory, landscape companies will complete an application process to provide the City with the required information to be featured on the City webpage as well as sign-off on the terms and conditions of being included in the directory.

Design Consultation Rebate for Property Owners

Eligible applicants will submit an application to the City demonstrating interest in design services from a certified landscape professional, including who they are interested in hiring and for what purpose. This application will include the collection of personal information from the applicant, such as address, to confirm eligibility. Following approval, eligible applicants will obtain the design services from their selected landscape professional. The City will provide the rebate of up to one hundred percent (100%) of the design services up to a total of \$500 per property. Receipts and a copy of

the design plan, or report indicating why green infrastructure is not suitable for the property, will be required to be submitted to, and accepted by, the City prior to the City issuing the rebate.

10) Program Evaluation

The program will be implemented as a three-year pilot and will then be evaluated to determine program continuation and/or enhancements.

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

- Determine if public education efforts, including the digital resource hub, and reducing the cost of design services were sufficient to address decision barriers the public is facing when deciding if and how to install and maintain green infrastructure on their property.
- Determine if an increased number of landscape professionals in Toronto obtained certification focused on green infrastructure solutions for stormwater management on residential properties.
- Determine if landscape professionals are offering more green infrastructure stormwater management solutions after completing certification.
- Determine the extent to which green infrastructure is installed on private property after accessing the design rebate.
- Obtain feedback from property owners interested in installing green infrastructure on their properties to understand what key barriers remain to doing so.