

From Policy to Practice: Building Successful Municipal Rain Gardens Webinar

April 14, 2026

[Webinar Recording](#)

The webinar showcased how the City of Richmond Hill plans, designs, and delivers rain garden projects to manage stormwater and build climate resilience. The presenters shared insights on the internal coordination and collaboration needed to successfully implement these projects, and strategies for engaging and educating the community on rain gardens.

Presenters

- Diana Shermet | Natural Environment Coordinator, Planning and Building Services | City of Richmond Hill
- John Tiberio | Project Manager, Infrastructure & Engineering Services | City of Richmond Hill

Presentation Overview

- Core Strategic Documents:
 - City of Richmond Hill's Environment Strategy directs staff to educate residents as water stewards, encourages incorporating sustainability in strategic park locations, and supports the improvement of habitat quality, which rain gardens facilitate.
 - The City's Official Plan directs the use of low impact development (LID) to minimize changes to water balance on development sites.
 - The Community Energy and Emissions Plan identifies natural heritage and green infrastructure as tools for capturing and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.
- The City utilizes specific technical guidelines, including Design and Construction Guidelines (Division 8), which provides technical requirements and standards for LID.
- The City's Sustainable Metrics Program includes a stormwater management metric that supports a treatment-train approach to reduce downstream flooding and erosion.
- Case Study: Minthorne Park Demonstration Site
 - Selected as a revitalization project to replace aging infrastructure and demonstrate the efficacy of rain gardens
 - The park features two rain gardens, the larger of which collects water from more than 50% of the site, including hard surfaces for runoff control
 - The gardens are designed as depressed beds that filter pollutants through a specialized soil to support groundwater recharge
 - Manicured sod was replaced with naturalized no-mow zones and tree canopy
 - Native plants were selected to thrive in varying water conditions

- Rain gardens are sensitive to sediment build up, and during construction silt control breaches during freeze thaw cycles led to a clogged system. This required replacing the soil medium and plant material.
- To fund education and awareness campaigns, the City was a part of ICLEI's Advancing Adaptation Program
- Workshops with residents revealed community concerns regarding rain gardens, including the misconception that they act as breeding grounds for mosquitoes
- To engage residents and encourage rain garden adoption, the City developed a do-it-yourself (DIY) guide, initiated a recognition program category for rain gardens and native plants, and in partnership with the TRCA provides education on energy retrofits and flooding mitigation measures through the Climate Ready Homes Program. The City has also installed interpretive signage at Minthorne Park to educate residents on how rain gardens function.
- Rain gardens reduce carbon footprint associated with weekly lawn mowing but are not zero maintenance. They require specialized monitoring to ensure plant health and proper drainage.
- LIDs are included in the City' Corporate Asset Management Plan and are valued based on replacement costs as green infrastructure.

Resources

- [City of Richmond Hill Environment Strategy](#)
- [City of Richmond Hill Climate Change Framework](#)
- [City of Richmond Hill Community Energy and Emissions Plan: Richmond Hill's Path to a Low-Carbon Future](#)
- [City of Richmond Hill Asset Management Plan](#)
- [Climate Ready Homes Program](#)
- [Build Your Own Rain Garden: A Resident Guide](#)

Contact Information

Please reach out to us at any time with questions, input, or for additional information.

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