

## **Recommended Residential Stormwater Subsidy Program**

Staff are recommending the City retains the local non-profit Green Venture regarding a formal single source partnership to continue and expand upon their current NATURhood program. The NATURhood program will provide on-site guidance to implement stormwater measures that would be subsidized by the City. This approach would be similar to residential subsidized incentive programs offered in Guelph, Kitchener and Waterloo.

At this time, the NATURhood program is an initiative offered by Green Venture to help residents slow water down and soak it up on their property, while providing beautification, home to pollinators, places to gather, flood protection and more. NATURhoods currently includes demonstration sites, workshops, events, resources and a rebate program for stormwater, rain gardens, pervious surfaces and other green infrastructure features. This is a unique program because it empowers residents to improve their properties with various types of green infrastructure which can improve property value and aesthetics, increase biodiversity, reduce urban heat island effect, and, ultimately better manage stormwater flooding.

### Rebate Program Eligibility

Currently, to be eligible for Green Venture's rebate program, residents:

- Must be located in Hamilton, ON
- Must be the homeowner or have written consent to complete the work
- Must be able to complete program milestones in the Summer (check-in dates and final project due dates, expense tracking and photo progress)
- Should be interested in rain gardens, water harvesting, reducing stormwater runoff
- May have a home or lawn that experiences flooding

### Eligible Expenses

Currently, Green Venture offers a \$500 rebate to around 15 homeowners annually. Example of eligible expenses for the rebate program are materials or contractors associated with:

- permeable pavements
- bioswales
- green roofs and blue roofs
- rain gardens
- infiltration galleries
- soakaway pits
- water harvesting

Throughout the year Green Venture offers design workshops and "ask the expert" open houses as well as Rain Coach visits. The Rain Coach will visit pre-approved Green Infrastructure projects and rain gardens that are verified by Green Venture. Visits from

the Rain Coach are mandatory for approved projects and can be conducted in-person or virtually. The Rain Coach can answer specific questions about the site regarding rain harvesting and landscape design. The Rain Coach will share information about other relevant City of Hamilton programs including, but not limited to: downspout disconnection, street tree planting, lead pipe replacements, backwater valves installation, etc. The Rain Coach can also provide a list of Fusion Certified landscape professionals who can create rain garden designs and landscaping. Property owners will be responsible to evaluate and hire a contractor to implement approved projects.

In early spring residents apply and applications are reviewed and approved. As the project progresses residents submit expense forms, provide receipts and pictures of the project. Once the project is complete Green Venture staff will perform a site visit and issue rebate cheques to approved applicants who have completed their project.

Green Venture has proposed a three-year plan which entails actively reaching up to 3500 Hamilton residents annually through workshops, festivals, meetings and events. Their target is to receive up to 70 annual applications and complete up to 70 residential rebates in one calendar year. They will also continue to promote additional City programs such as tree planting and downspout disconnection.

The enhanced program will mimic the Ready Rain Ottawa model and provide rebates up to \$1,500 for certified landscape designs and materials or fees for garden installations, rain harvesting tanks or rain barrels, soakaway pit or bioswale installation and rebates of up to \$5,000 for architectural drawings, certified engineering plans, landscape designs and materials for permeable pavements.

As per Recommendation (b) to Report FCS22043(c), a preliminary budget of \$500K for the NATURhood program will be referred to the 2025 Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Rate Supported Budget. The Program would be funded from dedicated Stormwater Fee revenues as of April 1, 2026. The contract will be managed by the Hamilton Water Division.

The proposed annual program costs for Green Venture to run and administer the Residential Stormwater Subsidy Program can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<b>Program Cost</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Annual Costs</b>
Green Venture Labour Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Director overseeing the project implementation (part-time)</li> <li>• Program Manager developing the project strategy and budgets (part-time)</li> <li>• Full-time Project Coordinator administering the program</li> </ul>	\$193,200

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time Rain Coach for personalized visits and promote other City programs</li> </ul>	
Portal setup and administration fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program will require set-up of a secure portal system to collect applications and store resident data</li> <li>• Annual administration, intake, workflow and communications software and IT costs</li> </ul>	\$20,000
Associated Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing and promotion</li> <li>• Bookkeeping, insurance, office expenses</li> <li>• Signage and supplies</li> <li>• Event fees and rentals</li> <li>• Mileage for site visits</li> </ul>	\$20,000
Rebate or Subsidies Pay-outs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rain Gardens</li> <li>• Bioswales</li> <li>• Permeable Driveway</li> </ul>	\$227,500
<b>Total Program Cost for 40 – 70 residential rebates per year</b>		<b>\$460,700</b>

Per City of Hamilton By-law 21-215, Procurement Policy #11 - "Non-competitive Procurements", staff must obtain Council approval for single source requests greater than \$250 K. As previously noted, Green Venture is currently administering the NATURhoods program which will be the basis for the Residential Stormwater Subsidy Program. As per recommendation (g) to Report FCS22043(c) staff is requesting the single source procurement of Green Venture as external administrators for the Residential Stormwater Subsidy Program.