



# Stormwater Utility Development

## January 2014



# Introduction



- Overview of the engagement program
- Summary of Feedback from property owners and stakeholders
- Recommendations
- Next steps



# Communications Goals

- To increase understanding about the stormwater system (the need, the age, condition and the challenges)
- To celebrate and promote rainwater management techniques that are already being used in Victoria
- To outline benefits of stormwater utility in terms of equality for all users, environmental stewardship, improvements to infrastructure and ability to respond to climate change impacts



# Engagement Goals

- To outline the impacts of the change in the funding model and seek feedback on the proposed utility
- To introduce potential rainwater management credits and seek feedback on the credit program





# Engagement Overview



- **Approach:** information/education, focus on face to face meetings to gather recommendations
- **Launch:** Media kick-off event
- **Promotion of engagement opportunities:** Mail-outs, paid advertising, media outreach, social media
- **Educational Tools:** Three videos, an interactive timeline tool, the watershed table, Rain Garden Gnome signs and puppet, and display boards
- **Engagement:** Three open houses, 10 stakeholder meetings and one additional community meeting, online and print surveys, correspondence

# Rain Garden Gnomes

Social Media: “The gnomes are coming...”



# Media Kick Off

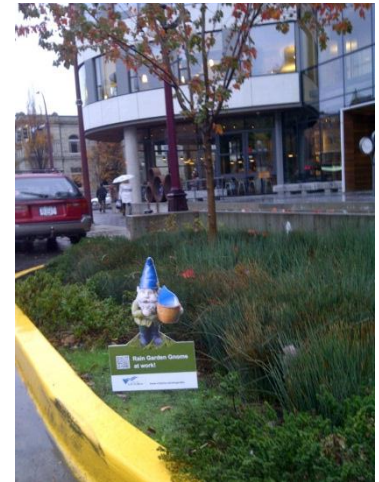
- Media event to introduce the City of Victoria's Rain Garden Gnomes and celebrate local property owners



Hillside Mall



Trent Street Rain Garden



The Atrium



# Media Kick Off

- Model Rainwater Management Home



Rain Barrel



Cistern



Rain Garden



Permeable Paving



# Media Coverage

- 3 media releases
- 14 print, radio, TV stories

## Victoria offers tips ahead of 2014 stormwater bills 2

Colonist

There's no stopping the rain, but Victoria hopes to help you manage it better.

Homeowners won't get their first stormwater utility bills from the City of Victoria until next September but in the meantime, using videos, open houses, media releases, a phone hotline and even a stormwater garden gnome, the city is about to launch a program to explain the ins and outs of rainwater management.

Essentially, the more you can do to slow the rate of runoff from your property into city storm drains, the better.

## Rain garden gnomes kick-off city stormwater awareness

Daniel Palmer  
News staff

Walking through Laura Porcher's Gonzales property is like looking 50 years into the future.

The gutters around Porcher's roof funnel rainwater into a 1200-litre cistern, which she uses to water her backyard vegetable garden and chicken coop.

Near the sidewalk, a simple rain garden grows where there was once grass, while permeable concrete absorbs runoff along the driveway.

"It was about sustainability for me," said Porcher, who completed the landscaping renovation last February. "It made sense to me to have something harmonious with nature that wouldn't require a lot of upkeep, and it's just lovely and beautiful."



Don Denton/News staff

Ed Robertson, assistant director of public works for the city of Victoria, displays one of the rain garden gnome signs that will be placed around the city to raise awareness about how stormwater is managed and used. This gnome was placed in a Robertson Street rain garden.

# Stakeholder Meetings

- **Presentation:** overview of stormwater utility, rainwater management and budget
- **Small Group Session:**
  - Q and A, discussions
  - Mapped out rainwater management options for properties
  - Brainstormed and prioritized recommendations for City

## Participation:

- 10 stakeholder meetings
- 143 participants



# Open Houses

## Participation:

• Victoria Public Market (average visit: 5-10 minutes)	80
• Burnside Gorge (average visit: 30 minutes)	35
• Victoria Public Market (average visit 10-15 minutes)	110
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>





# Surveys

- Five surveys for different property types

## Participation:

• Single-family	143
• Multi-family	76
• Commercial/Industrial	24
• Civic/Institutional	4
• Tax Exempt	16

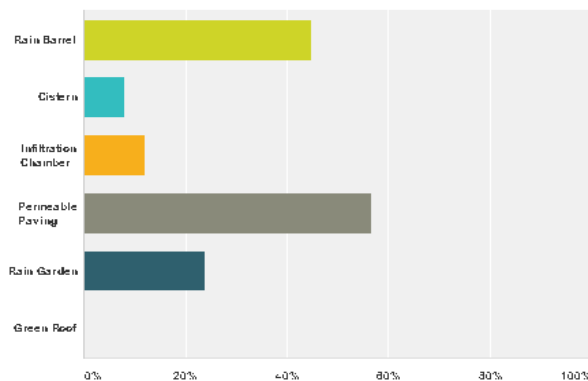
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**Total: 263**

Stormwater Utility and Rainwater Credit Program Survey (for single-family homes)

**Q9 Do you currently use any of these rainwater management methods on your property? (Select all that apply)**

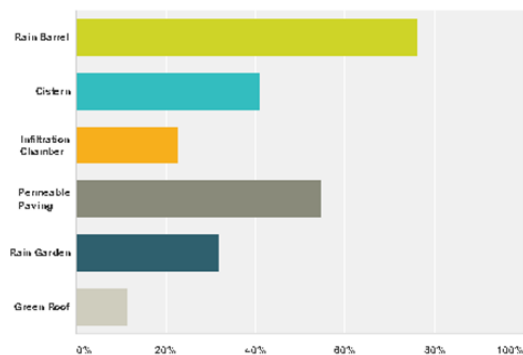
Answered: 76 Skipped: 87



Stormwater Utility and Rainwater Credit Program Survey (for single-family homes)

**Q10 With the proposed credit program, would you consider any of these rainwater management methods for your property? (Select all that apply)**

Answered: 95 Skipped: 55

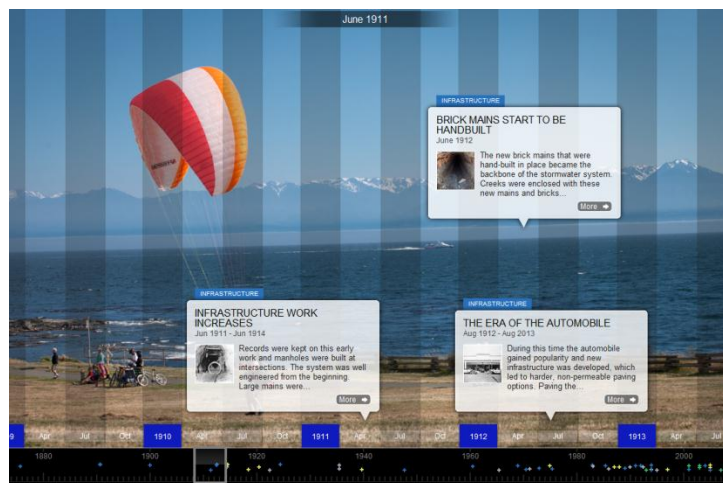


# Website

- 732 page views: [www.victoria.ca/stormwater](http://www.victoria.ca/stormwater)
- Three videos: 401 views, and partnered with Shaw to air all 3 videos



- Interactive historical timeline: also used at Open Houses



# Media and Social Media

## Facebook

- 9 posts :17 shares, 28 likes, 40+ comments, 35,516 views

## Twitter

- 13 tweets :20 re-tweets







# Correspondence

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- **Emails: 98**
- **Phone Calls: 79**
- **Letters: 3**



# Session Feedback



## Summary:

- Staff were friendly, open minded and accessible
- Well facilitated, good information and easy to follow
- Liked expert staff at tables, good opportunity to get answers
- Acceptance of everyone's ideas, effective group discussion
- Liked that recommendations from groups were shared
- Clear intention to help develop a workable stormwater utility
- Liked that you were listening to our concerns
- Somewhat rushed
- Noise was a challenge in larger groups



# Lessons Learned



- “Ask an Expert” was a popular format
- Small group Q and A was very effective
- Ask participants for specific recommendations, not just comments
- A tablet for surveys would have been useful at open houses
- There are many different and complex property types
- The process required staff commitment from multiple departments
- The process increased engagement knowledge and capacity within several departments
- Highlighted the value of working with Associations
- The rain garden gnome and interactive elements were effective
- The Victoria Public Market venue was great for “going to where the people are”



# Engagement Summary

Stakeholder meetings	143 participants
Open Houses	225 participants
Surveys	263
Emails	98
Letters	3
Phone calls	79
Stormwater webpage views	732
Facebook	35,516 views
Twitter	13 tweets
Media	14 stories

- **Connected with property owners from:**
  - all property types
  - all 13 neighbourhoods





# Summary of Feedback



- Primary focus of feedback was stakeholder meetings and open houses
- Specific recommendations were provided by participants
- Surveys provided additional opportunity for feedback
- Feedback was compiled and grouped into the following themes:
  - Credit program
  - Credit program simplicity
  - Utility model
  - Timeline
  - Communication



# Feedback - Credit Program



- Develop Case Studies
  - Provide detailed cost information for typical property types
  - Clearly show return on investment for rainwater management techniques
  - Show all potential benefits and costs in addition to stormwater (reductions in water, sewer and energy bills, increased insurance, etc.)
- Make the Credit Program more flexible
  - Some participants suggested that the credit program be more flexible in how credits are developed and applied
  - Additional credit options could be considered



# Feedback - Credit Program



- Consider a Rebate Program with the Credit Program
  - Some participants suggested that an up-front rebate for materials would help to stimulate more interest in the Credit program
  - Would also help offset upfront costs of installation
- Engage Associations to help with Credit Program development
  - Various associations indicated interest in further involvement in credit program development (including the development community, Strata and Rental Property Owners, Community Associations and Professional Associations)
  - Associations will also be able to assist with sharing information with user groups





# Feedback - Credit Program Simplicity



- Make the Credit Program streamlined and easy to access
  - Participants suggested that the credit program needs to be kept simple and easy to access (one point of contact, simple processes, etc).
- Clear Design Guidelines for Credits
  - Simplify design guidelines and reduce professional services required. Look for opportunities to educate property owners so that they can do some of the projects themselves.
- Provide City support to help owners with Credit Program
  - Provide support to help property owners to consider credit program. Assist with program requirements and resources who can provide guidance and advice.



# Feedback - Utility Model



- Phase in Stormwater Utility charges
  - Consider phasing in charges to moderate the impact to those with increases
- Cap future rates
  - Consider capping the rates in subsequent years
- Make Adjustments to the Utility Model
  - Consider adjusting the model to address some specific property types and situations
- Make Adjustments to the Utility Rate
  - Consider adjusting the rate to make it less costly



# Feedback - Timeline



- Consider changing the Implementation date to 2015
  - Consistent theme from stakeholder meetings (all but single family properties)
  - Would allow property owners to adapt to rate changes, adjust fees that they charge, etc.
  - Would provide more opportunity to undertake work for credits prior to initial billing cycle



# Feedback – Communication and Education

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- Communication and Education
  - Communicate the outcome of engagement: close the loop with the community (what we heard, recommendations, next steps)
  - Provide information and clarification about the stormwater program
  - Clearly explain how property owners can take advantage of the credit program
  - Disseminate information through various associations to help to communicate with membership groups





# Recommendations



1. That Council receives this report for information.
2. That Council approves the 2015 implementation date for the Stormwater Utility launch.



# Next Steps



- Communicate results of engagement program to stakeholders and the public
- Staff to analyze engagement data in detail and make adjustments where appropriate
- Finalize Rainwater Credit program details
- Update to stormwater section in Sewer Bylaw
- Final Utility model, Rainwater Credit program, and bylaw to be brought to Council in late Spring for approval and adoption
- Development and delivery of educational materials