

Town honoured for improving water health at LSRCA's 40th anniversary

On its 40th anniversary, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority recognized several communities, including Aurora, for their efforts in improving water quality within the Lake Simcoe Watershed.

The Healthy Water Award, a cornerstone of the LSRCA's Conservation Awards, was presented to several municipalities and Aurora's recognition zeroed in the Town's efforts to increase awareness of Low Impact Development (LID) Inspection and Maintenance Training through workshops benefiting communities throughout the watershed.

LID initiatives mimic natural water cycles to protect watercourses from pollutants that can be found in stormwater runoff. These can take the form of rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, permeable pavement and more.

"We are honoured to receive the Healthy Water Award and that our contributions are making a positive difference in protecting the water quality in the Lake Simcoe Watershed," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. "And what makes me particularly proud is that this award recognizes our efforts at supporting and working with other municipalities to help create a sustainable and healthier watershed in all of our communities."

The workshops, according to municipal staff, provided virtual classroom experiences and hands-on lessons, while also showcasing LID features that have been installed in the parking lot of the Aurora Community Centre related to stormwater control.

"The LID Stormwater Features are a newer approach to treating quality and quantity," said Dan Naccarato, Roads Traffic Supervisor for the Town of Aurora. "They're not installed in every municipality yet, but they're becoming more and more common and the LSRCA is hoping to see more of these implemented through Town projects, private parking lots. Any time you would require any sort of stormwater management they're looking to see more of these LID features installed as opposed to the previous and former conventional stormwater management [systems]."

LID features have been installed all over Aurora by the Town, says Naccarato, including within new developments such as the redevelopment of Highland Gate into a residential community.

"They're being installed in new developments by developers, in Town projects, they're being installed in private properties with landowners and large commercial properties that may be able to house some of these features. These are all kind of in the works. Some of them are already installed and taking place. For example, the Highland Gate development has many different LID stormwater features that are currently being installed and once the Town assumes these features, the maintenance and upkeep of these features will be the responsibility of the Town."

LIDs require specialized maintenance that might not be feasible for the average homeowner due to maintenance costs, but some domestic measures might be as simple as installing a rain garden.

"It's a garden with plants, mulch, trees and everything else but it's designed to take stormwater and filter it and treat it, and control quantity and quality of that stormwater before it is released back into the water course," he says. "LIDs serve a purpose to treat the stormwater and reduce run-off and reduce harmful toxins and things that may leech into our watercourse."

"Their main purpose is to provide that quality control before it is released back into our water courses, our streams, rivers, and lakes, and also give some aesthetically pleasing aspects of that as well. Typically, people are used to seeing ditches and culverts, catch basins, and things like that, but these are now alternatives to those."

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