

## **City seeks to strike stormwater balance**

News

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By: Doug Hallett, Guelph Tribune.

**T**he city is embarking on an 18-month study of how to turn water from big storms that falls in older parts of Guelph into something useful for the city.

The new stormwater management master plan initiative, which was recently approved by council, aims to strike a balance.

It will "balance the need to address flooding within the city with a city-wide strategy that considers stormwater not necessarily as inconvenient runoff, but as an important resource that can be utilized," says a city staff report.

The aim is to use the stormwater "to improve natural environment, contribute to water conservation targets and minimize pollutant discharges to river systems within the city."

Before the 1980s, the basic approach to stormwater management in the older areas of the city was to convey the stormwater runoff as quickly as possible to a stream in order to minimize flooding, the report says.

"However, recent flooding events, such as the ones experienced in a number of areas of the city last summer, have caused significant flooding and, in some cases, property damage," it adds.

It says that these storm events are being "attributed to climate change," and that their main characteristics are their very high intensity, their short duration, their increased frequency and being localized instead of widespread.

Since the 1990s, the city has been preparing stormwater management plans for new development sites in the context of subwatershed studies, the report says. Such studies done for the Hanlon Creek, Torrence Creek, Clythe Creek and Hadati Creek sub-watersheds have provided guidance for stormwater management in new developments.

Based on these studies, stormwater systems were designed to deal with more than flooding. They were also designed to maintain and enhance the natural environment by addressing surface and groundwater quality and quantity, wetlands, fisheries habitat and other issues.

In essence, the report says, such subwatershed plans have "enabled an ecosystem-based approach to water resource and land use management for new development."

The purpose of the stormwater management master plan will be to develop a plan for managing runoff from older areas of the city, while improving the healthy and sustainability of the Eramosa and Speed rivers and their tributaries.

The study, which will explore and evaluate innovative approaches to managing stormwater runoff, will include public information centres, the report says. Public consultation will also include residential focus groups that will look at types of "low-impact development" measures which could be successfully implemented in the city.

The consulting firm Philips Engineering Ltd. has been picked to provide professional engineering services for the master plan, whose cost will be paid from development charges.