

Fountain Creek Watershed District
CAFSM Small Grant Application 2023 for Residential Raingardens
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Introduction

The Fountain Creek Watershed District is pleased to submit the following research grant application to support pilot residential raingardens in the Colorado Springs neighborhood of Stratton Meadows. This is a diverse neighborhood consisting of single-family residential homes and affordable housing apartment complexes with a high population of underserved residents. The implementation of these gardens will showcase their numerous benefits including improved water quality, reduced runoff volumes, beautification, and support of pollinator habitat.

Background

A resident of Stratton Meadows approached the city of Colorado Springs with the concept of rain gardens in the right-of-way, and after be granted permission, she independently financed and constructed the city's first two water quality curb cuts on residential properties this spring. We want to build off this momentum by expanding the installation and public awareness of raingardens. If selected, grant funds will be used to install four additional curb cuts, dig and plant raingardens, and develop educational resources.

Objectives

As raingardens are a relatively new practice in our region, these pilot projects will help confirm their value for managing urban runoff to practitioners (builders, stormwater managers, etc.) and the local community.

Installing curb cuts redirects roadway runoff to a garden for absorption into the soil - reducing the volume of storm flows and street flooding. This benefit was readily observed in this year's installed raingardens, even owing to our record rainfalls and early, wet snowfall. This flood reduction benefit will be multiplied by the installation of additional projects.

By reducing street runoff, raingardens decrease the amount of stormwater pollutants entering nearby waterways. Stormwater is infiltrated, cleaned naturally by the plant material and soils, and slowly released into the groundwater. Studies done on neighborhood scale raingardens show proven reductions in sediment, phosphorus, and other pollutants, in addition to 90% volume reduction of stormwater runoff. This pilot could build into a much grander scale program in the future. 1

The proposed curb cut locations are in a highly visible area with significant daily pedestrian traffic including the walking route to a nearby elementary school and community center as well as being on the local public bus route. After a social media post about the original curb cuts went viral, numerous residents have reached out with interest in having curb cuts on their properties and a curb cut support team was formed. The group meets monthly to discuss expanding raingarden implementation and outreach. E-newsletters, social media, tours, a new webpage, brochure, and educational signage at the site are all components of the proposed communication plan.

As one of Colorado’s fastest-growing cities, water conservation and water quality protection are greatly needed in Colorado Springs. Raingardens can dramatically protect watershed health for both Fountain Creek residences and our downstream neighbors throughout the Arkansas Valley. In addition to stormwater management and water quality benefits, raingardens beautify properties and provide pollinator habitat creating additional watershed benefits along the front range.

Project Budget

Program management will be provided by the FCWD staff and volunteers. The requested grant budget will cover the following items:

| Item | Quantity | Cost | Total | Notes |
|--|----------|-----------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Signage with brochure rack | 1 | \$500.00 | \$500 | |
| Educational resource development (brochure, website, social media, sign, etc.) | 10 hours | \$30/hour | \$300 | FCWD Staff |
| Curb Cuts (concrete contractor hired to drill four 4” holes in curb) | 4 | \$225 | \$900 | |
| Landscape Work (digging out rain basins and removing extra soil) | 20 hours | \$30/hour | \$600 | Kelly Bull |
| Native Plants | 40 | \$5.00 | \$200 | |
| Mulch | | | 0 | Free from City mulch pile? |
| | | | \$2500 | |