

# City of Richmond Hill Sustainability Metrics Program

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *General Program Information*

#### **1. What is the Sustainability Metrics Program (SMP)?**

The SMP is a municipal planning initiative to guide and measure the sustainability performance of new development, and to support innovation and emerging trends in building complete communities. The program's numerous co-benefits include

- Reducing GHG emissions
- Protecting and enhancing our natural heritage
- Supporting local economic opportunities
- Improving health and wellness for residents
- And enhancing the local building stock.

#### **2. Why should developers participate in the program?**

Developers play a crucial role in shaping our growing Richmond Hill community. The SMP offers a platform for innovation and collaboration in responding to environmental and economic challenges, so that we balance growth with green.

Note: Richmond Hill has initiated a Community Improvement Plan related to both affordable housing and sustainable design. We will be exploring opportunities to further encourage and incentivize higher level uptake of the Metrics program through this CIP.

#### **3. Which municipalities are partners in the program?**

The original version of the SMP was developed collaboratively by the Cities of Brampton, Richmond Hill and Vaughan in the early 2010's. The City of Markham joined as a partner during the recent program update.

#### **4. Is the program identical for all the partner municipalities?**

Partner municipalities have worked hard to ensure that the updated program is largely the same from one jurisdiction to another. The overall process, scoring system, metrics categories, and most of the performance indicators are consistent. However, certain differences (for example, stemming from City by-laws or policies) mean that applicants need to ensure they are using the SMP resources and tools specific to the municipality where the development application is being made.

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### *Program Update*

#### **5. Why was the SMP updated?**

In 2022 the program was updated to reflect changes in sustainable development policies at various levels of government; to align with best practices; and to help address our city plans, goals, and, targets – including those from our 2021 [Community Energy and Emissions Plan](#).

#### **6. Was the development community consulted for the update?**

The partner municipalities conducted extensive consultation with BILD, Canadian Green Building Council, the development industry, Conservation Authorities, Regional and Local staff as well as NGOs, such as The Atmospheric Fund and Clean Air Partnership.

#### **7. When does the updated program take effect?**

In Richmond Hill, the updated program takes effect on January 1, 2023, with the new online Sustainability Assessment Tool (SAT) available starting January 6. Applications submitted up to and on December 31, 2022 fall under the original program.

#### **8. How is the updated SMP different than the original version?**

Using feedback from staff, the development community, and other stakeholders, the partner municipalities sought updates that would make the program more current and effective, but also more streamlined, easy to use, consistent and transparent. Key changes include:

- Increased number of metrics - meaning greater flexibility and more choice
- New and updated metrics that improve consistency with regulatory requirements and reflect industry trends
- New category for "Innovation"
- Harmonized performance levels (bronze, silver, gold)
- Updated scoring thresholds and ranges
- Guidebook improvements – more comprehensive, easier to use
- Application process – new online tool with modern, mobile-friendly, accessible interface; improved navigation; automated point calculations; summary page and PDF Summary Report generator

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *Participating in the Program*

#### **9. How does the Program work?**

Applicants use the SMP Guidebook and online Sustainability Assessment Tool (SAT) to select appropriate metrics for their development which will generate an overall Sustainability Score that is required to meet the minimum “bronze” threshold:

- Draft Plan applications = 27 to 40 points
- Site Plan applications = 41 to 61 points

#### **10. When is participation required?**

In Richmond Hill, the SMP applies to Site Plans (where applicable) and Draft Plans (not Block Plans).

#### **11. What steps are involved?**

- City staff notify applicants of the program and its requirements at the pre-submission stage.
- Using Richmond Hill's SMP Guidebook, applicants determine which metrics they will apply for, and ensure they have the required documentation.
- Using the online SAT, applicants enter their contact information and indicate
  - plan type (Draft Plan or Site Plan) and site type (residential, mixed use or ICI)
  - which metrics they are selecting
  - the location of required documentation in their development application
- The SAT automatically generates a Sustainability Score based on the applicant's choices. The total score from all selected metrics must achieve a minimum “bronze” threshold; applicants are encouraged to strive for “silver” and “gold”.
- City staff receive the score and review the SAT submission to confirm if the information provided aligns with the respective score.
- The Sustainability Score may be included in the staff recommendation report to Council, if applicable.

#### **12. How do I start?**

Visit Richmond Hill's Sustainability Metrics webpage to start your submission, and check the “Helpful Resources” section for videos, presentation slides, and more.