



Eligibility Criteria: Depaving, Permeable Paving, or Rain Gardens

Updated February 23, 2018

One of the primary goals of each Rain Check project is to keep stormwater from residential properties out of the sewer system. The Philadelphia Water Department requires that every project must manage stormwater that would otherwise flow into the sewer. This is true in areas with a combined sewer or separate sewer.

In most cases, it is easy to determine if stormwater enters the sewer system or if it is already being absorbed into the ground after it leaves a roof, patio, driveway or other hard surface. In cases where it is less clear, keep these criteria in mind:

- **When the installation is depaving only**, follow-up treatment of topsoil at a depth of 6" or more will be allowed. If a participant wants no follow-up treatment, then the contractor should inform the participant that most urban soils carry some level of lead and recommend they follow-up with grass, plantings, or mulch, but a follow-up treatment is not mandatory. "Lead in Soil" handout is available for download on Rain Check website and should be provided to participant.
- **Any depave that includes installing a bed of clean stone at least 6" deep** (the base required for permeable paving), will be eligible for the permeable paving subsidy of \$15 sf.
- **If hardscape is surrounded by a permeable surface**, it may not be eligible for Rain Check. When the hardscape slopes towards a permeable area and the flow path over the hardscape area is shorter than the flow path of the permeable area, then the Philadelphia Water Department assumes that the hardscape is already being managed by the permeable area, and thus not eligible for treatment through Rain Check. (See Examples #1 and #2 below)
- However, **in cases where the slope of the hardscape or the permeable area causes water to enter the sewer system**, then the hardscape area is likely eligible for treatment through Rain Check.
- **If the downspout is not connected to the riser and emptying onto the existing hardscape**, then permeable pavers are not eligible unless the downspout can be directed away from the installation (e.g., to nearby area drain, alleyway, or permeable area that can accommodate the roof drainage area) or reconnected to the riser.
- **If the basement is wet**, then permeable paving must begin at least 10' away from the basement wall. If the cause for the wet basement is obvious (e.g., broken pipe) and will be addressed before or during installation, then installation of permeable pavers up to the foundation wall would be possible. "Wet Basement Guidelines" document is available for download on the Rain Check website.
- **If hardscape is located between two structures with sub-basements**, with limited space for the liner extension, then it is assumed there will be no room left for infiltration. Water will collect and cause water intrusion issues for participant and/or neighbor, then permeable pavers are not eligible through Rain Check. *Recommended width of no less than 18', allowing 12' of infiltration area and 6' of liner area. (See Example #3)

- **If the hardscape is up against a retaining wall with no weep holes**, then permeable pavers are not eligible through Rain Check.
- **If a yard is already permeable**, it will only be eligible for Rain Check if the installation of impervious hardscape in the project area would increase the volume of stormwater entering the sewer system. (see Example #4)
- **If there is no downspout to disconnect for a rain garden**, then a rain garden would not be eligible through Rain Check. (See Example #5)
- **If a downspout is already disconnected and can be directed to a rain garden**, then a rain garden installation will be eligible. However, if a property has some downspouts that are connected to the sewer system and some are not, we strongly encourage participants to disconnect the downspout connected to the sewer and route that to the rain garden.
- A 2' setback for rain gardens is advised from **structures on a slab or where there is no basement**. A liner is suggested, but not necessary.
- **If extensive work is needed to support an installation**, then a permeable paver or rain garden installation would not be eligible through Rain Check. If the participant is willing to fund the extra work, then the installation will be reviewed for eligibility. *PWD's goal is to make sure that our installations are cost efficient. All proposals will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- **PWD will review all masonry and rain garden projects and will evaluate eligibility on a case-by-case basis** before issuing final installation approval.

Permeable Paving / Depaving - Example #1

Re-doing this walkway with permeable pavers would not qualify for a Rain Check cost-share. Even though the lawn is sloped, it is much larger than the hardscape. All of the water running off of this walkway will be absorbed by the lawn and surrounding vegetation.



Permeable Paving / Depaving - Example #2

Re-doing the below front walkways with permeable pavers would not qualify for a Rain Check cost-share. Almost all of the water running off of this walkway will be absorbed by the lawn and surrounding vegetation.



Space between two subgrade basements - Example #3

This space is located between two homes that both have subgrade basements. Per Rain Check guidelines, liners would need to be installed against the exterior foundation of both homes. The liners would then need to extend horizontally below the paver base at least 3'. With 3' of liner material on both sides of the area, there would be no space below the paver system for water to infiltrate. This project would not be eligible for permeable pavers.



Existing pervious surface Example #4

Although this backyard is already pervious, the installation of impervious cement in the area would cause runoff to either travel back towards the house and into the area drain (next to downspout) or if pitched away from the home, runoff would go towards the back alleyway and out to the street's storm sewer. Based on this "what-if" scenario, this project would be eligible for permeable pavers.



Rain Garden Example #5

Installing a rain garden here to manage runoff from the patio would not qualify for a Rain Check cost-share. Note: there are no downspouts to disconnect in this example – the rain garden would only manage the patio.



*On occasion, there are some rain garden projects that we have installed where the downspout is already disconnected from the sewer. This happens rarely and only when the installation of the rain garden significantly improves stormwater management on the site.