

How 2 men created a toilet renaissance in Fort Collins

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Here are two easy ways to get a Niagara Stealth toilet for your home. Jacy Marmaduke



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(Photo: Valerie Mosley/The Coloradoan)

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Just call Robert Mann and Paul Hegland the neighborhood toilet fairies.

The Fort Collins neighbors recently wrapped up a project installing 21 so-called “magic toilets” around the River Rock neighborhood northwest of downtown, and now they’re trying to spread the word about the most water-efficient throne on the market.

Before you pooh-pooh the idea, consider this: Water-efficient toilets cut down on your utility bill, Fort Collins Utilities will pay you to install one and there’s a chance you qualify for a new toilet free of charge.

The story of Mann, Hegland and the magic toilets — OK, they’re technically called [Niagara Stealth](#) toilets, which still sounds pretty cool — started when Mann heard Fort Collins Utilities was doubling some of its appliance rebates for the last four months of 2016.

Fort Collins Utilities customers can get rebates for all kinds of efficient appliances, from washing machines to lawnmowers to, you guessed it, toilets. The city has incentivized the replacement of more than 5,350 toilets since the rebate program launched in 2010.

Usually, the city offers a \$75 rebate for [WaterSense toilets](#) that use less than a gallon of water per flush. But from September through December, the city doubled that rebate to \$150.

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Mann, a water conservation aficionado who admits to perusing the toilet section every time he goes to Home Depot, knew the 0.8-gallon-per-flush Niagara Stealth toilet costs \$150. So he struck up a conversation with Hegland, and the two had an idea: Why not organize a toilet renaissance at River Rock?

Mann worked to organize the rebates with the city and ordered the toilets from Home

locations. Meanwhile, Hegland enlisted neighbors.

Changing your toilet might sound like a small thing, but toilets can account for close to one-third of household water consumption. More water per flush means more energy used to pump the water. And despite a federal law that mandates all new toilets use 1.6 gallons of water or less per flush, older and less efficient toilets were grandfathered in.

One toilet truly can make a difference.



Paul Hegland and Bob Mann installed highly efficient toilets in the common house at River Rock Commons Cohousing Community. The new toilets use .8 gallons per flush, about half the water used by the previous toilets. (Photo: Valerie Mosley/The Coloradoan)

Residents of the environmentally conscious co-housing River Rock neighborhood didn't need much convincing. The stealth toilet is twice as water-efficient as the toilets installed when the community was built in 1999, and all they had to do was agree to pay Hegland and Mann for the \$100 installation cost.

The men arranged for a delivery truck to drop off the toilets and coordinated pick-up of the old toilets for recycling. Thirteen of the 34 River Rock units were outfitted with one or two new toilets each for a total of 21 toilets.

"We really tried to make it easy for our residents," Mann said.

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Their next step is getting local Home Depot locations to sell the Niagara Stealth toilet in store so more people know about it.

Home Depot representatives didn't respond to a request for comment. Lowes also does not sell the toilet at its Fort Collins location.

Mann and Hegland said the toilet project was in part a way of dealing with post-election uncertainty.

"I think after the election, a lot of people said, 'What can I do?' — particularly on the environmental side," Mann said. "We need to not be discouraged by whatever's happening in Washington or Denver. There are all sorts of things that we individually can do."

Hegland said it reminds him of what former House Speaker Tip O'Neill said: "All politics is local."

"If you do stuff on a local level, it's going to magnify," Hegland said.

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How to get a water-efficient toilet for cheap (or free)

- Check out your toilet and see how much water it uses per flush. The information should be written on the toilet or inside the tank, or you can Google the toilet's name. If it's 1.7 gallons or more, you qualify for a free toilet and installation by the Larimer County Conservation Corps.
- If that's you, contact the organization to set up a home efficiency assessment at larimerworkforce.org/young-adults/lccc/home-efficiency-assessment or call 970-498-6660. Do it sooner rather than later, because the corps only does assessments through April.
- If your toilet uses less than 1.7 gallons per flush, you can still get a rebate for a new toilet. Visit fcgov.com/utilities/residential/conserves/water-efficiency/toilet-rebates for details on applying for a \$50 to \$75 rebate for up to two toilets in your home.
- Note that you need to be a Fort Collins Utilities residential customer to qualify for the rebate or free toilet installation, and you have to recycle your old toilet to qualify for the rebate.