



Managing Wet Weather with Green Infrastructure

Municipal Handbook

Green Streets

Managing Wet Weather with Green Infrastructure

Municipal Handbook

Green Streets

prepared by

Robb Lukes
Christopher Kloss
Low Impact Development Center

The Municipal Handbook is a series of documents
to help local officials implement green infrastructure in their communities.

December 2008

EPA-833-F-08-009

Front Cover Photos
Top: rain garden; permeable pavers; rain barrel;
planter; tree boxes.
Large photo: green alley in Chicago

Green Streets

Introduction

By design and function, urban areas are covered with impervious surfaces: roofs, roads, sidewalks, and parking lots. Although all contribute to stormwater runoff, the effects and necessary mitigation of the various types of surfaces can vary significantly. Of these, roads and travel surfaces present perhaps the largest urban pollution sources and also one of the greatest opportunities for green infrastructure use.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHA) estimates that more than 20% of U.S. roads are in urban areas.[1] Urban roads, along with sidewalks and parking lots, are estimated to constitute almost two-thirds of the total impervious cover and contribute a similar ratio of runoff.[2] While a significant source of runoff, roads are also a part of the infrastructure system, conveying stormwater along gutters to inlets and the buried pipe network. Effective road drainage, translated as moving stormwater into the conveyance system quickly, has been a design priority while opportunities for enhanced environmental management have been overlooked especially in the urban environment.

Table 1. Examples of Stormwater Pollutants Typical of Roads.[3, 4]

Pollutant	Source	Effects
Trash	---	Physical damage to aquatic animals and fish, release of poisonous substances
Sediment/solids	Construction, unpaved areas	Increased turbidity, increased transport of soil bound pollutants, negative effects on aquatic organisms reproduction and function
Metals • Copper • Zinc • Lead • Arsenic	 • Vehicle brake pads • Vehicle tires, motor oil • Vehicle emissions and engines • Vehicle emissions, brake linings, automotive fluids	Toxic to aquatic organisms and can accumulate in sediments and fish tissues
Organics associated with petroleum (e.g., PAHs)	Vehicle emissions, automotive fluids, gas stations	Toxic to aquatic organisms
Nutrients	Vehicle emissions, atmospheric deposition	Promotes eutrophication and depleted dissolved oxygen concentrations

The altered flow regime from traditional roadways, increased runoff volume, more frequent runoff events, and high runoff peak flows, are damaging to the environment and a risk to property downstream. These erosive flows in receiving streams will cause down cutting and channel shifting in some places and excessive sedimentation in others. The unnatural flow regime destroys stream habitat and disrupts aquatic systems.

Compounding the deliberate rapid conveyance of stormwater, roads also are prime collection sites for pollutants. Because roads are a component of the stormwater conveyance system, are impacted by atmospheric deposition, and exposed to vehicles, they collect a wide suite of pollutants and deliver them into the conveyance system and ultimately receiving streams (See Table 1). The metals, combustion by-products, and automotive fluids from vehicles can present a toxic mix that combines with the ubiquitous nutrients, trash, and suspended solids.

While other impervious surfaces can be replaced, for example using green roofs to decrease the amount of impervious roof surface, for the most part, impervious roads will, for some time to come, constitute a significant percentage of urban imperviousness because of their current widespread existence. Reducing road widths and other strategies to limit the amount of impervious surface are critical, but truly addressing road runoff requires mitigating its effects.

> **Green Streets** achieve multiple benefits, such as improved water quality and more livable communities, through the integration of stormwater treatment techniques which use natural processes and landscaping.

Roads present many opportunities for green infrastructure application. One principle of green infrastructure involves reducing and treating stormwater close to its source. Urban transportation right-of-ways integrated with green techniques are often called "green streets". Green streets provide a source control for a main contributor of stormwater runoff and pollutant load. In addition, green infrastructure approaches complement street facility upgrades, street aesthetic improvements, and urban tree canopy efforts that also make use of the right-of-way and allow it to achieve multiple goals and benefits. Using the right-of-way for treatment also links green with gray infrastructure by making use of the engineered conveyance of roads and providing connections to conveyance systems when needed.

Green streets are beneficial for new road construction and retrofits. They can provide substantial economic benefits when used in transportation applications. Billions of dollars are spent annually on road construction and rehabilitation, with a large percentage focused on rehabilitation especially in urban areas. Coordinating green infrastructure installation with broader transportation improvements can significantly reduce the marginal cost of stormwater management by including it within larger infrastructure improvements. Also, and not unimportantly, right-of-way installations allow for easy public maintenance. A large municipal concern regarding green infrastructure use is maintenance; using roads and right-of-ways as locations for green infrastructure not only addresses a significant pollutant source, but also alleviates access and maintenance concerns by using public space.

In urban areas, roads present many opportunities for coordinated green infrastructure use. Some municipalities are capitalizing on the benefits gained by introducing green infrastructure in transportation applications. This paper will evaluate programs and policies that have been used to successfully integrate green infrastructure into roads and right-of-ways.

Green Street Designs

Green streets can incorporate a wide variety of design elements including street trees, permeable pavements, bioretention, and swales. Although the design and appearance of green streets will vary, the functional goals are the same: provide source control of stormwater, limit its transport and pollutant conveyance to the collection system, restore predevelopment hydrology to the extent possible, and provide environmentally enhanced roads. Successful application of green techniques will encourage soil and vegetation contact and infiltration and retention of stormwater.

Alternative Street Designs (Street Widths)

A green street design begins before any BMPs are considered. When building a new street or streets, the layout and street network must be planned to respect the existing hydrologic functions of the land (preserve wetlands, buffers, high-permeability soils, etc.) and to minimize the impervious area. If retrofitting or redeveloping a street, opportunities to eliminate unnecessary impervious area should be explored.

Implementation Hurdles

Many urban and suburban streets, sized to meet code requirements for emergency service vehicles and provide a free flow of traffic, are oversized for their typical everyday functions. The Uniform Fire Code requires that streets have a *minimum 20 feet of unobstructed width;* a street with parking on both sides would require a width of at least 34 feet. In addition to stormwater concerns, wide streets have many detrimental implications on neighborhood livability, traffic conditions, and pedestrian safety.[5]

Oregon State Code Granting Authority for Street Standards to Local Government

ORS 92.044 - Local governments shall *supersede and prevail over any specifications and standards for roads and streets set forth in a uniform fire code adopted by the State Fire Marshal, a municipal fire department or a county firefighting agency*…. Local governments shall consider the needs of the fire department or fire-fighting agency when adopting the final specifications and standards.

The Transportation Growth and Management Program of Oregon, through a Stakeholder Design Team, developed a guide for reducing street widths titled the *Neighborhood Street Design Guidelines.*[6] The document provides a helpful framework for cities to conduct an inclusive review of street design profiles with the goal of reducing widths. Solutions for accommodating emergency vehicles while minimizing street widths are described in the document. They include alternative street parking configurations, vehicle pullout space, connected street networks, prohibiting parking near intersections, and smaller block lengths.

Figure 1. The street-side swale and adjacent porous concrete sidewalk are located in the High Point neighborhood of Seattle, WA
(Source: Abby Hall, US EPA).

In 1997, Oregon, which has adopted the *Uniform Fire Code,* specifically granted local government the authority to establish alternative street design standards but requires them to consult with fire departments before standards are adopted. Table 2 provides examples of alternative street widths allowed in U.S. jurisdictions.[7]

Swales

Swales are vegetated open channels designed to accept sheet flow runoff and convey it in broad shallow flow. The intent of swales is to reduce stormwater volume through infiltration, improve water quality through vegetative and soil filtration, and reduce flow velocity by increasing channel roughness. In the simple roadside grassed form, they have been a common historical component of road design. Additional benefit can be attained through more complex forms of swales, such as those with amended soils, bioretention soils, gravel storage areas, underdrains, weirs, and thick diverse vegetation.

Implementation Hurdles

There is a common misconception of open channel drainage being at the bottom of a street development hierarchy in which curb and gutter are at the top. Seattle's Street Edge Alternative Project and other natural drainage swale pilot projects have demonstrated that urban swales not only mitigate stormwater impacts, but they can also enhance the urban environment.[8]

Table 2. Examples of Alternative Street Widths

Jurisdiction	Street Width	Parking Condition
Phoenix, AZ	28'	parking both sides
Santa Rosa, CA	30' 26'-28' 20' 20'	parking both sides, <1000ADT parking one side no parking neck downs @ intersection
Orlando, FL	28' 22'	parking both sides, res. Lots<55' wide parking both sides, res. Lots>55' wide
Birmingham, MI	26' 20'	parking both sides parking one side
Howard County, MD	24'	parking unregulated
Kirkland, WA	12' 20' 24' 28'	alley parking one side parking both sides – low density only parking both sides
Madison, WI	27' 28'	parking both sides, <3DU/AC parking both sides, 3-10 DU/AC

ADT: Average Daily Traffic DU/AC: dwelling units per acre

Bioretention Curb Extensions and Sidewalk Planters

Bioretention is a versatile green street strategy. Bioretention features can be tree boxes taking runoff from the street, indistinguishable from conventional tree boxes. Bioretention features can also be attractive attention grabbing planter boxes or curb extensions. Many natural processes occur within bioretention cells: infiltration and storage reduces runoff volumes and attenuates peak flows; biological and chemical reactions occur in the mulch, soil matrix, and root zone; and stormwater is filtered through vegetation and soil.

Figure 2. This bioretention area takes runoff from the street through a trench drain in the sidewalk as well as runoff from the sidewalk through curb cuts *(Source: Abby Hall, US EPA).*

Implementation Hurdles

A few municipal DOT programs have instituted green street requirements in roadway projects, but as of yet, specifications for street bioretention have not yet been incorporated into municipal DOT specifications. Many cities do have street bioretention pilot projects; two of the well documented programs are noted in the table. Several concerns and considerations have prevented standard implementation of bioretention by DOTs.

Table 3. Municipalities with Swale Specifications and Standard Details

Municipality	Document	Section Title	Section #
City of Austin[9]	Standard Specifications and Standard Details	Grass-Lined Swale and Grass-Lined Swale with Stone Center	627S
City of Seattle[10]	2008 Standard Specifications for Municipal Construction	Natural Drainage Systems	7-21

Table 4. Municipalities with Bioretention Pilot Projects in the Right-of-Way

Municipality	Bioretention Type	Document
Maplewood, MN	Rain gardens	*Implementing Rainwater in Urban Stormwater Management* [11]
Portland, OR	• Curb extensions • Planters • Rain gardens	*2006 Stormwater Management Facility Monitoring Report* [12]

The diversity of shapes, sizes, and layouts bioretention can take is a significant obstacle to their incorporation with DOT specifications and standards. Street configurations, topography, soil conditions, and space availability are some of the factors that will influence the design of the bioretention facility. These variables make documentation of each new bioretention project all the more important. By building a menu of templates from local bioretention projects, future projects with similar conditions will be easier to implement and cost less to design. The documentation should include copies of the details and specifications for the materials used. A section on construction and operation issues, costs, lessons learned, and recommendations for similar designs should also be included in project documentation. Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services has proven adept at documenting each of its Green Streets projects and making them accessible online.[13]

Utilities are a chief constraint to implementing bioretention as a retrofit in urban areas. The Prince George's County, MD Bioretention Design Specifications and Criteria manual recommends applying the same clearance criteria recommended for storm drainage pipes.[14] Municipal design standards should specify the appropriate clearance from bioretention or allowable traversing.

Prince George's County, MD - 2.12.1.16 Utility Clearance

Utility clearances that apply to storm drainage pipe and structure placement also apply to bioretention. Standard utility clearances for storm drainage pipes have been established at 1' vertical and 5' horizontal. However, bioretention systems are shallow, non-structural IMP's consisting of mostly plant and soil components, (often) with a flexible underdrain discharge pipe. For this reason, other utilities may traverse a bioretention facility without adverse impact. Conduits and other utility lines may cross through the facility but construction and maintenance operations must include safeguard provisions. In some instances, bioretention could be utilized where utility conflicts would make structural BMP applications impractical.

Plants are another common concern of municipal staff, whether it is maintenance, salt tolerance, or plant height with regard to safety and security. Cities actively implementing LID practices in public spaces maintain lists of plants which fit the vegetated stormwater management practice niche. These are plants that flourish in the regional climate conditions, are adapted to periodic flooding, are low maintenance, and, if in cold climates, salt tolerant. Most often these plants are natives, but sometimes an approved non-native will best fit necessary criteria. A municipal plant list should be periodically updated based on maintenance experience, and vegetation health surveys.

Permeable Pavement

Permeable pavement comes in four forms: permeable concrete, permeable asphalt, permeable interlocking concrete pavers, and grid pavers. Permeable concrete and asphalt are similar to their impervious counterparts but are open graded or have reduced fines and typically have a special binder added. Methods for pouring, setting, and curing these permeable pavements also differ from the impervious versions. The concrete and grid pavers are modular systems. Concrete pavers are installed with gaps between them that allow water to pass through to the base. Grid pavers are typically a durable plastic matrix that can be filled with gravel or vegetation. All of the permeable pavement systems have an aggregate base in common which provides structural support, runoff storage, and pollutant removal through filtering and adsorption. Aside from a rougher unfinished surface, permeable concrete and asphalt look very similar to their impervious versions. Permeable concrete and asphalt and certain permeable concrete pavers are ADA compliant.

Implementation Hurdles

Of all the green streets practices, municipal DOTs have been arguably most cautious about implementing permeable pavements, though it should be noted that some DOTs have, for decades, specified open-graded asphalt for low use roadways because of lower cost; to minimize vehicle hydroplaning; and to reduce road noise. The reticence to implement on a large-scale, however, is understandable given the lack of predictability and experience behind impervious pavements. However, improved technology, new and ongoing research, and a growing number of pilot projects are dispelling common myths about permeable pavements.

Figure 3. Pervious pavers used in the roadway of a neighborhood development in Wilsonville, OR *(Source: Abby Hall, US EPA).*

The greatest concern among DOT staff seems to be a perceived lack of long-term performance and maintenance data. Universities and DOTs began experimenting with permeable pavements in parking lots, maintenance yards, and pedestrian areas as early as twenty years ago in the U.S., even earlier in Europe. There is now a wealth of data on permeable pavements successfully used for these purposes in nearly every climate region of the country. In recent years, the cities of Portland, OR, Seattle, WA, and Waterford, CT and several private developments have constructed permeable pavement pilots within the roadway with positive results.

> Permeable pavement concerns in the roadway often raise concerns of safety, maintenance, and durability. Municipalities can replace impervious surfaces in other non-critical areas such as sidewalks, alleys, and municipal parking lots. These types of applications help municipalities build experience and a market for the technology.

The two typical maintenance activities are periodic sweeping and vacuuming. The City of Olympia, WA has experimented with several methods of clearing debris from permeable concrete sidewalks. Each of the methods was evaluated on the ease of use, debris removal, and the performance pace. The cost analysis by Olympia, WA found that the maintenance cost for pervious pavement was still lower than the traditional pavement when the cost of stormwater management was considered.

Table 5. Municipalities with Permeable Pavement Specifications and Standard Details

Municipality	Document	Section Title	Section #
Portland	2007 Standard Construction Specifications	Unit Pavers (includes permeable pavers)	00760
Olympia	WSDOT Specification	Pervious Concrete Sidewalks	8-30

Freeze/thaw and snow plows are the major concerns for permeable pavements in cold climate communities. However, these concerns have proven to be generally unwarranted when appropriate design and maintenance practices are employed. A well designed permeable pavement structure will always drain and never freeze solid. The air voids in the pavement allow plenty of space for moisture to freeze and ice crystals to expand. Also, rapid drainage through the pavement eliminates the occurrence of freezing puddles and black ice. Cold climate municipalities will need to make adjustments to snow plowing and deicing programs for permeable pavement areas. Snow plow blades must be raised enough to prevent scraping the surface of permeable pavements, particularly paver systems. Also, sand should not be applied.

Table 6. A Study in Olympia, WA Comparison of the cost of permeable concrete sidewalks to the cost of traditional impervious sidewalks[15]

Traditional Concrete Sidewalk		Permeable Concrete Sidewalk	
Construction Cost	Maintenance Cost	Construction Cost	Maintenance Cost
$5,003,000*	$156,000	$2,615,000*	$147,000
Total = $5,159,000 $101.16 per square yard		Total = $2,762,000 $54.16 per square yard	

*The cost of stormwater management (stormwater pond) for the added impervious surface is factored into the significantly higher cost of constructing the traditional concrete sidewalk. Maintenance of the stormwater pond is also factored into the traditional concrete sidewalk maintenance cost.

Sidewalk trees and tree boxes

Figure 4. Trees planted at the same time but with different soil volumes, Washington DC
(Source: Casey Trees)

From reducing the urban heat island effect and reducing stormwater runoff to improving the urban aesthetic and improving air quality, much is expected of street trees. Street trees are even good for the economy. Customers spend 12% more in shops on streets lined with trees than on those without trees.[16] However, most often street trees are given very little space to grow in often inhospitable environments. The soil around street trees often becomes compacted during the construction of paved surfaces and minimized as underground utilities encroach on root space. If tree roots are surrounded by compacted soils or are deprived of air and water by impervious streets and sidewalks, their growth will be stunted, their health will decline, and their expected life span will be cut short. By providing adequate soil volume and a good soil mixture, the benefits obtained from a street tree multiply. To obtain a healthy soil volume, trees can simply be provided larger tree boxes, or structural soils, root paths, or "silva cells" can be used under sidewalks or other paved areas to expand root zones. These allow tree roots the space they need to grow to full size. This increases the health of the tree and provides the benefits of a mature sized tree, such as shade and air quality benefits, sooner than a tree with confined root space.

Table 7. Healthy Tree Volume and Permeable Pavement Specifications and Standard Details

Jurisdictions	Minimum Soil Volume	Section Title	Section #
Prince William County, VA	Large tree 970 cf Medium tree 750 cf Small tree 500 cf	Design Construction Manual (Sec 800)	Table 8-8
Alexandria, VA	300 cf	Landscape Guidelines	II.B. (2)

Implementation Hurdles

Providing an adequate root volume for trees comes down to a trade off between space in the right-of-way and added construction costs. The least expensive way to obtain the volume needed for roots to grow to full size is providing adequate space unhindered by utilities or other encroachments. However, it is often hard to reserve space dedicated just to street trees in an urban right-of-way with so many other uses competing for the room they need. As a result, some creative solutions, though they cost more to install, have become useful alternatives in crowded subsurface space. Structural soils, root paths, and "silva cells" leave void space for roots and still allow sidewalks to be constructed near trees.

Root Paths can be used to increase tree root volume by connecting a small tree root volume with a larger subsurface volume nearby. A tunnel-like system extends from the tree underneath a sidewalk and connects to an open space on the other side.

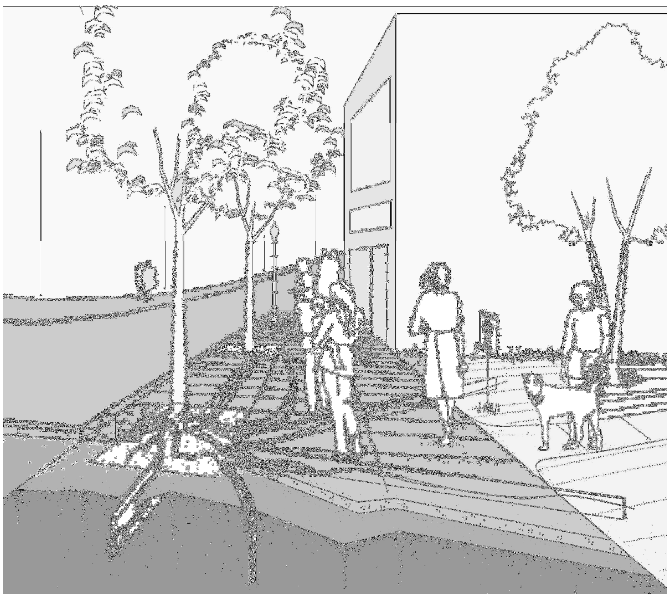

Figure 5. Root Paths direct tree roots under paving and into better soil areas for tree root growth
(Source: Arlington County, VA).

Silva Cells[17] are another option for supporting sidewalks near trees while still providing enough space for roots to grow. These plastic milk crate-like frames fit together and act as a supporting structure for a sidewalk while leaving room for uncompacted soil and roots inside the frame.

Permeable pavement sidewalks are another enhancement to the root space. They provide moisture and air to roots under sidewalks. Soils under permeable pavements can still become compacted. Structural soils[18] are a good companion tree planting practice to permeable pavement. When planting a tree in structural soils an adequate tree root volume is excavated and filled with a mix of stone and soil that still provides void space for healthy roots and allows for sidewalks, plazas or other paved surfaces to be constructed over them.

<u>Case Studies</u>

Portland, OR: Green Street Pilot Projects

Portland, Oregon is a national leader in developing green infrastructure. Portland's innovation in stormwater management was necessitated by the need to satisfy a Combined Sewer Overflow consent decree, Safe Drinking Water Act requirements, impending Total Maximum Daily Load limitations, Superfund cleanup measures and basement flooding. Through the 1990s, over 3 billion gallons of combined sewer overflow discharged to the Willamette River every year.[19] All of these factors plus leadership and local desires to create green solutions and industries compelled the city to implement green infrastructure as a complement to adding capacity to the sewer system with large pipe overflow interceptors. Despite gaps in long-term performance data, Portland took a proactive approach in implementing green infrastructure pilot projects.

Portland's green infrastructure pilot projects have their roots in the city's 2001 Sustainable Infrastructure Committee. The committee, consisting of representatives from Portland's three infrastructure management Bureaus, documented the city's ongoing efforts toward sustainable infrastructure, gathered research on green infrastructure projects from around the country, and identified opportunities for local pilots.[20, 21, 22]

Figure 6. Silva cell structures support the sidewalk while providing root space for street trees
(Source: Deep Root Partners, LP).

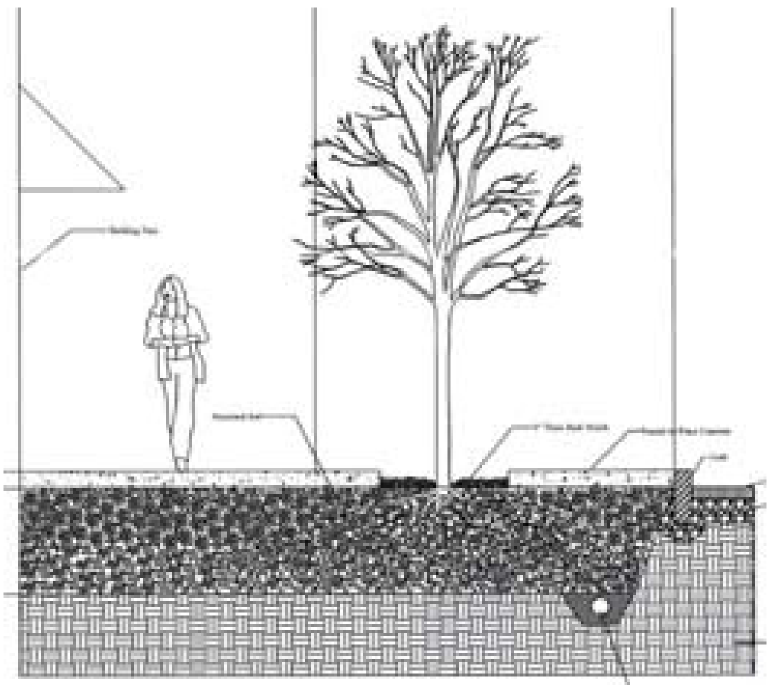

Figure 7. Structural soils provide void space for root growth and load-bearing for sidewalk
(Source: Urban Horticulture Institute, Cornell University).

One of the Bureau of Environmental Services' (BES) earliest green infrastructure retrofit projects within the right-of-way was a set of two stormwater curb extensions on NE Siskiyou Street. Portland had been retrofitting many streets with curb extensions for the purpose of pedestrian safety, but this was the first done for the purpose of treating street runoff. In a simulated 25-year storm event flow test, the curb extensions captured 85% of the runoff volume that would be discharged to the combined sewer system and reduced peak flow by 88%.[23]

Between 2003 and 2007, Portland designed and implemented a variety of Green Street pilots. Funding sources for these projects have come from BES, Portland Department of Transportation, U.S. EPA, and an Innovative Wet Weather Fund. BES combined funds with an EPA grant to create the Innovative Wet Weather Fund. In 2004, nearly $3 million from the Innovative Wet Weather Fund was budgeted for a long list of projects from city green roofs, public-private projects, and a number of pilot projects within the right-of-way.[24] Several pilots have been cost competitive with or less costly than conventional upgrades. The Bureau recognizes that costs will decrease once these projects become more routine. Many of the pilot project costs included one time costs such as the development of outreach materials and standard drawings.

Figure 8: NE Siskiyou Vegetated Curb Extensions
Source: City of Portland – Bureau of Environmental Services

Table 8. Portland, OR - Green Street Pilot Projects

Location	Design	Year Completed	Cost
NE Siskiyou b/w NE 35th Pl. and NE 36th Ave	Stormwater curb extension	2003	$20,000
3 blocks of the Westmoreland Neighborhood	Permeable Pavers in parking lanes and curb to curb	2004	$412,000
SE Ankeny b/w SE 56th and SE 57th Ave.	Stormwater curb extensions	2004	$11,946
NE Fremont b/w NE 131st and 132nd Av	Stormwater curb extension	2005	$20,400
SW 12th Ave b/w SW Montgomery and Mill	Stormwater planters	2005	$34,850
East Holladay Park	Pervious paver parking lot	2005	$165,000
4 blocks of North Gay Avenue b/w N Wygant and N Sumner	Porous concrete in curb lanes and curb to curb; porous asphalt in curb lanes and curb to curb	2005	--
SW Texas	Stormwater wetlands and swales	2007	$2.3 million
Division St. – New Seasons Market	Stormwater planters and swales	--	--
SE Tibbetts and SE 21st Ave.	Stormwater curb extension and planters	--	--

Source: Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, 2008
http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?c=44463&

Each of the pilot projects have been well documented by BES. A consistent format has been used to describe pilot background, features, engineering design, landscaping, project costs, maintenance, monitoring, and, most importantly, lessons learned. These case studies as well as other Green Street documentation can be found on BES's Sustainable Stormwater webpage, http://www.portlandonline.com/BES/index.cfm?c=34598. Due to physical factors (drainage, slope, soil, existing utilities, multiple uses) and development factors (retrofit, redevelopment, and new construction), there will be many variations on Green Streets. As part of the program, a continually updated Green Street Profile Notebook will catalog the successful green street projects. Users can use the Notebook for permitting guidance, to identify green streets facilities appropriate for various factors, but the document is not a technical document with standard details.

The Green Streets Team

The City of Portland, OR is widely acknowledged for long term, forward thinking, and comprehensive transportation and environmental planning. Portland recognized the fact that 66% of the City's total runoff is collected from streets and the right-of-way.[25] The city also saw the potential for transportation corridors to meet multiple objectives, including:

- Comprehensively address numerous City goals for neighborhood livability, sustainable development, increased green spaces, stormwater management, and groundwater protection;
- Integrate infrastructure functions by creating "linear parks" along streets that provide both pedestrian/bike areas and stormwater management;
- Avoid the key impacts of unmanaged stormwater whereby surface waterbodies are degraded, and water quality suffers;
- Manage stormwater with investments citizens can support, participate in, and see;
- Manage stormwater as a resource, rather than a waste;
- Protect pipe infrastructure investments (extend the life of pipe infrastructure, limit the additional demand on the combined sewer system as development occurs);
- Protect wellhead areas by managing stormwater on the surface; and
- Provide increased neighborhood amenities and value.

In a two phased process from 2005 to 2007, the Green Streets Team, a cross agency and interdisciplinary team, developed a comprehensive green streets policy and a way forward for the green streets agenda. Phase 1 identified challenges and issues and began a process for addressing them. Barriers to the public initiation of green street projects included a code and standards that would disallow or discourage green street strategies, long term performance unknowns, and maintenance responsibilities. To address these barriers, the Green Streets Team organized into subgroups focusing on outreach, technical guidance, infrastructure, maintenance, and resources.

Phase 2 of the Green Streets project synthesized the opportunities and solutions identified in Phase 1 into a citywide Green Streets Program. The first priority for this phase was the drafting of a binding citywide policy. The resolution was adopted by the Portland City Council in March 2007.

Prior to the start of the Portland effort, 90% of implemented green street projects were issued by private permits rather than city initiated projects.

Six Approaches to Implementing Green Streets	
Pathway	**Implementation**
City-initiated street improvement projects	City designs, manages, maintains
City-initiated stormwater retrofits	City designs, manages, maintains
Neighborhood-initiated LIDs	
Developer-initiated subdivisions with public streets	Developer designs and builds via City permit and review process, then turns over new right of way to the City after warranty period
Developer-initiated subdivisions with private streets	Developer designs and builds via City permit and review process, and turns over to home-owner association
Developer-related initiated frontage improvements on existing public streets	Developer designs and builds new sidewalks and curbs via City permit and review process, usually because the City required it via a building permit or via a land division

Source: Portland Green Streets, Phase 1

Portland City Council Approved Green Streets Policy

Goal: City of Portland will promote and incorporate the use of green street facilities in public and private development.

City elected officials and staff will:

1. Infrastructure Projects in the Right of Way:
   a. Incorporate green street facilities into all City of Portland funded development, redevelopment or enhancement projects as required by the City's September 2004 (or updated) Stormwater Management Manual. Maintain these facilities according to the May 2006 (or updated) Green Streets Maintenance Policy.

      If a green street facility (infiltrating or flow through) is not incorporated into the Infrastructure Project, or only partial management is achieved, then an off site project or off site management fee will be required.

   b. Any City of Portland funded development, redevelopment or enhancement project, that does not trigger the Stormwater Manual but requires a street opening permit or occurs in the right of way, shall pay into a "% for Green" Street fund. The amount shall be 1% of the construction costs for the project.
      Exceptions: Emergency maintenance and repair projects, repair and replacement of sidewalks and driveways, pedestrian and trail replacement, tree planting, utility pole installation, street light poles, traffic, signal poles, traffic control signs, fire hydrants, where this use of funds would violate contracted or legal restrictions.
2. Project Planning and Design:
   a. Foster communication and coordination among City Bureaus to encourage consideration of watershed health and improved water quality through use of green street facilities as part of planning and design of Bureau projects.
   b. Coordinate Bureau work programs and projects to implement Green Streets as an integrated aspect of City infrastructure.
   c. Plan for large-scale use of Green Streets as a means of better connecting neighborhoods, better use of the right of way, and enhancing neighborhood livability.
   d. Strive to develop new and innovative means to cost-effectively construct new green street facilities.
   e. Develop standards and incentives (such as financial and technical resources, or facilitated permit review) for Green Streets projects that can be permitted and implemented by the private sector. These standards and incentives should be designed to encourage incorporation of green street facilities into private development, redevelopment and enhancement projects.
3. Project and Program Funding:
   a. Seek opportunities to leverage the work and associated funding of projects in the same geographic areas across Bureaus to create Green Street opportunities.
   b. Develop a predictable and sustainable means of funding implementation and maintenance of Green Street projects.
4. Outreach:
   a. Educate citizens, businesses, and the development community/industry about Green Streets and how they can serve as urban greenways to enhance, improve, and connect neighborhoods to encourage their support, demand and funding for these projects.
   b. Establish standard maintenance techniques and monitoring protocols for green street facilities across bureaus, and across groups within bureaus.
5. Project Evaluation:
   a. Conduct ongoing monitoring of green street facilities to evaluate facility effectiveness as well as performance in meeting multiple City objectives for:
      - Gallons managed;
      - Projects distributed geographically by watershed and by neighborhood; and

The second priority for Phase 2 was developing communication and planning procedures for incorporating multi-bureaus plans into the scheduled Portland DOT Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Three timeframes for green street project planning were recommended. In the short term, the CIP Planning Group, backed by the citywide policy directive, will shift to a focus on "identifying and evaluating opportunities to partner." For example, coordinating Water Bureau and BES pipe replacement projects with DOT maintenance, repair, and improvement projects. The mid-term approach is more proactive and involves forecasting potential green street projects using existing bureau data and GIS tools. As for the long term, green street objectives will be incorporated into the citywide systems plan which guides city bureaus for the next 20 years.

The Green Street Team methodology propelled Portland's early green street pilot projects into a comprehensive, citywide multi-bureau program. The program built on previous efforts by the Sustainable Infrastructure Committee as well as other efforts such as the 2005 Portland Watershed Management Plan, established a City Council mandated policy, and institutionalized green street development. The outcome of this approach is multi-agency buy-in and responsibility for the effort. For instance, because of their knowledge of plant maintenance, Portland Parks and Recreation is responsible for the maintenance of some DOT installations.

Chicago, IL: Green Alleys Program

The City of Chicago, Illinois has an alley system that is perhaps the largest in the world. These 13,000 publicly owned alleys result in 1,900 miles, or 3,500 acres, of impermeable surfaces in addition to the street network. Because the alley system was not originally paved, there are no sewer connections as part of the original design. Over time the alleys were paved and flooding in garages and basements began to occur as a result of unmanaged stormwater runoff. Since the city already spends $50 million each year to clean and upgrade 4,400 miles of sewer lines and 340,000 related structures, the preferred solution to the flooded alleys is one that doesn't put more stress on an already overburdened and expensive sewer system.[26]

In 2003, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) used permeable pavers and French drain pilot applications to remedy localized flooding problems in alleys in the 48th Ward.[27] These applications proved to be successful and by 2006, CDOT launched its Green Alley Program with the release of the Chicago Green Alley Handbook (Handbook).[28]

The Chicago Green Alley Program is unique because it marries green infrastructure practices in the public right-of-way with green infrastructure efforts on private property. The user-friendly Handbook, which describes both facets of the program including the design techniques and their benefits, is an award winning document. The American Society of Landscape Architects awarded the creators of the Handbook the 2007 Communications Honor Award for the clear graphics and simple, yet effective, message.[29] The Handbook explains to the residents why green infrastructure is important, how to be good stewards of the Green Alley in their neighborhood, and what sorts of "green" practices they can implement on their property to reduce waste, save water, and help manage stormwater wisely.

While the initial impetus behind the Green Alley Program was stormwater management, Chicago decided to use this opportunity to address other environmental concerns as well as reducing the urban heat island effect, recycling, energy conservation, and light pollution.

Green Infrastructure in the Right-of-Way

Chicago's Green Alley Program uses the following five techniques in the public right-of-way to "green" the alley:

1. Changing the grade of the alley to drain to the street rather than pond water in the alley or drain toward garages or private property.

2. Using permeable pavement that allows water to percolate into the ground rather than pond on the surface.

3. Using light colored paving material that reflects sunlight rather than adsorbing it, reducing urban heat island effect.

4. Incorporating recycled materials into the pavement mix to reduce the need for virgin materials and reduce the amount of waste going into the landfill.

5. Using energy efficient light fixtures that focus light downward, reducing light pollution.

Figure 9: Permeable Asphalt Installation Using Ground Tire Rubber.
Source: Chicago Department of Transportation, Sustainable Development Initiatives; Streetscape and Urban Design Program, CDOT Division of Project Development.

Four design approaches were created using these techniques. Based on the local conditions, the most appropriate approach is selected. In areas where soils are well-draining, permeable pavement is used. In areas where buildings come right up to the edge of pavement and infiltrated water could threaten foundations, impermeable pavement strips are used on the outside with a permeable pavement strip down the middle. In areas where soils do not provide much infiltration capacity, the alley is regraded to drain properly and impermeable pavement made with recycled materials is used. Another approach utilizes an infiltration trench down the middle of the alley. Light colored (high albedo) pavement, recycled materials, and energy efficient, glare reducing lights are a part of each design approach.

Green Infrastructure on Private Property
The Handbook also describes actions that property owners can take to "green" their own piece of Chicago. The Handbook describes the costs, benefits, and utility of the following practices:

- Recycling;
- Composting;
- Planting a tree;
- Using native landscape vegetation;
- Constructing a rain garden;
- Installing a rain barrel;
- Using permeable pavement for patios;
- Installing energy efficient lighting; and
- Utilizing natural detention.

By bringing this wide range of "green" practices to the attention of homeowners, the positive impacts of the Green Alley Program spread beyond the boundaries of the right-of-way, increasing awareness and providing practical resources to help community members be a part of the solution.

Chicago Green Alley Cost Considerations
When the program began in 2006, repaving the alleys with impermeable pavement ranged in cost from $120,000 to $150,000, whereas a total Green Alley reconstruction was more along the lines of $200,000 to $250,000.[30] While less expensive conventional rehabilitation options may seem more attractive, they don't provide a solution to the localized flooding issues or the combined sewer system overflow problems. Sewer system connections could be established to solve the localized flooding problem, but it would add to the already overburdened sewer system and increase the cost of the reconstruction to that of the impermeable alley option. Consequently, the higher priced Green Alley option proved to be the best investment as it has multiple benefits in addition to solving localized flooding and reducing flow into the combined sewer system. The additional benefits of the Green Alley Program include not only urban heat

island effect reduction, material recycling, energy conservation, and light pollution reduction, but also the creation of a new market.

In 2006, when the Green Alley Program began, the city paid about $145 per cubic yard of permeable concrete. Just one year later, the cost of permeable concrete had dropped to only $45 per cubic yard. Compared with the cost of ordinary concrete, $50 per cubic yard, permeable concrete may have seemed like an infeasible option in the past to customers wanting to purchase concrete.[31] After the city's initial investment in the local permeable concrete market, the product cost has come down making permeable concrete a more affordable option for other consumers besides the city. This has resulted in an increased application of permeable concrete throughout the region.

Figure 10: Permeable Pavers and Permeable Concrete Chicago Alleys
(Source: Abby Hall, US EPA)

The success of the Chicago Green Alley Program is evident. Not only are the alleys been "greened" as a result of the program, the surrounding properties and even the surrounding neighborhoods are experiencing the positive impacts of the program's implementation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Incorporating green streets as a feature of urban stormwater management requires matching road function with environmental performance. Enhancing roads with green elements can improve their primary function as a transportation corridor while simultaneously mitigating their negative environmental impacts. In theory and practice many municipalities are not far removed from dedicated green streets programs. Street tree and other greenscaping programs are often identified and promoted along urban transportation corridors. Adapting them to become fully functional green streets requires minor design modifications and an evaluation of how to maximize the benefits of environmental systems.

Portland's green streets program demonstrates how common road and right-of-way elements (e.g., traffic calming curb extensions, tree boxes) can be modified and optimized to provide stormwater management in addition to other benefits. The curb cuts and design variations to allow runoff to enter the vegetated areas are subtle changes with a significant impact and demonstrate how stormwater can be managed successfully at the source. One of the biggest successes of the program was reassessing common design features and realizing that environmental performance can be improved by integrating stormwater management.

Where Portland used vegetation, Chicago's Green Alley Program similarly demonstrates that hardscape elements can be an integral part of a greening program. By incorporating permeable pavements that simulate natural infiltration, Chicago enhances the necessary transportation function of alleys while enhancing infrastructure and environmental management. Portland also contrasts the "soft" and "hard" elements of green streets by using both permeable pavements and vegetated elements. The green options available demonstrate the flexibility of green infrastructure to satisfy road function and environmental objectives and highlight why transportation corridors are well suited for green infrastructure.

Elements necessary for a successful green streets program:

- **Pilot projects are critical.** The most successful municipal green street programs to date all began with well documented and monitored pilot projects. These projects have often been at least partially grant funded and receive the participation of locally active watershed groups working with the city infrastructure programs. The pilot projects are necessary to demonstrate that green streets can work in the local environment, can be relied upon, and fit with existing infrastructure. Pilot projects will help to dispel myths and resolve concerns.
- **Leadership in sustainability from the top.** The cities with the strongest green streets programs are those with mayors and city councils that have fully bought into sustainable infrastructure. Council passed green policies and mayoral sustainability mandates or mission statements are needed to institutionalize green street approaches and bring it beyond the token green project.
- **Buy-in from all municipal infrastructure departments.** By their nature, green streets cross many municipal programs. Green street practices impact stormwater management, street design, underground utilities, public lighting, green space planning, public work maintenance, and budgeting. When developing green streets, all of the relevant agencies must be represented. Also, coordination between the agencies on project planning is important for keeping green infrastructure construction costs low. Superior green street design at less cost occurs when sewer and water line replacement projects can be done in tandem with street redevelopment. These types of coordination efforts must happen at the long-term planning stage.
- **Documentation.** Green street projects need to be documented on two levels, the design and construction level and on a citywide tracking level. Due to the different street types and siting conditions, green street designs will take on many variations. By documenting the costs, construction, and design, the costs of similar future projects can be minimized and construction or design problems can be avoided or addressed. Tracking green street practices across the city is crucial for managing maintenance and quantifying aggregate benefits.
- **Public outreach.** Traditional pollution prevention outreach goes hand in hand with green street programs. Properly disposing of litter, yard waste, and hazardous chemicals and appropriately applying yard chemicals will help prolong the life of green street practices. An information campaign should also give the public an understanding of how green infrastructure works and the benefits and trade offs. In many cases, remedial maintenance of green street practices will be performed by neighboring property owners; they need to know how to maintain the practices to keep them performing optimally.

As public spaces, roads are prime candidates for green infrastructure improvements. In addition to enabling legislation, and technical guidance, developing a green streets program requires an institutional re-evaluation of how right-of-ways are most effectively managed. This process typically includes:

- Assessing the necessary function of the road and selecting the minimum required street width to reduce impervious cover;
- Enhancing streetscaping elements to manage stormwater and exploring opportunities to integrate stormwater management into roadway design; and
- Integrating transportation and environmental planning to capitalize on economic benefits.

The use of green streets offers the capability of transforming a significant stormwater and pollutant source into an innovative treatment system. Green streets optimize the performance of public space easing maintenance concerns and allowing municipalities to coordinate the progression and implementation of stormwater control efforts. In addition, green streets optimize the performance of both the transportation and water infrastructure. Effectively incorporating green techniques into the transportation network provides significant opportunity to decrease infrastructure demands and pollutant transport.

---

[1] National Cooperative Highway Research Program, *Evaluation of Best Management Practices and Low Impact Development for Highway Runoff Control*, National Academy of Sciences – National Research Council, 2006.

[2] Lance Frazer, *Paving Paradise: The Peril of Impervious Cover*, Environmental Health Perspectives, Volume 113, Number 7, July 2005.

[3] See note 1.

[4] *Pollutants Commonly Found in Stormwater Runoff*, http://www.stormwaterauthority.org/pollutants/default.aspx (accessed July 2008).

[5] Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities*:* http://www.ite.org/css/ (Ch. 6, pages. 65-87)

[6] *Neighborhood Street Design Guidelines,* prepared by Neighborhood Streets Project Stakeholders. November 2000 http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/publications/neighstreet.pdf (accessed June 2008)

[7] *Narrow Streets Database,* http://www.sonic.net/abcaia/narrow.htm (accessed July 2008).

[8] City of Seattle. Street Edge Alternatives Project http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/util/About_SPU/Drainage_&_Sewer_System/Natural_Drainage_Systems/Street_Edge_Alternatives/index.asp

[9] City of Austin, Engineering Services Division. Standard Specifications and Details Website: http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/sd2/

[10] See note 9

[11] *Implementing Rainwater in Urban Stormwater Management* http://www.ci.maplewood.mn.us/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7BF2C03470-D6B5-4572-98F0-F79819643C2A%7D (accessed July 2008).

[12] 2006 Stormwater Management Facilities Monitoring Report http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?c=36055 (accessed July 2008).

[13] City of Portland. Green Streets website. https://www.sustainableportland.org/BES/index.cfm?c=44407 (last accessed July, 2008).

[14] Prince George's County, MD. *Bioretention Design Specifications and Criteria*. http://www.co.pg.md.us/Government/AgencyIndex/DER/ESD/Bioretention/pdf/bioretention_design_manual.pdf (accessed July 2008).

[15] City of Olympia. *Memorandum: Traditional versus Pervious Concrete Sidewalk – Construction and Maintenance Costs*. Feb. 2005. http://www.ci.olympia.wa.us/cityutilities/stormwater/scienceandinnovations/porouspavement.htm.

[16] The Case for Trees, Casey Trees, Washington, D.C.: http://www.caseytrees.org/resources/casefortrees.html#EconGrowth

[17] Deep Root, LLC. http://www.deeproot.com

[18] Cornell University, Urban Horticulture Institute. http://www.hort.cornell.edu/UHI/

[19] City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, *CSO Program,* *http://www.portlandonline.com/BES/index.cfm?c=31030*, (accessed July 2008).

[20] City of Portland Sustainable Infrastructure Committee, *Sustainable Infrastructure Report*. December 2001. http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=82893 (last accessed July, 2008).

[21] City of Portland Sustainable Infrastructure Subcommittee, *Sustainable Infrastructure: Alternative Paving Materials*. Oct. 2003. http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=82898, (accessed July 2008).

[22] City of Portland Sustainable Infrastructure Subcommittee, *Sustainable Infrastructure: Streetscape Task Force*. Nov. 2003. http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=82897, (accessed July 2008).

[23] City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, *Flow Test Report: Siskiyou Curb Extension*. August 4, 2004. http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=63097 (accessed July 2008).

[24] City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, *Environmental Assessment: Innovative Wet Weather Program*, April 2004.

[25] Portland Stormwater Advisory Committee, 2004.

[26]Chicago Department of Transportation, Sustainable Development Initiatives; Streetscape and Urban Design Program, CDOT Division of Project Development: http://www.railvolution.com/rv2006_pdfs/rv2006_217c.pdf

[27] 48th Ward Green Initiatives: http://www.masmith48.org/greeniniatives/greeniniatives.html

[28] The Chicago Green Alley Handbook, Chicago Department of Transportation: http://egov.cityofchicago.org/webportal/COCWebPortal/COC_EDITORIAL/GreenAlleyHandbook.pdf

[29] American Society of Landscape Architects, 2007 Professional Awards: http://www.asla.org/awards/2007/07winners/212_hdg.html

[30] DeJong, Aaron, A Pilot Project Takes Off, Sustainable Urban Redevelopment: http://www.surmag.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=2

[31] Saulny, Susan, In Miles of Alleys, Chicago Finds it's Next Environmental Frontier, *New York Times* November 26, 2007.