Aesthetics of Low Impact Development

LID Technologies Can Benefit Your Community's Visual Environment

LID Barrier Busters Fact Sheet Series

Low Impact Development (LID) Practices Add Natural Beauty

LID practices, which emphasize using natural vegetation to control stormwater, add value and beauty to public and private spaces. LID practices such as bioswales, rain gardens and street trees intercept stormwater, providing water quality benefits and saving money by reducing the need for stormwater conveyance and treatment infrastructure.

LID practices also generate numerous aesthetic and social benefits, including:

- Adding park-like elements to yards and neighborhoods
- Increasing habitat for bees, birds and butterflies
- Calming street traffic and improving public safety
- Offering recreational opportunities and pedestrian access
- Reducing the urban heat island effect

Many LID practices include traditional landscaping techniques that use mulch, plants and grass. With LID, the landscape serves the double purpose of adding beauty and capturing and filtering stormwater.

FAQ

Isn't LID unattractive?

Barrier Busted!

Communities recognize that LID can enhance aesthetics.

EPA's LID Barrier Busters fact sheet series...helping to overcome misperceptions that can block adoption of LID in your community

A flower-filled rain garden adds welcome color to an Ohio yard.

Southern California's Elmer Street (at right) was retrofitted to include roadside bioswales that capture and infiltrate stormwater. Before the project, neighborhood homes had grass lawns and minimal landscaping (below). Adding LID practices increased the visual beauty of the neighborhood (below right), provided sidewalks and reduced problems with flooding and standing water.

Elmer Street photos provided by the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council.

Stormwater flows through a curb inlet into a bioswale on Elmer Street. The water infiltrates into the soil within a day, preventing breeding mosquitoes.

LID Practices Fit Easily into New and Existing Landscapes

Communities can seamlessly incorporate LID practices into the public's everyday landscapes—adding both beauty and functionality. For example, in a traditional parking lot design, raised curbs typically completely surround vegetated traffic islands and all runoff is shunted into storm drains. By making minor modifications to the design, traffic islands can instead collect and infiltrate stormwater while maintaining the same look as a traditional traffic island. Similar opportunities exist everywhere you look, including:

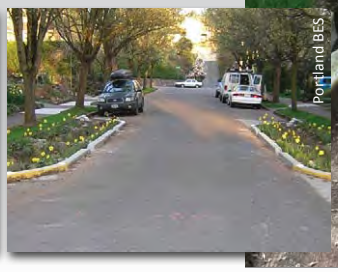
- The vegetated strip often found between the sidewalk and the street can be modified to collect and treat stormwater.
- Permeable pavements, which look similar to traditional pavements, can be used in the place of sidewalks and some roads.
- Porous pavers can provide a stable surface for parking and allow grass to grow and water to infiltrate.
- Public parks or green spaces can be designed to include grassed swales that slow and infiltrate stormwater.
- Impervious rooftops can be replaced with green roofs, reducing runoff and insulating the buildings beneath.

Visualizing LID in Your Community

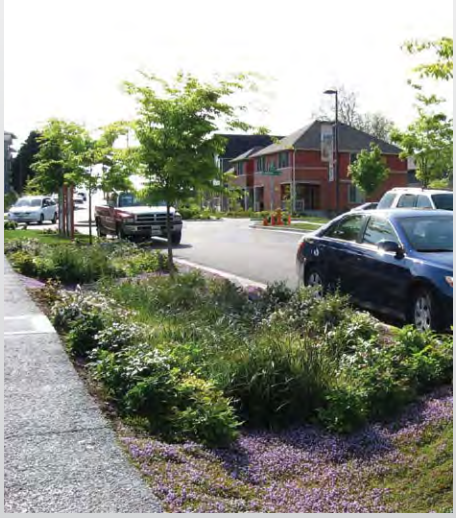
Several publications are available to help you visualize how LID can add natural beauty and stormwater control to your community:

- **www.epa.gov/greeninfrastructure**
- **www.epa.gov/nps/lid/#multimedia**
- **www.nrdc.org/smartGrowth/visions**
- **www.werf.org/liveablecommunities/index.htm**

Landscaped curb extensions (detail, right) on Northeast Siskiyou Street in Portland, Oregon, are designed to intercept stormwater runoff flowing down the street just before it would have entered the storm drain. The stormwater is redirected through a vegetated area, where it has a chance to infiltrate into the soil. Although a minor change, the curb extensions greatly improve the street's appearance and slow the traffic moving through the neighborhood.



In this Virginia parking lot, traffic islands are designed with curb-cuts and a porous drainage medium to allow runoff to collect and infiltrate.



In Seattle's High Point neighborhood, roadside bioswales collect and filter stormwater, create a park-like feel and improve pedestrian safety.

A green roof on Philadelphia's Friends Center captures runoff and insulates the building while adding natural beauty to the cityscape.

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