

PRESERVING IMPORTANT HYDROLOGIC FEATURES AND FUNCTION

There are many features in the natural landscape that provide the important hydrologic functions of retention, detention, infiltration, and filtering of stormwater. These features include, but are not limited to; highly permeable soils, pocket wetlands, significant small (headwater) drainage features, riparian buffers, floodplains, undisturbed natural vegetation, and tree clusters. All areas of hydrologic importance should be delineated at the earliest stage in the development planning process.

STRATEGIES

- 1. Buffers provide filtration, infiltration, flood management, and bank stability benefits.** Unlike stormwater ponds and other structural infrastructure, buffers are essentially a no capital cost and low maintenance form of "green" infrastructure. The benefits of buffers diminish when slopes are greater than 25%; therefore steep slopes should not be counted as buffer.
- 2. Preserve areas of undisturbed soil and vegetation cover.** Typical construction practices, such as topsoil stripping and stockpiling, and site grading and compaction by construction equipment, can considerably reduce the infiltration capacity (and treatment capacity) of soils. During construction, natural heritage features and locations where stormwater infiltration practices will be constructed should be delineated and not subject to construction equipment or other vehicular traffic, nor stockpiling of topsoil.
- 3. Avoid development on permeable soils.** Highly permeable soils (i.e., hydrologic soil groups A and B) function as important groundwater recharge areas. To the greatest extent possible, these areas should be preserved in an undisturbed condition or set aside for stormwater infiltration practices. Where avoiding development on permeable soils is not possible, stormwater management should focus on mitigation of reduced groundwater recharge through application of stormwater infiltration practices.
- 4. Preserve existing trees and, where possible, tree clusters.** Mature stands of deciduous trees will intercept 10 to 20% of annual precipitation falling on them, and a stand of evergreens will intercept 15 to 40%. Preserving mature trees will provide immediate benefits in new developments, whereas newly planted trees will take 10 years or more to provide equivalent benefits. Tree clusters can be incorporated into parking lot interiors or perimeters, private lawns, open space areas, road buffers, and median strips. An uncompacted soil volume of 15 to 28 m³ is recommended to achieve a healthy mature tree with a long lifespan.

SITING AND LAYOUT OF DEVELOPMENT

The location and configuration of elements, such as streets, sidewalks, driveways, and buildings, within the framework of the natural heritage system provides many opportunities to reduce stormwater runoff.

STRATEGIES

- 5. Fit the design to the terrain.** Using the terrain and natural drainage as a design element will reduce the amount of clearing and grading required and the extent of necessary underground drainage infrastructure. This helps to preserve predevelopment drainage boundaries.
- 6. Use open space or clustered development.** Clustering development increases the development density in less sensitive areas of the site while leaving the rest of the site as protected community open space. Some features of open space or clustered development are smaller lots, shared driveways, and shared parking. Clustered development also reduces the amount of impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff to be managed, reduces pressure on buffer areas, reduces the construction footprint, and provides more area and options for stormwater controls.
- 7. Use innovative street network designs.** Certain roadway network designs (e.g., loops, cul-de-sacs, fused grids) create less impervious area than others. These layouts by themselves may not achieve the many goals of urban design. However, used in a hybrid form together or with other street patterns, they can meet multiple urban design objectives and reduce the necessary street area, thereby reducing the amount of impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff to be managed.
- 8. Reduce roadway setbacks and lot frontages.** The lengths of setbacks and frontages are a determinant for the area of pavement, street, driveways, and walkways, needed to service a development. Municipal zoning regulations for setbacks and frontages have been found to be a significant influence on the production of stormwater runoff.

REDUCING IMPERVIOUS AREA

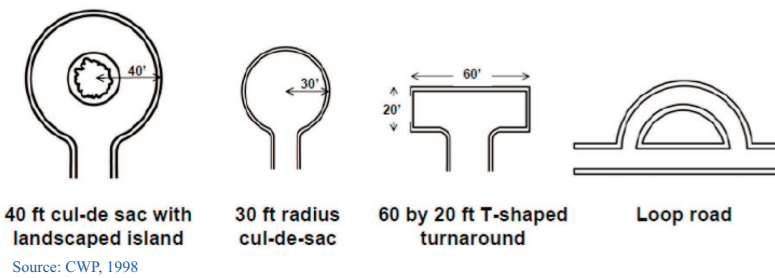
Many of the strategies described previously are primarily for the purpose of reducing impervious area on a macro scale. The following strategies provide examples of how to reduce impervious area on a micro or lot level scale.

STRATEGIES

- 9. Reduce street width.** Streets constitute the largest percentage of impervious area and contribute proportionally to the urban runoff. Streets widths are sized for the free flow of traffic and movements of large emergency vehicles. In many cases, such as low density residential, these widths are oversized for the typical function of the street. Amending urban design standards to allow alternative, narrower street widths might be appropriate in some situations. There are a variety of ways to accommodate emergency vehicle movements and traffic flow on narrower streets, including alternative street parking configurations, vehicle pullout space, connected street networks, prohibiting parking near intersections, and reinforced turf or gravel edges.
- 10. Reduce building footprints.** Reduce the building footprint by using taller multi-story buildings and taking advantage of opportunities to consolidate services into the same space.
- 11. Reduce parking footprints.** Excess parking not only results in greater stormwater impacts and greater stormwater management costs but also adds unnecessary construction and maintenance costs and uses space that could be used for a revenue generating purpose.
 - Keep the number of parking spaces to the minimum required. Parking ratio requirements are often set to meet the highest hourly parking demand during the peak season. The parking space requirement should instead

consider an average parking demand and other factors influencing demand like access to mass transit.

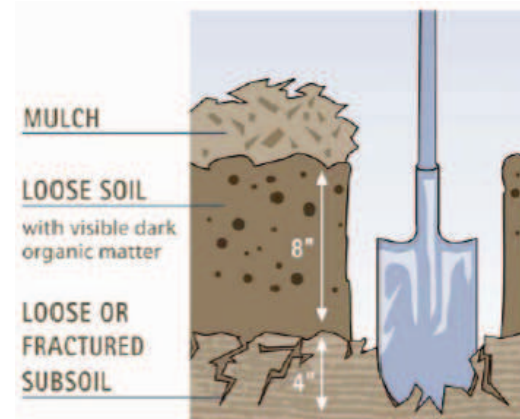
- Take advantage of opportunities for shared parking. For example, businesses with daytime parking peaks can be paired with evening parking peaks, such as offices and a theatre, or land uses with weekday peak demand can be paired with weekend peak demand land uses, such as a school and church.
 - Reductions in impervious surface can also be found in the geometry of the parking lot. One way aisles when paired with angled parking will require less space than a two way aisle. Other reductions can be found in using unpaved end-of-stall overhangs, setting aside smaller stalls for compact vehicles, and configuring or overlapping common areas like fire lanes, collectors, loading, and drop off areas.
 - More costly approaches to reducing the parking footprint include parking structures or underground parking.
- 12. Consider alternative cul-de-sac designs.** Using alternatives to the standard 15 metre radius cul-de-sac can further reduce the impervious area required to service each dwelling. Ways to reduce the impervious areas of cul-de-sacs include a landscaped or bioretention centre island, T-shaped turnaround, or by using a loop road instead.
 - 13. Eliminate unnecessary sidewalks and driveways.** A flexible design standard for sidewalks is recommended to allow for unnecessary sidewalks to be eliminated. Sidewalks that are not needed for pedestrian circulation or connectivity should be removed. Often sidewalks are only necessary on one side of the street. Driveway impervious area can be reduced through the use of shared driveways or alley accessed garages



	Square grid (Mileus, Houston, Portland, etc.)	Oblong grid (most cities with a grid)	Oblong grid 2 (some cities or in certain areas)	Loops (Subdivisions - 1950 to now)	Culs-de-sac (Radburn - 1932 to now)
Percentage of area for streets	36.0%	35.0%	31.4%	27.4%	23.7%
Percentage of buildable area	64.0%	65.0%	68.6%	72.6%	76.3%

Source: CMHC, 2002

Soil Amendment Guidelines



Soil amendment sizing criteria:

- impervious area / soil area = 1
 - use 100 mm compost, till to 300 - 450 mm depth
- impervious area / soil area = 2
 - use 200 mm compost, till to 300 - 450 mm depth
- impervious area / soil area = 3
 - use 300 mm compost, till to 450 - 600 mm depth

Compost should consist of well-aged (at least one year) leaf compost. Amended soil should have an organic content of 8-15% by weight or 30-40% by volume.

Source: Soils for Salmon, 2005

Open Drainage Applied in a Medium Density Neighbourhood



USING NATURAL DRAINAGE SYSTEMS

Rather than collect and move stormwater rapidly to a centralized location for detention and treatment, the goal of these strategies is to take advantage of undisturbed vegetated areas and natural drainage patterns (e.g., small headwater drainage features). These strategies will extend runoff flow paths and slow down flow to allow soils and vegetation to treat and retain it. Using natural systems or green infrastructure is often more cost effective than traditional drainage systems, and they provide more ancillary benefits.

STRATEGIES

- 14. "Disconnect" impervious areas.** Roof leaders or downspouts, parking lots, driveways, sidewalks, and patios should be disconnected from the storm sewer and directed towards stabilized pervious areas as sheet flow where possible. In cases of concentrated flow, the flow can be broken up with level spreaders or flow dissipating riprap. With the proper treatment, the landscaped areas of a site can accept runoff from impervious areas. Deep tilling or soil aeration is recommended for topsoil that has been replaced or compacted by construction equipment. Soil amendments can be applied to hydrologic soil group C and D soils to encourage runoff absorption. Use deep rooting vegetation in landscaped areas when possible which will maintain and possibly improve soil infiltration rate over time:

- **Undisturbed densely vegetated areas and buffers** - A hydrologist and/or ecologist should be consulted before designing a site to drain to sensitive natural heritage features like pocket wetlands.
- **Landscaped and disturbed areas** - With the proper treatment, the landscaped areas of the site can accept runoff from impervious areas. Deep tilling or soil aeration is recommended for topsoil that has been replaced or compacted by construction equipment. Soil amendments can be applied to hydrologic soil group C and D soils to encourage runoff absorption. Use deep rooting vegetation in landscaped areas when possible which will maintain and possibly improve the infiltration rates over time.

- 15. Preserve or create micro-topography.** Undisturbed lands have a micro-topography of dips, hummocks and mounds which slow and retain runoff. Site grading smoothes out these topographic features. Micro-topography can be restored in areas of ornamental landscaping or naturalization.
- 16. Extend drainage flow paths.** Slowing down flows and lengthening flow paths allow more opportunities for stormwater to be filtered and infiltrated. Extending the travel time can also delay and lower peak flows. Where suitable, flows should be conveyed using vegetated open channels (e.g., enhanced grass swales).

CVC/TRCA LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND DESIGN GUIDE - FACT SHEET

LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT SITE DESIGN STRATEGIES