

Low Impact Development: Improve aesthetics while keeping our rivers, lakes, and streams clean!

During storms, rain runs over our driveways, sidewalks, and roads - picking up pollutants along the way. This water flows into storm drains and directly into our water bodies, causing water pollution. Low impact development (LID) is a set of building practices that mimic nature's natural processes to keep rainwater on site, thereby improving aesthetics while reducing water pollution.

In addition to beautifying our cities and keeping our water clean, low impact development can also:

- Reduce the need for and wear on traditional stormwater infrastructure
- Muffle noise
- Mitigate "urban heat island" effects by cooling and humidifying air
- Absorb dust and smog as well as other contaminants from the air and rain
- Provide habitat for wildlife including birds, butterflies, and insects.

Examples of LID include:

Rain gardens and bioretention facilities



[*Photo courtesy of EPA*](#)

A rain garden (or bioretention area) is a depressed area in the landscape filled with sandy soil, topped with a thick layer of mulch, and planted with dense vegetation that collects rainwater from a roof, parking lot, driveway, or street and allows it to soak into the ground, filtering pollutants and recharging groundwater.

Rain gardens and bioretention areas can be used in parking lot islands, median strips, traffic islands, and your own garden. They can be incorporated in new construction or retrofitted into existing sites.

These rain gardens not only keep pollutants out of the water we fish, swim, and boat in, but they are a cost-effective way of improving aesthetics.

Permeable pavement



[Photos courtesy mass.gov](#)



[Photo courtesy of EPA](#)

Permeable (or porous) paving is a replacement for asphalt and concrete which allows water to infiltrate into the ground below, filtering pollutants along the way. Examples of permeable paving include pervious asphalt, pervious concrete, interlocking pavers, and plastic grid pavers. Permeable paving can also reduce the need for road salt and reduce construction costs for residential and commercial development by reducing the need for some conventional drainage features.

Source: Mystic River Watershed Association