ORDINANCE APPENDIX B

CONSERVATION DESIGN AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT SITE DESIGN

Draft – for review purposes only

CONSERVATION DESIGN & LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT SITE DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

Traditional approaches to land development often radically alter natural hydrologic conditions by constructing collection and conveyance systems that are designed to remove runoff from a site as quickly as possible and capture it in a detention basin. This approach has often led to the degradation of water quality, reduced groundwater recharge, and increased volumes of stormwater runoff, as well as the imposition of expenditures to detain and manage concentrated runoff downstream. Fortunately, the study of hydrology (the way rainfall interacts with slopes, soils, and vegetation) offers a number of alternative approaches that respect the natural environment and ultimately save money. The accompanying ordinance encourages the use of Conservation Design (CD), Low Impact Development (LID), and green infrastructure to preserve, restore and maintain pre-development hydrology on sites with planned land disturbance and development activity. The site design practices and recommendations included in this appendix provide a framework to assist developers, municipal planning commission members, and others involved in local land use planning with designing and implementing development that minimizes the impacts of stormwater runoff to local streams.

Conventionally designed development often divides a parcel into buildable lots, streets, and parking areas, while only keeping traditionally undevelopable areas (wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes) as open space. Existing site hydrology and natural features are often an afterthought in locating and designing stormwater systems. In contrast, Conservation Design and Low Impact Development practices strive to minimize landscape and natural feature disturbance to maintain a site's natural drainage patterns and flow conditions.

CD is a holistic site design process that aims to protect and maintain a site's unique natural, historic, and cultural features. CD emphasizes the protection of key land and environmental resources to maintain site hydrology; preserves and/or enhances significant concentrations of natural resources, open space, wildlife habitat, biodiversity corridors, and greenways (interconnected open space); incorporates unique natural, scenic, and historic site features into the configuration of the development; preserves the integral characteristics of the site as viewed from adjacent roads; and ensures flexibility in development design to meet community needs for complementary and aesthetically pleasing development.

LID consists of site design approaches and small-scale stormwater management practices that promote the use of natural systems for infiltration, evapotranspiration (returning moisture to the atmosphere through vegetation), and the harvest and reuse of rainwater. LID addresses the root cause of water quality impairment by managing stormwater as close to the point of generation as possible.

Together, CD and LID offer unique opportunities to balance the "carrying capacity" of the land, the human demands on the land (including land economics), and the design constraints and opportunities of a site, which together allow for a dynamic interaction between people and the natural world. The goal is to produce a design that balances the demands of human use (scale, pattern, autonomy, privacy, views, etc.) with the requirements for a sustainable landscape (reduction in land fragmentation and use conflicts, preservation of watershed hydrology, protection of wildlife corridors and species diversity, conservation of natural resources, etc.). CD and LID are integrated development processes that respect natural site conditions and attempt to replicate and/or improve the natural hydrology of a site. The abundance of Chester County's streams and headwaters areas, agricultural land (consisting of prime agricultural soils), unique aquatic and terrestrial habitat, and scenic and historic resources, argue for design approaches responsive to conservation principles.

This appendix provides information on the principles, processes, and common practices of Conservation Design and Low Impact Development to assist designers and planners to achieve site designs that best maintain pre-construction stormwater runoff conditions, protect site amenities, and preserve natural resources. Components of this appendix include:

- Implementation Challenges
- Design Principles and Techniques;
- Design Process;
- Design Practices;
- Benefits of Conservation Design;
- Conclusion, and
- References.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Various techniques exist to accomplish the purposes of CD and LID (see the list of Design Practices starting on Page 12). However, many municipal codes currently prevent creative site design and engineering by requiring mechanical "by the numbers" development of sites. Restrictive zoning, subjective economic concerns, jurisdictional preferences, and personal tastes determine how a site is developed and how stormwater will be managed. These can pose significant impediments to the use of CD and LID. Such issues, left unaddressed, will "fail to comprehensively maintain predevelopment ecological functions at sites and fail to prevent development impacts to overall watershed ecological health" (Low Impact Development, Prince George's County, Maryland). Several examples of practices that may be limited by municipal zoning or subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDO) are presented in the Design Practices section to assist municipalities, developers, and landowners to understand how to improve the development design process to allow or require CD and LID practices.

Dialogue between developers, municipalities, and planners should be encouraged early in the design process to evaluate all potential site design options. Discussions on proposed site layouts often do not occur until after the submission of preliminary/final developments plans. At this point, substantial time and expense have already gone into the development of these plans, resulting in the reduced preference to make substantial changes or re-designs. Thus, discussions of potential site considerations between landowners, developers, municipalities, and planners early in the design process is critical to ensuring CD and LID practices are incorporated. While the

Municipalities Planning Code prevents municipalities from mandating the submission of sketch plans unless they waive preliminary or final plan requirements, voluntary submission of these plans should be encouraged. Other options also exist; for example, municipalities could mandate the sketch plan but permit one-step preliminary/final plan submissions. In any event, the importance of dialogue cannot be stated strongly enough. Remaining open minded to alternative site designs, including flexibility of area and bulk standards, building types, lot sizes, and even construction standards, among others, may achieve multiple benefits, not the least of which is the protection of site hydrology and improved management of stormwater.

One of the greatest challenges to reducing the impact of development is to control the volume of stormwater runoff generated from a site. Typically, a development's increase in impervious surface contributes to reduced infiltration, evapotranspiration, and attenuation of stormwater runoff. This can result in reduced groundwater levels and lower stream baseflow during periods of dry weather and higher stream flows during and after precipitation events (which can result in increased occurrences of flooding and the erosion and destabilization of downstream streambanks). CD and LID techniques strive to prevent these problems by encouraging land development site designs that minimize post-development runoff rates and volumes and minimize needs for artificial conveyance and storage facilities. This process attempts to incorporate the desired land development into the natural hydrologic landscape in a manner that maintains and utilizes existing site hydrology features and functions to minimize generation of new stormwater runoff, thus avoiding the cumulative environmental impacts often associated with land development and reducing the need for and size of constructed stormwater facilities.

Site design practices include preserving natural drainage features, minimizing impervious surface area, reducing the hydraulic connectivity of impervious surfaces, and protecting natural depression storage. Applying this site design process helps maintain site hydrology and manage stormwater by:

- minimizing the generation of stormwater runoff (achieved by designing to the land, considering site drainage patterns and infiltration characteristics, reducing grading and compaction, and considering scale and placement of buildings); managing stormwater as close to the point of generation as possible (by disconnecting impervious surfaces, rather than collecting storm flows from all such surfaces, and distributing such flows to landscaped-based BMPs);
- providing open and vegetated channel conveyance (as needed to treat water quality, reduce velocity and infiltrate); and
- managing remaining conveyed stormwater in common open space (as needed to disperse low velocity storm flows, treat water quality, infiltrate, and release).

A well-designed site will contain a mix of all these features.

In some communities, the use of CD and LID will require a paradigm shift in how we think about and regulate development; community education, be that of residents, developers, engineers, or community officials, will be important if we are to achieve the multiple benefits offered through the use of these alternative design principles and practices.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES

CD and LID place significant emphasis on maintaining, mimicking, or improving the natural hydrology of land undergoing development. A site's natural hydrology refers to the drainage patterns and infiltration characteristics existing on a site. With CD and LID, effort is placed on development design that minimizes the generation of stormwater runoff. This can be achieved by designing to the land, i.e., giving consideration to site drainage patterns and site infiltration characteristics, reducing grading and compaction, and carefully considering the placement and scale of streets and buildings. Consideration of the natural drainage patterns of a site and the capacity of the site to infiltrate water are central to the concept of managing stormwater on-site.

Where stormwater is generated, the next step involves managing such storm flows as close to the source of generation as possible. This is achieved by disconnecting impervious surfaces and distributing storm flows to green infrastructure. Disconnection allows for management near the source of generation rather than the traditional approach of conveying all storm flows to a central "catch and release" facility (expensive to build and expensive to maintain). Where distributed management practices common to LID are insufficient to accommodate storm flows, CD encourages the use of open channel conveyance systems, such as vegetated channels, bioswales, and wet swales, that further manage storm flows in common open space. This multi-management approach (or four-step management process) – minimizing the generation of stormwater, landscape-based management near the point of generation, open channel conveyance, and management in common open space – is a clear advantage of CD (see Figure 1).

It should also be noted that CD is quite effective on sites with limited infiltration capability, principally because the four-step management process builds redundancies into runoff management, seeking to achieve disconnection, using LID, providing open channel conveyance, and making use of common open space where other tools and techniques are insufficient on their own.

Figure 1
Conservation Design Principles
Maintaining Site Hydrology and Managing Stormwater

Step 1 – Minimize Generation of Stormwater Runoff through Development Design: Achieved by Designing to the Land & Optimizing the Cumulative Benefits of the Site's Natural Hydrologic Features

- Consider Natural Drainage Patterns and Infiltration Characteristics
- Reduce Grading and Compaction by Utilizing Natural Topography
- Consider Placement and Scale of Streets and Buildings
- Minimize Land Disturbance – both Surface and Subsurface
- Minimize Cumulative Area to be Covered by Impervious and Compacted Surfaces

Step 2 – Manage Stormwater as Close to the Point of Generation as Possible using Distributed LID Practices

- Take Advantage of the Natural Hydrologic Landscape to Achieve Runoff Controls
- Disconnect Impervious Surfaces
- Distribute Storm Flows to Green Infrastructure

Step 3 – Utilize Open Channel Conveyance (as needed)

Step 4 – Management in Common Open Space (or as conveyed to other green infrastructure practices)

- Integrate Management Facilities into the Natural Environment
- Incorporate Natural Site Features into the Design
- Create Site Amenities that can be Enjoyed by Residents and Provide a Community Aesthetic

No single approach is appropriate for all sites; rather, CD is a process by which to assess the appropriateness of different techniques (LID or otherwise) for different sites. The key to making CD and LID work is a willingness on the part of all involved to be flexible in how a particular site is developed. With this in mind, CD makes it possible to achieve multiple objectives, both in terms of site design (controlling peak flows, reducing total volume, and enhancing water quality), as well as those related to community (protecting natural resources, preserving habitat, interconnecting open space, providing greenways, and achieving better designed communities). (See Figure 2)

Figure 2
Common Objectives Of Conservation Design

Conservation Design practices are intended to protect environmental resources, preserve open space, and manage stormwater by respecting natural drainage patterns and infiltration characteristics.

Common Objectives

Site Design Objectives	*Community Objectives*
Maintain Natural Drainage Patterns	Community Commons/Greens
Preserve Water Budget and Natural Infiltration	Lots that Front or Back to Open Space
Minimize Grading – Design to the Site (Minimum Disturbance, Minimum Maintenance)	“Neighborhoods” within Neighborhoods
Reduce Need for Traditional Structural Stormwater Management Facilities (incorporate the use of Green Infrastructure)	Options for a Variety of Housing Types/Lot Sizes
Reduce Impervious Cover	Incorporate Unique Site Features into the Design (Natural/Scenic/Historic)
Preserve Natural Features & Habitat (Contiguous Open Space)	Preserve Characteristics of Site as Viewed from Adjoining Roads
Provide Open Space Linkages with Adjacent Parcels	Provide Trail Systems and/or Alternative Transportation Options

CD and LID involve identifying and prioritizing natural resources and natural and constructed hydrologic features and incorporating such features into the overall site design to take advantage of their efficiencies in hydrologic performance, their cost efficiencies of reducing the need for or size of constructed stormwater facilities, and their aesthetic amenities.

Techniques to apply Figure 1 design principles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Site Design Process Principles and Techniques

Conservation Design Principles	Select Design Techniques
Development Design that Minimizes the Generation of Stormwater Runoff: Achieved by Designing to the Land & Optimizing the Cumulative Benefits of the Site's Natural Hydrologic Features	• Maintain the natural soil structure and vegetative cover that are often critical components of maintaining the hydrologic functions of natural infiltration, bioretention, flow attenuation, evapotranspiration, and pollutant removal. Strive to achieve multiple stormwater objectives (i.e., maintain hydrologic regime including both peak rate and total volume control, water quality control, and temperature control. • Protect, or improve, natural resources to reduce the needs for environmental mitigation, future environmental restoration, and cumulative flow and water quality impacts of unnecessary disturbances within the watershed system. • Minimize the disturbance of natural surface and groundwater drainage features and patterns, discharge points and flow characteristics, natural infiltration and evapotranspiration patterns and characteristics, natural stream channel stability, and floodplain conveyance, etc. • Minimize the size of individual impervious surfaces. • Separate large impervious surfaces into smaller components. • Avoid unnecessary impervious surfaces. • Utilize porous materials where suited in lieu of impervious materials. • Prioritize on-site hydrologic features (i.e., for protection, improvement, utilization, or alteration) and natural site drainage patterns and infiltration characteristics and consider them for the cornerstones of the conceptual site design. Prevent rather than minimize. • Reduce grading and compaction by applying selective grading design methods to provide final grading patterns that preserve existing topography where it most benefits natural hydrologic functions and where needed; this results in graded areas that evenly distribute runoff and minimize concentrated runoff flows. • Consider the scale and placement of buildings and other infrastructure to minimize impact to natural hydrologic features. • Incorporate unique natural, scenic, and historic site features into the configuration of the development, and ensure flexibility in development design to meet community needs for complementary and aesthetically pleasing development.

Conservation Design Principles	Select Design Techniques

Managing Stormwater as Close to the Point of Generation as Possible using Distributed LID Practices	• Incorporate natural hydrologic features that have been selected for their available capacity and function into the overall system of site runoff controls (protect their hydrologic and nature ecosystem functions without directing additional stormwater to them).
	• Disconnect runoff from one impervious surface to another.
	• Incorporate Low Impact Development (or similar) green infrastructure and distribute storm flows to:
	    o Reduce runoff;
	    o Manage stormwater at or as close to the point of generation as possible;
	    o Disconnect discharges from streets and municipal storm sewer systems; and
	    o Select and design BMPs to give first priority to nonstructural and vegetation (landscape-based) BMPs, second priority to surface structural BMPs, third priority to subsurface structural BMPs, and design subsurface BMPs as shallow as possible.

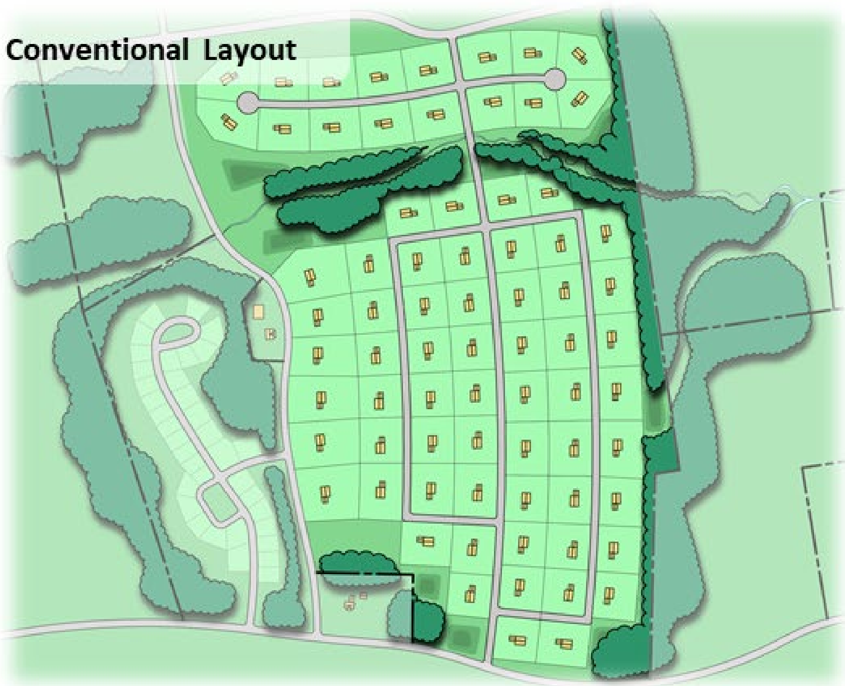
Open Channel Conveyance (as needed)	• Convey concentrated flows by means of innovative pervious vegetated channels rather than pipe systems
	• Provide open channel conveyance, as needed, to:
	    o Treat water quality;
	    o Reduce runoff velocity; and
	    o Promote infiltration and evapotranspiration of runoff.

Management in Common Open Space (or as conveyed to other green infrastructure practices)	• Rely on natural processes within the soil mantle and the plant community to the maximum extent practicable.
	• Manage remaining conveyed stormwater from small storms in common open space areas to achieve multiple objectives:
	    o Disperse storm flows and reduce velocity;
	    o Treat water quality; and
	    o Promote infiltrate and evapotranspiration of runoff.
	• Provide for appropriate conveyance to retention or detention storage facilities as needed for flows from large storm events (as needed).
	• Maintain open space functions consistent with common area uses (passive recreation, on-site sewage management, scenic vistas, etc). Management practices should be integrated into the natural environment and be site amenities.

The concepts presented in Figures 1 and 2, and further described in Table 1, are graphically presented below in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

89
Total acres of site

33
Existing acres of woodland



- Large cul-de-sacs
- Clearing and building
- in stream corridor
- Wide streets throughout
- Convention stormwater facilities
- Natural areas significantly disturbed
- Site layout not designed to fit terrain resulting in excessive grading

73	**8**	**27**
Total single-family lots	Acres of remaining woodlands	Acres of open space (30%)

Figure 3.1: Example of how a typical parcel may be developed using conventional layout methods

96
Total lots, 110 units

33
Acres of
remaining woodlands

67
Acres of
open space (67%)

- Provides open space linkages with adjacent parcels
- Designed to the site to minimize grading
- Narrower roads and smaller lots to reduce impervious cover
- Maintains natural drainage patterns
- Preserves natural features and habitat
- Community commons and green space
- Trail systems
- Characteristic of site preserved as viewed from adjoining roads

Note: While the Conservation Design graphics shown above optimize unit types and lot sizes (and thus allow greater density), it is recognized that that this type of mixed use may not be appropriate in some zoning districts. However, Conservation Design works equally well where housing diversity is not appropriate.

Figure 3.2: Example of site design on the same parcel using the principles of Conservation Design and Low-Impact Development.

DESIGN PROCESS

The first step in applying CD is to identify, delineate and assess the functions of all existing natural resources and natural and constructed hydrologic features that: are located within the project site; will receive discharge from the project site; or may be impacted by runoff or disturbance from the proposed land development project. These include:

- Streams, waterways, springs, wetlands, vernal pools, and water bodies;
- Drainage patterns, conveyances, and discharge points;
- Natural infiltration areas and patterns;
- Areas of natural vegetation or woodlands that provide significant evapotranspiration, pollutant removal, bank stabilization, flow attenuation, or riparian buffer functions;
- Floodplains; and
- Other features that contribute to the overall hydrologic function and value of the site and its receiving streams.

Once this inventory and assessment are completed, these identified resources and features are then prioritized for their ability to provide hydrologic function and performance for managing runoff from the proposed site improvements. Specifically, they should be prioritized as follows:

- Those to be incorporated into the site design in a manner that provides for their protection from any disturbance or impact from the proposed land development;
- Those to be protected from further disturbance or impact and for which the proposed land development will provide improvement to existing conditions;
- Those that can be incorporated into and utilized as components of the overall site design in a manner that protects or improves their existing conditions while utilizing their hydrologic function (i.e., for infiltration, evapotranspiration, or reducing pollutant loads, runoff volume or peak discharge rates, etc.) to reduce the need for or size of constructed BMPs; and
- Those that may be considered for alteration, disturbance, or removal.

These prioritizations are then applied as the basis on which to begin the site design lay-out, grading, construction, and permanent ground cover designs to achieve the CD Principles outlined above.

<u>Evaluating a Site Using Conservation Design Principles</u>

The following is a suggested series of steps that landowners, developers, and municipalities can take to achieve CD goals and work together in a more effective manner. While this approach places significant emphasis on the initial phases of project design, it will strengthen support for the plan and substantially reduce the time needed for preliminary and final plan review and approval.

It should be noted that the sketch plans encouraged herein cannot be mandated by municipalities in Pennsylvania under Act 247 (Municipalities Planning Code) unless requirements for either the preliminary plan or final plan are waived. Some municipalities are doing just this by requiring sketch plans and preliminary/final plan submissions while others “strongly encourage” sketch plans in their subdivision/land development ordinances. The Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) reviews sketch plans at no charge and highly recommends their use. Additional information on sketch plans can be found in the Chester County Planning Commission's "Sketch Plan" eTool. Whichever approach is taken, sketch plans can be of tremendous value to the community and developer alike; in particular, sketch plans offer developers the opportunity to get municipal feedback on design prior to investing large sums in engineering design.

1. Determine Development Goals

- Define what is driving the decision to develop the property.

- Consider the site context – regional, local and site characteristics of land ownership, visual patterns, cultural patterns, roadways, vegetation, wildlife habitat, topography, etc. Consider possibilities for linking other landscapes, stream corridors, critical farmland and distinctive woodland patterns; identify or establish wildlife or recreational trail corridors, etc. Consider the natural hydrology of the site – how water flows over the land (the natural drainage patterns), where vegetation intercepts water, etc.

  Note: Further consideration of these issues is suggested after a resource inventory and site analysis are performed.

- Clearly define the goals to work towards – these are the design goals for the project. Goals could be economic and/or personal/family related, as well as visual, ecological, agricultural, historical, and educational.

- Consider the project's time schedule and that of the municipal review process.

2. Conduct a Resources Inventory - Examine the Natural/Scenic/Historic Resources and Land Use Patterns

- Determine the site context (defined above)

- Evaluate current and past land use (agriculture, wooded lot, vacant, brownfield etc.)

- Assess wind patterns and micro-climate

- Delineate steep slopes and general topography

- Map hydrologic features and drainage patterns (wetlands, floodplains, streams, drainage swales, etc.)

- Identify scenic viewsheds (interior and exterior)

- Consider potential historic or cultural resources

- Assess soil patterns (hydric soils, prime agricultural soils, infiltration-capable soils, etc.) and vegetation patterns (landscape texture and patterns)

- Consider local zoning regulations

- Review the site for obvious land fragmentation (agricultural, natural habitat, human use, viewsheds)

- Determine the presence of endangered/threatened species and unusual habitats, critical natural areas, etc.

Other design considerations include solar exposure (seasonal changes),light patterns (shadows), sense of space (enclosed, open, mysterious) and sense of scale.

3. Undertake a Site Analysis

- Compare/overlay/combine the natural/scenic/historic resource and land use pattern information to create a general understanding of the site's opportunities and constraints, particularly as they relate to the design goals. Some initial constraints could present opportunities. Particular emphasis should be placed on site contours and existing site hydrology, e.g., drainage patterns, infiltration capability of soils, etc.

- Prepare a site analysis map that outlines the most important opportunities and constraints. The site analysis should identify both the traditionally unbuildable areas (wet, flood-prone, or steep) and the most outstanding aspects of the remaining land (such as scenic vistas, natural meadows, hedgerows, mature woodlands, historic buildings or other structures, stone walls, etc.). It is important to note that Conservation Design places significant emphasis on soils (particularly the manner in which water moves across and through them). Disturbance of soils, disturbance of vegetation, and compaction all affect the ability of a site to manage stormwater. For example, while it is imperative that good draining soils be preserved to the maximum extent possible, areas of poor permeability that contain robust vegetation may function quite satisfactorily (a well-developed root zone in conjunction with established vegetation can significantly improve poor soil infiltration and permeability). Conversely, even good soils, if substantially disturbed and compacted, can become far less permeable.

  Note: Although reliance on published soils data is acceptable for site analyses and conceptual planning purposes, detailed planning must include soil field sampling.

4. Create Conceptual Designs or Sketch Plans

- Use the site analysis to create conceptual designs. Consider the principles and objectives of Conservation Design as the basis for initially conceptualizing layouts. List opportunities and constraints of each design element. This component involves four steps:

i) **Delineate conservation areas (based on the findings of the site analysis) and potential development areas.** Designing to the site, rather than grading to achieve a standardized product, is preferable because it accomplishes the goals of minimum disturbance/minimum maintenance (i.e., respecting the site's natural hydrology, minimizing grading and earth disturbance, etc.); such an approach can also substantially reduce construction costs. Additional emphasis should be given to the site's existing hydrology, such as drainage patterns, the location of natural swales and conveyances, and the infiltration capability of soils.

This step requires careful integration of stormwater management and Conservation Design concepts into the design of the site. Engineering stormwater solutions after a design has been selected fails to consider a key component of Conservation Design, i.e., design as an integral best management practice. For example, it is better to prevent runoff than to attempt to mitigate it once it is created. Approaches to site design that can reduce the generation of stormwater from the outset are the most effective approach to stormwater management.

ii) **Locate desired/permitted structures (housing units, buildings, etc.) on the property (as they relate to Step 1 and the design goals).** Again, Conservation Design principles should be carefully considered here. Will compact development allow for a reduction in road length? Is it possible to interconnect open space, thus permitting stormwater management close to the source of generation and creating biodiversity corridors, etc. (multiple objectives)? Can structures be located so that a majority back or front to open space?

iii) **Connect buildings or house sites with streets (logical alignment) and trails (where appropriate).** Consider ways to reduce impervious cover (one-way streets where appropriate, planted islands in cul-de-sacs, etc.).

iv) **Draw in lot lines for the house sites or buildings, where needed.**

- Meet with municipal officials and critique plans -- what is liked, not liked, and why.
- Identify a direction for engineering and final design.

5. ***Formulate A Final Design (or Master Sketch Plan) as the Basis for an Engineered Site Plan***

- Synthesize discussion of conceptual designs (sketch plans) and finalize design.
- Develop legal instruments necessary to realize plan objectives, e.g., conservation easements, deed restrictions, homeowners association, estate planning, etc. (Note: these concepts are considered throughout the design process).

6. *Obtain Approvals (Follow-up)*

- Obtain municipal and County buy-in of master sketch plan, and
- Proceed to Final Engineered Plan approvals.

DESIGN PRACTICES

Numerous practices and strategies can be considered where their aim is to sustain and utilize the benefits of existing site hydrology and minimize the generation of new stormwater runoff. Careful consideration of site topography and implementation of a combination of the design practices described herein may reduce the cost associated with implementing stormwater control measures. Following are brief descriptions of various practices that can be used to achieve the principles of CD and LID.

Site Layout Practices

The following site layout practices are but a few of the methods by which CD and LID can be implemented. Although municipal codes can reflect such practices, they are less functions of regimented codes and procedures than about understanding and recognizing the benefits and values that existing resources can contribute to the desired outcomes of the land development project. In many circumstances, communication among design engineers, land planning and environmental professionals, knowledgeable developers, community representatives, and regulatory authorities can promote a beneficial collective understanding about the most effective path forward to achieve optimum planning outcomes.

Preserving Natural Drainage Features. Protecting natural drainage features, particularly vegetated drainage swales and channels, is desirable because of their ability to infiltrate and attenuate flows and to filter pollutants. Unfortunately, some common land development practices encourage just the opposite pattern -- streets and adjacent storm sewers typically are located in the natural headwater valleys and swales, thereby replacing natural drainage functions with an impervious system. As a result, runoff and pollutants generated from impervious surfaces flow directly into storm sewers with no opportunity for attenuation, infiltration, or filtration. Designing developments to fit site topography retains much of the natural drainage function. In addition, designing with the land minimizes the amount of site grading, reduces the amount of compaction that can alter site infiltration characteristics, and can result in cost savings to the developer.

Protecting Natural Depression Storage Areas. Depressional storage areas have no surface outlet or drain very slowly following a storm event. They can be commonly seen as ponded areas in fields during the wet season or after large storm events. Some development practices eliminate these depressions by filling or draining, thereby eliminating their ability to reduce surface runoff volumes and trap pollutants. The volume and release-rate characteristics of depressions should be protected in the design of the development site to assist in reducing runoff volumes and reducing runoff rates. Designing around the depression or incorporating its storage as additional capacity in required detention facilities, treats this area as a site amenity rather than a detriment.

Avoiding Introduction of Impervious Areas. Careful site planning should consider reducing impervious coverage to the maximum extent possible. Building footprints, sidewalks, driveways, and other features producing impervious surfaces should be evaluated to minimize impacts on runoff. **In many instances, municipalities have the ability to reduce impervious cover by providing incentives or opportunities in their zoning and subdivision/ land development ordinances to reduce road width, reduce or modify cul-de-sac dimensions, reduce, or modify curbing requirements, and reduce or modify sidewalk requirements.** For example, curbing contributes to impervious cover and channels storm flows to inlets, thus further concentrating runoff. An alternative is to consider bioswales and/or infiltration trenches that can treat and attenuate flows coming off roadways. Where curbs are desirable, simply providing curb breaks or openings of 6-12 inches every 2-4 feet can disconnect flows and reduce concentration of runoff. Cul-de-sacs can be replaced with “hammerheads’ or be designed with planted islands to reduce impervious cover (both of which can be designed to allow sufficient turning radius for emergency vehicles). In fact, planted islands in cul-de-sacs can be designed to intercept road runoff and contribute to infiltration.

Disconnecting Impervious Surfaces. Impervious surfaces are significantly less of a problem if they are not directly connected to an impervious conveyance system (such as storm sewer). Two basic ways to reduce hydraulic connectivity are routing roof runoff over lawns and reducing the use of storm sewers. Site grading should promote increasing travel time of stormwater runoff from these sources and should help reduce concentration of runoff to a single point within the project site. Along roadways, where feasible, low velocity runoff (i.e., 1-to-2-year storms) can be infiltrated in grass swales.

Routing Roof Runoff Over Lawns. Roof runoff can be easily routed over lawns in most site designs. The practice discourages direct connections of downspouts to “driveway-to-street-to-storm sewers” or parking lots. The practice also discourages sloping driveways and parking lots to the street. Crowning the driveway, to run off to the lawn, uses the lawn as a filter strip.

Reducing Street Widths. Street widths can be reduced by either eliminating on-street parking (where conditions warrant) and/or by designing roads to meet actual demand. Designers should consult with municipal officials and staff to select the narrowest practical street width for the design conditions (speed, curvature, housing density, need for on-street parking, etc.). For example, permitting one-way streets for small loop roads can reduce overall road width. Reduced street widths also can lower maintenance needs and costs. Municipalities should review their ordinances to ensure that their street requirements are not over or under designed. Although there are some situations, such as with higher density development, where on-street parking may be needed, the amount of on-street parking, and hence overall street width, should be gaged to need. For further information, see the Multi-modal Circulation Handbook prepared by the CCPC (or consult other smart street publications). Narrower neighborhood streets should be considered and encouraged under select conditions.

Reducing or Modifying Sidewalk Requirements. A sidewalk on one side of the street may suffice in low-traffic neighborhoods. The lost sidewalk could be replaced with bicycle/recreational trails that follow back-of-lot lines as an alternative to reduced sidewalks, where appropriate. Where used, consideration should be given to constructing trails with pervious materials.

Reducing or Modifying Parking Requirements. Parking standards, particularly for nonresidential development, can be excessive. Reducing spaces to match actual demand makes sense and can significantly reduce impervious cover. In addition to or in lieu of reductions, alternatives such as shared or reserve parking should be considered. Where appropriate, stall size should also be considered and modified as needed.

Reducing Building Setbacks. Reducing building setbacks (from streets) reduces the size of impervious areas of driveways and entry walks and is most readily accomplished along low-traffic streets where traffic noise is not a problem.

Minimum Disturbance/ Minimum Maintenance. Reducing site disturbance and grading can go a long way towards reducing runoff. Sensitive site design conducive to the natural features of the site, including natural site contours, can reduce the amount of land disturbed during actual development. Often referred to as "fingerprinting," this approach identifies the limits of disturbance, which are flagged in the field. As is often the case, development sites need some grading in order to achieve development objectives. In these cases, there are often opportunities to make grading part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. Careful grading can capitalize on natural site functions to achieve stormwater management objectives. For example, grading that does occur can be incorporated into terracing or berming near existing vegetation to aid in infiltration, stormwater management and pollutant filtering.

Constructing Compact Developments using Conservation Design Principles**:** Low impact cluster or compact development can reduce the amount of impervious area for a given number of lots. Reductions in overall infrastructure, including reduced street length, width, curbing, and parking, among others, can contribute to a reduction in development and long-term maintenance costs. Reduced site disturbance and preservation of open space help buffer sensitive natural areas and retain more of a site's natural hydrology. Development can be designed so that areas of high infiltration soils are reserved as stormwater infiltration areas. Construction activity can be focused onto less sensitive areas without affecting the gross density of development.

LID Practices and Stormwater Control Measures

Stormwater Control Measures (SCMs) are intended to supplement natural hydrology site design techniques where needed. Structural in nature, such practices include bioretention facilities, rain gardens, swales, and other engineered stormwater BMPs. Listed here are techniques intended to help manage stormwater predominantly at or near the source, rather than traditional techniques that largely release runoff over an extended period of time to adjacent properties and streams. This list, in no way exhaustive, gives examples of a few of the most common practices. It should be noted that LID aims to mimic the predevelopment site hydrology by using site design techniques that store, infiltrate, evaporate, and detain runoff. Use of these techniques helps to reduce off-site runoff and ensure adequate groundwater recharge. Since every aspect of site development affects the hydrologic response of a site, LID control techniques focus mainly on-site hydrology. LID strives to conserve existing site resources, minimize site impacts, maintain (and even extend) the time of concentration of runoff, utilize distributed management practices, and prevent pollution.

Bioretention. This type of BMP combines open space with stormwater treatment. Soil and plants, rather than sand filters, treat and store runoff. Infiltration and evapotranspiration are achieved, often coupled with an underdrain to collect water not infiltrated or used in the root zone.

Rain Gardens. Typically rain gardens are shallow depression areas containing a mix of water tolerant native plant species. The intent is to capture runoff for storage and use in the root zone of plants. Intended largely as a way of managing stormwater through evapotranspiration (ET), rain gardens often function as infiltration facilities as well.

Vegetated Open Channel Conveyances. By reducing the use of storm sewers to drain streets, parking lots, and back yards, the potential for accelerating runoff from development can be greatly reduced. This practice requires greater use of natural or vegetated drainage swales and may not be practical for some development sites, especially if there are concerns for areas that do not drain in a "reasonable" time. The practice requires educating local citizens, who may expect runoff to disappear shortly after a rainfall event.

Permeable Paving Materials. These materials include permeable interlocking concrete paving blocks or porous bituminous concrete, among others. Such materials should be considered as alternatives to conventional pavement surfaces, especially for low use surfaces such as driveways, overflow parking lots, and emergency access roads. Surfaces for which seal coats may be applied should refrain from using permeable paving materials. Note: ongoing maintenance is required for some surfaces to minimize potential for clogging.

Residents and municipal officials of communities that utilize LID and other green technology practices often need to be informed of the benefits of such facilities. LID practices can offer enhanced stormwater control in a more naturalized setting, reduce maintenance needs and costs, provide more attractive management options, and provide opportunities for wildlife habitat. Descriptions of the benefits of such practices should be included in homeowner association documents (and conveyed to homeowners in other ways) and signage should be used to convey helpful information about the function and value of such practices.

BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION DESIGN

Studies over the past 25 years have shown that development planned according to CD principles yields significant benefits to homeowners, developers, municipalities, and local communities. Homeowners see tremendous value in the preservation of open space and the protection of natural features, even if it does not exist on their lots (National Association of Home Builders, 1991; DVRPC, 2011). Developers experience reduced construction costs and enjoy the improved marketability. Municipalities see a reduced demand for new municipal parks and receive additional revenue from improved property values. Areas preserved as open space allow for passive and active recreational opportunities and help to preserve the unique character of the site. Common open spaces also help to foster social cohesion by providing residents with opportunities to get outside and interact with neighbors without having to drive. Ultimately, communities designed using CD planning principles are more desirable places to live, work, and play.

Given the improved sense of place and community, dollar appreciation of conservation subdivisions outpaces conventional development by upwards of 12% (The Conservation Fund, 2001). In Indiana, the use of conservation subdivision design added $20,000 in worth to each lot without decreasing the total number of lots. Even more compact development (quarter-acre lots) sells for more than half-acre and larger lots where open space exists. Over a 20-year period, the conservation development homes built on quarter-acre lots sold for an average $17,000 more than their counterparts built on half-acre lots (Illinois Planning Commission, 2003). Analyses completed as a part of Return on Environment report note that in Chester County, average property values have increased by more than $11,000 per lot for those homes located near open space (Return on Environment, Chester County, 2019). Furthermore, this same report identifies the reduced need for stormwater infrastructure as a major cost savings for conservation design subdivisions.

Developers see value through reduced development costs and increased unit values. In Texas, respect for the natural terrain and existing resources allowed the developer of an 80-lot development to reduce grading costs by 83% ($250,000) compared to a conventionally-engineered plan (Growing Greening, ConservationTools.org). Conservation Design subdivisions typically cost upwards of $7,400 less per lot to build (Environmental Law and Policy Center, 2011). Examples of cost savings to developers include:

- Reduced Site preparation costs
    - Elimination of mass re-grading
    - Decrease in erosion and sediment control measures

- Reduced Infrastructure costs
    - Reduced need for storm water basins
    - Reduced roadway lengths
    - Reduced drainage pipe installations

- Increased value of units
    - Located adjacent to open space
    - Positioned to coexist with natural resource areas

Conventional development places tremendous burdens on infrastructure and typically does not pay for itself in services provided. Conservation design and compact development reduce the costs of infrastructure and construction, preserve open space, increase the inherent value of units over conventional development, pose greater opportunities for cost efficient housing, and offer greater protection to the environment and our waterways. And while costs to develop go down, value to homeowners and municipalities goes up.

CONCLUSION

The use of Conservation Design (CD), Low Impact Development (LID), and green infrastructure offers municipalities and developers opportunities to protect and enhance the hydrology of development sites, as well as address other environmental and social issues related to development. In conclusion, development designed using these practices results in a more desirable place to live.

As noted above, land development sites can be evaluated through a consensus-driven stakeholder process that seeks to determine development goals, conduct a resource inventory, undertake a site analysis, create conceptual designs (sketch plans), formulate final designs, and obtain government buy-in and approval. Flexibility by all parties allows each site to be evaluated for its unique resources and potential. Solutions emerge from early and on-going engagement among all stakeholders in a project.

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