

Land

Search

Home » Cities move from grey to green infrastructure

Practice areas

- Arts & Culture
- Building
- Economy
- Education
- Energy
- Food
- Health
- Land
- Spirit
- Transportation
- Water
- Zero waste

Projects

- Planning & development projects

About

- About us
- Contact
- Donate
- Join
- Network map
- Sustainability jobs

Marc Lefkowitz

- Administer
- Blogs
- Forums
- Image galleries
- Latest images
- My account
- Node locations
- Quotes
- Recent changes
- User locations
- Create content
- Recent posts
- Log out

Users

Online New

There is currently 1 user and 1 guest online.

Online users

Marc Lefkowitz

The content access permissions need to be rebuilt. Please visit this page.

Cities move from grey to green infrastructure

View Edit Outline Track

Submitted by Marc Lefkowitz | Last edited September 29, 2008 - 2:45pm

Posted in: Green infrastructure

Add child page 6342 reads Facebook Twitter Print this Email this

Older cities such as Cleveland are seeking less costly and more sustainable solutions to handling storm water. Some of the more innovative approaches are slowly replacing big, expensive grey (i.e. concrete) with lots of smaller, green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure refers to best management practices for storm water, such as rain gardens, vegetated swales, permeable pavements, rain barrels, and green roofs that mimic the natural capacity of the landscape to absorb precipitation where it falls. Its benefits include allowing storm water to infiltrate into soil instead of rushing into sewers and streams with a toxic brew of oils or heavy metals which can degrade our drinking water and harm fish and other animals.



Perennial Raingarden

In July, 2007 Cleveland hosted the National Association of Clean Water Agencies conference where water department directors from Chicago, Portland, Milwaukee and Philly explained how storm water agencies and green infrastructure work. They reported positive results, but cautioned that the organizations that have lead the way—storm water agencies—don't form overnight. Most of the time cities have to reverse decades-old patterns that have them spending billions of dollars on ever larger pipes and systems, which still fail to handle all the run off from ever increasing paved surfaces. Streams were still being blown out or polluted, and streets flooded during high rains.

Some municipal governments have unpaved the way with city ordinances, which often needed updating in order to get residents working with them on green infrastructure. In most cities, ordinances prevented citizens from simply disconnecting their downspouts to capture the water in a rain barrel, or feed it into a rain garden on their property. Once considered controversial—inviting your resident stakeholders to take an active role in slowing storm water and reducing overall water usage—now it's paying dividends.

Cleveland officials are taking note, and are looking to add a layer of green infrastructure to their existing efforts. In October, Cleveland Office of Building and Housing—with assistance from the Office of Sustainability Director Andrew Watterson and Fran DiDonato, a project manager working on sustainable policies—proposed updating the city's ordinances to allow private property owners to disconnect downspouts from the sewer and attach them to approved receptacles on their property (guidelines will be written that include rain barrels and rain gardens). Watterson's office also proposes allowing permeable pavement to be used on private property. Both rule changes have been introduced in Cleveland City Council which will vote on the matter after committee hearing and Mayor Jackson's approval, DiDonato says.

"This will let the city get out of the way so that home and property owners can manage their own storm water," DiDonato says. "It also lets us promote and understand how to really do this."

The city plans to offer workshops in the spring on how to properly disconnect downspouts and, possibly, combine a workshop on how to make a rain barrel. Besides the written guidelines, DiDonato

Upcoming Events

October						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



who pushed Northeast Ohio to think strategically about regionalism and sustainability.  
A service of the GreenCityBlueLake Institute at the [Cleveland Museum of Natural History](#).  
Operating support provided by [The George Gund Foundation](#).  
The GreenCityBlueLake name and logo are registered service marks of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.



Unless otherwise indicated, all content is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike2.5 License](#).  
GreenCityBlueLake 2006-2008

GreenCityBlueLake is proudly powered by [Drupal](#).