

# Long-Term Stormwater Plans: Community Solutions for Clean Water and A Greener Future

Water is a community's most essential resource. Communities need clean water for drinking. Local businesses and industries need clean water to operate. And people need safe water to enjoy outdoor activities such as swimming, fishing and boating. Water helps create places where people can live, thrive and build a good quality of life for themselves and their family and friends.



Local communities across the nation strive to keep their water clean and safe. As their communities see more development and rising infrastructure costs, public works departments face many challenges to protecting their local waterbodies. One of those challenges, stormwater runoff, is the fastest growing source of water pollution.

While stormwater can be a hazard, cities today are finding that it can be a resource too. But to manage stormwater runoff *and* to find ways to take advantage of its benefits takes *long-term* planning. Just like we make plans for retirement and save over many years to reach our goals for the future, communities are finding that long-term planning is the way to match stormwater management goals with the planning goals for other areas of city services such as new roads and economic development.

It can lead to a marriage of two interests: community and safety. Rainwater can be harvested for household needs such as watering while reducing demand on drinking water supplies. Rain gardens beautify neighborhoods while reducing higher urban temperatures from heat island effects. Parks and green spaces provide natural outdoor spaces for people to enjoy with their family and friends when it's sunny while soaking up stormwater when its rainy.

Stormwater projects work best when communities think about stormwater early in the design phase rather than later after homes and businesses are built. And the most successful plans start with a vision for the community forged by a collaborative process.



## What is stormwater runoff?

Water from rain storms or snowmelt travels through a city's curb and gutter routes like a bus picking up dirt, debris, chemicals and bacteria. This payload of pollutants passes through the city storm sewer system and is dumped, untreated, into local streams, rivers and lakes. The polluted runoff can harm drinking water sources, increase flooding and trigger health advisories.

## What are the community benefits of a long-term stormwater plan?

By syncing stormwater upgrades with other infrastructure and development projects, communities save money. Reliable infrastructure reduces flooding and pollution, while attracting businesses and residents to the community. Cleaner waterways promote fishing and canoeing for citizens right in their backyard. Long-term plans provide surety to developers and financiers and promote environmental and economic success hand in hand.

-  Save money
-  Improve public health
-  Clean waterways
-  Reduce flooding
-  Safeguard and upgrade storm sewer infrastructure
-  Make open spaces useful come rain or shine

# What does long-term stormwater planning look like?



A community's long-term stormwater plan is a proactive strategy to address flooding and water pollution from trash, oil, dirt, pet waste, pesticides, fertilizers and sometimes sewage from stormwater piped directly to local streams, lakes and ocean fronts.



It's a tailored approach to efficiently synchronize innovative stormwater infrastructure solutions with a community's priority projects.



This big picture strategy looks at the community's long-term vision and plans and integrates stormwater projects to bring green spaces to residents and businesses, revitalize waterfronts and connect people to their precious water resources.

It's about looking for opportunities to add stormwater into projects happening every day like:



Adding or expanding bike lanes



Revitalizing downtown areas



Adding sidewalks



Renovating parks



Constructing, reconstructing, or repairing roads



Building or renovating schools



## Green Mixed With Gray

Green infrastructure works effectively when accompanied by "gray" infrastructure such as pumps, pipes, plant upgrades or other enhancements. Many communities are finding that green infrastructure in combination with gray infrastructure is useful to achieving water quality improvements, increasing resiliency, and the other community benefits described previously.

Build it ♪ Communicate it ♪ Refine it

### Are there examples?

Stay tuned in 2018. EPA has launched an initiative to expand the use of long-term stormwater planning. To pilot the process, EPA, states, and the five cities below are working together to develop individual long-term stormwater plans.

Burlington, IA | Chester, PA | Hattiesburg, MS  
Rochester, NH | Santa Fe, NM

For more information visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater-planning>