

*working for clean rivers*

Stormwater runoff can reduce water quality in rivers and streams. Portland uses green streets, ecoroofs, trees and other green infrastructure to increase sewer system efficiency, and protect water quality, public health, and the environment. Green infrastructure keeps stormwater out of the sewer system, filters pollutants, provides habitat and increases neighborhood green space for healthier watersheds.

## GREEN STREETS

# Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a green street and what are the benefits?

A green street is a natural stormwater management approach that uses plants and soil to slow, filter, and cleanse stormwater from streets.

Traditional stormwater management directs runoff into pipes. A green street manages stormwater before it enters the sewer system.

Green streets protect water quality in rivers and streams by removing up to 90 percent of pollutants. They replenish groundwater supplies, absorb carbon, and improve air quality. Green streets also improve community aesthetics by providing green connections between parks and open space. Vegetated curb extensions improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, and calm traffic.



SE 21st Avenue curb extension

Green streets reduce peak stormwater flows, free capacity in the pipes to carry more wastewater to the sewage treatment plant, and reduce sewer backups in basements. They can eliminate the need to install or replace expensive underground collection, conveyance and treatment systems.

### How does Environmental Services choose a location?

Environmental Services prioritizes the placement of green streets to where there is a need to reduce or remove stormwater runoff flowing to the sewer system, protect water quality in nearby streams and rivers, and protect properties from sewer backup.

The Sustainable Stormwater Management Program keeps a list of people who have expressed interest in having a facility in their neighborhood. Contact Emily Hauth at 503-823-7378 or [Emily.Hauth@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:Emily.Hauth@portlandoregon.gov) to be placed on a list for evaluation.



SE 23rd and Irving simple green street



SW 12th and Montgomery streetside planters



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
CITY OF PORTLAND

*working for clean rivers*

Nick Fish, Commissioner  
Dean Marriott, Director

### Where can I get more green street information?

Learn more online at [www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainablestormwater](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainablestormwater).

### Will the green street remove parking?

It depends on the type of facility. Stormwater planters accommodate parking while curb extensions replace parking with landscape. Our goal is to not remove parking, but sometimes a curb extension

is the only option. Curb extensions can enhance pedestrian safety by decreasing crossing distances, keeping site lines clear, and slowing traffic. The city continues to research a variety of design options to limit loss of parking.



Curb Extension:  
SE 42nd Ave and Belmont St



Stormwater Planter:  
SE 92nd Ave

### **Will a green street near our house cause basement seepage?**

No. We have very strict criteria including slope and separation requirements that determine how close a facility can be to a home.

### **If I live on a steep slope or have poor infiltration, is a green street an option?**

Yes. Typically in those situations the facility is lined. Lining prevents stormwater from infiltrating, but this type of green street still improves water quality and reduces peak flows.

## **PLANTS AND MAINTENANCE**

### **Who will maintain the green street?**

Environmental Services maintains green streets as an important part of the city's stormwater infrastructure. City maintenance crews visit facilities as needed, but at least twice a year to weed, prune, clean out sediment, and replace plants. We welcome help from neighbors to keep the facilities free of litter and leaves. Neighbors interested in helping care for a local green street can volunteer to become a Green Street Steward. For more information go to [www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/GreenStreetStewards](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/GreenStreetStewards), call 503-823-5623 or email [GreenStreetStewards@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:GreenStreetStewards@portlandoregon.gov).

### **How do we know the facility is working correctly?**

The city regularly monitors facilities, but if you see a problem, please report it 24 hours a day to City of Portland Maintenance at 503-823-1700. Green streets are designed to overflow to stormwater inlets when they reach capacity during heavy rain.

### **Will a green street breed mosquitoes?**

Mosquitoes breed in standing water. Green streets are designed to drain in fewer than 48 hours to prevent breeding. The City of Portland works with Multnomah County Vector Control to monitor green street facilities for mosquito breeding. Vector Control has not found a facility yet that is a mosquito breeding ground. Make sure you remove any potential mosquito nurseries from your property. Look for standing water in buckets, barrels, old tires, wading pools, or trash cans.

### **What kinds of plants will be in the facility?**

Environmental Services selects plants that can tolerate wet soil in the winter and dry conditions in the summer. The plants are a mix of native and non-native that grow 2 to 3 feet high. Rushes and sedges are commonly used. Flower bulbs add color. Street trees are planted whenever possible.



Green street facility on NW Pettygrove St

### **Does a green street collect pollutants?**

Plant roots and soil organisms in green street facilities help break down stormwater pollutants. The city monitors green street soil for pollutants of concern. Current soil analysis shows no evidence of pollutants accumulating in concentrations that pose a health risk. The city will continue to collect and analyze data.

### **Will you take out the existing street trees?**

Trees catch and absorb rain, and are important to the city's sustainable stormwater management efforts. Environmental Services works closely with the City Forester's Office to determine possible impacts to existing trees. For more information on street trees, contact the City Forester's Office at 503-823-4489.

### **For More Information**

[www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainablestormwater](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainablestormwater)