ORDINANCE APPENDIX B

SITE DESIGN PROCESS

NATURAL HYDROLOGY SITE DESIGN PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Section 304 identifies a natural hydrology site design process that strives to minimize disturbances to land, site hydrology, and natural resources, and maintain the natural hydrologic regime, drainage patterns and flow conditions of a site to the maximum extent practicable. This appendix is intended to build on that process by providing additional information for achieving site designs that best maintain pre-construction stormwater runoff conditions, protect site amenities, and preserve natural resources. This appendix describes the following components of the natural hydrology site design process:

- Design Principles and Techniques;
- Design Process;
- Design Practices; and
- References.

Some common drainage design approaches for land development 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 runoff, as well as the expenditure of additional resources for detaining and managing increased volumes of concentrated runoff at some downstream location.

The natural hydrology site design process encourages land development site designs that minimize post-development runoff rates and volumes, and that minimize needs for artificial conveyance and storage facilities. This process strives 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. This avoids cumulative environmental impacts often associated with land development, and reducing the need for and size of constructed stormwater facilities. This approach minimizes the disturbance of land area, natural features and site hydrology; preserves significant concentrations of open space, woodlands, and corridors of environmentally sensitive features; and incorporates landscape-based BMPs and low impact development techniques to minimize the utilization of more intrusive structural stormwater facilities.

With this design process, the primary goals of a land development project can be achieved while minimizing the negative environmental impacts and avoiding management costs associated with unnecessary stormwater runoff. The fundamental principle of this design process is that site hydrology features are considered "up front" in the land development design process and are prioritized as integral aspects to be maintained and utilized within the site design, rather than being first sacrificed for space needed for traditional site layout or for construction of more intrusive stormwater facilities.

Natural hydrology site design is not a new approach but rather a holistic process that combines certain principles of Low Impact Development, Conservation Design, and Sustainable Design, and focuses on reducing unnecessary alterations to the natural patterns and functions of existing on-site hydrologic features. These natural hydrologic features tend to perform their "hydrologic function" (i.e., infiltration, evapotranspiration, flow attenuation, pollutant removal, etc.) very efficiently and sometimes have the hydrologic capacity to perform that function on increased runoff loadings from the built environment. However, care must be taken to adequately characterize the capacity of their hydrologic function and avoid overwhelming the feature with excessive runoff loadings, thus causing unintended impairments that are completely counter-productive to the purpose of natural hydrology site design.

Preserving natural hydrologic conditions requires careful site design considerations. Natural hydrology site design should serve as the foundation of the overall site design approach, and when applied in conjunction with the design professional's overall land development goals and desired outcomes, can help shape the overall vision and conceptual layout of the land development project.

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 and distributing storm 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 those features.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES

Natural hydrology site design involves identifying and prioritizing natural resources and natural and man-made hydrologic features, and incorporating such features into the overall site design to take advantage of their efficiencies of hydrologic performance, their cost efficiencies of reducing the need for or size of constructed stormwater facilities, and their aesthetic amenities. The five Design Principles to be achieved by this approach are as follows:

- Minimize land disturbance – both surface and subsurface.
- Minimize the cumulative area to be covered by impervious and compacted surfaces.
- Designing to the land, so that the layout of constructed and landscape features utilizes the natural topography and minimizes grading.
- Design the constructed stormwater management system to take advantage of the natural hydrologic landscape to achieve the required stormwater runoff control standards.
- Refine the site design and layout to optimize the cumulative benefits of the natural

hydrologic features, the constructed stormwater management system, and the land development components to achieve the minimum post-construction runoff volume, peak discharge rates and pollutant loads from the proposed land development site.

Techniques to be applied to achieve the design principles are presented in Table B.1.

DESIGN PROCESS

The first step in applying natural hydrology site design is to identify, delineate and assess the functions of all existing natural resources and natural and man-made 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. This includes:

- Streams, waterways, springs, wetlands, vernal pools, and water bodies;
- Drainage patterns, conveyances and discharge points;
- Natural infiltration areas and patterns;
- Areas of natural vegetation 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 (e.g., 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 five (5) Design Principles outlined above. The following section describes just a few of the many design practices, methods and techniques that are available to achieve the landowner's desired land development goals and the desired environmental efficiencies intended by natural hydrology site design.

Table B.1 – Site Design Process Principles and Techniques

Design Principles	Design Techniques
Minimize land disturbance – both surface and subsurface.	• 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. • 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 cumulative area to be covered by impervious and compacted surfaces.	• Minimize the size of individual impervious surfaces. • Separate large impervious surfaces into smaller components. • Disconnect runoff from one impervious surface to another. • Avoid unnecessary impervious surfaces. • Utilize porous materials where suited in lieu of impervious materials.
Designing to the land, so that the layout of constructed and landscape features utilizes the natural topography and minimizes grading.	• 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. • Reduce grading and compaction by applying selective grading design methods to provide final grading patterns tthat 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 complimentary and aesthetically pleasing development, such as can be achieved through Conservation Design and Sustainable Design approaches.

Design Principles	Design Techniques

Design the constructed stormwater management system to take advantage of the natural hydrologic landscape to achieve the required stormwater runoff control standards.	• Incorporate natural hydrologic features that have been selected for their available capacity and function into the overall system of site runoff controls.
	• Incorporate Low Impact Development (or similar) BMPs 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.
	• Provide open channel conveyance, as needed, to:
	  o Treat water quality;
	  o Reduce runoff velocity; and
	  o Promote infiltratation and evapotranspiration of runoff.
	• 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.
	• Maintain open space functions consistent with common area uses (passive recreation, on-site sewage management, scenic vistas, etc).

Refine the site design and layout to optimize the cumulative benefits of the natural hydrologic features, the constructed stormwater management system, and the land development components to achieve the minimum post-construction runoff volume, peak discharge rates and pollutant loads from the proposed land development site.	Apply site design techniques and practices as appropriate based on: • Conservation Design principles and practices. • Sustainable Design principles and practices. • Low Impact Development Design principles and practices.

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. Following are brief descriptions of various practices that can be used to achieve the principles of the natural hydrology site design process.

Site Layout Practices

The following site layout practices are but a few of the methods by which the natural hydrology site design process described above can be implemented. Such practices 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 some circumstances, communication among design engineers, land planning and environmental professionals, knowledgeable developers, community representatives, and regulatory authorities is also beneficial to combine their collective understanding and perspectives to create effective planning efforts.

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 runoff 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.

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.

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 and/or by reducing roadway widths. Designers should select the narrowest practical street width for the design conditions (speed, curvature, etc.). Narrower neighborhood streets should be considered and encouraged under select conditions. Reduced street widths also can lower maintenance needs and costs.

Limiting Sidewalks to One Side of the Street. 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.

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.

Constructing Compact Developments or Conservation Design: Low impact cluster or compact development can reduce the amount of impervious area for a given number of lots. Savings result from reduced street length, which also contributes 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 les -sensitive areas without affecting the gross density of development.

Stormwater Best Management Practices

Stormwater best management practices (BMPs) 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.

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.

Reducing the Need for Storm Sewers. Increasing the use of natural or vegetated drainage swales can reduce the need for extending storm sewers for draining streets, parking lots, and back yards, the potential for accelerating runoff from the development can be greatly reduced. The practice requires greater use of 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.

Using 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.

SOURCES

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