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GREEN  
RESERVE

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Green Reserve of 2009, through the State Revolving Fund, provides funding for a wide variety of qualifying projects in the categories of: *green infrastructure, energy efficiency, water efficiency, and other innovative projects*. For more information on ARRA, to find out if your current or future planned project meets the necessary criteria, and how to apply, visit [www.Recovery.gov](http://www.Recovery.gov).

A CONCEPTUAL GUIDE TO  
EFFECTIVE GREEN STREETS  
DESIGN SOLUTIONS

# Green Streets

Residential Streets  
Commercial Streets  
Arterial Streets  
Alleys



Green Street designs provide better environmental performance while creating attractive, safer environments.

*A Green Street  
is a street that uses  
natural processes  
to manage  
stormwater runoff  
at its source.*

Streets comprise a significant percentage of publicly owned land in most communities, and thus offer a unique opportunity to manage for environmental outcomes. A Green Street uses a natural systems approach to reduce stormwater flow, improve water quality, reduce urban heating, enhance pedestrian safety, reduce carbon footprints, and beautify neighborhoods.

Through various combinations of plants and soils, these objectives—and several others—can be met on different types of streets in many settings. Green Street features include vegetated curb extensions, sidewalk planters, landscaped medians, vegetated swales, permeable paving, and street trees. This guide provides an overview of different strategies that can be employed in transportation rights-of-way at the local or neighborhood scale.

# Residential Streets

STORMWATER CURB EXTENSIONS  
PERMEABLE PAVING  
VEGETATED SWALES

Residential streets offer the greatest potential for building Green Streets in new neighborhoods or retrofitting existing streets because the streets are typically slower, less trafficked, and likely to already have some landscape elements.

These days, it is fairly common for homes to have rain gardens incorporated into their landscaping to collect and store stormwater runoff from rooftops, driveways, and patios. "Rain garden" is the general term used to describe stormwater strategies that use plants and soils to filter, absorb, and slow rainwater on the landscape surface.

Similar types of rain gardens can take various forms within the street right-of-way itself—the edges of the street can be built to allow stormwater to flow into a landscape area, or space within the paved area of the street can be converted to landscape, increasing permeability. Additionally, permeable

paving that is durable, load-bearing, and built with an underlying reservoir can temporarily store water prior to infiltration.

In new construction situations, Green Streets can be designed to handle significant volumes of water. In retrofit situations, they can typically handle all of the rain from small storms, while excess water from large storms can overflow into existing storm sewer systems.

*Rain gardens are beautiful landscape features that naturally filter runoff and require less maintenance than turf grass.*

## STORMWATER CURB EXTENSIONS

Conventional curb extensions (also known as curb bulb outs, chokers, or chicanes) have been used for decades to enhance pedestrian safety and help in traffic calming.

A stormwater curb extension simply incorporates a rain garden into which runoff flows.



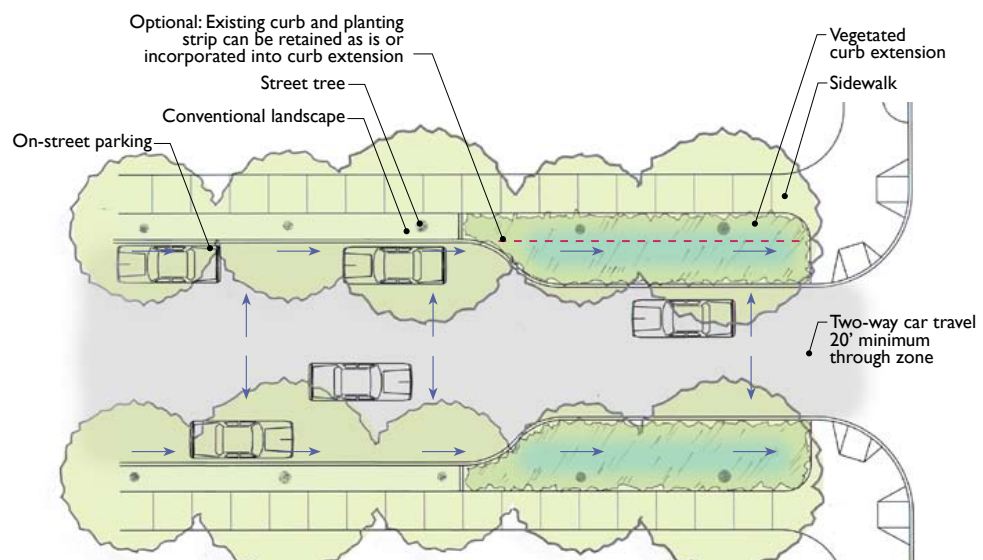
TYPICAL STREET



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## PERMEABLE PAVING

Permeable paving (pavers, or porous asphalt and pervious concrete) in the parking lane converts impervious surfaces to allow stormwater to absorb into the ground, which reduces the amount of runoff without any loss of parking on the street.

The aesthetics of permeable paving can also give the illusion of a narrower street and therefore help calm traffic.



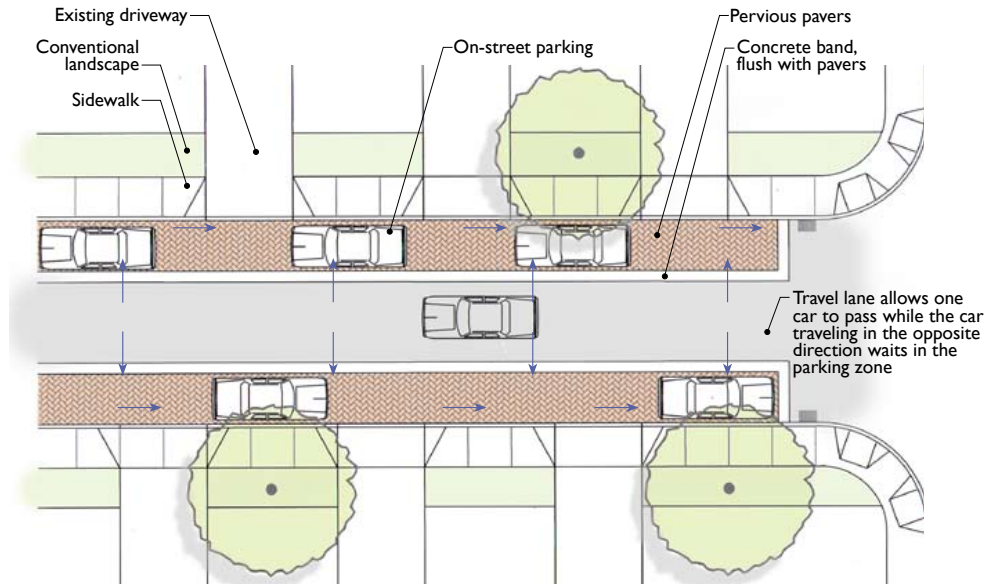
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## VEGETATED SWALES

Swales are long, shallow vegetated depressions, with a slight longitudinal slope. As water flows through the swale, it is slowed by the interaction with plants and soil, allowing sediments and pollutants to settle out. Water soaks into the soil and is taken up by plants, and may infiltrate further into the ground if the soil is well-drained.



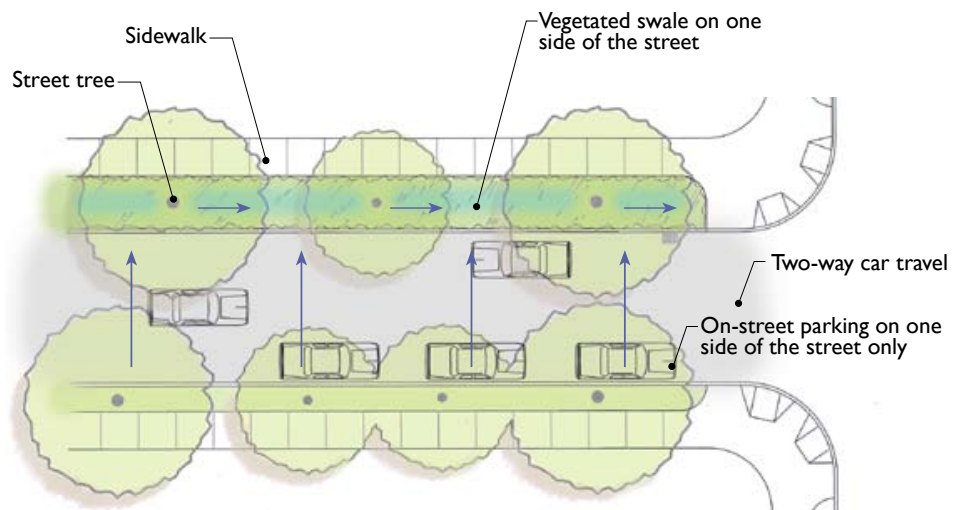
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# Commercial Streets

STORMWATER PLANTERS  
STORMWATER CURB EXTENSIONS  
PERMEABLE PAVING

Commercial streets in most urban areas need to accommodate a wide range of users and uses including pedestrians, drivers, bikers, transit riders, on-street parking, outdoor seating, lighting, trees, etc. Because of all these demands, finding space to collect and manage stormwater can at first appear challenging. There are, however, several design options that towns and cities can consider when integrating stormwater management into even their most active streets.

The key is thinking creatively in finding space that can accommodate multiple purposes in one space, such as a street tree pit designed to collect runoff, or the curb extensions (also known as “pedestrian bulb outs”) at the corners designed to reducing crossing distances for pedestrians that can also contain a rain garden. These design options are more easily accommodated in new

streets where the location of underground utilities is considered from the start. More strategic design is necessary for streets with existing utilities. The pay-off of these efforts, though, is a more attractive, walkable street that considerably reduces polluted runoff.

*A community's identity is often most evident on its commercial streets. Green Street techniques not only achieve environmental goals but can greatly improve the look and feel of a community.*

## STORMWATER PLANTERS

Planters are long, narrow landscaped areas with vertical walls and flat bottoms, typically open to the underlying soil. They allow for more storage volume than a swale in less space.

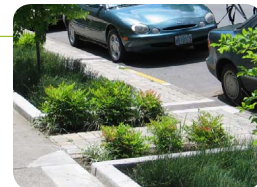
Water flows into the planter, absorbs into the plants and topsoil, fills to a predetermined level, and then, if necessary, overflows into a storm sewer system. If desired, planters can accommodate street trees.



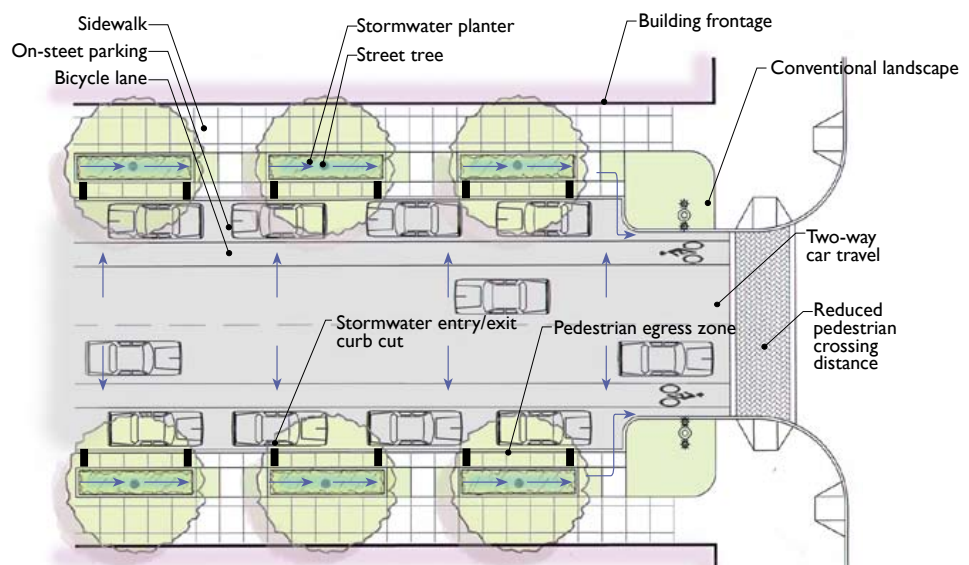
TYPICAL STREET



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## STORMWATER CURB EXTENSIONS

Stormwater curb extensions on commercial streets are similar to those on residential streets. They are rain gardens typically located near the corners that can also provide the pedestrian with a more comfortable crossing.

Curb extensions can also be located mid-block by converting one or more parking spaces.



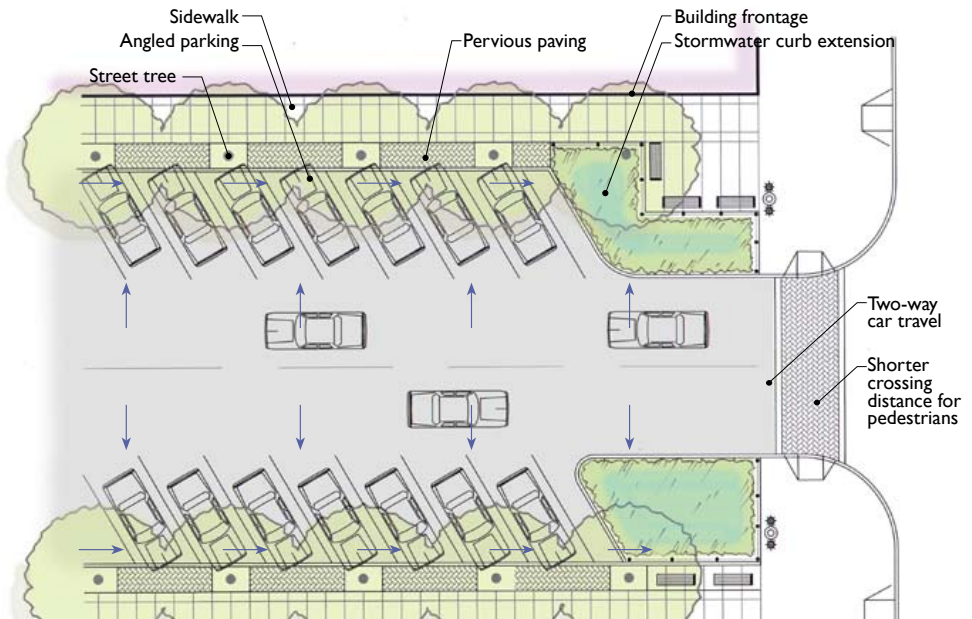
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## PERMEABLE PAVING

Permeable paving on commercial streets can be incorporated into sidewalks and parking lanes.

Recent advances in permeable paving technologies now make many appropriate for higher speeds or where large, heavy vehicles are expected to be parked—areas such as loading zones and bus stops.



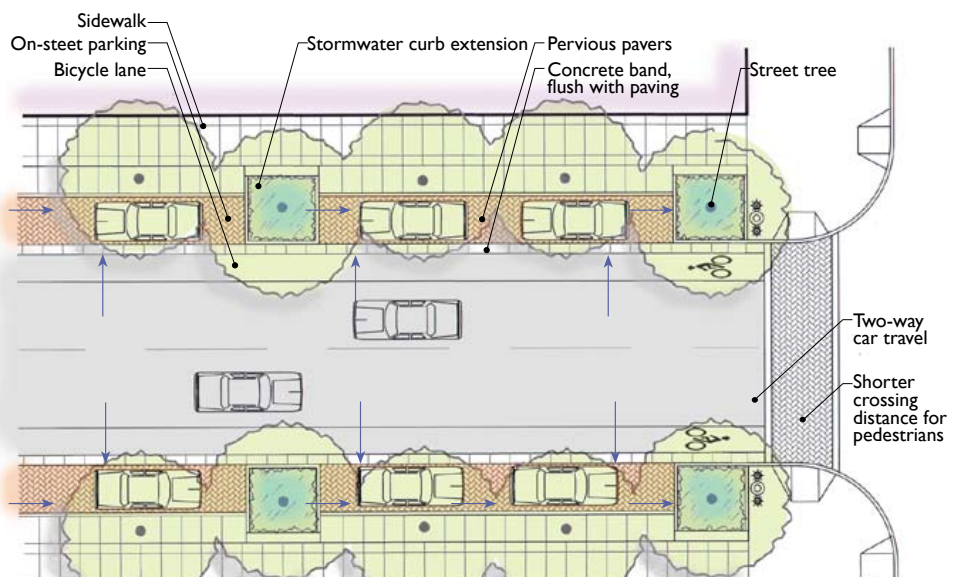
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# Arterial Streets

## VEGETATED SWALES

Arterial streets in towns and cities are often characterized by wide expanses of pavement, little greenery, and little to address pedestrian needs. Should an arterial street already have landscape areas adjacent to the roadway or within grassy medians, then retrofitting these areas to accommodate rainwater will significantly reduce runoff and help protect water quality.

Where adjacent landscape space does not exist, a process of “road dieting” can be undertaken. This involves determining just how much paved surface is necessary to safely manage travel, and how much can be converted to green space. In addition to managing runoff, this is also an opportunity to retrofit the functionality of arterial streets, making them more “multi-modal” by

incorporating sidewalks, on-street bike lanes, or landscape-separated bike greenways.

Again, as with residential and commercial streets, though it is easier to plan and design all of these uses into a roadway from the beginning, most arterials present opportunities to incorporate Green Street features, and can be highly successful.

*Busy arterials need not only be a conduit for traffic. They have the potential to be attractive, green boulevards that reduce runoff and reinforce a community's identity.*

## VEGETATED SWALES

Like residential streets, arterial roadways are good street types for swales because they typically have long, linear stretches of uninterrupted space that can be used to manage stormwater.

Some arterials may not have landscape space in place but do have travel lanes or paved shoulders that can be narrowed to create space for swales.



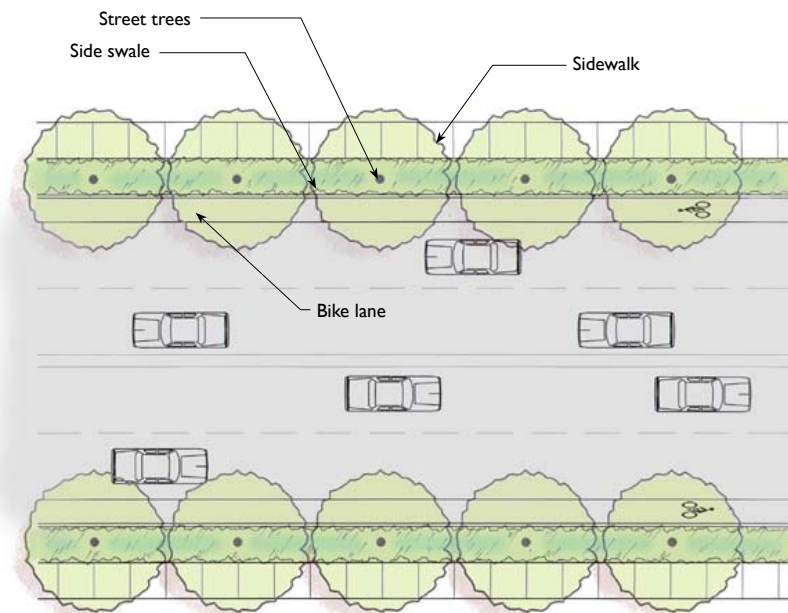
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# Alleys

## PERMEABLE PAVING VEGETATED SWALES

In many towns and cities, alleys comprise a significant amount of impervious surface and are sometimes prone to flooding because they are often not connected to the sewer system. Green Street techniques like vegetated swales and permeable paving effectively reduce and treat runoff, alleviate flooding, and are far less expensive than installing connections to sewers.

*Alleys are the “low-hanging fruit” of Green Street design—a good starting point for towns and cities to begin incorporating stormwater management.*

### PERMEABLE PAVING

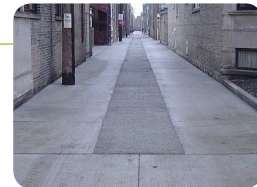
Alleys are typically low-speed and low-trafficked streets and therefore suitable locations for using permeable paving. The entire surface could be permeable, or if heavier vehicles are anticipated for loading and unloading, or the alley is “reversed crowned” (sloping toward the center line), then only the middle section needs to be permeable.



TYPICAL ALLEY



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### VEGETATED SWALES

If the alley is crowned in such a way that water flows to the side, then stormwater can be accommodated by simply greening edges of the alley with swales and planters.

If necessary, water can flow through pipes or covered trenches to allow vehicle access to garages and driveways.



TYPICAL ALLEY



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Illustrations and photographs used in this brochure are from the EPA publication *Stormwater Management Handbook—Implementing Green Infrastructure in Northern Kentucky Communities* and were created by Nevue Ngan Associates of Portland, Oregon.

This handbook, as well as other valuable resources, are available at both [www.epa.gov/smartgrowth](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth) and [www.epa.gov/greeninfrastructure](http://www.epa.gov/greeninfrastructure).