



New York State
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION



Hudson River Estuary Program

Tools for Watershed Protection: Better Site Design

What is Better Site Design?

Better Site Design is an approach to development that utilizes a set of design principles that protect natural areas, reduce impervious surfaces, and better integrate stormwater treatment in development projects.

What are the benefits of Better Site Design?

By delineating and protecting natural areas and wildlife habitat, communities and development projects are enhanced and stormwater management costs are reduced. By managing water on-site with attractive practices, groundwater aquifers are replenished, flooding is reduced, and pollutants in stormwater are treated before entering local waterways, providing long-term benefits to a community.



Rockland County Boy Scout Rain Garden Project

How does Better Site Design compare with Low Impact Development?

Better Site Design and Low Impact Development are really the same set of practices, with somewhat more emphasis on hydrology and engineering in Low Impact Development, and somewhat more emphasis on changing municipal codes in Better Site Design.

How can we incorporate Better Site Design in Development Projects?

Better Site Design is implemented in two ways:

- 1) Developers, builders, engineers and landscape architects incorporate Better Site Design practices in the design and construction of development projects.
- 2) Municipalities review and consider amending their local codes to incorporate Better Site Design.



Hudson River Estuary Program
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Has Better Site Design Been Done Anywhere?

The Towns of Clinton and Wappinger in Dutchess County conducted better site design roundtables in 2005 resulting in two documents, “Town of Clinton: Recommended Model Development Principles for the Protection of Natural Resources in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed,” and “Town of Wappinger: Recommended Model Development Principles for the Conservation of Natural Resources in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed.” In July 2007, the Town of Wappinger Town Board adopted 22 out of the 36 local code changes recommended by the roundtable participants. These documents are available on the Town of Clinton website at: <http://www.townofclinton.com/>

The Center for Watershed Protection in Maryland developed a set of tools for states, municipalities and watershed groups to use including a handbook, “Better Site Design, A Handbook for Changing Development Rules in Your Community,” which includes a “Code and Ordinance Worksheet.” See the Center for Watershed Protection website at: <http://www.cwp.org> for a free download of this publication. Several municipalities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have used these tools to implement Better Site Design principles. The Hudson River Estuary Program is currently revising these tools for closer applicability to the Hudson River Estuary watershed and New York State. For developers and engineers, NYSDEC has adopted better site design guidance that is posted on the NYSDEC website at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/43321.html>



Residential Rain Garden (Center for Watershed Protection)

How can we find out more about Better Site Design?

Contact the Hudson River Estuary Program
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*This fact sheet was developed in cooperation with the
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The Hudson River Estuary Program is a charter member of the
Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials National Network



Commercial Rain Garden/Bioretention
(Center for Watershed Protection)