



County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works
Watershed Management Division



NEWS

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New County Building Standards Bring LID Practices to LA County Communities

LOS ANGELES—The County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors approved a precedent setting suite of green building ordinances today, introducing new building standards that support water and energy conservation, diversion of waste from landfills and a healthier environment. The new County ordinances will apply to industrial, residential and commercial developments within County unincorporated areas and go into effect on January 1, 2009.

In order to meet the stormwater provisions of the new ordinances, contractors will have to adopt new techniques for landscape design, known as Low Impact Development (LID). LID uses both natural and man-made features to control the flow of stormwater from a property. The result is a reduction in the rate of water runoff, filtering of pollutants, as well as infiltration of water into the ground. Successful implementation of LID practices will be instrumental in improving the quality of stormwater for later use, as well as stabilizing flow rates of stormwater runoff.

"The LID ordinances will require new developments to implement practices that improve water quality and water conservation," said Bruce Hamamoto, a senior civil engineer in the Department of Public Works. "When stormwater doesn't run off the property, it doesn't pollute the rivers and oceans."

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Examples of LID Best Management Practices (BMP's) include:

- Pervious Pavement/Pavers: Asphalt or concrete structures that allow water to percolate for storage of rainwater during a storm.
- Dry Wells: Gravel or stone-filled pits that catch water from roof or pavement runoff.
- Rain Barrels and Cisterns: Containers of various sizes that store the water delivered through building runoff. Rain barrels are generally smaller structures, put above ground. Cisterns, which tend to be larger, are often built underground, and are possibly connected to the building's plumbing or irrigation system.

County Public Works staff worked closely with a variety of stakeholders in crafting the LID ordinance, including the California Building Industry Association, which represents 650 home development companies in the state, as well as nonprofit groups Heal the Bay, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, and Santa Monica Baykeeper.

"I think this is the most far-reaching set of environmental ordinances that the board has ever passed and it's not only a strong investment in environmental projects, but in green jobs too," said Heal the Bay President Mark Gold in a statement to the Daily News.

The first successful implementation of LID came in 1990 from Prince George County, Maryland, where the first municipal LID manual was introduced in 1998. Since then, LID has been put into practice by several municipalities, including Portland, Oregon; and San Diego County; as well as the construction projects developed by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Department of Defense.

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