

Not the Norm



Despite reports of Millennials moving out of cities and into the suburbs, urbanization is still on the rise in the U.S. The United Nations recently projected

that by 2030, 1.1 billion people will relocate to cities. As a resident of a large city myself, I know the benefits of living in such a diverse, modern area. But I also know that nowhere is the country's lack of pervious surfaces more apparent than in a concrete-covered city. According to a 2012 study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Northern Research Station, 25.5% of urban land is covered in impervious surfaces, compared with 2.4% nationally.

For centuries, engineers and developers have designed city streets and buildings that send water away from homes and businesses and into the sewers. At a conference I attended recently, a panelist remarked, "We've designed our entire world to drain water." Take a look at a typical city street and notice how the angle of every impervious surface points toward a catch basin or storm drain. In recent years, more frequent, severe rain events, combined with deteriorating infrastructure, have led to overwhelmed sewer systems, causing flooding and overflows.

Fortunately, city planners and designers seem to be noticing the benefits of

alternative storm water management techniques and are moving away from developing land and buildings that send rainfall straight to the sewer. Whether retrofitted or as part of new construction, technologies such as permeable pavement, green roofs and rainwater harvesting are diverting storm water from storm drains and making use of it in other ways. In some cases, it is treated and sent to groundwater aquifers. In others, it is reused inside a commercial building or residence. In most cases, it has a beneficial purpose and relieves the stress on storm and combined sewers.

Throughout the year, SWS covers a plethora of municipal storm water and erosion control projects. In this special issue, we are switching our focus to the residential, commercial and industrial sectors. Inside these pages you will find stories of residential, commercial and industrial projects led by teams committed to responsible storm water management. From residential rainwater harvesting, to commercial water reuse, to industrial runoff management and treatment, these stories are examples of non-municipal entities responsibly treating and managing storm water. **SWS**

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