



PW-21

Natural drainage systems

The city of Seattle, Washington (563,000), has installed natural drainage systems on approximately 20 city blocks. On these streets, the city has dug a shallow trench between the sidewalk and the street. After adding several inches of rich, absorbent soil, the city planted native vegetation. During Seattle's frequent rainstorms, almost all of the stormwater from streets and roofs is filtered and absorbed by these natural drainage systems. As a result, the pollutants in the stormwater do not reach the city's creeks, lakes, and bays. The natural drainage projects are attractive and citizens want them on their streets. The city works closely with residents and plants attractive, high-maintenance plants if residents are willing to take care of them; if not, the city provides plants that do not require maintenance. The natural drainage systems actually cost slightly less than traditional drainage systems because they require less extensive trenching.

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