



Highlights on three innovative stormwater projects around town

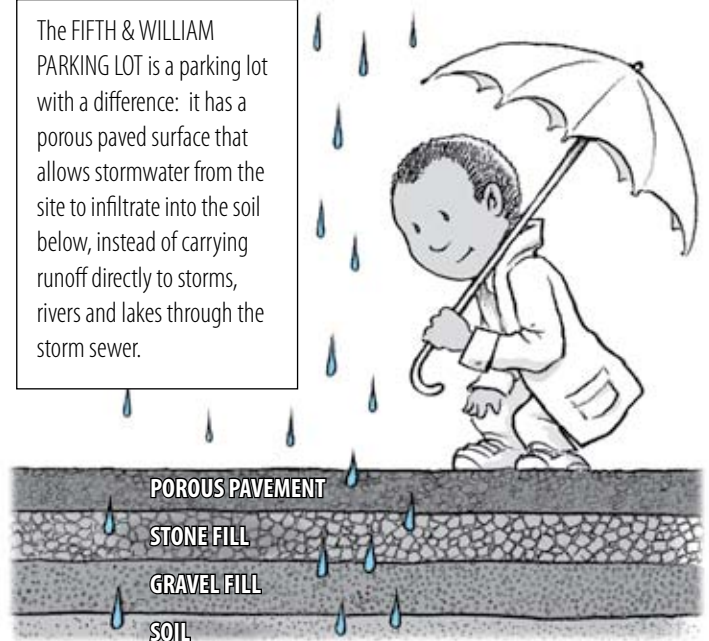
Earlier this year a new parking lot located across from the downtown Ann Arbor District Library was constructed using several layers of porous pavement materials designed to absorb rainwater. The effectiveness of this new parking surface is easily demonstrated by watching water being absorbed.

At West Stadium near Pauline, oversized stormwater pipes up to 42" in diameter were placed under the reconstructed street in order to better manage the flow of rainwater and to provide temporary storage of stormwater along the entire street.

The current construction activity at Pioneer High School campus on the Stadium and South Main corner is a \$3.1 million project to install an acre of underground seven-foot high storage vaults to detain stormwater running off the Dicken and Eberwhite neighborhoods. This project will help improve water quality and control flow within the Allen Creek system before discharging into the Huron River. The captured water will first pass through treatment units that use the force of flowing water and baffles to separate and remove pollutants such as sediment, oils, metals, and phosphorus. The vaults are designed to detain water during heavy storms and drain up to one-fifth of the collected water into a sand layer that will percolate into the groundwater. Most of the construction will be completed by August 2010—in time for the site to resume service as a parking lot for home football games. Completion of the entire project is anticipated by spring 2011 and will include interpretive signs and the installation of 130 trees. This project is a collaborative effort between the Ann Arbor Public School District, Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner, and the City of Ann Arbor and is funded through several sources, including the Federal Stimulus Fund, a low interest (2.5%) State Revolving Fund loan to the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner, and the City of Ann Arbor. Fun fact: The erosion control "filter socks" placed around the Pioneer construction site periphery are filled with Ann Arbor's municipal compost!

Property owners can reduce the amount of stormwater running off their own property and save money on their quarterly stormwater bill by using rain barrels or installing rain gardens. Details on these options are provided online at www.a2gov.org/storm or by calling 734.794.6333.

The FIFTH & WILLIAM PARKING LOT is a parking lot with a difference: it has a porous paved surface that allows stormwater from the site to infiltrate into the soil below, instead of carrying runoff directly to storms, rivers and lakes through the storm sewer.



Tips for a safe and happy snow season

Street plowing information. Following heavy snowfalls, Ann Arbor provides an online tracking service of street snow plow activities at www.a2gov.org/snow. You may check this Web address at any time for updates or subscribe to free e-mail alerts by selecting the red envelope posted on the snow page.

Street snow removal. When possible, remove your vehicle from street parking during heavy snowfalls until the streets are plowed. The plows will be able to clear more of the pavement, which will make driving and parking easier and safer after the storm.

Winter traveling tips. Pedestrians and bicyclists need to make themselves visible during winter's shorter daylight hours by wearing bright colors or

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reflective materials and by avoiding risks when navigating streets. Motorists need to drive cautiously, especially on streets that may be slippery, and around bike lanes and cross walks. Please be aware of the city's pedestrians and bicyclists: Ann Arbor was ranked this year as a "Top 10 city to visit with your dog" and achieved a silver award as a "Bike-Friendly Community" by the League of American Bicyclists.

Safe sidewalk snow removal. Remember to clear sidewalks within 24 hours following each accumulation of snow greater than one inch. To assist with this effort, Ann Arbor residents

may fill their own five-gallon bucket with a salt/sand mixture from the city's maintenance yard at 721 N. Main Street to apply to their sidewalk. For more information, call 734.794.6362. Remember to take shoveling breaks, especially when the weather is very cold, windy, or the snow is deep.

Winter solid waste setouts. Please place your recycling and trash carts in a clear street or driveway by 7 a.m. on your weekly collection day or shovel a shelf into the snow bank, no higher than one inch from the ground to provide for stability and safe lifting. Special pickup (disabled) customers must provide clear driveways or walkways, free of snow and ice, leading to the stored recycling bins and trash cart. Property managers can remind their parking lot snow removal service to maintain access to dumpsters and recycling carts.

Our readers ask, we respond...

Q: Where do my City of Ann Arbor utility bill donations go?

A: If you have ever donated money through your water bill payments, you have helped your neighbors in need. In the past five years, the City of Ann Arbor Utility Assistance Fund has utilized over \$14,000 of these donations to assist over 40 City of Ann Arbor residents in need of emergency utility assistance. This fund is managed—along with many other public and private funds dedicated to emergency financial assistance—through the Barrier Busters Network by the City of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County Office of Community Development. The Barrier Busters Network is a group of social service agencies that work with Washtenaw County residents to help access resources and services in times of need. To request assistance with your utility bills, please contact the Washtenaw County 211 (Dial 2-1-1 from any phone) for a list of agencies closest to you. To contribute, simply include an Ann Arbor Assistance Fund Donation amount on your water bill invoice, located just above the payment line. Thank you.

Comment: Online bill payment is not an option for me

Response: The percentage of Ann Arbor water customers choosing to be invoiced and pay water bills electronically continues to grow to over 23 percent of the customer base since this fee-free option was launched in May 2009. However, as a few customers noted, people without a home computer would incur a large carbon footprint if they purchased a computer, software, etc., just to pay bills online. A mailed paper bill payment is the appropriate "green" option-of-choice for many customers.

Suggestion: Consider eliminating multi-page water invoices in order to save paper

Response: Most water bill invoices fit on a single sheet of paper, printed on both sides. However, the need for multiple sheets of paper may arise whenever the water rates increase and the lines of information needed to print are doubled in order to provide the cost of water before—and after—the date when the new rates went into effect during a specific quarterly billing cycle. Good suggestion! We'll keep this in mind to consider, as possible, with future software billing programs. In the meantime, customers may elect to use the online billing option, where past bills are stored electronically for reference and may be printed, as needed, on a double-sided printer.

Q: Why doesn't Ann Arbor use more salt on roads?

A: Ten years ago the Ann Arbor City Council passed a resolution to switch from applying 100 percent salt (sodium chloride) to using a mixture of 95 percent sand and 5 percent salt onto public streets. This decision was based on research and recommendations from the Huron River Watershed Council, which found significant salt contamination in the Huron River. High levels of salt in the Huron River result in poisoned fish and aquatic plants and increased costs to process the river water into drinking water at the municipal Water Treatment Plant. Road salt can also have a detrimental affect in neighborhoods by stunting grass and trees and by promoting rust on the metal undersides of vehicles. Consequently, it is a city policy to apply the least amount of salt that allows for safe driving. The amount of salt used depends on snowfall rates, time of day, and pavement conditions. Salt is not effective when pavement temperatures are below 18 degrees F. The city uses portable readers to determine pavement temperatures. Under icy conditions, sand may be applied to provide road friction until the salt can begin to work. Because sand clogs street gutters, using sand requires additional maintenance to sweep streets and clean drains.