

New Jersey Green Streets



Funding Green Streets
September 2021

About

We all consume water and create waste, but we seldom think about the underlying pipes, sewers, and utilities that sustain our water usage. Our lives depend on clean drinking water, and robust wastewater and stormwater infrastructure systems support local economies, create strong communities, and protect our environment.

Green infrastructure is one solution many communities are employing to maximize community benefits, including reduced flooding and improved water quality, local economies, community health, and long-term resilience. Specifically, green streets are an effective solution to tackle both water and transportation infrastructure issues. This chapter includes information on funding both capital costs and operations and maintenance costs for green streets projects.

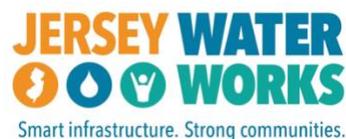
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About Jersey Water Works:

Jersey Water Works is a collaborative effort of many diverse organizations and individuals who embrace the common purpose of transforming New Jersey's inadequate water infrastructure by investing in sustainable, cost-effective solutions that provide communities with clean water and waterways; healthier, safer neighborhoods; local jobs; flood and climate resilience; and economic growth.

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Introduction

When designing green streets, localities need to consider and budget for the life cycle costs of each included green infrastructure practice. Green infrastructure life cycle costs typically include initial planning, design and installation costs, as well as the costs of operating and maintaining the practices and replacing vegetation when necessary. When green infrastructure practices are not maintained properly, the draining systems do not function correctly, which can cause dangerous localized flooding. Unmaintained practices can also lead to the false conclusion that green infrastructure catches trash, is ugly and is hard to maintain.

A transportation project that includes green street elements can qualify for additional funding sources. Along with more traditional local funding options, the [EPA Water Finance Clearinghouse](#) provides information, sources, descriptions and application processes for federal- and state-specific potential funding opportunities. (Planning green streets projects is discussed in more detail in the [Planning for Green Streets in Your Community chapter](#).) There are two funding elements that localities should plan for: capital costs and operations and maintenance costs. Localities can also consider how they might be able to utilize indirect funding sources, such as volunteers, for planning, design, installation and maintenance activities.



Figure 1. Rain garden in Manville, NJ. Credit: Loana Mendez-Solano

Funding Capital Costs

Capital costs for green streets projects include planning, design and installation costs. As local leaders consider incorporating green streets, there are a variety of funding and financial assistance options they can tap to ensure that the project is built in a way that will benefit the community most. By diversifying the project being planned, leaders can potentially expand their funding sources to meet requirements for more loan and grant options.

Local Funding Sources

Green streets can be financed through various local funds, depending on the structure of a locality's finances.

General Funds

Residents' taxes are typically put into a local general fund, which is the starting point for localities considering green street funding options. General funds are typically used for capital improvements, such as street and flood control projects, so financing green street elements would likely be an appropriate use of this resource.

Stormwater Utilities

Through the [Clean Stormwater and Flood Reduction Act](#), New Jersey localities can create stormwater utilities and collect fees to provide flood protection, water quality improvements and erosion control for the community. These enterprise fees are to be used as dedicated funding to benefit the public and help prevent ongoing stormwater problems that a community might face—which includes building green infrastructure. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) has compiled a [Stormwater Utility Guidance](#) that includes a resource called [Using Utility Fees](#), and New Jersey Future has developed the [New Jersey Stormwater Utility Resource Center](#); these are all available to help localities understand, evaluate and establish a stormwater utility. The locality may also decide to dedicate a portion of tax revenue to stormwater infrastructure maintenance, which is crucial to making sure that green infrastructure is operating properly and will not cause flooding or property damage.



Bonding

Localities can consider undertaking passage of a bond that allows the local government to pay for a large capital improvement project over the life of the infrastructure. Green bonds, which focus funding on climate resiliency and environmentally friendly projects, can generate positive press and be an additional opportunity for community education and buy-in.

New Jersey Funding Sources

New Jersey state departments and agencies offer a wide array of financial assistance through grants that are available to localities that meet certain requirements. Presented below are grants funded by private companies or nonprofits that are only available to New Jersey localities situated within certain boundaries. Localities can consider both green infrastructure-specific and broader funding opportunities to fully fund a project.

Green Infrastructure Funding

The [New Jersey Water Bank](#) (formerly New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program) provides low-cost financing to local governments. Eligible projects include a variety of wastewater treatment works, stormwater management, drinking water systems, land acquisition and landfill activities. Loan applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

EPA's [Clean Water State Revolving Fund \(CWSRF\) Green Project Reserve](#) promotes green technologies by applying a portion of CWSRF grants to address green infrastructure, water or energy efficiency improvements, or other environmentally innovative activities. Localities must present a business case to provide justification for use of the funds.

[Sustainable Jersey Grants](#) connect participating communities with financial and technical resources through multiple competitive grant and technical assistance opportunities. The [Public Service Electric and Gas Foundation](#) funding cycle is available to help municipalities gain points needed for Sustainable Jersey certification. The funding cycle is announced in mid-November, and applications are due mid-February. Sustainable Jersey also maintains their own [funding database](#), which includes a wide range of potential funding opportunities.



The [New Jersey American Water Company Environmental Grant Program](#) offers environmental grants to localities within their service area. The environmental grant is used to fund community-based environmental projects that improve the watershed, surface water and groundwater supplies in the locality. Applications are due March 31, and applicants are notified on April 30.

The [New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust \(NJEIT\)](#) offers financial help and resources to localities through funding from EPA's CWSRF program. NJEIT funding focuses on projects that enhance ground and surface water resources, ensure the safety of drinking water supplies, protect public health, and foster responsible and sustainable economic developments. Applications are considered on a rolling basis.

The [Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions Open Space Stewardship Projects Grant](#) helps New Jersey localities preserve natural resources and promote sustainable communities. The Open Space Stewardship Projects grant is available to local environmental commissions. Previous grants have helped localities install green infrastructure, rain gardens, pollinator gardens and more. Applications are available in the spring.

Transportation Funding

The [New Jersey Department of Transportation \(NJDOT\) Local Aid and Economic Development](#) offers grant opportunities for a variety of project types. The Municipal Aid, Transit Village, Bikeways and Safe Streets to Transit grant programs could all incorporate green infrastructure into funded projects. Grant applications open in April and close July 1 of each year.

The [NJDOT Transportation Alternatives \(TA\) Set-Aside](#) program is open to localities undergoing eligible projects including design and construction, streetscaping and corridor landscaping, and stormwater management. There is also a TA Set-Aside Design Assistance Program that offers engineering consulting services to assist localities with their TA Set-Aside projects. Many of the eligible projects could include green street elements in their planning and design.

The [NJDOT Safe Routes to School \(SRTS\)](#) is an effort to encourage children to walk and bicycle to school. The grant funding is available to schools and communities for improving walking and bicycling conditions as well as assistance for crossing guards. Green street elements can enhance aesthetics and calm traffic, making the environment safer for walking and bicycling.



The [NJDOT Safe Streets to Transit \(SSTT\)](#) is a pedestrian safety initiative providing localities with grant funds to encourage transit users to walk to stations, improve safety for transit users walking to transit facilities, and facilitate projects that improve safety in the vicinity of transit facilities. Typical SSTT projects include traffic calming measures, for which green street elements could be considered. Applications are reviewed yearly.

The [New Jersey Transportation Infrastructure Bank](#) provides low-cost funds, bond information and assistance to transportation projects through the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank. Project proposals can include streetscape improvements and the addition of green street elements into a community. Loan applications are considered on a rolling basis.

The [New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority \(NJTPA\) Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality \(CMAQ\) Program](#) provides funds to NJTPA member subregions to help administer shuttle services or other projects that can reduce pollutant emissions and traffic congestion in the region. Other projects might include making streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians—which some green street practices can accomplish—and public education about air quality. Solicitations are issued every three years. The last solicitation was completed in 2020.

The [Transportation and Community Development Initiative](#) is a grant awarded by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission that supports smart growth initiatives by improving quality of life; encouraging transit, bike and pedestrian transportation; and protecting the environment. Grants are awarded in odd-numbered years.

Federal Funding Sources

Localities can also consider looking at federal funding opportunities to overcome funding gaps with green infrastructure-specific, transportation-specific, or other options that are available through federal grants or loan programs, detailed below.

Green Infrastructure Funding

The [EPA Section 319 Grant Program](#) funds nonpoint source-related projects, with funds provided to states for distribution. New Jersey's Nonpoint Source Management Program manages the water quality restoration grants through NJDEP to fund watershed restoration activities and other initiatives that address nonpoint source pollution. Grants are awarded in even-numbered years.



Transportation Funding

The [U.S. Department of Transportation \(USDOT\) Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity \(RAISE\) Grant Program](#) allows USDOT to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects, focusing funding on multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects that are more difficult to support through traditional USDOT programs. Previous awards have been given to a wide variety of projects that utilized green infrastructure elements to accomplish project goals and provide additional climate benefits. RAISE grant applications are reviewed annually.

Other Funding Sources

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities](#) is a pre-disaster hazard mitigation program that supports communities through incentivizing public infrastructure projects, projects that mitigate risk to key infrastructure, projects incorporating green infrastructure solutions, and adoption and enforcement of modern building codes. Applications open in September and are due the following January.

The [Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) Community Development Block Grant Program](#) provides funds for a wide variety of community activities, including the construction of public facilities and improvements to areas such as streets or water and sewer facilities. 70 percent of funds must be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons; funds can thus be used to help facilitate the addition of green infrastructure.

Partnerships

Localities can seek out inter-agency collaborations or partner with outside organizations like state agencies, county agencies, non-profits, local universities or private companies to provide funds or other in-kind resources for different aspects of green streets projects to help reduce costs. Localities could also consider in-kind partnerships to obtain donations of time and materials—such as trees or equipment—to support the project. For example, Camden County partnered with NJDEP to devise environmental solutions for pressing local problems, and they also partnered with the New Jersey Tree Foundation to provide landscape design for new rain gardens. This project is discussed in more detail in the [New Jersey Green Streets Case Studies](#) chapter.

Funding Operations and Maintenance



Figure 2. Maintenance activities at a rain garden in Sea Girt, NJ. Credit: Mark C. Olsen

Operations and maintenance guidance documents can be a helpful reference for localities when considering future costs. The [New Jersey Best Management Practices Manual](#) provides maintenance requirements for each green infrastructure best management practice (BMP) that must be included in the project's maintenance plan. NJDEP provides more New Jersey-specific, detailed [maintenance guidance documents](#), including maintenance plans, field manuals, maintenance checklists and inspection forms. Since many green infrastructure elements incorporate the addition of plants, it is important that localities require appropriate watering and pruning activities and include additional funding in the budget to replace dead plants.

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) [Urban Street Stormwater Guide](#) includes an [Operations & Maintenance](#) section, which recommends maintenance steps to ensure the long-term success of public green infrastructure projects.

Partnerships

Necessary green streets maintenance can also create opportunities for a locality to engage with local community groups and workforce development programs that may be able to provide staff who can perform routine maintenance and assist with training.

Some localities have used local Adopt-A-Highway-type programs to maintain green infrastructure practices. These partnerships help educate the public about how green infrastructure works, keep the practices



Figure 3. New Jersey Adopt-A-Highway street sign.

functioning properly and create new green infrastructure advocates. Installation of interpretative signage educates the community about green infrastructure and encourages the community to keep the areas clean.

Localities could also consider partnerships with universities and other local educational groups to provide maintenance through a formal agreement. For example, the [Rutgers Master Gardener Program](#) trains volunteer gardeners to provide gardening services to residents across New Jersey.

Many localities across the country support local landscaping businesses and programs that provide job training in marginalized communities. Below are several examples of successful green infrastructure maintenance job training programs in New Jersey. (More details about each of these projects can be found in the [New Jersey Green Streets Case Studies chapter](#).)

- Camden County created [PowerCorps Camden](#), a program that supports at-risk youth through AmeriCorps funding. Each year, the program has provided training to 60 participants who work on Camden’s routine BMP operations and maintenance.
- Hoboken has hired dedicated maintenance staff who were trained through a grant funded by Walmart.
- The Newark Workforce Development Board created [Newark GreenWorks](#), a paid training opportunity for individuals to complete the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program.
- The [New Jersey Tree Foundation](#) provides volunteers to participate in tree plantings and staff to conduct routine maintenance on trees in underserved neighborhoods.

Conclusion

Procuring funding is an important first step for planning and constructing green streets. New Jersey localities have access to a wide range of funding dedicated to green infrastructure and transportation that can be used to establish green streets.

When considering funding opportunities, localities can break down their projects into different elements to expand the possibilities and chances of securing outside funding for capital costs and operations and maintenance. Localities may also generate in-kind funding opportunities by partnering with local businesses, organizations and schools. These partnerships can provide community education and regular volunteers who support planting and regular maintenance needs.



Figure 4. Bioswale along Washington Street in Hoboken, NJ. Credit: City of Hoboken