

South Thornton Creek Natural Drainage Systems Frequently Asked Questions

PROJECT OVERVIEW

What is stormwater and why is it a problem?

Stormwater is water that falls during a rainstorm or melting snow. In developed areas such as Seattle, we have many hard surfaces such as roadways and rooftops that do not allow water to soak into the ground. Flooding occurs when a lot of water runs over hard surfaces.

The runoff from drizzling or pounding rain also picks up fertilizers, pesticides, soaps, and other pollutants from the ground. It transports them to the nearest storm drain and local waterways, contaminating water quality and harming fish and other wildlife.

What are project goals?

- To improve water quality and help manage stormwater flows by constructing natural drainage systems alongside the road in your neighborhood.
- To improve your neighborhood through reducing localized flooding where possible, providing more street trees, and calming traffic.

SPU is planning to build natural drainage systems built in the roadway shoulder (the space between the street edge and the property line) on several blocks in your neighborhood. This project is part of the **Natural Drainage Systems Program in the Plan to Protect Seattle's Waterways**. See the following link for more information:

www.seattle.gov/utilities/documents/plans/drainage-and-sewer-plans/waterway-protection

Why is Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) bringing this project to your neighborhood?

This project will help reduce polluted runoff from entering Thornton Creek and flowing into Lake Washington. It's estimated that more than 12 million pounds of pollution are carried into our water systems by stormwater every year; SPU wants to build natural drainage systems (NDS) to help solve this problem.



SITE SELECTION PROCESS

How did SPU select sites to move into design phase?

SPU selected sites within the Thornton Creek watershed (separated drainage system) based on a variety of factors:

- How much stormwater can be managed and cleaned
- Ability to address a flooding problem
- Location of nearby adverse conditions (steep slopes, high groundwater, contaminated sites)
- Potential impacts to existing trees
- Existing soil conditions
- Location and condition of existing utilities
- Community input
- Width of existing public right-of-way
- Presence of driveways
- Existing parking congestion and availability of off-street parking
- Project construction, operation, and maintenance costs



POTENTIAL IMPACTS

What will I see on the side of my street?

Because this project is built with growing plants, the way they look will change over time and they will take up to two years to fully develop. The grasses, shrubs, and trees installed at construction will grow as the garden matures. In the first few years, the stormwater collected in the natural drainage system will be more visible. The plants will also look different as seasons change throughout the year.

How will this work affect existing plants and trees?

This project is likely to affect some trees on your street, but we will replace any one tree removed with two new trees. Some smaller or unhealthy trees may need to be replaced or transplanted. Protecting trees during construction is a priority.

Will I have to relocate my fence, bushes, trees, or sheds if they are within the public right-of-way?

We will work with each resident that may be impacted by NDS improvements. Fences will need to be removed by the impacted resident at the resident's expense, or they will be removed by us and placed on your property. Vegetation and sheds will also be removed by us and placed on your property. We work to protect mature trees unless they are diseased. Smaller trees may be removed if we are not able to work around them, but impacted residents will be given the opportunity to replant them at another location on their property.

Will my driveway be impacted by this project?

NDS may require some driveways to be restored to the City's 10-foot width standard within the public right-of-way. We will work with each resident that may have impacts to their driveway.

Will my utilities be impacted by this project?

Some gas lines, side sewers, and water utilities will need to be adjusted during construction. We will work with each resident that may be impacted by utility relocation due to this project.

Will my mailbox be impacted by this project?

Some mailboxes may need to be relocated due to NDS improvements.

How will the water flow over my driveway once this project is complete?

Rainwater off the street will be conveyed to the NDS and/or new drainage collection structures through a new road edge gutter. This new road edge treatment will convey water across driveways and down the street. The City is evaluating different options of road edge gutter designs given available funding. The planting strip will be designed to slope towards the street so that water flows into the road's new gutter.

I have an upcoming construction project. How do I find out where my property line is?

Call the Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections (SDCI) Help Desk for more information at (206) 684-8850. More significant work will require a survey. SDCI will be able to help you identify what is needed and how you determine your property boundary.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Will I see water in the natural drainage systems?

During storms, each project site will temporarily hold up to 12 inches of water and then drain within 24 hours after the rain ends. When there are back-to-back storms or a larger storm, the water level will rise and fall, which is a sign that the project is functioning properly.

What if it rains so much that the project site overflows?

The natural drainage systems are designed to completely drain within 24 hours of the storm passing. If there is more water than the project can hold at one time, you will see any excess stormwater flow out of the system and into the nearest pipe, ditch, or storm drain.

What happens if the site does not drain within 24 hours?

Seattle Public Utilities' Operation Response Center maintains a 24/7 hotline for people to call and report drainage issues. If the completed project near your home isn't draining properly or requires maintenance, please call: (206) 386-1800.

Who is responsible for maintenance of the project?

SPU is responsible for all maintenance needs of this project including watering, weeding, and general upkeep. SPU will also prune trees and shrubs as needed. You will not be asked to pay for or perform any maintenance. In fact, it is important for residents to stay out of the project area to maintain their function. Plants will mature over time and the mix of plants will likely change, but this doesn't affect its function. The planting strip that is not part of the NDS will be the responsibility of the adjacent property owner as typical for streets in Seattle.

See the following link for more information: www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/maintenance-and-paving/property-owners-responsibilities

Will this project cause my basement to flood or drainage problems around my house?

This project is designed to carry stormwater straight into the ground, not toward yards or basements. SPU uses soil testing information to locate these projects only where the conditions are good for infiltrating stormwater straight down into the ground. If needed, the design of the site may provide an underground liner for extra protection.

Will this project affect street parking?

This project is likely to affect street parking. Seattle Public Utilities knows that parking and pedestrian access are very important to residents. We will carefully consider and address the impacts to parking in every potential project location. We also look at alleys and assess the condition and availability of off-street parking nearby.

Will this project attract mosquitoes?

This project will not attract mosquitoes. Mosquitoes need stagnant water (found in bird baths, old tires, dog water bowls, etc.) and natural drainage systems are designed to constantly drain and keep water moving.



For more information on mosquitoes and prevention, please visit: www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/westnile.aspx or www.seattle.gov/environment/WestNile.htm.

Will my children and pets be safe when the water is collected and stored here?

Natural drainage systems are designed with safety in mind. They will typically drain within 24 hours following a storm and, in most cases, it will be even faster.

COMMUNITY INPUT

How much input do you want from residents?

Community involvement is important to us and we will consult with you during location selection, design, and construction. We want to understand specific concerns and interests from you and your neighbors.

STAY IN TOUCH

SPU is happy to answer questions and provide any information you need to be informed about this project and its impacts to you and your neighborhood.

Contact: Luis Ramirez, Project Manager

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Visit: <http://www.seattle.gov/utilities/SouthThorntonNDS>