



**Environmental  
Facilities Corporation**

## **GREEN INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM (GIGP)** **Interpretive Sign Development Guidance**



# Creating Effective Interpretive Signs for GIGP Projects

## Introduction

This manual establishes basic standards for the design and fabrication of the interpretive signage that is required as part of your GIGP grant agreement. A well-designed interpretive sign will help foster awareness of the innovative green practices on your site while providing a positive image and identity for your project and your community. As stated in the grant agreement, there should be at least one interpretive sign per project.\* If the project has multiple green infrastructure practices, they may be combined on one sign, or multiple project signs may be installed, as appropriate, at the discretion of the recipient.

## Planning

Signs should be installed at your project site by a qualified individual or company within 90 days after final project acceptance. To ensure that the signs are fabricated in a timely fashion, it is important to include signage in your initial budget, and that you plan the procurement of any necessary consultants and/or fabricators early in the project timeline. Ideally, interpretive material should be integrated into the design by locating and labeling your sign(s) on the site plan in the construction document set.

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\*Interpretive sign requirements for GIGP projects may be found in Section 8.12 of the grant agreement.



*An interpretive sign installed at a wetland construction project funded by GIGP in Brookhaven, NY.*

**Effective interpretive materials call attention to the green practices at your site that may not be immediately evident or even visible.**

**Site features and technical information about the project can be illustrated with photographs or diagrams to bring a greater public awareness of the environmental benefit of green practices and how your project is helping your community and your region.**

## Materials

Sign panels are to be fabricated from an exterior grade graffiti-proof material that is resistant to ultraviolet (UV) radiation deterioration and resistant to scratching, ink, paint, crayon, acids, and cigarette burns. Panels must be fabricated so as not to break, separate, flake, or fray under impact from thrown objects. Panels must be weathertight and resistant to mold and fungus.

Sign panels should be guaranteed for a minimum period of ten years from the date of delivery. No fewer than two steel exhibit pedestals should be provided for mounting the sign panels.



*An interpretive sign installed by the City of Brookhaven, in Long Island, NY illustrates the habitat created by wetlands and riparian buffers with a simple and colorful graphic style.*

## Locating Interpretive Signs

GIGP projects may include the construction of several new structures, (bioswales, wetlands, bioretention basins or rain gardens), or they may introduce a new practice into existing infrastructure, (rainwater harvesting, porous pavement, green roof systems).

Interpretive material plays an important role in educating people about the innovative work your community is doing. A well thought-out location for your sign can help your project reach more people.

In general, when selecting a location:

- Locate sign panels in a well-traveled public area where people naturally gather or pass through.
- Ensure that the viewer can stand safely and comfortably while reading the signs without creating an obstruction or hazard.
- Be sure the sign is not detracting from views or contributing to visual “clutter.”

## Special Situations

For some projects, such as those with multiple installations or those in urban streetscapes, on private lands or remote areas, it may be difficult to find a practical and safe location to install your sign. In these cases it may be necessary to look at other options for interpretation and outreach that will be able to reach the public effectively.

Your project consultant, sign designer, Department of Public Works or other municipal entity may be helpful in determining alternative locations for signs in special instances, or it may be necessary to explore other methods for getting the word out about your project.

## Size and Dimensions

Signs should be sized according to the content. The more complex the project or the more practices described, the larger the sign will need to be in order to adequately interpret and illustrate the material.

Standard sign sizes are:

- 18×24 inches
- 24×36 inches
- 24×42 inches

Mounting height from ground level to the bottom edge of the frame is generally 28” to 32.” Install the sign oriented horizontally, and tilt panel at an angle of about 45° for ease in reading and to facilitate rain runoff. The frame is typically displayed between two posts.

## Agency Logo Placement

The EFC logo is a required component of the interpretive sign. Place the logo in either the bottom left or bottom right corner of the interpretive sign panel. A pdf of the EFC logo is available online [here](#).



Image: dlandstudio

Conceptual images such as this, which depicts a GIGP project which will install bioretention systems along an industrial waterway in Brooklyn, help to enliven the interpretive material.

**Grinter Wetland & Storm Water Harvesting**

The cost of this lake in Whitehall was roughly equal to Central Islip. It was approved by the local government, and the local water utility. This was the first step in the process of capturing and treating stormwater. The water is then stored in a large reservoir, and the treated water is used for various purposes, including irrigation and drinking water.

**Water captured in this wetland comes from:**

- Stormwater from the whole suburb of Whitehall and part of St. Albans Park
- Stormwater from Sparrowshawk road, Caspari and Griner Reserve
- Flow backwash from Sparrowshawk Aquatic Centre

**Average annual rainfall falling in Whitehall results in 624 million litres of runoff of which this system will use 20 million litres of.**

**How the System Works**

Wetlands treat stormwater using two major processes:

- Physical processes:** Slow moving water traps heavy suspended solids. Plants trap and filter out suspended solids. Plants also prevent sediment from being washed away from the site.
- Biological processes:** Plants absorb the nutrients in the water, such as phosphorus, nitrogen and other pollutants that are washed into the water. Bacteria, such as denitrifiers, help convert pollutants into harmless gases, which are safely released back into the atmosphere.

**Major Problems:**

- Stormwater runoff contains pollutants like sediment, nutrients and heavy metals. These pollutants are harmful to aquatic life and can also pollute the water and ground the waterways and ecosystems.
- Stormwater runoff can also cause high levels of erosion, which can damage roads, bridges, and other infrastructure. It can also cause flooding, which can damage property and cause loss of life.

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Colorful graphic diagrams help explain the function of a wetland in a pleasing and easily accessible format.

Image courtesy of Ian Rooney, Aspect Studios

## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PARK

The Chautauqua Institution is continually working to improve the water quality of Chautauqua Lake. With the help of funding from the NYS Green Infrastructure Grant Program, the Institution hopes to collect and treat stormwater run-off wherever possible. Previously in this location, stormwater run-off from uphill impervious sources traveled beneath this area in a 24" diameter drainage pipe, carrying unwanted sediments and undesirable nutrients directly into the lake below. This stormwater management feature "daylights" this same stormwater run-off and treats the water through a series of natural bio-swale retention areas (Stepped Rain Gardens) before returning it to the downhill ravine and into the lake. This feature is intended to simulate a natural creek, with natural boulders as weirs and native planting throughout. This natural process assures that this "dirty" stormwater run-off is properly filtered, which helps to improve the water quality in Chautauqua Lake.

**Labels:** PRETREATMENT POND, FLOW DIVERTER TO "DAYLIGHT" AND FILTER RUN-OFF, EXISTING STORM DRAINPIPE BENEATH SURFACE, NATURAL WOODED AREA, BIO-FILTERS (To simulate Natural Creek), FILTERED STORMWATER OUTFLOW, ROOT AVENUE, LEVANA HALL, PALESTINE AVENUE, LEVAN GARDEN, EXISTING BRICK WALKWAY, INFLOW FROM TERRILL IMPERVIOUS SOURCES, LAWN.

Trees		Shrubs	
Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple	<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i>	Red Chokeberry
<i>Amelanchier Canadensis</i>	Red Maple	<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	Black Chokeberry
<i>Betula nigra</i>	River Birch (Clump)	<i>Cornus alba 'Sibirica'</i>	Red Twig Dogwood
<i>Cercis Canadensis</i>	Eastern Redbud	<i>Dirca palustris</i>	Lesterwood
<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	White Fringetree	<i>Hydrangea arborescens 'Annabelle'</i>	Annabelle Hydrangea
<i>Larix laricina</i>	Tamarack	<i>Hydrangea paniculata 'Interhydia'</i>	Pink Diamond Hydrangea
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	American Sweet Gum	<i>Hamamelis virginica</i>	Common Witch Hazel
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Tulip Tree	<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	Spicebush
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Black Tupelo	<i>Myrica pensylvanica</i>	Northern Bayberry
<i>Picea glauca</i>	White Spruce	<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>	Common Nine Bark
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	Red Oak	<i>Rhus aromatica 'Gro Low'</i>	Gro low Fragrant Sumac
		<i>Spiraea x bumalda 'Anthony Waterer'</i>	Anthony Waterer Spiraea

\*Other areas infilled with Assorted Perennials and Grasses

The Chautauqua Institute in Western New York installed this sign to illustrate one of several green infrastructure practices they are constructing to address phosphorus loading in the lake that borders their campus.

## Fonts and Type Styles

Using consistent graphic styles for your interpretive signs will help to provide a unified image that will connect your site with other innovative green projects across New York State. In general, it is best to use just one or at the most two type styles and their variations (italic, bold) per sign.

### Main Title: 72 point

Arial, Bold:

# Sample

### Subtitle: 48 point

Arial, Bold:

# Sample

### Main text: 24 point

Arial, Regular:

Sample

### Secondary Text: 18 point

Arial, Regular, Italic or Bold

**Sample**

### Captions: 18 point

Arial, Regular or Italic

*Sample*



*The consistent use of color and text styles will ensure that even signs with large quantities of information are easy to navigate.*

*Image courtesy of Dee Rogers, coffsdesign.com*

## Other Design Options

This manual illustrates basic design concepts for your interpretive materials; however, the use of these guidelines is optional and not a grant requirement. Your signs should be designed to be appropriate to your site, project type and context. In some cases, you may need to match existing institutional signage or other design parameters.

## Color Usage

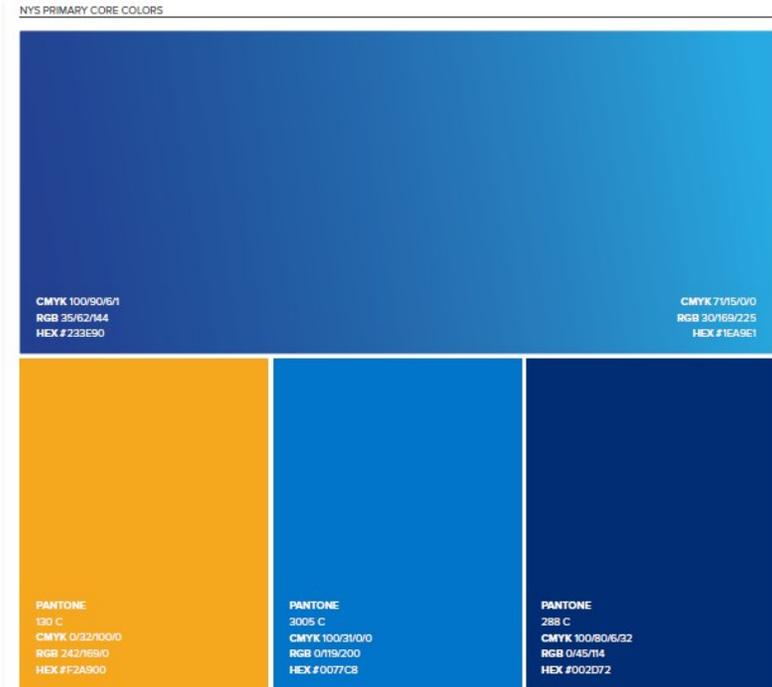
In order to maintain a uniform visual image for green infrastructure projects statewide, it is recommended that signs for GIGP funded projects have a consistent and limited color scheme. A defined color palette provides a more cohesive backdrop for your photographs and other graphic images. In most cases no more than four or five of the supporting colors should be used in your panels.

The colors shown here are an example of a range of colors that may be used for backgrounds, type and graphics. In order to communicate exact formulas to potential graphic designers, fabricators and/or other consultants, colors should be identified by a Pantone number or other color system number.

Select appropriate images, including photographs, maps, plans, charts or other graphics, that will convey the information clearly and complement your selected color palette.



*Photographs that show context, depth of field and have a variety of colors and textures will add interest to your educational materials. A view of a green roof at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry shows late-season foliage and deck areas as well as a large sports arena in downtown Syracuse beyond.*

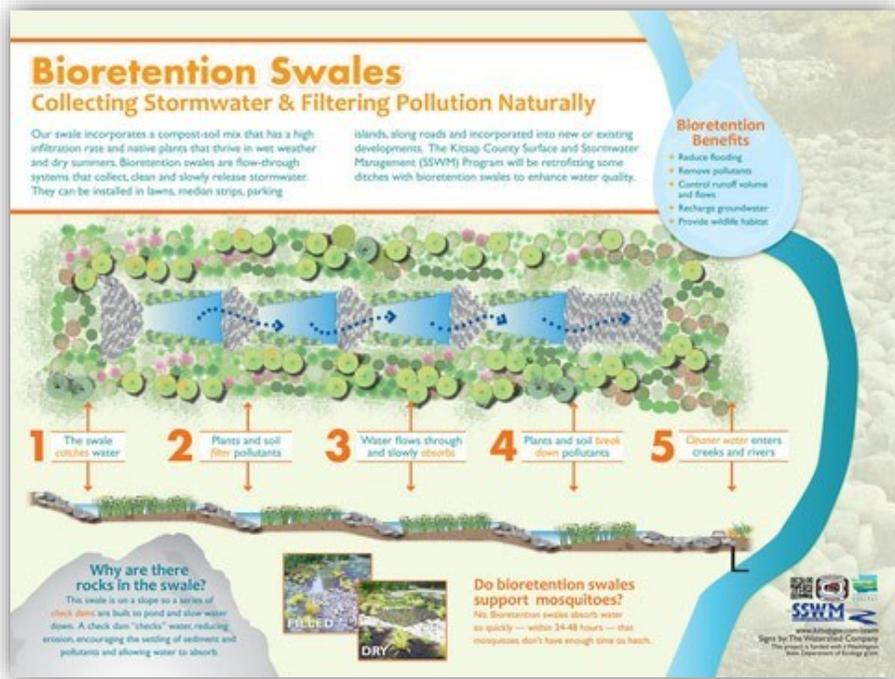


**From New York State Branding and Guidelines**

## Final Product

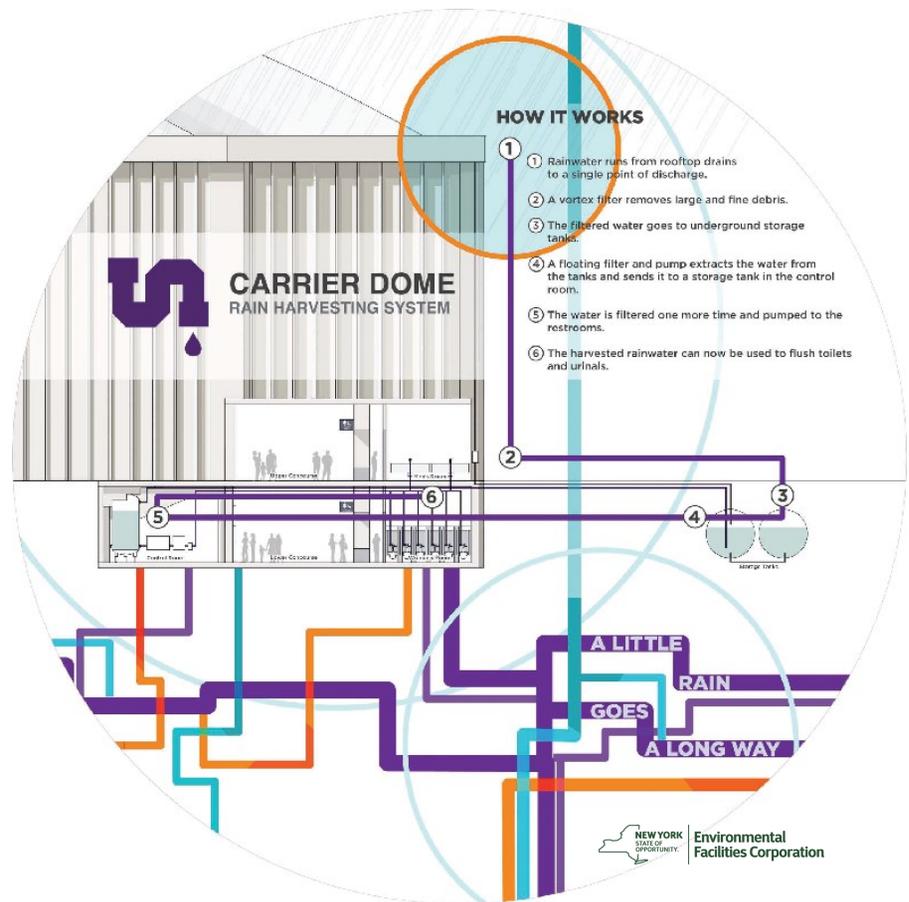
As part of the design process for your sign, your designer or fabricator should provide several review proofs or mock-ups of the panels for you to review. This will give you the opportunity to see how the material works graphically, and whether it will meet the needs of your site and audience.

The GIGP grant contract requires that your interpretive materials be installed within 90 days of project completion. Contact your project administrator if you have any questions or issues that arise regarding this requirement.



Graphics should reflect a clear hierarchy, with strong headings, smaller subheadings, and a readable size for body text. Content should move graphically from one concept to the next.

Image courtesy of The Watershed Company



A draft interpretive sign for a stormwater harvesting and re-use project at Syracuse University's sports arena, the Carrier Dome. The facility captures, treats and re-uses stormwater runoff from its roof for use in its restroom facilities.

## Additional Assistance

Guidance with interpretive signage development is available from EFC's Green Policy, Planning and Infrastructure Staff. Please contact us with any questions at 518-402-7461 or [GIGP@efc.ny.gov](mailto:GIGP@efc.ny.gov).