

Urban Soil Primer¹

NOPI Cornell Neighborhood Ecology Team Primer #6

The EPA issued a report detailing the condition of soils in New Orleans after the flooding from Hurricane Katrina, which stated that contamination levels in the city pose no “unacceptable” health risks. The NRDC conducted additional testing in November 2005 and issued a warning that contaminant readings found high levels of arsenic, lead, and petroleum compounds across the city at levels that could justify triggering a mandatory cleanup or additional investigation.

While environmental cleanup from the disaster are still underway, residents can take extra precautions to protect themselves and their families from health risks. Local Cooperative Extension Service provides brochures that explain how to collect samples for soil testing and can help locate the nearest public university offering soil fertility testing at a low cost. In addition, basic measures like immediately washing after contact with soil, cleaning clothes that picked up dust and soil, and cleaning the feet and coat of pets will reduce any risk associated with contaminated soil until the proper restoration measures have been completed.

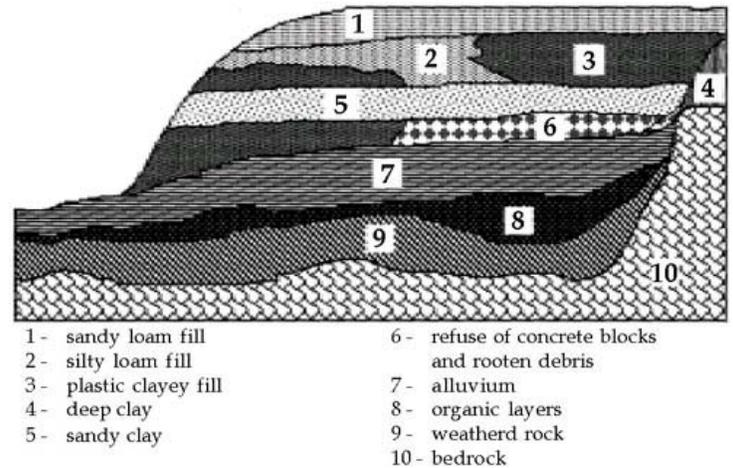


Fig. 1. The vertical and spatial variability of an urban soil.

Source: www.wcisa.net/magDetails.asp?MagazineID=21&Detail=



Source: www.ucd.ie/plantmat/urbtsoi.htm

¹ Seward Elizabeth, & K.G. Tidball, Cornell University, Dept. of City and Regional Planning New Orleans Planning Initiative Workshop CRP 679; A Product of “Mobilizing the Community to Integrate Ecology, Open Space Resources, and Disaster Resistance in a Post-Katrina 9th Ward.”



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