



Underground Engineering for Sustainable Urban Development

Committee on Underground GeoEngineering for Sustainable Development, Committee on Geological and Geotechnical Engineering, Board on Earth Sciences and Resources, Division on Earth and Life Studies, National Research Council

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For thousands of years, the underground has provided humans refuge, useful resources, physical support for surface structures, and a place for spiritual or artistic expression. More recently, many urban services have been placed underground. Over this time, humans have rarely considered how underground space can contribute to or be engineered to maximize its contribution to the sustainability of society. As human activities begin to change the planet and population struggle to maintain satisfactory standards of living, placing new infrastructure and related facilities underground may be the most successful way to encourage or support the redirection of urban development into sustainable patterns. Well maintained, resilient, and adequately performing underground infrastructure, therefore, becomes an essential part of sustainability, but much remains to be learned about improving the sustainability of underground infrastructure itself.

At the request of the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Research Council (NRC) conducted a study to consider sustainable underground development in the urban environment, to identify research needed to maximize opportunities for using underground space, and to enhance understanding among the public and technical communities of the role of underground engineering in urban sustainability.

Underground Engineering for Sustainable Urban Development explains the findings of researchers and practitioners with expertise in geotechnical engineering, underground design and construction, trenchless technologies, risk assessment, visualization techniques for geotechnical applications, sustainable infrastructure development, life cycle assessment, infrastructure policy and planning, and fire prevention, safety and ventilation in the underground. This report is intended to inform a future research track and will be of interest to a broad audience including those in the private and public sectors engaged in urban and facility planning and design, underground construction, and safety and security.

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