

Community Toolbank

mostcenter.org/casestories

■ Problem:

In an industrial section of Baltimore, heavy volumes of stormwater flowed from rooftops into storm drains, delivering polluted runoff to Inner Harbor during each rainfall.

■ Solution:

Baltimore Community Toolbank, a nonprofit that offers low-cost tool and equipment rentals to community groups, occupies a large facility in this neighborhood. Community Toolbank decided to transform the building's stormwater problem into an opportunity. Large cisterns were installed to capture runoff from the rear of the roof, where the water is stored and then used to clean tools that have been loaned through Community Toolbank's program. On the front of the building, roof rainwater was routed to two, above-ground bioretention planters, which filter the water before sending it to storm drains. The raised planters also provide seating for visitors; habitat for birds, bats, and pollinators; and natural beauty in an otherwise industrial area.



Raised planters provide seating, beauty, habitat and stormwater treatment. Photo Credit: Biohabitats



Nature balances hardscape in this industrial zone

Key Project Facts

Scale: Runoff from a 12,000 square foot roof

Funding Sources: MD Department of Natural Resources' Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund through the Parks & People Foundation

Partners: Biohabitats Engineering, Parks & People Foundation

More information: <https://bmorecommunitytoolbank.wordpress.com/>

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What is Polluted Runoff?

The growth of our cities has resulted in too many paved surfaces, which prevent rain water from being absorbed by the ground. Instead, the water runs off streets and buildings, collecting trash and dangerous chemicals on its way. This contaminated water overflows into our streams and rivers, creating public health hazards and toxic waters.

Storm water projects create safe paths for polluted runoff to be captured and filtered before it reaches our waterways. They keep communities healthy and the environment clean.

When communities and their local governments work together to solve big problems like stormwater runoff, that's a story worth telling!