

Library Square

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■ Problem:

Library Square is a one-acre parcel of green space located behind a public library in an otherwise densely developed and impervious area. High volumes of polluted stormwater from surrounding streets drain through the site via to the buried Harris Creek, which flows into Inner Harbor and then the Chesapeake Bay. The stormwater conveyance system was overwhelmed during heavy rain events, causing neighborhood streets to flood. While Library Square was a treasured community open space, it was not living up to its stormwater management potential.

■ Solution:

A collaboration between Blue Water Baltimore, Friends of Library Square, and other partners enabled Library Square to be retrofitted with green infrastructure. Project elements included a plaza made from permeable pavers, which allows water to filter into the ground, as well as three rain gardens with native plantings that absorb excess runoff and provide habitat for pollinators and birds. The space was also enhanced with new public seating areas. The project has not only improved Library Square's ability to treat stormwater runoff; it has also made it an even more attractive place for area residents to relax and recreate.



Pleasant new streetscape provides an urban oasis with permeable pavers and Linden trees. Photo Credit: Blue Water Baltimore



A boy plays on marble seating areas, designed to mimic the "front stoops" of the surrounding neighborhood.

Key Project Facts

Scale: 500 gallons per hour per 1 inch rainfall from surrounding paved urban neighborhoods.

Funding Sources: Chesapeake Bay Trust; MD Department of Natural Resources

Partners: Banner Neighborhoods; Biohabitats Inc.; Blue Water Baltimore; Friends of Library Square

More information: <http://www.biohabitats.com/projects/library-square-stormwater-retrofit-d...>

Contact:

Carl Simon 410-254-1577 x105
csimon@bluewaterbaltimore.org

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!