

Blue Neighborhood & Alleys

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■ Problem:

In Baltimore's urban, impervious downtown, high volumes of polluted stormwater had nowhere to go but into Inner Harbor.

■ Solution:

A group of partners worked together to retrofit several urban streets and alleys in two Baltimore City neighborhoods. Retrofits included installation of permeable pavers, stormwater bumpouts (vegetated curb extensions), rain barrels, and other green infrastructure elements. The result has been cleaner, greener neighborhoods and a program that is a model for urban stormwater management. The Baltimore Blue Neighborhoods & Alleys collaboration includes monitoring to determine which types of retrofits are most effective in terms of cost and performance in ultra-urban environments. Before-and-after monitoring will track runoff reductions and progress toward complying with Baltimore's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits.



Diagram of water permeating through alley pavers, to gravel reservoir, and finally to in ground retention basin.



Photo Credit: Biohabitats

Key Project Facts

Monitoring: Before and after monitoring to track runoff reduction and meet goals of the City's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits.

Funding Sources: Baltimore Departments of Transportation and Public Works (\$300,000); EPA's Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction grant program via the National Fish and Wildlife Foundations (\$600,000)

Partners: Biohabitats Inc.; Blue Water Baltimore; Center for Watershed Protection

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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.

Stormwater 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!