

Downtown Columbia Planning, Restoration and Design

Columbia, Maryland



Parking lots surrounding a large mall are being transformed into a highly walkable urban area connected to an accessible network of restored ecosystems and green infrastructure.

The recent completion of a new master plan for Downtown Columbia marked the beginning of an historic revitalization effort. At the heart of the plan is the vision to create a community that fosters the growth of its people, respects the land, and promotes economic prosperity while celebrating the diversity of life. Biohabitats has worked closely with The Howard Hughes Corporation and other consulting team members to ensure integration of ecological restoration and regenerative design into the community as it is redeveloped.

Early in the master planning process, Biohabitats' team of landscape architects, scientists,

water resource engineers and GIS specialists produced a body of ecological information to inform and guide design and planning. Over a nine-month period, Biohabitats spearheaded the engagement of state and county agencies, community stakeholders, and the general public on watershed, woodland and sustainability issues related to redevelopment activities. Biohabitats worked with various stakeholders to reach consensus on balancing redevelopment with environmental enhancement initiatives.

Through rigorous field investigations, community participation and design team collaboration, Biohabitats developed a Watershed Restoration and

Management Plan for two sub-watersheds within Columbia, an Environmental Enhancement Plan for Columbia Town Center, and Ecological Sustainability Guidelines. When applied in an integrated and thoughtful manner, the sustainability guidelines will lead to regenerative conditions that create a more healthy and vibrant Downtown Columbia.

As the project moves into the design stages, Biohabitats continues to play a critical role in overseeing environmental restoration, stormwater management, and overall integration of sustainability elements into the project. A first Final Development Plan for Downtown Columbia has been submitted for the Warfield Neighborhood. As the sustainability consultant for the project, Biohabitats designed

the stormwater green infrastructure, and also ensured that design guidelines for the neighborhood integrated goals such as reducing heat island effect, enhancing native wildlife habitat and encouraging walkability and bikeability. Biohabitats is currently in the early stages of planning and design of environmental restoration on property owned by The Howard Hughes Corporation within the Crescent, per Downtown Columbia's Community Enhancements, Programs and Public Amenities requirements.

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