
Community Ecology Institute/Freetown Farm

Community Ecology Institute Master Plan

Columbia, Maryland



An ecological nonprofit demonstrates stewardship on a farm located in suburban Maryland.

SERVICES

Conservation Planning
Water Quality
Runoff Management

The nonprofit Community Ecology Institute works to foster socially and ecologically healthy communities by enhancing diverse connections between all people and the natural world. They pursue this mission by demonstrating tangible, community-based environmental stewardship actions that enhance green infrastructure, ecosystem services, and human well-being. Located on a property surrounded by suburban development and a public high school, CEI's Freetown Farm offers hands-on experience in leading happier, healthier, more connected and sustainable lives.

Biohabitats helped CEI develop a campus ecological master plan for the farm that would improve its ecological value and optimize its potential to engage and educate visitors. After conducting an ecological assessment and inventory of the site and characterizing its conditions, Biohabitats identified opportunities to enhance ecological resilience and stewardship. Strategies included ecological restoration and the implementation of best management practices (BMPs) for handling stormwater flowing through the property and into a nearby tributary.

The ecological master plan, which provided a foundation for all future campus improvements, also included an early action implementation project to demonstrate a regenerative approach to treating and managing stormwater. In a design-build capacity, Biohabitats created a bioswale and bioretention system at the farm's entrance. These stormwater best management practices use native vegetation to slow down and filter nutrients to not only improve downstream water quality, but add beauty, biodiversity, and important pollinator habitat at the farm.