

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 a 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 a multidisciplinary team of architects, engineers and general contractors 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 Geographic Information System (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.

Moving from the planning phase to design, Biohabitats has been coordinating and collaborating with the design team in preparing phased design documents since 2013. For this effort, Biohabitats prepared site development plans and/or waiver petitions, as well as required permits from State and Federal authorities. To date, Biohabitats has designed and overseen twenty acres of forest restoration, including three full seasons of invasive species management.

Biohabitats completed a design-build stream restoration of two thousand linear feet of incised tributary to the Little Patuxent. Biohabitats provided construction administration for additional environmental restoration, including three thousand linear feet of stream restoration, two acres of wetland creation and restoration, and approximately thirteen additional acres of forest restoration on property owned by The Howard Hughes Corporation within the Crescent Neighborhood. Finally, Biohabitats coordinated and designed stormwater green infrastructure at several new building locations throughout Downtown Columbia.

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conservation planning
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