

Library Square Stormwater Retrofit Design-Build

Baltimore, Maryland



from top: Native plants provide beauty and habitat; Community volunteers install the new plants; Children play on public seating that pays homage to Baltimore's "front stoop" culture

Behind one popular branch of Baltimore's Enoch Pratt Free Library is a 1.1-acre wedge of green space that is surrounded by blocks of pavement and urban development in every direction. Known as "Library Square,"

A city park regenerates urban ecology and enhances public open space while treating stormwater runoff from more than half an acre of previously uncontrolled impervious surfaces.

the land sits directly atop Harris Creek, a buried stream that conveys a tremendous amount of stormwater toward Baltimore's Inner Harbor when it rains. This stormwater had been the cause of flooding in the neighborhood, and a major source of pollution and trash to the Harbor, which empties into the Chesapeake Bay.

When Blue Water Baltimore, in partnership with Banner Neighborhoods (and Friends of Library Square), won a Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund Grant to create a stormwater management plan to redevelop Library Square, they turned to Biohabitats for help.

After meeting with community members and stakeholders, and reviewing previous master plans for the site, Biohabitats crafted a design to maximize stormwater management and improve the park's aesthetics and sustainability—all while

being responsive to the community's needs for an active and safe open space. The new Library Square Park features native landscaping that promotes urban ecology and creates new habitat for pollinators, and three bioretention basins and a permeable paver plaza area to help manage runoff from the surrounding streets, while maintaining the canopy of mature Linden trees (*Tilia americana*). The native plantings connect with a larger "pollinator garden" that is planned for the local elementary school, a nearby vacant lot, and the front of the library. Public seating was designed in a style that pays homage to the neighborhood's Baltimore tradition of "front stoop" culture.

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800.220.0919
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