

Appendix 2

2020 MS4 Stormwater Annual Report

New Haven Independent

news stories on

Public Participation in Stormwater Improvements

"Runoff Art" Flows Thru West River Corner

by **THOMAS BREEN** | Jul 17, 2020 10:08 am

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Posted to: [Arts & Culture](#), [Visual Arts](#), [Edgewood](#), [West River](#)





THOMAS BREEN PHOTOS

Sidewalk stormwater art on Chapel Street. Design by fifth-grade artist Nick Ruiz.



Student artists Assata Johnson and Trinity Ford.

A half-dozen high school student artists brightened up a West River corner with painted sunflowers and swirling waves of water as part of an eco-friendly summer work project.

The teens were out painting Thursday afternoon at the northeast corner of Chapel Street and Norton Street, on an expansive stretch of sidewalk in front of the boarded up [former Sidney's Expert Cleaners](#).

Under the supervision of local public artist [JoAnn Moran](#), the students painted crystalline blue swirls of water around the corner's storm drains; warm, towering sunflowers on the plywood covering the vacant storefront; and on a fish-filled banner reading, "Only Rain In The Drain."



Making art at the corner of Chapel and Norton.

The afternoon painting was part of a stormwater education project called "Runoff Art" spearheaded by Moran's organization, [Lots of Fish](#). The teenage artists participating in the project are all employed through the city's [Youth@Work program](#).

"It's about building public awareness and education around keeping streets free of litter," Moran said. The storm drain sidewalk paintings in particular are meant to draw people's attention to that [critical, and oft-overlooked, public infrastructure that drains storm water](#)—and sometimes pollution—out into the city's rivers.





Moran (pictured) said that the teens have been working all week at that corner, cleaning storm drains of litter and painting on the sidewalk, the banner, and the Sidney's storefront. Next week, they'll move on to [the Learning Corridor in Newhallville](#) for another round of painting and stormwater education.

Moran said that three of the students participating Thursday were employed by Lots of Fish for the summer, and three were employed by the [Evergreen Family Oriented Tree, Inc.](#), and all were being paid through Youth@Work.

She said that the "Only Rain In The Drain" banner will ultimately be hung up above traffic across a city street. She said she's leaving where exactly it will be hung to the city.

And the blue swirl design painted around the storm drains was the brainchild of John S. Martinez School fifth-grader Nick Ruiz





Assata Johnson (pictured), a 15-year-old rising junior at Career High School, said that painting sunflowers on the plywood storefront lifted up her mood, and represented to her a symbol of happiness.

"Everything going around right now with corona, it's a sad time," she said. "Looking at this, it just makes me remember that there are going to be good days, that there's going to be better days coming, if we just keep working together."





Trinity Ford (pictured), a 15-year-old rising sophomore at Co-Op High School, said she enjoyed spending time out in the sun, painting with friends and learning about stormwater infrastructure. "It's bringing the community together," she said.

"Everyone thinks this is a bad neighborhood," added 17-year-old West Haven High School student Danielys Lopez. "This shows that it's not that bad."





Hill resident and local artist Andre Davis (pictured) joined in on the painting after walking by the corner and asking Moran about the project. He said he's been painting since he was little, first through drawing at school, then painting his family's house, then moving on to making art on clothing for fashion shows his mother used to host.

"To expose something as beautiful as clean water right now, with the pandemic and things that are going on, it's very important," he said. "I think this is a great time to display something that is unifying to let people know to stay conscious of what's going on. We're out here to help give you a visual to help you stay conscious."

Commenting has closed for this entry



Comments

posted by: Heather C. on July 17, 2020 12:13pm

What a beautiful project! I'm so happy that these teens are being paid and engaged in a positive activity and beautifying the neighborhood. We need more positive and constructive things for young people to do that uplift the community and make the city a better place for all.

posted by: Melinda Tuhus on July 19, 2020 7:26am

I so appreciate Joann Moran's work putting art in the service of social justice. She helped me make a banner promoting multi-modality (bike, ped, bus, train) transportation for a rally last year at the Capitol calling for drastic action to address climate change. And this spring she set up physically distanced circles in the sand at Lighthouse Point Park that we decorated with seashells and seaweed so folks could safely enjoy the beach. Art helps us celebrate life, and helps us heal.

posted by: Lots of Fish on July 19, 2020 12:30pm

Thank you, Thomas, for stumbling upon us making art and writing this excellent article! We were so busy when you visited; I didn't get a chance to give you the information about how the project is funded and supported. I will add the list here for your readers!

The Runoff Art storm drain, rain barrel, GIS map, and other stormwater education art projects are funded in part by a matching grant from Sustainable CT, individual donations, and community support from Fair Haven Community Management Team, Quinnipiac East Management Team, New Haven Bioregional Group, B Foundation, and Greater New Haven Coalition for People.

We are producing these projects with assistance from various City Departments; Engineering, Public Works, Traffic and Parking, and of course, Youth Services. The Community Management Teams contributed some funds they received from New Haven's Livable Cities Initiative. We have pending support and grants from Regional Water Authority, CT Sea Grant, Green Fund, and Save the Sound for the continuation of the program into the school year.

We will be in Newhallville this week, then Fair Haven and Quinnipiac Heights the following weeks. So we hope you'll visit again. Jordan Wabahati, a youth employee from Wilbur Cross High School, he is our TikTok Choreographer. He is leading and posting dance videos filmed around the completed artworks. It is part of our mission to reach and inspire a new generation of environmental stewards!

Thanks, Melinda and Heather for your nice comments too,

JoAnn and Lots of Fish
"Artful Solutions to Water Pollution"



New Haven Tops 200 Bioswales

by **ALLAN APPEL** | Dec 9, 2019 3:38 pm

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Posted to: [Environment](#)



ALLAN APPEL PHOTO

Dawn Henning signs in an Elm Street bioswale.

The bioswales have landed — New Haven has now passed the 200 mark, and on course to lay down another 75 of the rainwater-runoff gardens to reduce floods and buttress the city’s storm-sewer system.

City Engineering Department Program Manager Dawn Henning set out Friday to start posting informational signs at 25 of the latest “green infrastructure” additions. She was joined by Matt Viens and William Tisdale, a crew from the [Urban Resources Initiative \(URI\)](#), the Yale School of Forestry-based nonprofit that has installed many of the city’s 210 bioswales, the most of any city in the state.

URI and the city have just finished a federally funded two-year 100-bioswale installation project for the center of the city, from Long Wharf through downtown to the eastern edge of Dwight.



The sign-planting group's first stop Friday was the 15-by-five foot bioswale immediately in front of the library's new Orchid Cafe so the public can better understand the science behind the simple but effective green infrastructure.

"For a city our size the density of bioswales is very high," Denning said as Viens and Tisdale screwed on the informational sign to one of the bioswale's vertical posts.

The signs report that each bioswale can receive and infiltrate down into the soil up to 75,000 gallons of stormwater annually, diverting it from the city's sewer system.

Henning and the city engineer staffers adapted the design of New Haven's bioswales to fit New Haven's needs and soils.



Viens and Tisdale with the signage.

For example the new bioswales have granite curbs, unlike New York's concrete one. Black chain fencing aesthetically echoes the historic iron fencing across the street from the Green.

Another key point: "What's unique in New Haven is that we developed the design so it could be built with low-skilled labor," Henning said.

The hand-digging of the enclosure prevents damage to unmarked utilities in the soil beneath, especially in busy downtown areas. Manual labor means that there are no backhoes and other heavy equipment clogging traffic on the adjacent thoroughfares, she added.

URI won the contract to do the installation. Many of its crews come through [Emerge Connecticut](#), which helps train formerly incarcerated people to join the job force and reintegrate to society.

The same guys who plant the many trees that URI is responsible for citywide are also involved in creating these low cost green infrastructures.

Bioswale Basics



You can't put a bioswale on a hill. And bioswales must leave at least five feet of sidewalk for pedestrian passage. That posed a bit of challenge, in front of the library, with its steps and walls pushing out towards the curb.

Once you have a good spot, over a two-and-a-half day period crews dig down five feet below grade and lay in the 15-by-foot trench two and half feet of stone and two feet of mulchy graveled soil. The entryway from the road is the inlet; that lets in the stormwater — so that it doesn't wash into the nearby catch basins. That water enters, circulates among the plants, swirls and infiltrates down through the soil, then the stone layer where, cleaned up by now, it joins the ground water.



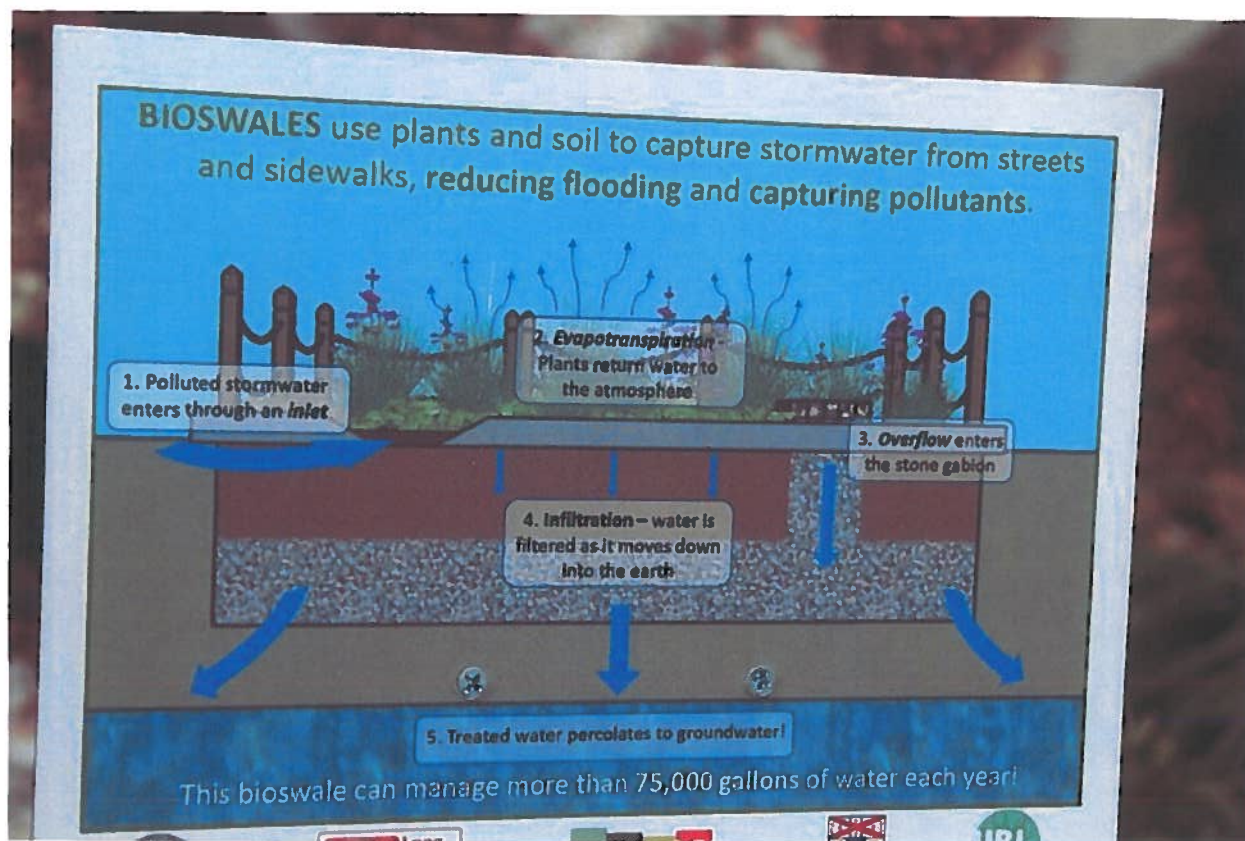
Each bioswale features toward a cage or [gabion](#) filled with rocks. Henning explained that the gabion is a shortcut to the rock level to expedite rapid infiltration during heavy stormwater events.

If you see a white tube descending in the middle of the gabion, that's not part of the structure. Rather it's for a study being undertaken by another partner in the city's growing bioswale enterprise, Dr. Gabe Benoit of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. "He's doing research in the bioswales to measure precisely how much is being taken out of our storm sewer system" through the bioswales, said Henning.

Henning said preliminary soundings suggest that a "capture of 75 percent of the water inflows into the bioswale."

She speculated that the soils under the city are incredibly sandy and have huge absorptive ability. New Haven soils absorb 40 inches per hour, she said, while normal towns register closer to five.

It's Not A Gravel Pit



Each bioswale has generally the same mixture of evergreen and deciduous shrubs and plants, explained Viens, who is URI's green skills manager.

They all need to have roughly similar characteristics; They need to be able to withstand high salt—from the washed off de-icing compounds. They also need to survive well in both wet and very dry conditions, and so the the plants you're passing in the bioswales are generally those that would live in what Viens described as an ephemeral wetland environment.



MARKESHIA RICKS PHOTO

A Chapel Street bioswale.

So, botanists, get ready. These would be [ninebark](#), inkberry shrubs, and an ornamental evergreen grass called a liriop. The bioswales also contain a variety of day lilies that are nearly indestructible and, when they emerge, provide vibrant color. All this is so that people walking by won't think a bioswale is a gravel pit, Viens said, with irony.

Henning's office gets many calls from regular citizens requesting bioswales, along with professional calls from cities including Bridgeport and those in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Since New Haven has the highest density of bioswales in the state, other cities are inquiring to borrow New Haven designs and to pick its engineering brain for best practices and approaches for installing — which include efficient pre-cast elements such as the granite edging and the fence posts.

Would Henning one day like to see New Haven monickered "The Bioswale City?"

She thought for a moment and then suggested a more general title: the City of Green Infrastructure.

URI plans to start building another 75 bioswales in the Hill once warm weather returns in 2020.



Project EMERGE participants at work on a Westville bioswale.

Commenting has closed for this entry

Comments

posted by: Esbey on December 9, 2019 3:59pm

Such a great program! The alternatives are more expensive water treatment or else just polluting the Sound. And we get nice little bits of greenery and flowers.

posted by: ElmCityAle on December 9, 2019 4:08pm

Great in concept, but like many such projects, no staff or funding is available to keep them clean. While the photos NHI choose show units in good condition, I've see other bioswales that have become trash pits. There is a real cost to such work, usually not factored into the initial source of funding, so the city is avoiding those costs by avoiding the upkeep. The city's "answer" is to push the responsibility off on residents. I'm all for property owners being held responsible for their land and neighborhood volunteer efforts, but not to maintain and clean municipal infrastructure.

posted by: AverageTaxpayer on December 9, 2019 4:34pm

Can we turn Tenple Street's federally-funded, heated bus stop into a bioswale?

Missing from this article are the expenditures!

posted by: Bill Saunders on December 9, 2019 5:08pm

ECY,

There is an older gentleman in my neighborhood that does a good job keeping our bio-swale, clean but that is by no means an 'answer' to a full 'maintenance program'.

An 'Adopt-a-Swale' Program might be a simple solution...(with a small tax credit)

posted by: anonymous on December 9, 2019 5:10pm

Yes, the Yale swales always look nice, but some of the others do seem to accumulate garbage and will require maintenance from time to time.

posted by: Thomas Alfred Paine on December 9, 2019 6:23pm

I do not like bioswales. Many residents do not want them in front of their homes. Does any one from the city ever ask homeowners and business owners if they want one near their property?

Bioswales are unsightly. They narrow pedestrian sidewalks, and are a danger to pedestrians who can trip on their raised curbs. They make it difficult or impossible to open a door of a car parked next to one of these things. They have become trash and debris collectors. They also quickly become filled with leaves and weeds.

Apparently no one is assigned to regularly clean and maintain them.

Has the expense to install of all of these bioswales been worth it all? Do they actually perform the service intended to make any substantial difference?

Residents have lived in New Haven since 1638 without bioswales. For 370 years we let nature take care of the rainfall without regular, reoccurring major consequences to life and safety in this city.

I am a doubter and a sceptic of this enterprise. I am also a taxpayer who feels our tax dollars, and even grant dollars, can be better spent to address more urgent needs of our city.

posted by: Esteban on December 9, 2019 6:44pm

Is it so strange an idea to require a deposit on every bottle and can of any type sold in the city, or even the entire state. Were we to implement such a program you can be sure not to see any bottles thrown out in the street from cars or dumped in the bioswales or left on top of overflowing garbage cans.

posted by: ADAK on December 9, 2019 7:08pm

I dig these, but are we getting any in Westville? Or will we be forgotten like the Bike Share program... There's more to the city than just around the Green.

posted by: Kevin McCarthy on December 9, 2019 7:22pm

AverageTaxpayer, you're right that the article does not discuss expenditures. But this is a case where green infrastructure is cheaper than the alternative.

A large part of the city has a combined sewer system, in which sewage and stormwater are handled by the same pipes. After a heavy rain, the volume of liquid entering the sewage treatment plant exceeds its capacity, and the plant dumps raw sewage into New Haven Harbor. The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, for some reason, thinks this is a bad thing and the Water Pollution Control Authority has entered into a consent settlement with it to stop the practice. Traditionally, the way the WPCA would address the problem is by tearing up the streets and installing new separated sewers. This is wicked expensive and disruptive. While bioswales are not feasible in all locations, they are often a cheaper, equally effective option.

posted by: __quinnchionn__ on December 9, 2019 7:59pm

Nicknames that I thought of that could maybe represent New Haven:

1. "The Constitution City"
2. "The City Between Two Rocks"
3. "The Harbor City"
4. "America's greatest small city."
5. "The Shadow City"
6. "The City of Pure Honesty"

posted by: Bill Saunders on December 9, 2019 8:23pm

I would also like to add an amendment to my 'Adopt-a-Swale' Program....

If 'said' bioswale is situated in front of a non-profit entity, it then becomes 'that entity's' responsibility to maintain 'said bioswale'. In cases like this, no 'tax credit' will be provided.

posted by: Gaeb on December 9, 2019 8:24pm

I'm seeing lots of misinformation and confusion in these posts:

- (1) Without bioswales, storm water does not take care of itself. It goes into expensive underground pipes that dump it in New Haven Harbor and other vulnerable aquatic habitats. Bioswales in fact mimic conditions in 1638. Also, without bioswales or other measures there is periodic flooding. Because we have replaced open space with hard surfaces, flooding has increased over time and re-

quires some kind of system to deal with it.

(2) Bioswales are in fact regularly maintained and provide green jobs. Frequency of maintenance may be inadequate in some locations, but that's something that's being worked out. BTW: What they replace (catch basins) also needs periodic maintenance (expensive vacuuming), but since catch basins are below ground you don't notice.

(3) So far bioswales have been paid for by grants dedicated to this purpose. They have not been paid for with tax dollars, nor could the grant money have gone to another purpose. Bioswales cost much less than alternatives (like separated sewers).

posted by: Westville voter on December 9, 2019 10:21pm

I was skeptical when these first appeared, fearing they would become weed-swales instead. But, I am happy to acknowledge my error. That said, some of the bio-swales downtown are poorly placed and create hazards for pedestrians. Even the best of ideas need careful implementation.

posted by: missthenighthawks on December 9, 2019 11:00pm

Combined sewer and storm water pipes are an environmental nightmare for those who believe in clean water. Cities all over the country are doing their part and eliminating them at great expense. However, NH believes that a couple hundred flower boxes will be enough. What a joke.

<https://www.epa.gov/enforcement/national-compliance-initiative-keeping-raw-sewage-and-contaminated-stormwater-out-our>

posted by: Esbey on December 9, 2019 11:58pm

missnighthawks: I know that there have been sewer separation projects underway for a long time, and I believe they are completed in at least parts of downtown that feature these bioswales. As elsewhere, I think this is a decades-long project, funded by water bills. I believe that the water plant has also been upgraded to handle higher volume. The article says that the bioswales "reduce floods and buttress the city's storm-sewer system," without referencing the remaining combined sewers, but Kevin McCarthy is probably correct (he often is) that this is a cost-effective way to help with the combined sewage problem as well.

posted by: Kevin McCarthy on December 10, 2019 7:14am

Missthenighthawks, no one claims that bioswales are panaceas and the WPCA has constructed a wide range of sewer projects to comply with the consent order. Here is a report that describes the projects,

<https://gnhwpc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-GNHWPCA-LTCP-Update-Part-1-of-3.pdf>.

Both Dawn Henning and her boss, Giovanni Zinn, are licensed Professional Engineers. They had to demonstrate that the bioswales would work for the project to be funded. Prof. Benoit's research shows that they have.

To pick up on Bill Saunder's suggestion, it would be helpful if the neighborhood groups that volunteer with URI periodically clean the bioswales.

posted by: Patricia Kane on December 10, 2019 10:05am

@AverageTaxpayer: There is a federally funded, heated bus stop on Temple St?

If we want to reduce carbon emissions and car trips, then we need to improve the bus experience by installing attractive shelters that are heated in the winter, vented in the summer, have seating and are located at every stop.

My regular route is E. Grand Ave to downtown. There is no seating of any kind at E. Grand Ave near Quinnipiac. And NO shelter.

This cold, wet and raw winter weather is truly bone-chilling.

My return via Chapel at Orange is not much of an improvement. The benches inside the 3 sided "Shelter" were removed to discourage people from sleeping there overnight. So the elderly, people with children, people in wheel chairs and the rest of us have to be deprived of a place to sit on a daily basis because no one can come up with a better solution?

My understanding is that the City is responsible for setting up bus stop shelters.

How about addressing the lack of basic amenities at bus stops and show your concern for the people who have to use them for work, grocery shopping, doctor's appointments and and other necessary activities?

A quick shout out to all the amazing bus drivers who patiently answer questions, assist the disabled in getting on and off the bus, deal with baby carriages and shopping carts and still manage to be graceful under pressure. Good people. You are noticed.

posted by: LynneB on December 10, 2019 11:23am

Thanks Allan for covering of this important topic. The Greater New Haven Water Pollution Control Authority

(GNHWPC is under a consent order to reduce combined sewer overflows that occur when rain gets in the combined sewer pipe and is diverted into an outfall along the Quinnipiac, Mill, West rivers and New Haven Harbor. Originally GNHWPCA estimated that 247 million gallons of raw sewage goes into our waterways/yr. but in fact, after they measured using flow meters it was nearer to 100 million gallons, still a sizable amount. Some areas of the city are more affected than others based upon whether their sewer pipe is combined with storm drains or not. Westville and East Shore have separated systems for the most part. The Hill, Fair Haven and downtown are combined; other areas are partially separated which means that private property owners may still divert their gutters into the sewer pipe (not supposed to) but street drains are separate from the sewer pipe.

Many people don't understand that they will pay to fix this one way or another. GNHPWCA wanted a new improved sewer plant at the cost of 1/2 billion dollars of public money to "treat rain water"- a huge expense. Couple that with the increased power costs to pump the storm water to East Shore for treatment is rarely discussed. Yes, maintenance costs money but would you rather pay for someone to have a green job maintaining the swales or pay GNHPWCA and UI for the gray infrastructure to deal with something that could be more economically handled by green infrastructure (also called source control).

Thank you Giovanni and Dawn for such an amazing job as well as Gabe Benoit and everyone else. If you are a resident that would like more information about what you can do and why it is important please view our video on you tube called Bringing in the Rain featuring groups working on these issues for residents in New Haven. I am not allowed to provide the link on this blog.

posted by: George Polk on December 10, 2019 11:25am

Great addition to the system but I have a thought. If URI has the contract to design and build the bioswales aren't they able and as part of the contract to maintain i.e pick up the trash, and clean them? I know that's grunge work but even a clean earth has some dirt. I bet those 50 newly minted "football fans" could have those swales all cleaned up in say 5 hours.

posted by: Ben Howell on December 10, 2019 12:42pm

Just to add my voice in the "pro" column. I think the bioswales are great. A win all around. Using grant money (that would otherwise not be coming to the city) to improve infrastructure and storm water management. I also agree that it'd be great to see more bioswales in other neighborhoods outside the downtown core.

posted by: LynneB on December 10, 2019 1:43pm

Dear George, thanks for your question. Generally, under state statutes, municipalities are responsible for managing storm water and meeting clean water standards, MS4 regulations. We are lucky that the City of New Haven got so much grant money to install the bioswales. It gets a little more complicated because storm water management has a very large effect on combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in areas of the city where the pipes are combined. GNHWPCA has adamantly claimed that they are not responsible for storm water management even though the reason we have combined sewer overflows is because rain water gets into the combined sewer pipe; any efforts to reduce storm water runoff and allow rain to infiltrate the ground helps reduce combined sewer overflows. That role, however, is not recognized officially.

Nevertheless, GNHWPCA has invested in bioswales in the West River section of town along Winthrop Ave. as part of a pilot to measure how much storm water runoff can be removed from the combined sewer system in the West River section of town. GNHWPCA agreed as part of their consent order to initiate a watershed based plan (evaluate and invest in source control first) to manage combined sewer overflows, I think the first in the State of CT. They are still making modifications, testing different interventions and measuring bioswale functions-using the West River neighborhoods as testing grounds for what works best. They are demonstrating watershed based management of CSOs in the West River Watershed in New Haven, now, to their credit, and DEEP's credit who required them to do this.

You may remember that the City of New Haven wanted a Storm Water Authority to pay for these things; it was soundly defeated as another tax. However, storm water management costs money; we need to pay one way or another. Personally, I prefer to pay for green jobs to maintain green infrastructures rather than UI and GNHWPCA to unnecessarily treat rain-it is not polluted.

posted by: Annie on December 10, 2019 1:55pm

Imperative to force City to STOP salting streets!!! Salt destroys bioswales!

Operation and maintenance is a challenge that when not addressed properly can lead to failure of green infrastructure and high costs associated with restoration. This memorandum addresses common operation and maintenance questions and provides recommendations for evaluating the need and providing maintenance for green infrastructure, specifically bioretention and bioswales, that serves highly impervious roadways and parking lots.

Green infrastructure (GI) involves the use of vegetation and porous materials to restore some of the natural processes required to treat stormwater runoff at the source. GI tends to have vegetation, be relatively small and distributed, and contain fewer structural components than more conventional stormwater practices. GI requires routine operation and maintenance to uphold the desired performance and aesthetic quality as well as ensure performance throughout its expected lifetime.

Runoff from roads and parking lots often contains high nutrient loads compared to other impervious surfaces and is also a source of sediment, heavy metals, and organic compounds (e.g., polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs). Concentrated flow from roads and parking lots causes stream degradation, flooding, and other hydrologic impacts. These conditions emphasize the importance of maintaining GI receiving runoff from these surfaces.

Stormwater managers have been installing vegetated infiltration practices such as bioswales and bio-retention for decades now. While some studies exist, limited research is available on how operation and maintenance affects performance of these practices. Key issues and challenges include:

- * How to determine if maintenance is needed
- * Inspection frequency
- * Triggers for maintenance
- * Disposal of materials

posted by: Annie on December 10, 2019 1:56pm

The purpose of this explanation (last post) is to illustrate what is known about each challenge listed above and provide operation and maintenance recommendations. All stormwater control measures (SCMs)—not just GI—need operation and maintenance. If not properly operated and maintained, performance can decline, eventually leading to failure. The following series of photos provides several examples of failure due to insufficient operation and maintenance.

SALT

In cold climates, salt usage is common to mitigate icy streets, sidewalks, and paved areas during winter months.

Salt (e.g., sodium chloride) can build up on paved surfaces between melt events but will eventually be washed off into nearby SCMs and downstream to receiving waters.

Salt can also accumulate in soils and can be transferred to the shallow groundwater system over time. High salt concentrations in soils can hinder a plant's access to water and cause declines or loss of vegetation in bioretention cells and bioswales.

Early spring is the most critical period for managing salt concentrations when plant leaves are emerging and rains have not yet flushed the soil media of excess salts.

posted by: 1644 on December 12, 2019 8:05am

In the meantime, the city is encouraging building to the lot line in areas like the Route 34 land, as well as having done it with Co-op and Metro High Schools. There is precious little land between now overcrowded (due to the loss of the connector plus new development) streets and the buildings for street trees and bioswales. Look how deep and close to the street the new foundation for LAZ's parking garage are? There's no room for trees, either root or branch. Trees can absorb a lot of water, especially in combination with a bioswales, as well as keep streets cooler.

posted by: UnheardNerd on December 12, 2019 8:15am

I love the idea, but I really, really wish they would use ONLY native plants in them (plants which existed on this continent before 1492). Some of the plants mentioned in the article are native. Others you can't tell because they used a common name that refers to a family of plants that some species are from here and others are not. And some are only non-native. I'm all for diversity when it comes to people and culture, but when it comes to plants, ecosystems, and infrastructure that is supposed to be "green" and contribute to the environment, why are we introducing yet another foreign species to be widely planted around town? Don't we have enough invasive species threatening our ecosystems? The City of New Haven, if it really cared about the environment, would commit to planting ONLY NATIVE PLANTS AND TREES within its borders. These are the plants that can withstand our winters, our summers, our droughts, and our floods, because they have existed here for millions of years without any help from humans. Native plants are just as lovely as foreign ornamentals, and require no extra work to grow (often they're easier because you just set it and forget it and nature does the rest). And yes, there are even native plants that can withstand salt! So, makers of the bioswales if you are reading this, PLEASE find native plants to put in them from now on. Thank you.

So Long, Dump Site. Hello, Greenspace

by **ALLAN APPEL** | Nov 11, 2020 3:18 pm

[\(5\) Comments](#) | [Commenting has been closed](#) | [E-mail the Author](#)

Posted to: [Environment](#), [Fair Haven](#), [Community Management Teams](#)



ALLAN APPEL PHOTO

Nicole Davis amid the dumped mess to be cleared for a pocket park.

A community dumping ground in Fair Haven is poised to become a greenspace full of bio-retention features and fun and environmental education for neighborhood kids

That good news conveyed was by [Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound](#) Mill River Watershed Coordinator Nicole Davis.

Thursday night Davis was on hand at the Fair Haven Community Management Team's regular meeting, which drew 35 attendees via the Zoom teleconferencing app and was hosted by the team's chair, Michelle Lee Rodriguez.

The discarded tire and mattress haven in question is the lot where Exchange Street meets Haven Street and dead-ends in what is now a dumping site adjacent to the playing fields of the John Martinez School.

Converting that space into what [Davis has described a green pocket park](#) is a key aim of the second leg of the [Mill River Trail](#)

The Mill River Trail is a walking and biking path envisioned to connect Whitney Dam on Whitney Ave-

nue and Criscuolo Park on James Street.

This summer [the ribbon was cut on the completion of the first or northern leg of the trail](#), a stone dust or cinder surface suitable for walkers or bicyclists that snakes dreamily along the east side of the Mill River from the Chapel Street Bridge right up to the train overpass 25 yards from Humphrey Street.

The stretch of the newest segment-in-progress from Grand Avenue to Chapel Street and its terminus at Criscuolo Park by the Sound follows the path of the Mill River but obviously much of it is an urban trail whose aim in no small part is simply to remind you that a river is nearby, even if in segments it is not visible.

The rescue and re-purposing of the abandoned lot is a key feature of this leg of the trail. The idea is that it will be the catchment area where storm water—which is not caught by bioswales and other features planned for the nearby streets— racing along the impermeable surfaces of Exchange south of Grand will eventually end up. Better there than in the Mill River.

In the little pocket park storm water and run off will be filtered into the ground through green infrastructure planned for the lot. “By greening this space, we will depress dumping,” as well as reduce pollution of one of the city’s three rivers, she said.

The effort is a feature of the [Mill River Watershed Plan](#), released two years ago, to offer a blueprint of suggestions to clean up the river and make it more accessible to the community.

Davis reported, in an email after the meeting, that the initial \$30,000 from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven has led to additional funding from private foundations and another \$150,000 from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

The city is not contributing any funding to the project, although city staffers are working with Davis and her team on technical and design issues, she reported.

Asked to describe in some detail how the space will be transformed, Davis replied: “The parklet will remove pavement from the closed dead end portion of Exchange street and replace it with a trail with bioretention areas (depressed gardens) planted with native vegetation that will collect storm water runoff from the road way and allowing it to infiltrate into the ground naturally. The Current plans include native grasses, wildflowers like black eyed Susan, purple cone flower and and native shrubs and trees.”

In addition to the storm water control benefits, the space will also feature pollinator and bird habitats, she added.

Covid Slowed The Outreach

Fair Haven advocate Lee Cruz urged Davis to be in touch with homeowners in the immediate area of the lot: “The key is not only beautification but identifying home owners in the area.”

Davis said efforts to bring local homeowners into the loop slowed and then stopped due to the onset of Covid in March, “so we haven’t been in as much touch as we should.”

The main community engagement thus far has been with local schools, primarily Martinez, where playing fields abut the parklet site; and the private Cold Spring School.

Curricula have are already in development to incorporate the park and activities that will be able to be conducted there, Davis added.

Fair Haven activist and gardener Mary Ann Moran was enthusiastic. "I think this is a great idea for the school, but when Covid calms down I am sure homeowners will want to be involved," she said. "This will make a difference in the neighborhood."

"I agree," replied Davis. "It's just the timing that we couldn't reach out. We will as soon as we start building the project."

Davis said the project is in the permitting process with the city and if all the green ducks line up, construction should begin in the spring 2021.

Commenting has closed for this entry

Comments

posted by: Heather C. on November 11, 2020 1:01pm

What a beautiful project it will be when completed. I hope more effort will be made to encourage the neighbors to be involved. We need to reclaim and clean up our green spaces and abandoned areas and our waterways. By healing our environment, we heal our communities. Nature reduces stress, anxiety and depression as well as improves our physical health when we go out and participate in enjoying it and keeping it clean.

posted by: Gretchen Pritchard on November 11, 2020 5:35pm

Might I ask again that whenever you describe a new development project, you include a map of the immediate area, with the site highlighted? It would add so much context to the story.

Thanks.

posted by: TheInternet on November 12, 2020 6:05am

Gretchen:

Dropped pin

Near Mill River Trail, New Haven, CT 06513

<https://goo.gl/maps/mkc6aCCGk68UTeYV8>

posted by: Kevin McCarthy on November 12, 2020 7:31am

Paul, seconding Gretchen's suggestion, maps convey information just as text and photos do. This is particularly true when a map is linked to a Geographic Information System (GIS). Attaching the maps sounds like a good job for an intern (seriously). They could pick up useful skills as well as providing value for readers.

And as we have discussed, attaching a heat map to Tom's on-going coverage of real estate transactions would be valuable. It would show where sales prices have regularly exceeded appraised values, an indicator of where gentrification is happening or about to happen.

posted by: LynneB on November 12, 2020 9:18pm

So nice to see green infrastructure coming to Fair Haven! Likewise thanks to the NH Independent for covering it. Fair Haven has very sandy soil that promotes rain soaking into the ground. They also have several large combined sewer outfalls that release raw sewage in the rivers when it rains. One of the largest outfalls is at the end of James Street where many local residents fish. I've seen fishermen haul their catch up on the bank to gut and clean their fish before taking them home not realizing that the banks are coated with raw sewage especially after rain events. It is tidal so eventually the river banks are flushed by tides but most people have no idea where the outfalls are or even what risks they have by not being aware that they are exposed to sewage and taking necessary precautions such as washing hands, not touching face etc. Kudos to all for converting this space from a dump to a valuable water infiltration site. I'd love to see the city and local residents get more engaged in source controls such as stormwater infiltration sites (swales) and gutter downspout disconnects for Fair Haven residents. Keeping storm water from entering the combined sewer pipe lessens the amount of raw sewage released by rain events. It helps keep our rivers and harbor clean.