

RHIC's Master Greening Plan

Introduction:

Urban living has many factors that impact the environment and our health. Communities can be designed in ways that are more sustainable, efficient, healthy and aesthetic with several benefits for the community. The main issues in an urban environment are storm water runoff; tree canopy health; recreational and garden spaces; habitats for wildlife and plant species; energy consumption; air, soil and water quality; and sanitation, trash and waste. Projects, such as expanding the tree canopy cover in an urban area, are important to protecting the long-term health of residents and local waterways such as streams, rivers—and in our case the Jones Fall River, which drains into the Inner Harbor, then the Chesapeake Bay and finally into the ocean. Everything we do in an urban setting has an impact on a larger scale. According to the USDA Forest Service and the Chesapeake Bay Program, by increasing urban tree cover and, more generally, expanding the green areas in urban places, stormwater runoff and stream channel erosion can be reduced, water and soil quality improved, airborne pollutants can be filtered, and summer temperatures and resulting ozone pollution and energy can be reduced. Urban greening also has economic benefits. It draws more people to live in the community and improves the overall quality of health and life.

Greening the Community

Goal: To Enhance, Increase and Connect Reservoir Hill's Green Space for Passive and Active Recreational Use to Improve Environmental Health and to Bring the Community Together.

a) Objective: Tree Canopy--To double the tree canopy in the neighborhood by 2036 in conjunction with Baltimore City's Tree Baltimore Campaign, in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, reduce storm water runoff, increase property values, bring beauty to the community and help conserve energy.

Action Steps:

1. Conduct a tree inventory using i-Tree Software with the help of Reservoir Hill volunteers Spring of 2008.
2. Determine how many healthy trees we have as well as dead, dying and empty tree wells. Determine how many of each species of trees we have in Reservoir Hill and the value of the trees in reducing pollution and increasing property values.
3. Identify specific locations for new trees to be planted and new tree wells to be cut summer with the results of the survey.
4. Identify locations of dead trees and stumps to be removed.
5. Apply for a grant to increase the Tree Canopy by 15% in 2009.
6. Have residents sign maintenance agreements for new trees in existing empty wells in the winter of 2009.
7. Request the new trees from the city for spring of 2009 planting.

8. Hire a contractor to expand the existing empty in spring of 2009.
9. Have the city remove the stumps and dead trees in the spring of 2009.
10. RHIC will provide maintenance arrangements for residents including rain barrels, gator bags, buckets, mulch, and/or hose bibs.
11. Fill in soil into tree well and plant trees with volunteers.
12. Hire a contractor to cut new tree wells Fall of 2009.
13. Fill in soil into new tree wells, and plant trees with volunteers Fall 2009.

b) Objective: Vacant Lots--With the support of the community to act as planners and stewards, restore 3 new vacant lots by 2011 into useable green spaces for passive and or active recreational use to be determined by residents.

Action Steps:

1. Assess existing empty lots.
2. Pick which vacant lots to restore.
3. Present the idea to turn lots into a green space to the community and find ownership from neighbors who will maintain the lot.
4. Community planning--decide what to do with the lot (flower garden, basketball court, vegetable garden, bocce ball, lawn, trees...etc).
5. Create a program to work with local kids to implement the plan.
6. Maintain the lot.

c) Objective: Community Gardens--To improve the two existing community gardens in order to provide more people a peaceful space to garden and grow their own food, and by providing the means necessary to protect the gardens, increase membership, provide access to tools, seeds and volunteers in the spring of 2009.

Action Steps:

1. Look at successful community gardens in the city to learn how to create one that will last.
2. Take the steps necessary to make the garden function optimally: put up a fence with a lock, provide water and tool shed, increase membership, set rules and guidelines.
3. Encourage the gardens and as well as individual gardeners to join The Community Greening Resource Network (CGRN).
4. Provide tools for residents to use.
5. Set up work days for the gardens and provide tools.
6. Set up workshops in the community to be held at St. Francis Neighborhood Center or in the gardens.
7. Prepare the gardens for planting.
8. Let residents maintain the plots.

d) Objective: Front and Backyard Gardens—to create more gardens and green space around residents' homes in order to reduce their cost of living by providing food, help the environment by providing permeable surface and cleaner air, and to beautify the neighborhood by the spring of 2010.

Action Steps:

1. Set up a workshop on gardening for the community.
2. Provide information on resources for gardening materials, seeds and soil.
3. Provide volunteers and tools to help people start their gardens.

e) Objective: Bike Path--by 2012 Reservoir Hill will devise and connect bike paths to Druid Hill Park in accordance to the city's master bike plan.

Action Steps:

1. Assess existing and surrounding bike paths.
2. Set up meeting with City Planning Department with community members.
3. Install signage and/or road markings for bike paths.

Energy Conservation

Goal: to promote, educate and provide resources about energy conservation in residents' homes.

a) Objective: Energy Audits—RHIC aims to reduce energy consumption in Reservoir Hill by the Spring of 2010 by educating residents about energy conservation, hosting workshops on efficient practices in the home as well as providing efficient light bulbs and faucets.

Action Steps:

1. Meet with Earl Millet at Civic Works to plan the process and possibly use Project Light Bulb as a model.
2. Partner with Kids on the Hill for educational purposes to see how they can be involved in the process.
3. Present the idea to the community and offer services to see who is interested.
4. Conduct energy audits and install efficient appliances and light bulbs.

b) Objective: To educate Reservoir Hill residents about environmentally conscious green rehabilitation practices that they can complete on their own homes to make them more energy efficient and sustainable from summer of 2008 to summer of 2009.

Action Steps:

1. Set up a series of Green Rehab workshop for the community on topics such as: green roofs, cool roofs, worm composting, rain barrel-making, front and backyard gardening, LEED contracting,

3/4/2009

- energy star appliance installation, recycled or biodegradable building materials, home air sealing, and solar energy.
2. Conduct research on green rehab and design resources and services.
 3. Place this information on the website as resources for community members looking into redesigning their houses to be more green and energy efficient.

Youth Involvement

Goal: To engage youth in a hands-on educational process focusing on various environmental issues/projects which promote awareness and appreciation for the natural environment.

a) Objective: Watershed Education—work with the Kids on the Hill Environmental program to teach them issues about watershed issues and how storm water runoff from our neighborhood affects the Chesapeake Bay by Spring of 2009.

Action Steps:

1. Meet with youth to teach basics about our urban environment's affects on the larger environment including the Chesapeake Bay.
2. Visit the Chesapeake Bay through the CBF grant program.
3. Teach the students about reusing, recycling and reducing their own waste in their daily lives.
4. Stencil drains in Reservoir Hill to teach others about our connection to the waterways.
5. Build and paint our own rain barrels to sell to neighbors to place in their yards to collect rain water to be used for the community gardens and tree wells.
6. Create a final project related to Baltimore City watershed runoff and the Chesapeake Bay.
7. Youth present the final project to the public in Baltimore city.

(Possible partners: JFWA, DPW, PPF, CBF)

b) Objective: Youth Oriented Green Spaces—to involve youth in planning, design, implementation and maintenance of Reservoir Hill's Green Spaces by 2009.

Action Steps:

1. Advocate for youth friendly recreational spaces (e.g. German Park, vacant lots, and school yards).
2. Meet with partners and youth.
3. Find out owner of the vacant lots. Get ownership into the hands of Baltimore City Parks and Recreation Department.
4. Design parks, community gardens, schoolyards, and vacant lots

3/4/2009

- in ways that create safe, healthy green spaces for recreational use.
5. Educate about the importance of maintenance and involve youth and community and city in the maintenance if the green space.

(Partners: Parks Dept, PPF, Irvine Nature Center, NDC, Youth as Resources, HNI, City Farms, Master Gardener, the Park Advocate, Carrie Murray Nature Center)

c) Objective: Public Health –to simultaneously examine public health and environmental justice issues with youth and to instigate thinking around improving our neighborhood’s quality of life by 2010.

Action Steps:

1. Take a Toxic Tour with the Kids on then Hill Program students.
2. Examine our community for similarities, identify issues in our community (e.g. trash, vectors, dog feces, or lead poisoning).
3. Look for opportunities and strategies for improving health (reducing waste, creating dog parks or ways to take care of waste, do lead testing with the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning).
4. Brainstorm possible solutions.
5. Create a public health campaign through social marketing focusing on one identified health issue and document.
6. Educate the public and present some possible solutions.

(Possible partners: Bloomberg School of Public Health, Environmental Justice Partnership, Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, Johns Hopkins Center in Urban Environmental Health Kids on the Hill, DPW, Baltimore Health Dept., UMD School of Medicine)

d) Objective: Connecting Youth to Nature—By 2010 KOH teens will learn about local natural spaces and will create a program that exposes urban youth to local outdoor green spaces through youth-led nature tours.

Action Steps:

1. Take inventory of local parks and nature centers.
2. Visit the nature centers and tour the parks to discover natural treasures, hikes and bike paths.
3. Decide on a plan to integrate urban children into natural places.
4. Design a program (e.g. a treasure hunt, game of capture the flag, a hike in a park, or a visit to nature center) to instill an appreciation for natural environments in children who do not often have a chance to enjoy it.
5. Partner with schools to lead younger children in the activity.
6. Reflect on the results.

Partner: School Dept, John Eager Howard, Parks, Irvine Nature Center, John Sarbanes—no child left inside)

3/4/2009

f) Objective: Food --by 2011 we will spend a semester learning and educating about how cooking and eating sustainable, local and organic food, benefits our health and the environment.

Action Steps:

1. Host a class from local chef and gardeners on growing and cooking healthy food.
2. Grow and harvest our own food in a community garden or on school grounds.
3. Cook a benefit feast to go towards local garden with presentation and information on local farms and farmers markets.

g) Earth Day Tree Planting with John Eager Howard Elementary School –in the spring of 2009, RHIC will work with Jones Falls Watershed Association and John Eager Howard Elementary School to engage youth in tree planting and stewardship.

Action Steps:

1. Partner with the Jones Falls Watershed Association.
2. Talk to Principal of John Eager Howard School and present the idea to engage youth in tree planting.
3. Set the date as Earth Day.
4. Create a site plan to determine how many trees to plant and where.
5. Assess how many volunteers and students we will need.
6. Decide which classes to involve.
7. Request the trees from the city.
8. Call out for volunteers.
9. On the day of give a presentation on tree planting and the benefits for the health of environment, ourselves and the Chesapeake Bay.
10. Plant the trees.

Storm Water Reduction

Goal: To reduce trash and water that enters the storm drain system in Reservoir Hill by educating residents and creating more permeable green space to protect our watershed's streams, rivers and bay animals and ecosystems.

a) Objective: Stencil Drains—By the Fall of 2008 to stencil every storm drain in Reservoir Hill to say “Don’t Dump, Chesapeake Bay Drainage” in order to inform residents not to throw trash and not to pollute the streams and bay to protect the animals and ecosystem in the Bay.

Action Steps:

1. Find a team of people who want to participate in this activity.
2. Supply stencils, paint, paint brushes, traffic cone, and drop cloth.
3. Make maps of streets.
4. Assign teams per street.
5. Stencil the drains.

b) Objective: Rain Barrels—By the Spring of 2009, get a grant to host a workshop on building and/or installing rain barrels for residents and place the rain barrels around the community to collect water to use for watering gardens, trees and flowers while reducing storm water runoff.

Action Steps:

1. As part of the Tree Canopy Plan, RHIC will apply for a grant to host workshops on rain barrel making and installation for the community.
2. Spring of 2009 RHIC will host its first rain barrel workshop for residents led by the Jones Falls Watershed Association.
3. Train Kids on the Hill students who will have already learned about making rain barrels to install them so they can be hired by residents to assist with the rain barrel installation onto their properties.

c) Objective: Alley Gating—to turn alleys into green spaces to provide more permeable surfaces for rain water to absorb into the ground through to protect the Chesapeake Bay and to provide safe backyards for the community.

Action Steps:

1. Set up Alley Gating Workshop for Community.
2. Provide supporter and resources to those interested in turning their alley in a gated and green space.

d) Objective: Parks and School Green space—to turn school and park space into a habitat for wildlife (butterflies, birds, rabbits, deer, bees) to promote a healthy environment and to serve as environmental education opportunity for youth by the fall of 2008.

Action Steps:

1. Meet with the John Eager Howard School Board to tell them our idea to turn the schoolyard into a wildlife habitat with new trees, bushes, flowers and a birdbath and some birdhouses.
2. Partner with Kids on the Hill and the Jones Falls Watershed Association to design and devise a plan.
3. Call out for volunteers to help plant.
4. Apply for a grant for funding.
5. Gather materials.
6. Plant and install the habitat.

e) Objective: Vacant Lots and Water Retention—turn existing vacant lots into green space and rain gardens to create safe community recreational spaces that also are a permeable surface for rainwater.

Action Steps:

1. Pick a vacant lot to work in.

3/4/2009

2. Find out the owner.
3. Gain permission to work in the lot.
4. Work with Jones Falls Watershed Association and volunteers to create a rain garden (an area of land that dips down filled with plants that soak up a lot of water) that retains water and reduces the storm water that travels through the storm drain system into the rivers and bay.

Waste Reduction:

Goal: To educate residents about lifestyle changes that are better for the environment and their own health and inspire them to reduce the amount of waste produced in Reservoir Hill that is dumped into landfills.

a) Objective: Recycling-- to promote and increase recycling in the neighborhood by the Spring of 2009 by providing recycling bins to residents and creating incentives to recycle more by calculating tonnage of recycling and hosting mini block-competitions.

Action Steps:

1. RHIC to act as recycling bin supplier for the neighborhood.
2. RHIC and KOH to design a program to promote recycling.
3. Go door-to-door with a recycling campaign.
4. Create incentives for blocks to recycle.

b) Objective: Composting—to promote composting in the neighborhood by holding a presentation on the options (e.g. worms) and benefits of composting.

Action Steps:

1. RHIC and KOH to host a presentation on worm composting.
2. Provide links for community to purchase worms for composting.
3. Kids on the Hill may even start a business where they provide worms and a place to dump composting that can be used for gardens.

c) Objective: To Reduce Waste—by 2009 Reservoir Hill will reduce its waste by 25% by calculating tonnage of trash taken from Reservoir Hill and creating incentives to reduce that amount.

d) Objective: Public Trash and Recycling Receptacles—by the Spring of 2009 we will introduce public garbage and recycling receptacles on the public streets and sidewalks in the Reservoir Hill community to promote a cleaner, greener community.

Action Steps:

1. Research the source and cost for the City garbage and recycling receptacles and how we can become part of the city trash pick up.
2. Apply for a block grant to place bins in strategic locations throughout the community.
3. Educate the residents about how to properly use the garbage bins (i.e.: not to place household trash and furniture in or around them, and which is recycling and which is garbage).

3/4/2009

3. Obtain the bins and place them in the neighborhoods.