



CITY OF HARRISONBURG PUBLIC WORKS

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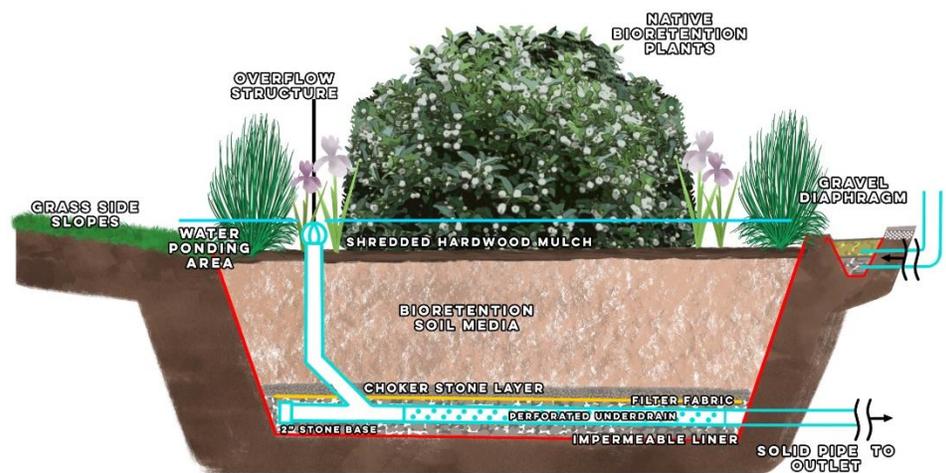
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Local church celebrates unveiling of new stormwater feature

HARRISONBURG, Va. – A Harrisonburg Public Works program is helping a local house of worship accomplish environmental sustainability efforts in The Friendly City.

Trinity Presbyterian Church recently installed a bioretention practice on their property with assistance from the Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program (HCAP). A bioretention is a shallow depression filled with specially adapted soils and plants with an underdrain system. Each time it rains, the bioretention temporarily stores and filters the stormwater runoff from adjacent paved areas, roofs and other impervious surfaces.



(Above) An example of a bioretention feature.

temporarily stores and filters the stormwater runoff from adjacent paved areas, roofs and other impervious surfaces.

The new bioretention feature is highlighted with educational signage provided by the City of Harrisonburg's stormwater team and funded by a special environmental project. A celebratory unveiling of the new stormwater feature and educational signage will take place at Trinity Presbyterian Church in early 2024.

HCAP utilizes funds from the City's Stormwater Utility Fee to help residential and non-residential properties implement stormwater best practices, and is done in partnership with the Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District office in Harrisonburg. HCAP has already helped install 24 projects with another four planned to be implemented in the near future.

Trinity Presbyterian applied for the HCAP program in 2021 to remove asphalt from their parking lot as well as installation of a bioretention. This stormwater best management practice (BMP) will help improve the water quality of Blacks Run which is impaired due to high levels of bacteria and sediment.

"The church has long held that hospitality and stewardship are ways we are called to live into our mission as Christians," Mark Facknitz, of Trinity Presbyterian Church, explained. "We have renovated our HVAC system, twice added solar panels, and planted a pollinator garden. Wonderfully, the bioretention served both purposes of hospitality and

stewardship. Rainwater, that once sheeted down the parking lot and used to pond in the neighbor's backyard before carrying pollutants into Blacks Run, now refreshes the ground water beneath us."

This stormwater BMP receives runoff from a portion of the roof of the church and will treat 4,092 square feet of impervious area. Trinity Presbyterian Church received \$30,000 in cost share reimbursement from HCAP to help fund the project. The site also was selected to receive funding for the educational sign due to the project being located on a non-residential property.

"Generous bequests from two congregants were crucial, but the church would not have been able to fund the project without the support from HCAP," Facknitz added. "We are looking for other ways to be good stewards, and to offer our grounds as green space for the neighborhood. We are encouraged by the city's efforts to mitigate harm from run-off, so much so that we are including in our long-term discernment whether we might replace our asphalt parking lots with permeable pavement. Once again, the city's assistance would be key."

The success of the partnership between the City and Trinity Presbyterian Church is exactly the type of effort Harrisonburg Public Works is eager to see happen more in the community.

"We are excited to have a program like HCAP which allows individuals to take action in their own yards that help to improve our local waterways," Harrisonburg Public Works Sustainability and Environmental Manager Keith Thomas said. "Even though each project has a relatively small impact on the entire watershed, it is still important to see our local community working to improve and wanting to share their success stories with others."

Harrisonburg community members and those interested in HCAP and stormwater-friendly practices are invited to come celebrate the unveiling of the stormwater feature and educational signage at Trinity Presbyterian Church, 725 S. High St., on Thursday, Jan. 25, at 12:30 p.m. Harrisonburg Public Works staff and members of the church will be on site to answer questions about the bioretention as well as the HCAP.

More information about the Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program can be found online at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/hcap>.

*The **City of Harrisonburg** is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 54,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is available online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.*

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