

Build Green Cities

Natural Solutions to Environmental Challenges in Urban Communities



Residents enjoy the benefits of an urban greenspace at Federal Hill Park in Baltimore, Maryland. © Matt Kane/TNC

Urban populations across the globe are growing rapidly. In the U.S. more than 80 percent of Americans now live in cities, a percentage that is projected to rise over the coming decade. This urban migration, combined with a changing climate, is accelerating environmental problems like polluted stormwater runoff, urban heat islands and lack of access to green space. If these problems are not addressed soon, then the resiliency and sustainability of our cities and their surrounding natural resources are at risk. So, what is the answer? We believe that nature can do a lot for our cities—and that our cities can do a lot for nature.

In Washington, D.C., we are working with community partners and landowners to implement natural solutions to stormwater runoff, the fastest growing source of pollution to our rivers and to the Chesapeake Bay. With a focus on using green infrastructure to retain and filter stormwater runoff, TNC—through a wholly owned subsidiary called District Stormwater—has become the largest voluntary supplier of Stormwater Retention Credits in the D.C.'s stormwater credit-trading market.

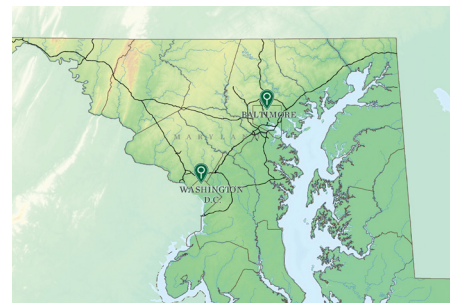
Thanks to a grant from the Baltimore-based France-Merrick Foundation, we are excited to be working in the city of Baltimore. With increasingly hotter temperatures, disruptive floods and more frequent storms, the effects of climate change are already impacting Baltimore. To address these challenges, we are taking an intentional and steady approach. By combining science, partnership-building, political advocacy, and on-the-ground project implementation, we aim to create lasting conservation impacts that will benefit Maryland's largest city and the Chesapeake Bay.

5 MILLION GALLONS of stormwater pollution are treated annually by TNC's green infrastructure projects in D.C.

500 URBAN TREES PLANTED by the MD/DC chapter.

130 STUDENTS TRAINED in political advocacy.

Where We Operate



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Our Solutions

We believe that nature can help our urban communities in many ways. From filtering stormwater runoff, to mitigating urban heat-islands, to the physical and mental benefits of nature, natural solutions need to be built into urban planning across the globe.

Deploy Green Infrastructure

After a detailed analysis of Washington, D.C.'s micro watersheds, we have a better understanding of the areas where green infrastructure can reduce stormwater flooding and pollution. We are prioritizing our stormwater retention projects by using this data, but with a deeper focus on neighborhoods struggling with legacy environmental issues resulting from our nation's history of racist and discriminatory urban planning practices. Thanks to the success of our stormwater credit-trading market work in the District, we have been working with the Illinois chapter to launch a similar initiative in Chicago called "StormStore."

Expand Tree Canopy

The value of trees in our cities is undeniable. They offer a host of benefits like filtering stormwater through their roots, reducing the urban heat island effect, serving as habitat for native species and providing quality of life benefits for people. That's why we've worked in collaboration with Casey Trees to plant more than 500 trees in the District at our first two stormwater project sites. We look forward to significantly expanding this work to new sites in both D.C. and Baltimore.

Cultivate Future Environmental Leaders

To create a lasting and positive impact on our planet, we must invest in youth as the leaders of tomorrow, which is why we've developed a unique Youth Advocacy Training program. The curriculum provides students with the tools needed to create their own strategic environmental advocacy campaigns. Since starting the training program, we have engaged 130 high schoolers, including groups from the National Aquarium, Rock Creek Conservancy and the Student Conservation Association.




Influence Decision Makers

TNC in Maryland and Washington, D.C. has a proven track record of advocating for policies that benefit both people and nature. As we expand into Baltimore, our initial focus will be to prioritize policies that make green infrastructure and nature-based stormwater solutions more achievable and widespread through smart environmental policies. Establishing local relationships and amplifying community voices will also be critical to this work given the long and painful history of systematic inequity, segregation and racism that continues to impact Baltimore today.

Your Support Makes a Difference

Thank you for your support of The Nature Conservancy. With your help, we are making a difference for both people and nature in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore.

The Nature Conservancy in Maryland/DC
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The green infrastructure project at Knollwood (pictured upper right) will prevent approximately 3 million gallons of stormwater runoff from entering nearby Rock Creek each year. © Aileen Craig/TNC

Project Profile

Rosamond Davis and Lydia Taylor (wife of former Army Chief of Staff General Maxwell Taylor) dreamed of building a facility to care for America's forgotten heroes—primarily, the widows and other relatives of U.S. Army Servicemen. In the 1960s, with public fundraising help from President Dwight D. Eisenhower and First Lady Mamie Eisenhower, the nation's first military retirement home was born. Originally named the Army Distaff Hall, the facility is now known as the Knollwood Life Plan Community and it is the location of our most recent stormwater retention project.

In the fall of 2020, we broke ground on a new green infrastructure installation at Knollwood. This installation will capture and filter approximately 90,000 gallons of stormwater runoff per rain event, preventing pollution from entering nearby Rock Creek. TNC is honored and humbled to be partnering with the Knollwood Life Plan Community to protect nature and improve water quality in Rock Creek, the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.

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