Community Watershed Stewardship Program

2011-2012 PROJECT

Our Happy Block



Project overview

The "Our Happy Block Coalition" is a group of neighbors near SE 82nd Avenue and Woodstock Street concerned about public safety and criminal activity. The group received a CWSP grant in 2011 for a project on the property of Calvary Lutheran Church. The project included planting trees and native plants, creating a mural, improving stormwater management, and closing a parking lot entrance/exit. The project used funds from CWSP and several other sources, and relied upon the work of dozens of volunteers from the

Community issues addressed by the project

Drivers were using the Calvary Lutheran Church parking lot as a shortcut between two streets, leading to a safety problem for neighbors. In addition, there was often drug dealing, graffiti, dumping and other criminal activity in the parking lot and surrounding area. The area lacked trees and vegetation. Neighbors did not know each other, and people felt unsafe walking in the area at night.

Project results

• Greater safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and children as a result of less traffic cutting through the neighborhood.



neighborhood and beyond.

370,000 gallons/year of stormwater naturally infiltrated via rain gardens

NEIGHBORHOOD:

Mt. Scott-Arleta (Southeast Portland)

WATERSHED:

Johnson Creek

COMMUNITY

OUTCOMES:

criminal activity

WATERSHED OUTCOMES:

Improved pedestrian

safety and decreased

FOR MORE INFORMATION: ourhappyblock. blogspot.com



Stormwater runoff can impact water quality in rivers and streams. Natural resources, like urban streams, forests, and wetlands manage stormwater naturally to protect water quality, public health, and the environment. Green infrastructure reduces flooding and erosion, provides cool, clean water to our rivers and streams, and adds wildlife habitat and urban green space for healthier watersheds.

in partnership with Portland State University

- Increased public safety as a result of less drug dealing and other criminal activity. In the first year of the project, calls to police from within 500 feet of the site dropped by 57%. Before the project, one neighbor was going to sell her house because she felt uneasy about her safety. After seeing the improvements in her neighborhood, she decided to stay and is now investing in energy efficiency improvements for her home.
- A more beautiful, vibrant neighborhood, including a colorful mural, street trees, native plant rain gardens, and sustainable stormwater management.
- A stronger and more connected community. The pastor of Calvary Lutheran said, "What's going on here reminds me of life in a small town where neighbors get to know each other by working together."

Community member profile

Stephanie has lived down the street from the Our Happy Block site for four years. She is a faithful volunteer who has helped with work parties and often stops by to pull weeds and gather trash. Stephanie recalls that the parking lot used to be a site for drug dealing and other criminal activity. However, the neighbors' efforts have made a dramatic difference. Before the project, "I wouldn't walk around here at night with my dog," Stephanie said. "Now I do. People walk the streets at night now. That didn't happen before." Stephanie is grateful for a newfound sense of community. "I see people at the store or walking around the neighborhood," she said. "We know each other because we worked together to make a real change. It's just a real happy thing!"

Other resources utilized

- Portland Development Commission: Lents area Community Livability Challenge grant
- East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District: Partners in Conservation grant; Small Projects and Community Events grant
- Depave: Volunteer labor to remove pavement from parking lot and plant new landscape
- Southeast Uplift: Graffiti Abatement grant (funded mural and lighting)
- Friends of Trees: Street trees
- TBBV design: Terah Beth is a neighbor who envisioned, designed, and coordinated the project, maintains the landscape, and maintains a blog: ourhappyblock.blogspot.com
- Calvary Lutheran Church: Funds for irrigation, volunteers
- Sacred Roots: Volunteers

The Community Watershed Stewardship Program (CWSP) offers grants of up to \$10,000 to help Portlanders improve their neighborhoods and communities, while also improving the health of our streams and rivers.

More information at www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/stewardship or 503-823-7917.



WATERSHED BENEFITS

The project removed 4,300 square feet of asphalt and replaced it with native plant rain gardens. These facilities now soak up 370,000 gallons of stormwater runoff each year from the parking lot, diverting it from the city's combined sewer system and naturally absorbing it into the ground.





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Stephanie Stevens Our Happy Block neighbor