

Rogers Park Goes Green: Saint Margaret Mary Church & School Helping to “Green” Rogers Park



Through this project, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) is testing the performance of green infrastructure, the use of natural landscape features to absorb water and create beauty. In Chicago's Rogers Park community, St. Margaret Mary Church and School at 2324 W. Chase Avenue is hosting the research. The Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are being constructed there are a bioswale in a parking lot, two raingardens in the lawn, and porous concrete pavement in another parking lot.

The Green Infrastructure research and demonstration project is a partnership with the City of Chicago to gather engineering data on the performance of stormwater best management practices (BMPs) that use the power of plants and surrounding soil to absorb and clean rainfall runoff. CNT is monitoring these features to demonstrate how much water green infrastructure can handle, and how such features can fit into attractive neighborhoods while solving local drainage problems. CNT will publish information and resources that result from the project to stimulate increased implementation of green infrastructure.

St. Margaret Mary Church was selected as the site for the work after the City scanned its 311 calling system for complaints about flooding of streets and private property. One of the neighborhoods that had made the most complaints was that around the church. While the soils in the area are sandy and thus able to readily absorb stormwater, the large amount of pavement and roof areas along with small diameter local sewers prevented water from being drained following heavy rainfall.

Students from St. Margaret Mary School joined the City's Green Corps, a City-sponsored community landscaping and job training program, in planting over 500 native grasses and wildflowers in the 18 by 51-foot bioswale. The bioswale was cut out of the center of the parking lot and is designed to receive runoff from the asphalt and soak it into the garden, thus relieving the burden on the sewer system for all but the most severe storm events. The 12 by 10-foot raingardens each absorb water from a roof downspout on the rectory building. Donated by Ozinga Brothers, two 15 by 15-foot porous pavement inserts will help drain a separate parking lot at Jarvis Avenue, to help reduce flooding in the church recreation center.

Participating students and community members can learn about how Green Infrastructure improves local water management, and other property owners can apply these lessons to begin to reduce polluted runoff and flooding problems around their homes. As the St. Margaret Mary gardens become special places that bring the natural environment to students, CNT will work with the community to site other demonstrations, to encourage property owners to use Green Infrastructure to solve neighborhood water management problems, and to create more beautiful places.

CNT Green Infrastructure Initiatives

Our goal is to make Green Infrastructure the preferred stormwater management option for municipalities, developers, communities, and individuals.



Removing concrete to prepare the bioswale site.



Students working with Green Corps members and community volunteers to plant native grasses and wildflowers.



A blessing from Father James Barrett, and support from the congregation, the school, and the community.

Contact: Bill Eyring, CNT, (773)269-4016

Principal Peggy Finnegan, St. MM, (773) 764-0641