

University Hills Green Street Project Hyattsville Environment Committee Review

The Hyattsville Environment Committee (HEC) was asked to respond to the University Hills Project Feasibility Report (Report). The Committee has reviewed the report and would like to offer the following:

1. HEC approached the Report from an environmental/sustainability point of view. Discussions about sidewalks, where they should be placed, the size of the sidewalks, traffic calming and pavement are outside of our purview. However, we would like to point out that a "walking community", where individuals can walk or ride their bikes instead of driving or without fear of being struck or endangered by motor vehicles is preferred.. To that point, we support sidewalks on at least one side of the street and, if at all possible, clearly marked bike lanes on the busiest of streets (Wells).
2. Trees - The Report does a very good job detailing expected tree loss. HEC strongly urges the City to adopt a policy that keeps as many trees as possible. The larger the trees, the more water is soaked up which could alleviate some of the storm water issues. It seems that the issues of storm water come in during larger rainstorms and that there is not as much of an issue during normal rain. In this case, the size of the tree won't make much of a difference in the amount of water running down the street. Still, as a designated Tree City, there should be efforts to save the existing tree canopy and to replace, immediately, any tree that is removed. That means additional funding should be included for replacement trees.
3. Stormwater Management - Section 6.0 of the Report details the Stormwater Management. HEC is in agreement with the Report on this issue.
 - a. Permeable sidewalks will alleviate some of the runoff. The question would be is the amount of run off prevented worth the additional cost. From an Environmental standpoint, the answer is of course yes as water seeping through the ground is always preferable to running down a street.
 - b. Bio-Swales - This is a great opportunity to use bio-swales. HEC recommends the City carefully review the bio-swales so that they can learn of their best use for installation in other parts of the City.
 - c. Stormwater Storage Under the Sidewalks - HEC supports the capturing of stormwater so that it does not run directly into the local waterways as it is one of the main causes of pollution in the water.
 - d. Rain Gardens - HEC did not see rain gardens mentioned in the report. Specifically, a rain garden similar to that across from the Magruder Park entrance would not only work to catch storm water, but if they jutted out into the street some they could also be a traffic calming device. In conclusion, HEC fully supports the creation of a "Green Street" in the City of Hyattsville and hopes that it's success will lead to additional streets within the City and surrounding communities to adopt the same design principles. It is unfortunate that Green Streets, or aspects of Stormwater management, were not fully utilized during the construction of the Arts District Hyattsville. The Report, while very well documented and designed was missing one key factor which was that of cost. As environmentalist, we would hope that no cost would be spared to create the "greenest" and most sustainable project possible. However, as Citizens of the City of Hyattsville, we also understand that there is a "real" cost to completing these projects during a time when income to the City is not increasing and there are other budget priorities. That being said, HEC feels that green

projects are investments in the future of not just the City of Hyattsville, but of the Planet as a whole and "going cheap" is usually not always the best option. This project would set a good example for our neighbors in the surrounding communities that we (the City) are stepping up and doing our part to solve the storm water problem because it is our responsibility to do what we can. We would hope that it would inspire communities both "up and down" stream to do the same.

An idea did come up for Wells Parkway which we would like to share. Rather than keep the road as it is, why not split the road in half all the way down to the Duck Pond? By doing this, the City could pave the road so that rain water runs to the middle of the road. The middle section of the road would include a large side walk made with permeable cement with the water retention tank below it.

On either side of the walk way there could be a rain garden that is fed by the runoff from the road.

There would be no reason to claim eminent domain over someones property, it would be really nice looking once the plants grew, it would offer safe access to pedestrians to walk to the Duck Pond and would accomplish most of the goals for that stretch of road without have to do construction on both sides.

Lastly, HEC feels very strongly that this work be very well documented, in writing, photos and videos and that a page on the Hyattsville.com website be dedicated to the work involved as well as the final outcome. By doing this, the City will draw attention from other communities nearby as well as around the world as many have the same issues.