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News Release

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Share! Durham's Rain Catchers project wins EPA award; <http://bit.ly/1fmhSkA>

Durham Awarded EPA Rain Catcher Award

DURHAM, N.C. – The City of Durham's [Rain Catchers project](#) has received recognition from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for an innovative partnership with residents to reduce stormwater runoff in the South Ellerbe Creek watershed.

The EPA recognized the [City of Durham Public Works Department](#) with the regional 2015 EPA Rain Catcher Award in the Municipal Category. The [EPA Region 4 Rain Catcher Award](#) recognizes excellence in the implementation of stormwater green infrastructure practices.

The Rain Catchers project, funded by a Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant, was implemented by the City's Public Works Department to install small, residential stormwater retrofits, or rain catchers. The project clustered over 250 rain catchers including rain gardens, cisterns, trees, and downspout disconnections in the headwaters for South Ellerbe Creek. Targeted neighborhoods in this watershed included Old West Durham, Walltown, Trinity Heights, and Trinity Park.

The project goal was to reduce pollutants and storm surge by building small-scale projects on private property. Out of 880 residents contacted for participation in the pilot project, 156 sites were ranked for rain gardens, cisterns, and tree suitability. Project participants were then later surveyed to track their expectations, their understanding of the project, and whether they were properly maintaining the installations.

According to Public Education Coordinator Laura Webb Smith with the City's Public Works Department Stormwater and GIS Services Division, the pilot project did more than put projects in the ground. It involved the community and started to measure the impact on the creek.

“Durham residents demonstrated how slowing down stormwater in their own yards helps the neighborhood creeks, and eventually our drinking water supplies,” Smith said. “The participants were also excited to be a part of a larger project to study the effect on the creek.”

The project also included special studies led by N.C. State University and the City’s Public Works Department. The Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association also partnered to offer rain garden and rainwater harvesting workshops.

According to Smith, the Rain Catchers homeowners have agreed to maintain their rain gardens, cisterns, and trees for at least 10 years. Meanwhile, the City will continue to monitor how the project benefits the South Ellerbe Creek watershed.

To learn more about the [Rain Catchers project](#), contact Smith at (919) 560-4326, ext. 30235 or by [email](#).

About the Public Works Department Stormwater and GIS Services Division

The [Stormwater](#) and [GIS Services](#) Division with the City of Durham’s [Public Works Department](#) is guided by the City’s [Strategic Plan](#) goals of stewardship of the City’s physical assets and well-managed city. Activities include storm drainage design and plans review; inspecting and maintaining City-owned drainage systems; enforcing stormwater ordinances and regulations; education and outreach; stream monitoring, restoration, and watershed master planning; maintaining multiple layers of the City’s geographic information; and stormwater billing. To learn more, visit the [Web page](#), like on [Facebook](#), and follow on [Twitter](#).

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