

THE CROSSINGS OF ANN ARBOR SUMMARY FACTSHEET FOR 2021 RAIN GARDEN PROJECT

Background

The Crossings of Ann Arbor is a 64-unit condominium complex on the north side of Ann Arbor. Members of the community began a number of environmental initiatives when new resident owners joined the board of directors in 2017. Our first endeavor was to address the use of herbicides and pesticides on our property, specifically with respect to landscaping and snow removal. We were successful in switching to products that are significantly less toxic. When the City of Ann Arbor expanded curbside compost pick-up to include multi-family dwellings, we acquired compost carts and began to educate more of our members about composting.

In the spring of 2019, we began to discuss the possibility of planting rain gardens on our three-acre property. We contacted Catie Wytychak, the Water Quality Specialist at the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission. Catie encouraged us to apply for membership in Washtenaw County's Community Partners for Clean Streams (CPCS) and Waste Knot programs. We were delighted to be admitted to both of those programs. In 2020, with Catie's help, we applied for a grant to build a rain garden and were awarded that grant. The first garden was planted in the fall of 2020.

Project Description

In the fall of 2020, we also identified a second site on association property which was well-situated for a rain garden. Our landscaping company, Greenview Services, had installed the first rain garden and we asked them to develop a proposal and estimate for the second site. That estimate (dated 12/26/2020) and a sketch of the proposed garden (dated 2/1/2021) are attached to this Summary. Based on this estimate and proposal, we applied for a second grant and were very pleased when that grant was awarded.

The site of this year's garden is a low-lying area on the property immediately in front of one of our nine buildings. Rain water and snow melt routinely pooled on and around the patios of two units in that building. The source of that water is runoff from the nearby parking lot, and therefore carries toxics from motor oil, etc. Runoff to this area also comes from an adjacent building on a slightly elevated part of the property.

Installation of 2021 Rain Garden Project

Installation of the garden was initially planned for the spring but, due to unavailability of the proposed plants, that was delayed until late summer. The garden was installed in one day, on September 10, 2021. The cost of the installation was consistent with the original estimate provided by Greenview Services. A crew of three workers completed the project, supervised by Greenview owners Jeff and Tammy Taylor. I am including the invoice with this Summary, as well as four photographs taken some weeks later.

Future Plans

We learned a painful lesson regarding our first rain garden during the summer of 2021. It had been our understanding that Greenview Services, who are on our property at least once a week from April through October, would monitor and maintain the rain garden installed in 2020. There was some significant miscommunication regarding maintenance and, during a particularly dry period, many of the plants in that first rain garden died. On examination of the garden, Catie Wytychak also helped us to determine that some of those plants had not been correctly installed. They were replaced (at no charge to the Crossings) at the same time as installation of the second rain garden. It also became clear that members of the Crossings community needed to be more actively involved in making sure the gardens are properly watered and maintained.

As a result, Judy Nikolai, the chair of the Crossings Environmental Committee, made a commitment to take the Master Rain Gardener Class which is offered online through the Washtenaw County Water Resources Office. Although she has not yet completed that class, Judy is committed to doing so during the winter months, so that she will be better able to keep our rain gardens healthy in the year ahead. She will also endeavor to get other community members involved in this effort.