Eastside Community Network

ECN has been spearheading community development on Detroit's Lower Eastside for over 30 years.

We create multi-sector partnerships to support work in areas such as

- youth development
- small businesses and entrepreneurship
- blight reduction
- green infrastructure
- housing stabilization
- resident peer-engagement
- commercial redevelopment
Master Rain Gardner Minigrant Project Goals

• Educate local residents on the water system and green infrastructure
• Address storm water management and urban flooding
• Provide resources for the installation of rain gardens
• Promote innovative repurposing of vacant green space
• Help residents navigate new drainage fee system and potentially qualify for proposed water bill credits
Project Elements

- Free Master Rain Gardener course taught by landscape architect from InSite Design
- Students planned projects, presented to blight advisory committee for approval
- Awarded minigrants, two $1500 (residential) and two $3,000 (community group)
- Facilitated construction and connection to resources
- Some gardeners decided to host community events at the sites for education

Examples:

Before 

After

“Rain Garden Tea Party”
Challenges

• Aesthetics - people associate native plants with weeds and blight

• Low interest at the beginning due to lack of knowledge of the purpose and benefits of GI - Had to extend our target zone due to low turnout

• Water department frequently changing new drainage fee structure

• Finding experienced rain garden installers in Detroit is difficult

• Local politics and some resistance against “greening” in the area

Past project where a resident expressed disapproval by planting plastic roses

A tree stand that was deliberately cut down, likely due to local politics around “greening”
Workshop Goals

• Learn about workforce development strategies to increase the available talent for green infrastructure projects

• Discover ways to help foster collaboration with the government sector and promote policies supportive of green infrastructure development

• Explore how other teams have obtained youth participation and enthusiasm