

Montgomery County Storm Drain Art Program Proposal

Proposal by the Montgomery County Water Quality Advisory Group to the Department of Environmental Protection

Summary: Residents are not always aware that storm drains empty directly to local rivers and streams. Although there are a variety of methods to spread awareness, community storm drain art programs have been rapidly spreading across the country over the past few years. These programs aim to spread awareness about stormwater issues while engaging the local community and protecting water quality. In a typical program, murals with a water quality message or theme are painted on storm drains. The project meets several concurrent goals of the County and has the potential to educate a significant number of residents through direct and indirect participation in the program. Other examples of storm drain art programs provide a variety of potential options for implementation, many of which involve only limited funding requirements. Furthermore, there are several avenues through which local watershed groups, schools, and art centers can be leveraged to improve the program. This Proposal sketches out several options for a storm drain art program in Montgomery County.

There are several factors to consider while assessing the options presented below. First, there are many potential partnership opportunities available. Partners should help optimize the project by taking some of the planning and implementation burden. However, the degree of control, involvement, and hours provisioned is up to the County. Second, the choice of mural will impact the level and target of the outreach. The third central factor is the location of the murals, which could be independent of the type of program selected, as there are many options throughout the County. Finally, the funding of the materials may vary over the choices. In other storm drain art programs, groups have been able to get paints donated by outside organizations (for example, in the Missouri program paints were donated by Sherwin Williams).

The options presented below are certainly not exhaustive, and it may be easy to combine factors from each into a hybrid program. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to use one of them as a pilot, in order to gauge the potential to expand to others.

OPTION 1: LOCAL ARTISTS AND ART GALLERIES

Have local artists volunteer to paint the murals, with engagement by local art centers, such as the Strathmore. For instance, Strathmore (or a similar local organization) would nominate several artists to paint the murals. The artists would submit a design to the County to be approved. Many artists have a significant social media presence, which could help spread awareness of the project. The murals could be unveiled as part of a local arts or crafts festival, like the Sugarloaf Crafts Festival in Gaithersburg. It may also be beneficial to have the artists paint storm drains “live” at a festival or planned event. Furthermore, pictures of the murals could be featured prominently in a high traffic public area, such as the Rockville Library.

Similar example program: <http://www.itsalldowntown.com/2013/01/storm-drain-revel-2013/>
<http://www.ci.superior.wi.us/index.aspx?NID=722>

Pros:

- Artists can be active in outreach to a heterogeneous audience and visibility could be increased through making an event of the mural production and/or the unveiling of the mural
- Artist involvement could result in high quality murals
- Could have the public vote on submitted designs through a poll on facebook or other form of social media. This could significantly increase its visibility.
- This is the most common type of program in other areas, and appears to work well in many cities.

Cons:

- The County may have to exercise more oversight on approving the designs

OPTION 2: IMPLEMENT THROUGH MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Local schools would assume a large role in this option, as a teacher would incorporate the storm drain art mural into their class activities. The class would design and paint the mural on a nearby (or school) storm drain. This option would be able to attract immediate community involvement as parents of the students in the school get involved and spread the word. Furthermore, many schools have newsletters that they distribute to parents, which could quickly spread the word about the project.

Example: Prince George's County had local artists design murals, which were then painted by elementary schoolers:

<http://www.gazette.net/article/20130409/NEWS/130409281/1123/watershed-society-art-project-carries-an-environmental-message&template=gazette>

Pros:

- Potential for broad outreach and education of County youth
- Target audience may not be knowledgeable about water quality issues
- Having students participate should increase to probability of attracting sponsors (to donate paint supplies).
 - o Particularly if any parents are involved in the home improvement business.

Cons:

- Coordination with the school system may involve several bureaucratic hurdles
- Identifying the proper schools for the first projects.

OPTION 3: INVOLVE LOCAL WATERSHED GROUPS

There are several active watershed groups in the County that could be involved in the storm drain program. These groups regularly host water quality-related events, which could incorporate the mural for additional outreach. To increase participation and enthusiasm, it could be staged as a competition between the various watershed groups, with the County selecting a winner.

Pros:

- The watershed groups already have an established network of volunteers who could quickly spread the word
- This activity could be incorporated with other highly-visible events that the watershed groups already hold.

Cons:

- The outreach might be directed at a population that is already knowledgeable about the subject
- This would be an original format, so there would not be other examples to draw from. At the same time, it might bring recognition to the County for a pioneering effort.

Notes on materials, location, and other considerations

Materials:

- It should be possible to find local paint or home improvement stores willing to sponsor the project by donating paints and/or supplies (such as brushes).
 - o Potential sponsors:
 - The Strathmore, or some of their donors.
 - Glenstone private art gallery in Potomac: <http://www.glenstone.org/>
 -
- Most paint stores sell low VOC and low toxic paints. It is possible to get environmentally-friendlier paints. For example: <http://www.afmsafecoat.com/>
- Most other programs use acrylic-based paints for the murals.
- Depending on the initial condition of the storm drain, they could be power washed before being painted.
- “Seal-Krete Clear Coat” is a product that is sprayed onto the murals after they are done to extend their lives.
- NOTE: There should not be any maintenance costs once the murals are done. They will gradually fade over time after accomplishing their outreach purpose. Maintenance of the art is not necessary.

Location:

- Option 1: Pick several storm drains throughout the county with high foot traffic – downtown areas
- Option 2: Highlight a particular stream, creek, or river. Have all murals done on storm drains that discharge to that waterbody. Could make artists incorporate the waterbody name into the art.
- Option 3: If the public school option is chosen, use a storm drain near that school.

Press and Additional Visibility

- The County could issue press releases about the project.
- High resolution photographs of the murals could be taken, to be displayed in visible County areas, such as libraries, parks, or government offices.
- Create a video to get additional social media presence. Reno was extremely successful in attracting attention with a youtube video: <http://youtu.be/-obqC450nc8>

APPENDIX

EXAMPLES OF OTHER US STORM DRAIN ART PROJECTS:

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

- <http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/PublicWorks/StormWater/documents/StormDrainArtGuide.pdf>
- <http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/PublicWorks/StormWater/documents/08-10-2012StormWaterEducationArtProject.pdf>
- 2013 Update: <http://www.itsalldowntown.com/2013/01/storm-drain-revel-2013/>
- Several local artists volunteered to paint murals on local storm drains. Sherwin Williams donated materials and supplies to the artists.
- Launched as part of a local festival.
- This was one of the original art programs that attracted attention nationally.
- The directions to artists reveal their approach:
 - o “The storm drains will be power washed before the project begins. The artist will be responsible for picking up orange cones from the City which they will be required to use during painting. The artist will also be given Seal-Krete Clear Coat to put on before and after the painting is done. Acrylic paints in basic colors will also be provided. On the application you will see deadlines for bio submittal and art completion. These deadlines are critical to the success of the project. Once the storm drain murals are completed, professional photos of each drain will be taken and mounted. In 2012 these photos, along with the artist’s mounted bio, were displayed at May’s First Friday Artwalk and Saturday and Sunday at Artsfest on Walnut Street.”



STORM DRAIN ARTIST: Lisa Bartlett



South Ninth and Elm streets



- Application for artists: <http://www.itsalldowntown.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/SDR-Artist-Application-2013.pdf>

BLUE WATER BALTIMORE’S STENCIL SHARE PROGRAM AND STORMWATER ART PROGRAM

<http://www.bluewaterbaltimore.org/stencilshare/>

- Send application to city to be able to use a stencil on a storm drain painting project near you.
- Partially funded by charitable giving: https://givecorps.com/en/baltimore/projects/321-blue-water-baltimore-paint-baltimore-blue?utm_source=Blue+Water+Baltimore&utm_campaign=8264853085-GiveCorpsStencil3&utm_medium=email



- Also have a storm drain art program, with more freedom in the designs.
 - o <http://www.flickr.com/photos/83905623@N08/sets/72157630987457110/>

RENO, NEVADA'S PUBLIC ART STORMWATER PROGRAM:

<http://www.reno.gov/index.aspx?page=366>

<http://renoistartown.com/2013/07/09/city-fights-pollution-with-public-art/>

- A particular artist was chosen to paint a few art projects around storm drains



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY AND THE ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY

- <http://www.gazette.net/article/20130409/NEWS/130409281/1123/watershed-society-art-project-carries-an-environmental-message&template=gazette>
- Grant from the Chesapeake Bay trust used to fund project. Local artists solicited to design paintings on 10 storm drains. Students from elementary schools do the actual painting.



PHILADELPHIA STORM DRAIN MARKING PROGRAM

- <http://www.delawareestuary.org/storm-drain-marking-program?gclid=CMan8dTYproCFYSd4AodMhgAIA>
- Medallions similar to current Montgomery County Program. Residents send a request to the county, who send the supplies

BOWIE MARYLAND

- <http://www.cityofbowie.org/DocumentCenter/View/1203>
- <http://www.cityofbowie.org/DocumentCenter/View/1291>
- Artists apply to the County with a design for the storm drain. The county selects winners. Winning designs will be painted on storm drains by an art student from Bowie State University using temporary paint.
- Ages 8 and up can enter
- Cash prizes (under \$100) provided to winners of the contest



MICHIGAN CITY

- <http://thenewsdispach.com/articles/2013/08/10/news/local/doc5205b3c385ff8092157439.txt>
- This project was created in a partnership between Nicole Messacar, education coordinator for the La Porte County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Janet Bloch, education director for the Lubeznik Center for the Arts, as a way to teach students about art and the environment.

- Once the artworks were completed, large, foil versions were applied to the brick, asphalt and cement surrounding the drains. According to the County, the applications will last approximately three years.
- The MS4 program funds supported the project.



BENTONVILLE, FAYETTEVILLE, ROGERS AND SPRINGDALE, ARKANSAS STORM DRAIN PAINTING PROGRAM

- <http://www.fayettevilleflyer.com/2012/04/12/storm-drain-art-project-underway-in-fayetteville/>
- Local artists were selected by the County to do the artwork. The artists complete an application package and include their proposed design. Application found here: <http://nwaupstreamart.wikifoundry.com/page/How+to+Submit+Your+Design>
- The murals will be professionally photographed and mounted for inclusion in local galleries and receptions, including an exhibit in the Walton Arts Center's upcoming Artosphere festival.



SIDEWALK CHALK STORM DRAIN ART PROJECT

- <http://www.hrwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Stormdrain-Art-Contest.pdf>
- Project in Ann Arbor, MI, to raise awareness about stormwater issues.
- Expansive chalk designs painted by local artists.
- Art washes away, but they say that it still makes a lasting impression.

NEWPORT, OREGON STORM DRAIN ART

- <http://aquarium.org/posts/833819882-Aquarium-Youth-Volunteers-Bring-Storm-Drain-Art-To-Newport>

Oregon Coast Aquarium youth volunteers partnered with the Surfrider Foundation to create a painting of a whale around a storm drain at the Nye Beach Turnaround in Newport.

ART ON STORM DRAIN MANHOLE COVERS IN SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

- http://www.txstate.edu/news/news_releases/news_archive/2013/September-2013/PublicArt090613.html
- The city and a local college coordinated a contest to design art for manhole covers.

