

Nuisance to Community Asset - Neal Bennett

Broad Ripple Floods... Who Knew?

If this winter weather of rain, snow and sleet is any indication of what we can expect this spring, then I believe it is safe to say that we can expect flooded streets from time to time. It is one of the unsatisfactory aspects of living in Broad Ripple, along with potholes I might add. It is the desire of Green Broad Ripple to do something about this issue. How can we solve a historical problem like flooding in Broad Ripple? And the answer, a new way of thinking. A paradigm shift, if you will. Current accepted wisdom is to collect stormwater from streets, roofs, and parking lots and place it into stormwater drains strategically placed along city streets, which in turn outfall into the White River. This is an acceptable method, if the



rainfall or snowmelt does not exceed the capacity of these drains to do just that, drain. However, we know they often backup and flood our streets. This is due to an overabundance of runoff water that is a greater volume than the drainage infrastructure that is in place. One solution, replace the existing stormwater drains with super-huge, too big for reality pipes. As one drainage engineer told me, "Stormwater is a nuisance; my job is to get rid of it." This method could work, but at an astronomical cost. My reply to that is, "Why view any water as a nuisance, isn't it a resource?" Stormwater is a precious resource actually, one that we have neglected for too long. Green Broad Ripple

infrastructure projects include green solutions for this flooding issue. We construct raingardens and other stormwater infiltration methods to put this water back into the ground, so that it may be filtered by natural processes, recharge groundwater aquifers, or slowly percolate through the ground and recharge the river, greatly reducing the low water periods throughout the year. Three cheers for pontooning!!! By infiltrating this water, we can alleviate the volume that enters our storm drains, thus reducing the frequency and duration of flooding in the streets. All this is accomplished along with the beautification of our neighborhoods by installing native plants and providing song bird and butterfly habitat to boot. Now that sounds like a pretty neat solution to me.

If you would like to see the first raingarden in Broad Ripple, walk down the alley behind Hair @ 6310, College Avenue. Then, if you have the mind, stop in and get your hair trimmed. Oh, the sustainability of it all.

Photo: Water in Alley – Cortellini