



NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD CASE STUDY

City of Rome's Canopy Restoration Project – *Honored an inspiring, city-wide approach to stormwater management and city revitalization.*

SUMMARY

The City of Rome's Canopy Restoration Project was honored in 2012 because it inspired a new, city-wide approach to stormwater management that spurred adaptive reuse of vacant buildings, an increase in property values, pollution reduction and reinvestment in Rome's urban core. It was among the first green infrastructure projects to use a combination of a U.S.-made porous pavement and a locally developed sub-soil.

BENEFITS

After the scientific and environmental benefits of a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy became clear, the city planted 450 new trees in targeted low-to-moderate-income neighborhoods with high housing and population densities. When fully mature, the new trees are expected to capture approximately 695,000 gallons of rainwater, remove 26,500 tons of carbon dioxide and 430 pounds of air pollutants, and save homeowners and businesses an annual \$31,240 in energy costs.

Green infrastructure elements were constructed using a locally developed sub-surface material and an American-manufactured porous pavement product made from recycled tires. The project has significantly decreased stormwater runoff which, in turn, has decreased the amount of pollution entering the water stream. This project serves as an urban revitalization and green infrastructure model.

KEY METRICS

- 450 trees planted
- 695,000 gallons of rainwater captured annually
- 26,500 tons of CO₂ removed annually
- \$31,240 in energy costs
- 430 pounds of air pollutants reduced annually

ABOUT CITY OF ROME

- 34,950 population
- Located in Oneida County
- Community and Economic Development Department uses grants to reduce local costs and maximize potential

NYS Environmental Excellence Award: Annual recognition of outstanding innovative and sustainable projects or programs and unique partnerships that are improving and protecting New York State's environmental resources and contributing to a stronger economy

A MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

- Partnerships were formed between the public and private sectors
- Created Smart Growth model for small-to-mid-sized municipalities
- Downtown hardscapes have been improved with durable, easily maintained materials

HIGHLIGHTS

This new, community-wide approach to stormwater management directly contributes to the elimination of blight, increased property values, pollution reduction, neighborhood beautification, and reinvestment in Rome's urban core. The project flourished as partnerships were formed between the public and private sectors, spanning underserved commercial and residential neighborhoods, and catalyzing the adaptive reuse of vacant and blighted structures downtown. The project serves as a Smart Growth model for small-to-mid-sized municipalities across the state to follow when tackling blight, decay, and overburdened infrastructure.

Green infrastructure continues to be a preferred solution to the challenges of maintaining a safe and vibrant downtown in Rome so businesses and residents can capture the full benefits of trees and green spaces. With sufficient moisture, rooting volume and management of stormwater, organisms thrived and produced a lush canopy. The health of the affected trees dramatically improved after the first growing season and has continued each year since. Downtown sidewalks and hardscapes have been improved with durable, easily maintained materials that facilitate pedestrian and vehicle travel without negatively impacting trees and green spaces.

FUNDING

The City of Rome leveraged resources from multiple state, federal, and private sources, including a \$250,000 NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation GIGP Grant, a \$25,000 City of Rome Community Development Block Grant, a \$10,000 NYSDEC Urban and Community Forestry Grant, and a \$10,500 National Grid 100,000 Trees and Growing Grant. These funds covered the \$295,480 cost of the project.