Mill River Park, Taunton

Who: The City of Taunton, MA Gateway Park Initiative, Taunton River Steering Committee, Horsley Witten Group

What: The City of Taunton worked with state, regional, local, and non-profit partners (Taunton River Steering Committee, facilitated by Bridgewater State College) to repurpose a former police auto impoundment area, located in a corner of a paved municipal parking lot below and behind Taunton City Hall and the Taunton Police Station. This area of the lot sloped toward the river, contained broken and degraded pavement, was a sediment collection point for the parking lot, and was surrounded by invasive plants and vegetation. The auto impoundment area was also a source of stormwater loading to the adjacent Mill River, resulting in water quality and habitat degradation. The Mill River flows directly into the federally designated Wild & Scenic Taunton River. This source of river pollution was transformed into a public park with green infrastructure based stormwater treatment features, improved parking, lighting, and transportation safety features, and, educational signage explaining the features of the park.

When: The park construction was completed in 2011.

Where: Allens Avenue, off of Spring Street, behind the Taunton City Hall and Taunton Police Station.

Why: The site was selected as a potential demonstration project as part of the second phase of the Taunton River Watershed Study (undertaken by the Horsley Witten Group on behalf of the above-mentioned Steering Committee). The site was in need of a way of managing and treating stormwater runoff from the upgradient parking lot, enhancement of the vegetative buffer between the parking lot and the river, and an invasive species management plan.

How: The $1.24 million cost of the park was paid for entirely by grants, nearly 80% of which came from the state's Gateway Park Initiative, and the other 20% from the federal Community Development Block Grant Program.

Benefits: The social, economic, and environmental benefits of the Mill River Park project include:

- Mitigation of a source of chronic stormwater pollution to the Mill River, a major tributary of the Wild & Scenic Taunton River, and located in an MS4 area
- The repurposing of a blighted area and source of pollution into an accessible public park in an Environmental Justice area, immediately adjacent to the downtown and center of City government
- Removal of invasive plant species, invasive species management plan, and restoration of the riverbank resource area
- Improved fisheries and wildlife habitat and connectivity
- Reduced risk of localized flooding due to unabated stormwater flow