

The Transformation Of The Metropolitan Branch Trail

For the 18th Annual Community Improvement Day on October 2, 2010, DCBIA members transformed a portion of the newly opened Metropolitan Branch Trail just north of the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station into an Urban Arboretum and a Teaching Garden for the community and schools nearby. Interwoven throughout the arboretum and garden is a newly created soft walking path that allows one to interact with the hillside and thousands of new plantings. Various retaining walls were created out of window wells and corrugated metal panels to retain the hillside for the path and to create terraces where students may sit and the community can enjoy.



An extensive planting plan covering the entire length of the path was created and designed by **Sharon Bradley of Bradley Site Design, Inc.** She integrated DDOT's request regarding edible plants and also corresponded with Casey Trees to help integrate future trees to be donated into the landscape plan. Sharon worked with **Meg Herndon of Merrifield Garden Center** to locate the planting materials, and between the two of them, placed on site every plant that was ultimately planted, ensuring that the original design intent was met.

Preparation for the work to be performed on the event day began three weeks prior to October 2. **Anton Markin of Cunningham Architects and Don Ramsey of Clark Construction Group** led the efforts to establish grades, locate the path, and locate the retaining walls. With all of this completed over a weekend and a series of subsequent follow up visits the following week, the site was turned over to **Chiaromonte Construction Company** who donated the labor and equipment to provide all of the mass grading for the path and the excavation for the retaining walls.

Because the plan for the work included such a large quantity of planting materials, as well as over 36,000 pounds of Sakrete and nearly 1,000 linear feet of retaining structure, it was obvious that the logistics

of delivering such a large amount of materials could not feasibly be done in one day. As we struggled with how to receive and safely store the material that would be delivered two days prior to the event, **Leslie Mazzocco and Kim Clark of Vanguard Realty Group** stepped in and helped locate a nearby, secure storage area. With deliveries occurring over an 18 hour period stretching over two days, there was much to do in addition to simply opening a door

The Met Branch Trail is an 8-mile on and off street trail that runs from Union Station in the District of Columbia to Silver Spring in Maryland. A section of the trail in the Brookland and Edgewood neighborhoods of the District was completed by DDOT this past spring. In our search for an appropriate site for this year's Community Improvement Day, DDOT suggested we consider a portion of the completed section of the trail.

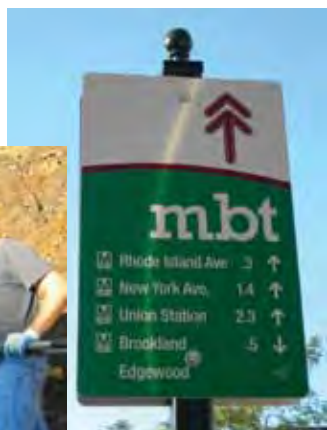
The scope of work covered a stretch of the Met Branch Trail from the Franklin Street Bridge at the north end to the Rhode Island Avenue Shopping center at the south end. The majority of the work was performed on a rugged hillside to the west of the trail, including major landscaping. A gabion was installed to the east of the trail. DDOT requested that we include plenty of edible plants, seating for children and seniors, and open grassy areas to stretch



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and signing for deliveries. Considering the time it took to receive deliveries, without storing them strategically, getting materials out to the workers on October 2 would have been impossible. The complexity of this task, along with the length of the area that was being affected on the work day, required a team captain who was responsible for nothing but site logistics. **Byron Kassing and Inna Goryuk of Monarc Construction** gladly accepted this task and performed beyond expectations. In addition to providing labor to receive and properly stage the materials, Monarc Construction supplied many trucks to transport the material so that the other captains were able to make so much happen in their respective areas.

Stretching over a 1,800 linear foot site, the design and construction was originally broken into five zones, which ultimately became four. DDOT's future plans are to have a pedestrian bridge for commuters to cross over the CSX tracks to reach the Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station. **Jose Benitez of RTKL Associates** designed a gabion (a square cage tower filled with rocks and soil and strawberry vines and a large rain collector at the top) to be located near the entrance of the path leading to the proposed pedestrian bridge. The gabion fell within Zone 1, which ultimately became meshed with Zone 2, under the design leadership of **Jenn Eason and Mark Baughman with SKB Architecture & Design and Lauren Frank of Hickok Cole Architects**. The construction captain for this area was Clark Construction Group, who oversaw the purchase and installation of the gabion structure on October 1. The weight of the structure required that the majority of it be erected using a boom lift, and the safety of doing that at the entry to the trail with nearly 500 volunteers walking by throughout the day, made it necessary to install prior to the day of the event. **Tripp Bailey with Clark Construction** oversaw this effort along with **Don Ramsey. Don and Tim Kamas, also of with Clark,** oversaw the work in Zone 1 and Zone 2 on the day of the event.



The design for Zone 3 was performed by **Heather Daley, Anton Markin, and Michael Day of Cunningham Quill Architects** and included extensive grade transitions and retention structures as the path explored

the hillside the most within this zone. **Gary Ball and Mike O'Connor of Turner Construction Company** oversaw the work in Zone 3. The design for Zone 4 was performed by **Michael Norton of Norton Land Design**. This area included the most retention structure as it houses the teaching terraces. **Steve Hawryluk and Ridge Kelley of James G. Davis Construction Company** led the construction effort, and **Jefferson Millwork & Design** installed protective caps on the corrugated metal panels in seating within specific window wells. Zone 3 and Zone 4 were most adversely affected by the torrential rains leading up to the event (two days prior), and their work installing



foundations in wet conditions, not to mention reclaiming trenches that had been filled with muck, was much more than originally anticipated. In spite of these hurdles, all of the retention structures were put in place, and the path and teaching terraces are now available for use by the community and area schools. Although Zone 3 and Zone 4 were initially designed independent of one another, Norton Land Design and Cunningham Quill Architects worked closely with their contractor captains to resolve constructability issues of the retention structure, and incorporated each others' design components into their areas to allow for a cohesive overall design. The idea to use corrugated metal panels and window wells as retention structures came late in the design from Norton Land Design and Cunningham Quill Architects, but the issue of creatively retaining soils was one that was debated at the very first design charrette.

Zone 5 was designed by **Michael Hartman and Anne Robinson of DBI Architects**. The zone features a 30 foot tall trellis structure at the north end of the trail, welcoming, or bidding farewell, to those travelling the path. Extensive planting and the longest stretch of path were in this zone, the construction of which was led by **Robert Stewart and Jeff Paradise of HIT Contracting**. Like the gabion in Zone 1, the size of the trellis structure required installation on October 1, which was overseen by Jeff Paradise.

These design and general contractor captains oversaw the work of the almost 500 volunteers that showed up on the day of the event ready and willing to work. Representing over fifty DCBIA member companies and joined by members of the community, their efforts ensured the event's success and the completion of the scope of work. Volunteers were treated to a delicious barbecue lunch organized, coordinated, and served by **Alisa Lange and the Design Products team**. For twelve years, Design Products has worked hard to ensure that volunteers are rewarded with an enjoyable and tasty meal. In the middle of a construction site, they manage to create the ambience of an outdoor fair.

We would also like to thank this year's **Corporate Sponsors**, whose strong commitment to community service and improving the District ensure we have the funds crucial for purchasing materials and supplies. **Hines** deserves special recognition, as this year's event marks their 10th year as Corporate Sponsor. Hines is joined by **Archstone** (4th year as Corporate Sponsor) and **Terra Nova Title & Settlement Services** (1st year as Corporate Sponsor and a high level sponsor for many years). With Hines, Archstone, and Terra Nova Title & Settlement Services leading the way, Fundraising Co-Chairs **Steve Mutty of Booz Allen Hamilton and Kate Griffin of Jones Lang LaSalle** were able to secure additional supporters – see this issue of Pipeline for the entire list!

The lasting aesthetics of the transformation of the Met Branch Trail will be enjoyed by the community for many years to come — thanks to dedicated DCBIA members. Thanks everyone for your hard work tremendous support! ▲

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