

# Coming Soon to Ward 5: Restoration and Enhancement of the Metropolitan Branch Trail

Thanks to the generous support of its membership and Lead Corporate Sponsors Hines, Archstone, and Terra Nova Title & Settlement Services, DCBIA's annual Community Improvement Day continues to be a model of how to bring expertise and talent to bear on a place and then transform it. Last year's event, the extension of the bicycle and pedestrian path connecting historic forts east of the Anacostia, involved several public agencies – DC Parks and Recreation, DDOT and the National Park Service. That project was our first that involved public trails and it was so incredibly successful, we decided to do more this year.

On October 2, DCBIA will transform the Rhode Island Avenue section of the Metro Branch Trail – a barren stretch of land along the Metro and Railroad tracks – into an urban arboretum for the neighborhood and a colorful gateway for commuters. Co-Chairs for this year's event are Derek Mason, Architectural Designer, and Kevin Rogge, Harvey-Cleary. Derek was instrumental in resolving many complex issues last year, and Kevin is energetic, creative and resourceful. Together, they carry on the tradition of outstanding leadership that has been the hallmark of DCBIA's Community Improvement Day for the past 17 years.

The site is a few yards north of the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station. DDOT has recently extended the Metro Branch Trail paving and lighting, but the landscape is in poor condition. Neighbors could benefit greatly from the kind of special work DCBIA does. It is a remarkable community. There is an exciting local arts scene and the retaining walls, bridge supports and other local surfaces in the immediate vicinity – once blighted — are now covered with colorful murals from various local artists.

The stretch of land we will be working on is bordered by the rail tracks on one side and several charter schools housed in large warehouses on the other side. When the Community Services Committee team sat down to focus on ideas for the site, it was clear that the community was creating its own versions of the institutions that bind us together – the charter schools, the outdoor art museum. Wouldn't it be nice, the team thought, if we could make a museum of nature as a foil to the harsh railroad tracks? From that simple idea, an elaborate design developed with a series of green spaces tied together by a winding green path running parallel to the asphalt track. There will be a teaching area for the local schools where they can plant their own vegetables, hold an outdoor class on a terraced landscape, eat fruits and berries from an orchard, or play on a

grassy flatland (a rare feature in this neighborhood). Of course there will be rest stops for joggers and cyclists who can take in fantastic views of the capitol and the smells of aromatic plantings.

Every year Community Improvement Day is noteworthy because of the many leaders that stand up and contribute in so many ways. In addition to Derek and Kevin, the Committee benefits greatly from Michael Norton of Norton Land Design and Sharon Bradley of Bradley Land Design, who have worked together to develop an exciting landscape plan; Michael Day, Heather Daly and Anton Markin of Cunningham Quill Architects, who have contributed greatly to the big picture and fine details; Gary Ball of Turner Construction who as President of the Community Services Corporation, brings wisdom and experience; Charles Barber, instrumental in getting us through the labyrinth of government agencies; and Steve Mutty, who has lead our fundraising efforts for more than a decade.

Most of all, the success of the project comes from the generous and steadfast support of lead corporate sponsors Hines (Bill Alsop), Archstone (Jason Jacobson) and new this year – Terra Nova Settlement & Title Services (Christopher Clarke). They remind us that in these difficult economic times, the communities we serve with our Annual Community Improvement Day are the most vulnerable and are in great need of help from others like our dedicated DCBIA members.

See you on Saturday, October 2, bright and early! ▲



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