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The CityRoots Dig - August 2009

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Dear CityRoots Participants and Friends,

Things have certainly been picking up speed this past month as we enter the heart of the CityRoots season. Karen and Katherine have been busy with numerous project planning meetings and on-site work days. Their excitement about each project is evident. This wonderful energy is why we do the work that we do, and the credit goes to the many dedicated neighborhood groups that have come together with a shared commitment to benefit their greater community. Thank you to our devoted CityRoots participants for your enthusiasm and drive to improve your neighborhood's unity, sense of empowerment, and landscape. We have already observed many positive effects of your great work. Keep it up!

Please read on to learn about the latest CityRoots activities, upcoming events and learning opportunities around Boston, as well as, our Tip of the Month.

Allston/Brighton North Neighbor's Forum

Families and neighbors worked hard throughout July to prepare and plant the site at the Gardner Pilot School. A berm was built and seeded with clover, seating areas were installed and native, ornamental grasses were planted along Brentwood Street. We will host a final planting day in September when school is back in session.

For more information contact the Allston/Brighton North Neighbor's Forum through ABNNF@googlegroups.com

Community members work on building the berm at the Garner School play site

Egleston Square Neighbors

The Friends of The Egleston Square Library and CityRoots have been developing a plan to install large planters along the street in front of the library. These planters will help to brighten up the entrance to the library. A plan is in the works to add native trees and shrubs to the Seavers and Walnut entrance of Franklin Park.

Contact Felicia Hayes at haysinger@comcast.net if you would like to learn more and get involved!

Shawmut Springs Church

July at the Art Park was a month spent planting and improving the perennial beds along Parker Street. Neighbors donated plant divisions from local community gardens and came out to join Shawmut Springs Church in getting their hands dirty. Neighbors also turned out for a demonstration rainbarrel installation across the street from the park.

Please visit the Shawmut Springs Church's website for more information at www.shawmutsprings.org.

Neighbors working together to beautify the planting beds at the Art Park

McCormack Civic Association

On July 22nd twenty five neighbors turned out to participate in a design charette for the lot on Washburn and Howell streets. Enthusiasm was high as people broke out into smaller groups to discuss and sketch out their ideas. A design has been completed and work on the site will begin later this month.

Please visit the McCormack Civic Association's website for more information at www.mccormackcivic.com.

Members of of the McCormack Civic Association sharing their ideas for the park design at Washburn & Howell Streets

TNT Green Space Alliance - The Boston Project Ministries

TNT has been surging ahead with the site design, preparation and development of 93 Norfolk Street. We brainstormed ideas during a neighborhood meeting and a follow-up meeting relating to access, use, seating, and plantings. Also, together with the Park Patrol, a group of 13-16 year-olds from the Triangle, we have gotten a head start on site transformation. First we outlined and dug out a walking path and several planting beds, and we then constructed a gravel path with aluminum edging.

Call Boston Project Ministries at 617.929.0925 to get involved.

Park Patrol shoveling stone pack for the gravel path's base

United Neighbors Association

UNA has moved into full gear with its residential planting design projects. The group's outreach has identified four neighbors interested in planting and construction projects in their yards. This week the neighbors began selecting plant types and species for their gardens. The residential projects will include a rain garden, permeable paver patio, a flowering tree, and some shrubs.

The group welcomes contact from other CityRoots participants who would like to learn how to install these environmental technologies. You can contact Theresa at latsont@verizon.net or Katherine at 617-552-0184.

Children playing during a recent UNA meeting

Four Corners Green Neighbors

Four Corners has conducted bi-weekly door-to-door outreach to build up the group, with a focus on neighbors who garden. The group has begun developing a schematic site plan for the vacant lot, with a focus on community gardening, and it hopes to partner with the The Food Project and the Department of Neighborhood Development, in addition to CityRoots, to realize phase I of the project this season.

If you would like to get involved, please contact Esther Chandler at estavagen@yahoo.com or Katherine at 617-552-0184.

Uphams Corner Westside Neighborhood Association

The group has completed three test rainbarrel installations on Virginia and Monadnock Streets. Within 24 hours, one of the first rainbarrels filled to within 1" of the top! [Handy tip: they have found that the "flex-elbow" is a convenient product that connects the downspout to the rainbarrel at unusual angles.] With their

multi-lingual outreach effort completed, the group has begun following up with neighbors who have expressed interest in gardening-related activities.

If any other CityRoots participants can speak Cape Verdean, the group would appreciate your help with some interpretation for their on-site visits, so they can better understand what their neighbors would like in their yard.

Please contact Joanne at 857-212-7629 or jt4house@yahoo.com to learn more or get involved!

Creating a sturdy, level foundation is key for a successful rainbarrel

City-Wide News & Opportunities

CityRoots Partners with Boston's Citizen Forester Program

On August 22nd, several CityRoots participants will attend an educational urban forest certificate program offered by The City of Boston Parks and Recreation Department. The certificate program will teach participants proper pruning, watering, weeding, mulching and planting techniques, as well as how to identify invasive threats. At the end of the seminar, participants will take a brief exam; upon passing, participants will be certified as a Citizen Forester to prune city street trees and approved park trees. If you are interested in learning more about this program, contact Parks and Recreation at: 617-635-4505.

Governor Deval Patrick Postpones MBTA Fare Increase/Service Cuts Public Meetings

The highly anticipated MBTA public meetings, in preparation for the proposed service cuts and fare increases in the coming

months, have been called off until further notice. Governor Patrick's motion comes from the belief there needs to be a detailed review of all of MBTA's operations and finances before such a drastic decision as fare increases along with service cuts is implemented. Click here to read more about this issue.

Boston: Future Best City for Cycling

For possibly the first time ever The New York Times is giving some positive press to Boston for being bicycle friendly, or at least having the potential to be in the near future. Follow the link to read this article and learn all about Boston's latest initiatives and future plans for becoming one of the best cities for cycling in the country.

The City of Boston Introduces the Kill-A-Watt™

The City of Boston has now made it easy for you to monitor the amount of electricity consumed by the appliances around your home. Just like checking out a book you can rent a nifty kilowatt meter from your local library branch, plug it in with your appliances and other electronic devices around your household, and calculate the amount of money you spend to keep these running. More often than not you have items sucking up energy that you're not even utilizing. The Kill-A-Watt™ device will help you understand your energy consumption, especially where you can cut down the wasteful costs. Try it out today! Learn more here.

Urban Wildlife: Hands-On Activities

The Fields Corner Branch Library will be offering a special urban wildlife education program this month. During this interactive four day session, children will be able to investigate urban wildlife through creative science, literacy, and art activities while discovering ways to expand their knowledge through excursions out into the natural urban landscape. Pre-registration required. Ages 6 and up.

Cost: FREE

When: Tuesday, August 18th - Thursday, August 21st
2:00-3:00 PM

Game Night

Both children and adults are welcome to come to the Egleston Square Branch Library for an evening full of games, such as UNO, Srabble and Dominos. Bring your families, friends and neighbors to

this fun social event!

Cost: FREE

When: Wednesday, August 19th & 26th
5:00-7:30 PM

Boston GreenFest 2009

Boston's greenest event of the year comes back to City Hall Plaza from August 20th-22nd. Boston GreenFest 2009 attracts people from the metro area and all across New England with its wide array of interactive workshops and exhibits for green products and services, live entertainment, activities for all ages, and great food! Come out to learn something new, pick the brains of some progressive folks, and have fun riding the green wave that is taking Boston by storm! Follow this link for more information, including a list of the organizations in attendance and a schedule of events.

Cost: FREE

When: Thursday, August 20th
5:00-10:00 PM

Friday, August 21st
10:00 AM-10:00 PM

Saturday, August 22nd
10:00AM-10:00 PM

Greenway Walking Tour

The Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy will be having Boston By Foot, Inc., a non profit group offering guided educational tours, leading a tour of the beautiful mixed-use public greenway where the elevated highway once stood prior to the Big Dig construction. Come out to learn the history of this dynamic neighborhood and what lies ahead for Boston's ever changing landscape.

Cost: $10

When: Thursday, August 20th
6:00-7:30 PM

Public Meeting on The Charlesview Redevelopment Proposal

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) will be holding a

meeting to present and discuss a proposal for a redevelopment of The Charlesview site. This is your chance to ask your questions and share your concerns as residents of the community being affected by this large construction project. Follow the link to learn about the specific plans outlined by the BRA.

Cost: FREE

When: Monday, August 24th
6:30 PM

Bike Friday

Do you have a bike? Do you want to show your support for green transportation? Then join many other bike enthusiasts for a safe guided convoy to City Hall Plaza. You will be able to link up at various locations in the metro area with experienced ride leaders who will be following a fixed schedule.

Even more, when you reach City Hall Plaza, you will be treated to music, an expo, and a free breakfast burrito, courtesy of Boloco. Join a convoy, or just show for the fun up at City Hall Plaza.

Cost: FREE

When: Friday, August 28th
6:45-8:15 AM

Tip of the Month

Composting Makes Sense for the Garden & the Globe

Building upon last month's tip of recycling rainwater to prevent the overburdening of our sewers (and to cut down on watering costs) we decided to highlight the sustainable practice of composting. Composting is an easy project to maintain and has numerous benefits, even in an urban setting. You can use a compost bin (inside or outside) to collect food and yard waste to enrich your soil and add nutrients to your garden or yard, even indoor and outdoor planters! In effect, you will create your own nutrient rich soil, and reduce the amount of kitchen and yard

waste being trucked away to the landfill. If you're going to throw it away anyway, you might as well put it to good use!

Follow these links to learn more about the benefits of composting and how to get yours started today:

Benefits of Composting

Tips on Composting

Check out Boston Building Materials Co-op for compost bin options, or click here to learn how to make your own!

Founded in Boston, MA in 1998, the Urban Ecology Institute (UEI) aims to promote the health of urban ecosystems through research, education, advocacy, and community action. UEI helps urban communities build healthy and vibrant cities by educating students and residents about their neighborhood environments, connecting them to each other, and engaging them in the transformation of their communities into healthy places where people want to live.

Rachael Harris (Note: my last name has changed!)
CityRoots Program Manager
Urban Ecology Institute

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