

DC NorthStar

A Neighborhood Blog for
Shepherd Park & Takoma DC



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Green Infrastructure and the Promise of the City's Future

📅 November 5, 2017 👤 Christopher Alexander 👁 587 Views 🏠 Community

Green Intentions

I had intended this to be a technical blog post about Green Infrastructure.

I had every reason to geek out over the cool, innovative technology that was on display at [DC Water's Rock Creek Project A](#) kickoff event on October 23rd in the Manor Park neighborhood.

Upcoming Events

NOV

21

Tue

(http://dcnorthstar.com/calendar/action~oneday/exact_date~11-21-2017/)

7:00 pm Ward 4 Democrats of Washington, ... @ Washington Ethical Society (http://dcnorthstar.com/event/ward-4-democrats-washington-dc-meeting/?instance_id=82)

View Calendar → (<http://dcnorthstar.com/calendar/>)



Weather in 20012



Wednesday

Overcast

High 49° Low 42°

10%



Thursday



Mayor Bowser

investment and signal that the city was serious about fulfilling its obligations to reduce combined sewer overflows into the District's waterways.

Councilmember Brandon Todd was there to tout the *seventy-seven* separate Green Infrastructure installations that are scheduled for Ward 4

alone over the next few years. These projects will help reduce the amount of storm water runoff that reaches Rock Creek and the Anacostia and Potomac rivers when it rains.

Then we met Mr. Raymond Coates.

On a panel featuring the mayor, a sitting councilmember, the director of the District Department of Energy & Environment Tommy Wells, and DC Water CEO and General Manager George Hawkins, the featured speaker was someone most of the audience had never heard of.

Soon, we would know why.

What is Green Infrastructure?

According to DC Water's educational material, "Green Infrastructure" describes the management of stormwater using the earth's natural processes. If water can soak into the soil, evaporate into the air, or be used by plants before it can enter the sewer system, that structure can be considered "green". Examples include bioretention (rain gardens), permeable parking lanes and trees.

A Mixed Mess

10%

**Friday**

Clear

High 41° Low 24°

0%



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Split Decision on Harris Teeter Site

📅 June 7, 2017 💬 No Comments



From Abandoned to Amazing: The

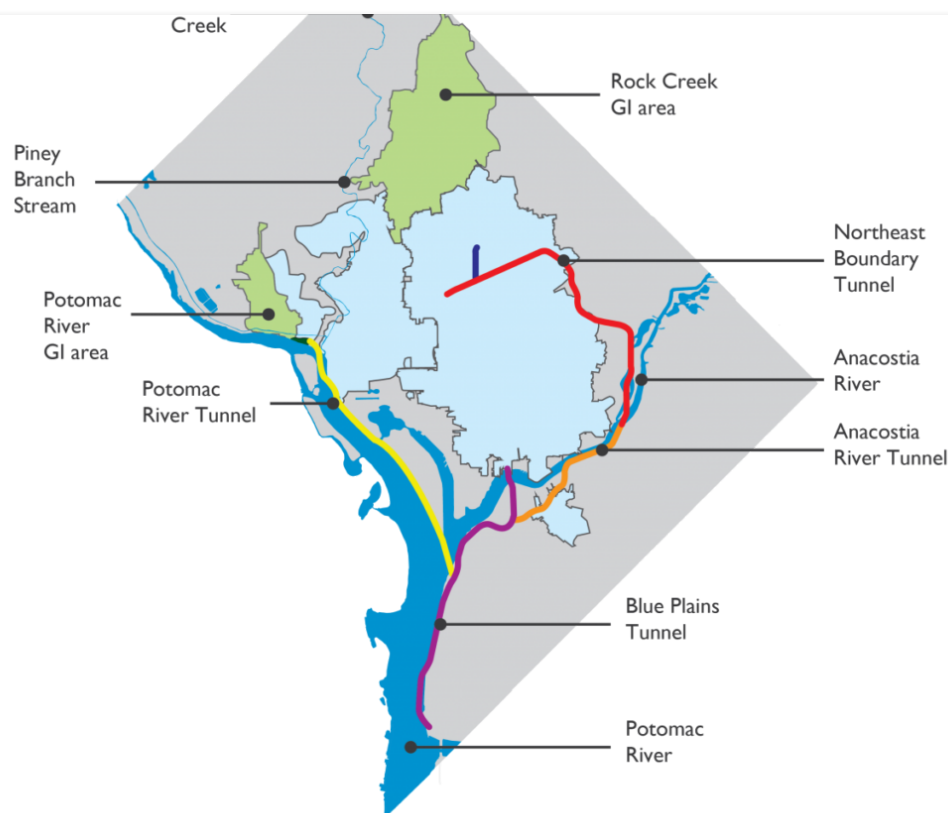
Transformation of 7800 Morningside Drive NW

📅 September 8, 2017 💬 No Comments



September Home Sales Report for

Brightwood, Shepherd Park and Takoma



A sketch of DC Water's Clean Rivers Plan. When completed, it will reduce system-wide combined sewer outflows by 96% and manage 500 acres of land with Green Infrastructure



Walter
Reed
Foreign
Missions
Center

Open House

April 21, 2017 No Comments

All of this is important because the District has a very old sewer system that was built out in the late 19th century. By some accounts, fully 1/3 of D.C. homes and businesses connect to a sewer that doubles as a stormwater pipe. On dry days it works well, but any heavy rain overflows this system, which then, by design, outlets the excess, untreated mix of sewage and rainwater at various points along the shore of Rock Creek, the Potomac River and the Anacostia River. This makes the water unsafe for swimming, boating, or other human contact. Walk along any of those bodies of water after a rain shower and your nose will quickly detect the problem.

Our water utility, DC Water, and the District are working under a Consent Decree with the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce the amount of combined sewage that reaches our waterways.

D.C.'s effort to clean up its waterways comes with a big price tag: \$2.6 billion. The hot conversation about rising water bills on many of the city's listservs bear witness to that. In 2014, the utility sought and received permission to modify its plan. It will replace about two miles of planned underground storage tunnels with some of the Green Infrastructure described above. In addition to reducing the cost of the project and its overall environmental impact, this change would create another benefit: green jobs.

Ward 4 Permeable Pavement



A New Certification

Partnering with the Water Environment Federation and sixteen other cities, DC Water created the **National Green Infrastructure Certification Program** (NGICP). This program certifies individuals who install, inspect, and maintain green infrastructure systems. This credential will give job applicants an advantage when seeking these new, living-wage careers. The requirements include a high school diploma or GED and completion of a Green Infrastructure training program.

The true beauty of this program is that the certification will be accepted by utilities across the nation. Program graduates will possess a valuable asset that will enhance their careers and their families' well-being for years to come. The program will expand nationwide in 2018.

And that brings us back to Mr. Coates.



Models of Permeable Alleyways and Bioretention (Rain Gardens)

Platinum

DC Water CEO George Hawkins introduced, Mr. Coates, who is a graduate of the NGICP. He stepped to the podium with a quiet dignity:

“

Good Morning everyone. I appreciate the privilege of standing before you today to talk about something I find very incredible. I'm a native Washingtonian. I've been here all my life. I've known several different kinds of government. I've known so many attempts to do the right thing for everybody in this city.

“

When I signed up I had the question, “Can my government do that?” What I found was not only could my government do it with the vision, but my government can execute!

“

I want to give special thanks to all of the people involved, from the water authority. Great people who were there from the beginning. You can actually talk to these people while you’re learning. They’re pointing out things to you. The enthusiasm, the “can-do”, the “we will succeed and we will succeed with you” spirit was permeated throughout this whole program.

“

I look forward to seeing this program grow. I want to give a special thanks to Constituent Services Worldwide who recruited us and helped us get our resumes together. Ensured that we were work ready by giving us jobs from contracts around the city so that we could get familiar with the idea of what Green Infrastructure looks like in practice.

“

I want to give a special thanks to the people from UDC, Harris and Cameron, who taught a wonderful, interactive class and got you to understand the fundamental ways that water moves. They taught me the most fascinating thing I’ve learned: Every drop of water that we have here now we’ve ALWAYS had! So, I’m drinking the water of my forefathers. Ain’t that something? Teaching me this brought me closer to my VALUE. What I bring to the table. How I can participate. And I’ve been treated as a person of value throughout this process. Including when I landed at Anchor (Construction Company) not even two weeks ago.

“

My first day on the job...never worked construction...I didn’t eat breakfast (laughter)...I did not bring lunch (more laughter). They taught me about how to work in this business. My team pulled me in when I was wobbling (laughter). And I was literally wobbling. They were right there: ‘Pick up less’. ‘Take a break’. ‘Work over there’. They showed me how to pace myself.

“

Finally, seeing the thing come alive. Whew! Watching that stone build up. Remembering the book. Remembering what Harris

“

I'm very excited about this. I can't wait until the younger people come down into the ditch. Because there's a future here. There's a true pathway. In three years, a twenty-year-old could probably buy a home off of this (applause).

“

“

Again, I thank everybody involved. I really am proud of my city.

I was talking about going forward and getting [certified for] LEED associate. I was doing the research on it and guess what I found? I live in a city that's the first PLATINUM LEED city in the world! So, in the future when they look at that, and they do down the list of all of these projects, somebody will say, 'Raymond Coates was on that project.' So, I'm a part of the team that makes us PLATINUM. What does that make me? PLATINUM!! (applause, standing ovation).

I transcribed that speech for the reader to make this point: when the various elements of our business community, government and non-profits work together, we *can* create pathways to the middle class for our fellow residents. Beyond Green Infrastructure, this model can be applied to many fields and careers: construction, technology, health science and more.

I congratulate Mr. Coates and all the graduates of the NGICP program. I look forward to our city leaders collaborating on similar efforts in the future.

Comments

0 comments

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ANC 4A – Advisory Neighborhood Commission November Meeting

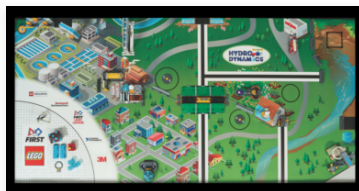
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