

Common Wealth Award Report

The Boxwood Garden Club
Peter Paul Development Center
Fall 2020

In the heart of the East End of Richmond, in the midst of Richmond's four public housing communities, lies Peter Paul Development Center. This community center acts as a bastion of hope for the youth of one of the most underserved populations in the area.

In 2018, Boxwood Garden Club's (BGC) membership voted unanimously to partner with Peter Paul Development Center to create a garden space in the playground adjacent to the center. Carmax and Kaboom had just partnered and installed play equipment there. Boxwood's mission was to transform the playground into a garden and greenspace for the community's children.

Over 70% of BGC's membership donated to this project. BGC's plan was to plant trees for shade, native plants along the property border and throughout the greenspace and playground. The installation of synthetic turf inside the playground, along with native plants and trees, aids in conservation goals by reducing water and chemicals. The mission was to provide a cherished spot where children and families can interact with a simple and beautiful green space and to become an educational resource to the students attending the center.

This project fulfilled Peter Paul's mission of supporting the residents of the East End, educating its students and equipping them to serve as positive contributors to their family, community and society. Educating the child, engaging the family, and empowering the community were the shared objectives driving this project.

Receiving The Common Wealth Award ensured the completion of this much needed improvement to the community, while supporting GCV's mission of supporting natural and native greenspace in Virginia.

The Peter Paul Development Center Playground and Garden Project relates to four areas of GCV focus: Civic Contribution, Beautification, Education and Horticulture.

Civic contribution - by creating a central greenspace for this underprivileged community and its children

Beautification - bringing an area of natural beauty to a blighted neighborhood

Education - the playground and garden is directly focused on educating the youth at PPDC on horticulture and Virginia native plants. PPDC has Master Gardener volunteers that will teach about plants, trees and vegetable gardening.

Horticulture - the installation of native Virginia plants and trees fulfills the horticultural objective by utilizing plant material indigenous to the area thus requiring (once plants are established) less watering and more food for native pollinators .



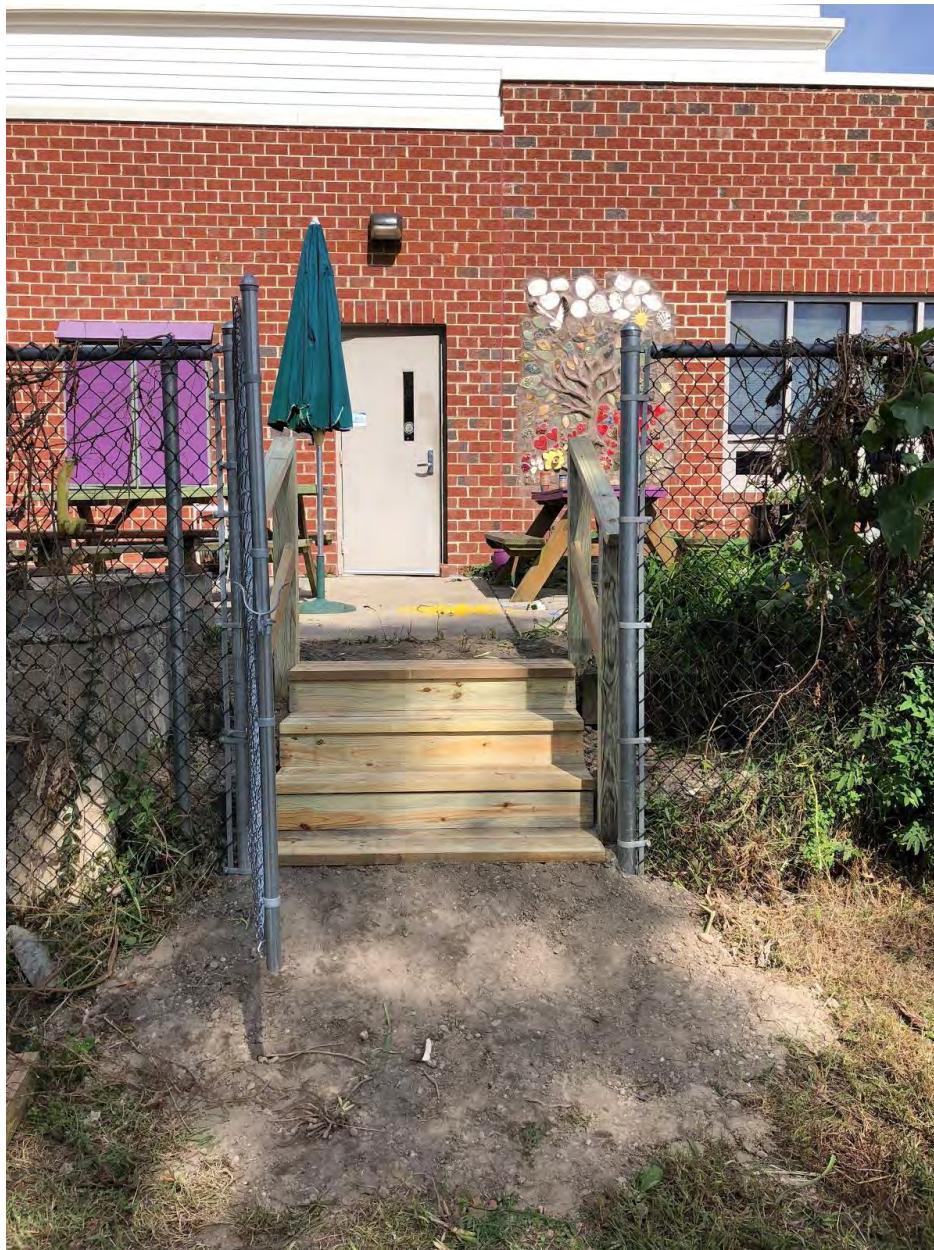
Lot before play equipment and garden installed



Play equipment, but no garden/landscaping

Boxwood is very fortunate to have as a member, Anna Aquino, who was instrumental in developing the plans and securing contractors for the project.

Boxwood began the project in Fall of 2018, with monies we had raised from our fundraiser as well as internally (70% of our membership donated). We had enough to fund the installment of the artificial grass and pavers. We began with the installation of new steps from the Community Center to the playground.



2019

In late February, Terra Forma began prepping the area for the artificial grass, pavers and plantings.



Terra Forma team prepping playground for landscape installation.

Installation of the artificial turf, pavers and aluminum edging (intended to help with the weeds) began in March. At that time, Terra Forma added organic compost, tilled and amended, to the planting beds.

Boxwood received a grant from the Tree Stewards for 7 native trees planted around the perimeter and inside the fence. The first week of November, we had volunteers from Boxwood and Peter Paul on hand to learn about the trees and to help plant the trees. A representative from the Tree Stewards was also there to instruct us.

The trees received from the Tree Stewards are as follows:

1 American smoketree (*Cotinus obovatas*) – 5g

1 cucumber magnolia (*Magnolia acutissima*) – 15 g street tree

2 black gums (*Nyssa sylvatica*) – 1.5"

2 sweetbay Magnolia (*magnolia virginiana*) 15g

1 fringe tree (*chionanthus virginicus*) 10g

The cucumber magnolia did not make it through the summer and will be replaced this fall.



Peter Paul volunteers and staff planting trees

The week following the tree planting, Terra Forma completed the installation by planting all the perennial beds. The majority of plants used are natives, such as Asters, Echinacea, Monarda, Verbena, Hyssop, Ironweed, Beardtongue, Baptisia, Rudbeckia, Coreopsis, perennial Hibiscus and Grasses.



Terra Forma team installing Anna Aquino's design.

The weather cooperated and nature provided us with lots of rain, so watering was minimal until the heat of the summer. Also, as a silver lining in the Pandemic, the playground saw little activity in the spring and the summer, allowing the garden to flourish and mature.





The completed Peter Paul Playground garden in all its glory!

The majority of the work was completed pre Covid, but over the spring and summer, club members and other volunteers watered, weeded and mulched while socially distancing. It was wonderful to be outside, doing physical activity while helping others. Many neighbors walked by while we were working and commented on how much they appreciated our hard work. They loved seeing the transformation and the beauty it brought to the neighborhood. It was a community effort to produce this beautiful, mature garden. Our hope is that the children will soon be able to enjoy it and the playground to its fullest!

We are also cleaning up a diseased and partially dead tree on the playground. If not taken care of, when it falls, it could cause great personal and/or property damage to Peter Paul and the neighborhood. The plan is to try and save it. If it is beyond saving, then we will take it down and replace it with a similar tree.

Boxwood had many volunteers participate in the effort - Children from the center, neighbors, Boxwood members, Boy Scouts to name a few. And a big shout out to our contractors and donors:

Garden Club of Virginia

Anna Aquino

Terra Forma

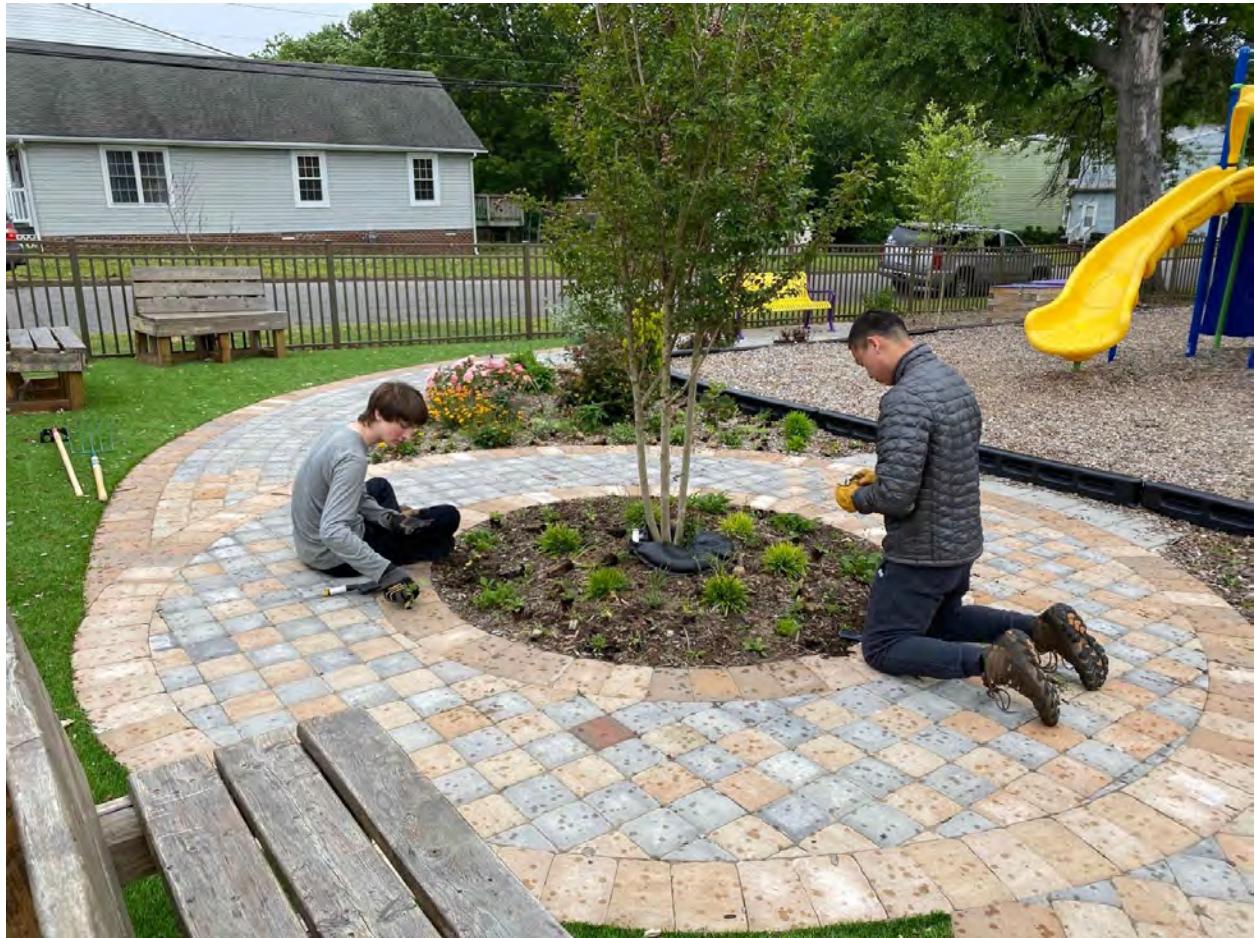
Accent Fence

True Timber

Kindness for Kate

Tree Stewards

Due to their time, effort and expertise, Boxwood was able to enhance the playground at Peter Paul, creating a beautiful respite for the students, staff and neighborhood!



Boy Scouts helping with the mulch while earning a Badge



Respectively submitted,

Nella Timmons
President, Boxwood Garden Club