

# Touring Urban Wilds and Gardens Gives Life to COGdesign Mission

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This year's Project Showcase, *Touring Urban Wilds and Gardens*, gave nearly 100 supporters a first-hand look at what COGdesign is doing in, with, and for several local communities.



On Sunday, September 21 – a sunny and crisp fall day – two buses left Brookline High School for a tour of six COGdesign projects. Lucia Droby, Executive Director, and Roger Jeanty, Board President, acted as tour guides and described each project as we were en route. At each site, we were met by docents – COG's designers and local residents who spoke glowingly about how much these public spaces meant to them and their neighbors.

## JENKS HOUSE, BROOKLINE



Our first stop was a sunken garden at **Jenks House** in Brookline, a Pine Street Inn residence. The "before" photos showed a grim, paved terrace used primarily for trash receptacles. The contrast to the current space was dramatic. Landscape designer Sally Muspratt had created a shady refuge for residents to sit, cook, and garden in peace. One of the residents proudly showed us her healthy tomato crop and explained her work to maintain the flower beds.



## FRANCIS STREET GARDEN, MISSION HILL



Our next stop was the **Francis Street Garden** on Mission Hill, across from Brigham & Women's Hospital. A former weed-strewn open lot between two triple-deckers, this garden was just created to provide a sanctuary for reflection. Working with the Roxbury Tenants of Harvard, COG's designers, Jennie Smith and Andrea Taaffe, used a "River of Life" motif which includes a stream of glass pebbles, curving planting beds, and an ornate iron fence.

## NIRA ROCK, JAMAICA PLAIN



At **Nira Rock** in Jamaica Plain, Will Crosby and Suzanne Brown from the Friends of Nira Rock, and Paul Sutton from the Boston Parks Department led visitors through an open park with a new play space and up a wooded winding path to an open meadow with views of the city.

Nira Rock itself is a 40-foot wall of Roxbury Puddingstone used for everything from rock climbing to a backdrop for open air movie showings. This project, with design support from Nina Shippen and Susan Opton, transformed a space that was originally so overgrown and derelict that everyone but drug dealers avoided it. Today, it is a welcoming urban wild enjoyed by local residents for active and passive recreation year-round.



## PUDDINGSTONE GARDEN, ROXBURY



**Puddingstone Garden** in Roxbury is a small park that was, like most COGdesign projects, created with active community involvement. On the former Grove Hall estate, this park, as designed by Janis Porter, balances historical allusions to a former formal rose garden with low-maintenance spaces for residents to sit or play.



Local resident Peter Crawford has been involved with this garden for many years and continues to play an active role in maintaining it. He spoke movingly about how much this space means to him and his neighbors.



## RONAN PARK, DORCHESTER



At the 11-acre **Ronan Park** in the Savin Hill neighborhood in Dorchester, we had a stunning view of Dorchester Bay.

The park includes playing fields, a perennial garden designed by Susan Balleza, and a future COG-designed space for dogs to run off leash. As we looked at the smiling children running around, the soccer players on the field, the stone marker honoring John Beresford, a Friends of Ronan Park member, and the plans for the RoDogRun dog park as designed by Charlotte Fleetwood, it was easy to see the enduring impact of COGdesign's work and partnerships with communities.



## SHIRLEY EUSTIS HOUSE



The tour ended at the elegant **Shirley Eustis House** in Roxbury where COG's designer, Susan Balleza, had designed a perennial garden as an initial landscape improvement. The house museum's director, Andrea Taaffe, told about the site's history while tour goers enjoyed tea in the historic barn and gardens.



### DOCENTS

Sally Muspratt (Jenks House); Jennie Smith (Francis St. Garden); Janis Porter and Peter Crawford (Puddingstone Garden); Paul Sutton, Will Crosby, Suzanne Brown & Friends of Nira Rock; Susan Balleza, Adam Greenfield & Friends of Ronan Park; Charlotte Fleetwood, Paige Davis & Friends of RoDogRun; Andrea Taaffe (Shirley Eustis House).

### EVENT PLANNING

Diane Aronson, Lucia Droby, Monica Fairbairn, Roger Jeanty, Jean Krasnow, Sally Muspratt, Susan Opton.

### EVENT PHOTOGRAPHER

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### GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Margery Stegman (program), Anna Ozols (program map).

### EVENT SPONSORS

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