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BOARD OF FREEHOLDERS

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: JOYCE GABRIEL

Camden's Waterfront South Rain Gardens Open
Ceremony celebrates new park that adds beauty and combats flooding

Sunshine gilded the trees and plantings in the new Waterfront South park rain gardens that officially opened today in a ceremony that celebrated teamwork, environmental responsibility, and a love for the city of Camden.

The rain gardens were a project spearheaded by the Camden County Board of Freeholders and the CCMUA in partnership with the City of Camden, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Rutgers University, the New Jersey Tree Foundation and Cooper's Ferry Development Association to implement a new green infrastructure program throughout Camden City called the Camden Stormwater Management and Resource Training (SMART) initiative. The gardens were built on the site of an abandoned gas station that was demolished and remediated with the help of the state DEP.

The park consists of four rain gardens connected by walking paths that have been designed by the Rutgers Agricultural Extension Service. The landscaping, including grading and plants selected, are not just beautiful but functional in capturing stormwater and prevent it from entering Camden's combined sewer system.

Father Michael Doyle gave the invocation, quoting from the Book of Leviticus in the Bible. "God said, 'This land is mine and you are my tenants...you must provide for redemption of the land.'" Father Doyle said the day was one of hope and blessings and one in which City residents can "rejoice in this miraculous healing and creation of the rain gardens."

"The SMART initiative has constructed new rain gardens in Camden City to reduce stormwater from entering Camden's overburdened sewer system, and reduce flooding, sewer backups and sewage overflows in the city during major rain events," said Freeholder Jeffery L. Nash, liaison to the CCMUA, who says he has a passion for helping to improve the city of Camden. He thanked CCMUA Director Andy Kricun, Mayor Redd and the partners in the SMART Initiative for the completion of this project.

He reminded everyone that Camden County was the first county in the United States to mandate recycling. Nash also noted that the County to date has preserved 2,000 acres of open space and has created a series of trailways and bikeways throughout the county and is now pursuing Sustainable Camden County, an initiative that will not only deal with environmental concerns but will help to educate the public about what individuals and businesses can do.

Freeholder Director Louis Cappelli, Jr. praised the CCMUA's efforts under the leadership of Kricun in working to make this project a reality.

"Whether it's a project like this that helps the environment and the community, or whether it's preserving libraries or new public safety initiatives, it takes cooperation from all levels of government—the state, county and municipalities—to make things happen," Freeholder Cappelli said. "This rain gardens park is a perfect example of how government groups can come together."

Camden Mayor Dana Redd saw this as one more major accomplishment in further enhancing the city and county parks in Camden City.

"We strive for partnerships to revitalize this city and appreciate the help from all our partners," Mayor Redd said. "I want to thank Andy for his help and leadership as well as the Freeholder Board for their support of the City of Camden, as well as special appreciation for the great work of all the stakeholders in the SMART initiative for making this park and other rain gardens a reality."

"This rain garden park is one more stellar example of how we can transform blight into beauty, one block, one building at a time," said Anthony Perno, CEO of Cooper's Ferry Development Corporation.

Helene Pierson from the Heart of Camden, perhaps summed it up best. "When this was the site of an old, blighted gas station with seven underground gas stations, it greeted visitors to this neighborhood with a message that said we were down for the count. Now we have this garden that makes you want to go outside in the rain and stand right in the middle of it."

For color illustrations of how the gardens work and live photos from the event, visit www.camdencounty.com and click on Camden's Waterfront South Rain Gardens under County News. All are available for use by the media in print and on their websites or as part of a TV report.

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