



Small park brings big change for adults and children in neighborhood

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Delray Beach Community Redevelopment Agency will hold a ribbon cutting ceremony for Rosemont Park on Saturday, October 6 at 10 a.m., marking its official opening. Several city officials, residents, and neighborhood children are expected to attend the celebration.

South of SW 4th Street in Delray Beach, between SW 4th and 5th Avenues, the park is full of green grass, colorful flowers and inviting palm trees. There is a modest playground and a smiling yellow school bus where children play. A winding sidewalk stretches from one end of the park to the other with ceramic tiles, painted by the neighborhood children, inlaid in the sidewalk.

But Rosemont Park, now a small recreational oasis in the southwest neighborhood, was once an eyesore.

“It was horrible,” said Zerlean Williams, a 38-year resident of Rosemont Gardens, referring to the trash that used to pile up on the site. “The city would issue citations, and a week later the garbage would be back.”

Williams and her neighbors were more than pleased when the City of Delray Beach announced that the unimproved public right-of-way would be closed off and turned into a public park for neighborhood residents and children. The project was funded jointly by the CRA and the City, each contributing \$131,197 and \$28,500 to the project, respectively.

The creation of such “pocket” parks, designed to be tucked into the fabric of individual neighborhoods, was a recommendation in the Southwest Area Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan, adopted by the City Commission in 2003. The plan noted the lack of interior parks in residential areas that families could walk or bike to safely.

Williams, however, said that members of the Rosemont Park/Rosemont Gardens Homeowners Association wanted to create a park well before the SW Plan came about. Years ago, her neighbor’s grandson was permanently disabled after he was struck by a car, in a spot right next to what would become Rosemont Park. Williams says the accident happened because the children had nowhere to play. So when the city came to the residents with the idea, they were thrilled.

Neighborhood children have also been able to take pride and ownership in the park. Many of them helped participated in the “Words to Live By” project, which incorporated a list of 13 words into the sidewalk with creatively painted ceramic tiles.

The children came up with a list of 20 words, and then narrowed them down to their final choices—dream, education, faith, harmony, kindness, knowledge, love, loyalty, peace, purity, spirit, trust, and unity. They also worked with local artist Sharon Koskoff, painting single letters on each tile until each word was spelled out.

Rosemont Park, completed in September, is already a hit with the neighborhood. Adults relax on the park benches and children play on the playground. Williams has even spotted children doing their homework as they sit on the sidewalk.

The park has become more than a place for recreation. It symbolizes the pride the neighborhood residents have in their property and their children. The homeowners association even adopted a slogan, “a rose without thorns,” which is proudly displayed on the park signs.

The slogan, Williams explained, refers to the former unsightly area that used to distract from the beauty of the neighborhood, much like thorns on the stem of a rose. “To get rid of the eyesore was to get rid of the thorn,” she said.

Rosemont Park is the second pocket park to be funded by the CRA and City. In February, residents of La Hacienda, a neighborhood adjacent to the North Federal Highway corridor, celebrated the completion of La Hacienda Gardens. For more information, call the Delray Beach CRA, (561) 276-8640.