

Helios Park Dedication – April 22, 2017



Named for the ancient Greek personification of the sun, Helios Park is an outstanding example of how sun power, nature, and technology can work together to mitigate the detrimental effects of storm water runoff and production of greenhouse gases. Helios Park is a working monument to environmental stewardship and provides a living demonstration of sustainable energy and pollution management principles. The project is located in downtown Richwood, repurposing what was an abandoned commercial lot which had burned to the ground. The resulting pocket park is today donated to the City of Richwood.

Throughout its history, Richwood has sustained repeated flooding, many of which have been quite substantial. This was never more evident than in June of 2016 when what has been referred to as a 1000 year flood occurred. In this instance, a combination of the rising Cherry River and descending flash-streams from the surrounding mountainsides combined to devastate Richwood. In an interesting twist of fate, the Helios Park project site received minimal damage and implementation of the Helios Park stormwater ground work was able to be initiated just over one month after the 2016 flooding. The intent of the project is to visibly display the technology and strategies that could/should be more broadly utilized in communities such as Richwood.

Project Highlights

Helios Park has a number of highlights which make it a truly unique venue in West Virginia, the country and honestly in the world. Among these distinctive aspects are the following:

- Park layout designed by West Virginia architect Todd Schoolcraft, specifically in support of the Helios theme
- Porous pavement walkway which allows rain and ground water to permeate into the soil below and be filtered and returned to natural use
- Center pad in the shape of a sundial, which actually works in utilizing the participant's shadow to provide the time of day in Eastern Standard Time
- French drains below the pavement and gravel beds to direct groundwater to native vegetation garden beds
- Solar panels returning energy to the grid via net-metering, thus providing a positive to the city electric bill
- Panels mounted on trellis which was uniquely designed by a West Virginia architect Thom Worlledge for Richwood, to provide the look and feel of standing forest
- Trellis made from donated native West Virginia White Oak which was milled locally in Richwood
- Trellis construction and solar / electric implementation by Fusion Builders

The Helios Park project turned a previous eyesore, via considerable hard work and generosity, into an attractive community asset. The lot upon which the park has been constructed had been left as a hole in the ground subsequent to a structure fire. The combination of technology, original design, and native landscape is an aspect that should be natural to West Virginia. This project is unique to the area, region, state, country, and world. Richwood is leading by example with Helios Park, as this project rivals sustainable pocket parks from across the nation and world.

Park location after structure fire and debris removal and prior to project initiation



Project Outcomes

1. Reduction of storm water pollution in the Cherry River, conservative estimate of load reduction based on annual rainfall is **76,176 gallons per year**.
2. Educating students, community members, and visitors about the importance of pollution reduction and prevention.
3. Stimulating interest in implementation of similar sustainable community projects throughout the state.
4. Providing a tangible statement of hope for a community in distress. We have created an attractive and effective municipal green space where there was previously abandonment and loss.