

MURA STREET GARDEN MOSAICS PROJECT



*Funding, technical assistance and training provided by
The Parks & People Foundation*

About 15 years ago, Dora and Howard Eaton decided they wanted a vegetable garden, but they lacked a large open space for planting one. After several days of hard work in their Broadway East neighborhood, they were able to carve out a small garden on a vacant lot near their home. Little did they know that this was the beginning of a community gardening project in Broadway East that would eventually make friends out of strangers.

Over time, Broadway East residents who passed by the garden began to realize that they also wanted a vegetable garden to call their own. As the Eatons' garden flourished, Dora and Howard realized that there was a definite need for a larger garden in their community. Out of desire to help community residents, Dora and Howard Eaton worked through Baltimore City's Adopt-A-Lot program to take ownership of a much larger space, and eventually establish the Mura Street Garden in the middle of the North Montford Avenue-Mura Street-North Milton Avenue-East Biddle Street block, an area that was once vacant garages and piles of trash.

As the Mura Street Garden began to grow, its gardeners sought funding from the Historic East Baltimore Community Action Committee (HEBCAC). Once acquired, the funds were used to build a fence and gate around the garden. The gardeners also used the money to build a large tool shed to house gardening equipment, including a large farm tractor owned by John Holley, Dora Eaton's "right hand man." Every year, John Holley uses his tractor to turn over the soil at both the Mura Street Garden and a nearby community garden on Duncan Street. John calls the Mura Street garden a "love garden" and he is clearly invested in its success.

While each gardener plants and maintains his or her own garden plot, the Mura Street Garden is truly a communal space; hard work and bountiful produce are both shared there.

The garden is essentially the backyard of Baltimore City Truck Company #15, Broadway East's main fire station. Through 15 years of gardening, Mura Street gardeners and Company #15 firefighters have become close neighbors. On several occasions when water was needed for the garden, the firefighters helped to supply the water to the garden from a hydrant that was a half a block away. When asked for their thoughts on the Mura Street Garden, the firefighters noted that while their job in dealing with tragedies is very difficult, returning to Company #15 to see community residents working in an urban oasis full of vegetables is very comforting and is certainly unique to this area of Baltimore City.

In early 2005, the Parks & People Foundation introduced *Garden Mosaics* to Mura Street, a program that connects young children to community elders through the science of gardening. Students who were brought to the garden met Mura Street gardeners and learned about growing vegetables as well as the agricultural backgrounds that many of the gardeners share. When asked how the Mura Street Garden has made an impact on Broadway East, the gardeners were reluctant to take credit for making a significant difference in the surrounding community. However, many people think otherwise. It's obvious that the Mura Street Garden has made a difference in the lives of people who work in the garden and also in the lives of the firefighters who work in nearby Baltimore City Truck Company #15.

WHO

Dora & Howard Eaton, John Holley

WHAT

Mura Street Garden Mosaics Project

WHERE

North Montford Avenue & Mura Street

WHEN

Est. 1991 by Dora & Howard Eaton

WHY

To naturally enhance their neighborhood

