

## **MERRIFIELD CENTER, FAIRFAX-FALLS CHURCH COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD**

8221 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22031



### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

A 200,000 SF Human Services Building and a 230,000 SF parking garage with 712 parking spaces. This new facility consolidated 8 existing sites to house a complex program of mental health services in a state-of-the-art, community-based, out-patient facility for the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board. Building program highlights include:

- 24/7 emergency service with separate entry for emergency vehicles at lower level
- Mobile Crisis Unit
- Peer Resources Center
- Pharmacy and Medication Clinic
- Primary Health Care Clinic and Dental Clinic
- Behavioral Health Outpatient & Case Management
- Youth and Family Outpatient Services
- Intellectual Disabilities Services

### **DESIGN**

#### **Healing Design Approach:**

- The landscape and hardscape geometry and materials complement the building facade.
- Landscape design with various walking paths and gardens are an integral part of the therapeutic healing environment.

#### **Sustainable Design Features:**

- Use of sustainable materials with high recycled content; low-emitting materials; regional materials; and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified wood.
- Green stormwater features, including rain gardens; a vegetated swale; an infiltration trench; porous pavers; porous concrete; grass pavers; and two green roofs.
- Daylight harvesting and lighting control system with occupancy sensors.

- White, highly-reflective membrane roof to reduce the urban heat island effect.
- Vegetated open space using native and drought-resistant plants.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- Landscape Design: Rhodeside and Harwell, Inc. (Alexandria, VA) - developed detailed hardscape and planting designs and details.
- Timeline:
  - o Fall 2014 - Original landscaping was installed as part of the County construction project. Landscaping was not fully complete at substantial completion/occupancy due to timing of the installation and issues with plant availability.
  - o Spring 2015 - Warranty and maintenance work was contracted to a new landscape vendor.
  - o Spring-Summer 2017 - Significant plant and tree replacement was required as part of the construction bond release process, which was completed in Fall 2017.

### **MAINTENANCE**

- The majority of the site is maintained by the Facilities Management Division (FMD).
- Low Impact Development (LID) areas and the two green roofs are maintained by the Maintenance and Stormwater Management Division (MSMD).

### **OBSERVATIONS**

- The landscaping was designed in 2010-2011 and was intended to provide therapeutic opportunities. However, some features were seen as overly detailed and complex. A part of a DPWES internal pilot project to reduce landscape costs, the design was reevaluated with minor design changes, which were implemented in March 2014.
- Issues with the original installation were never completely resolved due to timing and contractual issues with the original subcontractor.
- Availability of specified plants has been a problem.
- "Right plant, right place" - Many plants on the north side of the building may have failed due to poor plant selection for heavy wet shade.
- Other factors may have contributed to inhospitable growing conditions, including heat buildup; reflected light; heat island effect (in which hardscapes continue to give off heat at night); rain runoff; construction subsoils; and small planting holes.
- Were soils properly selected, i.e. clean (weed free) and of the proper mix?
- Installation techniques and oversight: Could poor soils and compaction be partly to blame for poor plant survival?
- Maintenance: Generally the areas that are maintained by MSMD still have the intended plant materials and look better. Other areas may have had less maintenance.
- Establishment: There is very little lawn. As a result, the project has more planting beds to maintain in the establishment period. Increased maintenance in the first two or three growing seasons might minimize significant maintenance later.