

# The Implausible Park; Metro Fashions New Oasis in Berwyn Heights

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## ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

Indian Creek in Prince George's County spilled over its banks yesterday, making it hard to get to Lake Artemesia, one of the Washington area's most unusual parks because it was built by Metro, the transit agency. Metro could have hauled in the fill material from outside the area, which would have cost \$11.5 million and torn up streets in College Park. Instead, [Johann Sikkar] recommended digging the fill material from a 38-acre undeveloped area near the track bed. The hole could be made into a lake surrounded by a park, Sikkar said. The best part? Sikkar's plan cost only \$8 million. Metro saved \$3.5 million in subway construction costs; big trucks were kept off the streets of College Park, Berwyn Heights and Greenbelt; and Prince George's got a new park that was virtually free.

## FULL TEXT

Indian Creek in Prince George's County spilled over its banks yesterday, making it hard to get to Lake Artemesia, one of the Washington area's most unusual parks because it was built by Metro, the transit agency.

But those who did get there said they were impressed by the Washington area's newest park.

"It's a great addition to the neighborhood, and they did a great job," said Jamie Lummis, of Berwyn Heights, where the park is located.

"We were very concerned initially because we didn't know what to expect from Metro," said Steve Sandberg, of College Park, who was walking two chows. "We're happy with it."

Metro has taken its share of knocks recently, but Lake Artemesia is getting only praise. Transit officials do not know of another example in the nation of a subway and bus agency teaming with a parks and recreation department to build a park.

"It takes special people to pull together and transform a vision into a reality," said Prince George's County Executive Parris N. Glendening (D).

The person credited with the idea for the lake is Johann Sikkar, a Metro engineer since 1967.

As Metro began building the Green Line between Fort Totten and Greenbelt, tons of sand, soil and gravel were needed to raise the track bed between the College Park and Greenbelt stations to prevent flooding. Construction is expected to be finished late next year.

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The best part? Sikkar's plan cost only \$8 million. Metro saved \$3.5 million in subway construction costs; big trucks were kept off the streets of College Park, Berwyn Heights and Greenbelt; and Prince George's got a new park that was virtually free.

"To know it was created by saving money is almost a make-believe story," said John P. Davey, a Metro board member from Prince George's.

Transit officials had been calling the lake "Lake Metro," but it was named after Artemesia N. Drefs, of St. Louis, who

donated some of the land.

The park, which is accessible only by trails but has a small parking lot nearby, actually has two connected lakes because of a compromise between environmental groups. The larger, wilderness lake aims for a natural habitat; the smaller recreation lake is intended for public use.

An asphalt trail winds around the lake, with benches spaced apart on red brick surfaces. There is a main public area with an observation tower on the lake, an enclosed basin for radio-controlled model boats and a community building that includes restrooms. Fishing is permitted, and there are plans for boats.

Plantings of black-eyed Susans, azaleas, rhododendrons, junipers, viburnum and periwinkle, among others, add to the park's appeal. Most of the native hardwood was destroyed during construction, but new trees have been planted.

Lake Artemesia had an unlucky start. The official dedication Thursday drew about 200 people, but it was canceled abruptly when the area was hit by a thunderstorm with winds so strong "you could have surfed on the lake," Metro spokeswoman Marilyn Dicus said. Yesterday, some trails leading into the park were flooded.

Hillard Ratliff, of Berwyn Heights, found a dry trail for a morning jog. "This is a real asset," he said in a winded voice. "It certainly beats having high-rise apartments."

### Illustration

PHOTO,,Harry Naltchayan CAPTION:In addition to walkways across the water, park visitors can enjoy hiking, fishing and an area for radio-controlled boats.

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