

2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DATA

RUDY BRUNER AWARD

FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

NOTE: This sheet and a selected image will be sent to the Committee in advance.

Project Name: Schuylkill Banks

Location: tidal Schuylkill River east side, Phila. PA

Owner: City of Philadelphia, created and managed by the Schuylkill River Development Corporation and Fairmount Park

Project Use(s): Recreation - running, walking, biking, fishing, picnicking, kayaking, canoeing, community events

Project Size: 8 mile riverfront greenway, 1.5 miles has been completed

Total Development Cost: $24 million to date

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate)

Date Initiated: 1996

Percent Completed by December 1, 2010: 20%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate): 2020 anticipated

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates

Application submitted by:

Name: Patrick M. Starr

Title: Senior Vice President

Organization: Pennsylvania Environmental Council

Address

City/State/Zip: 1315 Walnut St. Suite 532, Philadelphia, PA 19107

Telephone: (215) 545-4570 ext. 108

Fax: (215) 545-4594

E-mail: pstarr@pecpa.org

Weekend Contact Number (for notification):

Perspective Sheets:

Organization	Name	Telephone/e-mail
Public Agencies: Fairmount Park	Mark Focht	mark.focht@phila.gov
Architect/Designer: Boles, Smyth Associates & The Delta Group	Tim Boles	tfboles@bolessmyth.com
Developer: Schuylkill River Development Corporation	Joseph Syrnick	joseph.syrnick@srdc.net
Professional Consultant: Pennsylvania Horticultural Society	Nancy O'Donnell	nodonnell@pennhort.org
Community Group		
Other: Mark Thompson and Associates (Architect/Designer)	Claire Donato	cdonato@mbtarchitects.com

Please indicate how you learned of the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. (Check all that apply).

- ☐ Direct Mailing
- ☐ Magazine Announcement
- ☐ Previous Selection Committee member
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☑ Professional Organization
- ☐ Previous RBA entrant
- ☐ Online Notice
- ☐ Bruner/Loeb Forum

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Signature Patrick M. Starr Date 12/2/10

2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

RUDY BRUNER AWARD

FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

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NOTE: This sheet and a selected image will be sent to the Committee in advance.

Project Name Schuylkill Banks

Address east bank of the tidal Schuylkill River City/State/ZIP Philadelphia, PA 19103

1. Give a brief overview of the project.

From the decline of the industrial revolution to the end of the 20th century, the east bank of the Schuylkill River south of the Fairmount Dam was abandoned and disconnected from the urban fabric of Philadelphia, becoming a haven for illicit activity. The Schuylkill River Development Corporation, City of Philadelphia and Fairmount Park had the revolutionary idea to transform this area into a riverfront destination to benefit Philadelphia. Opening in 2001, this was one of the first industrial riverfront reclamation projects in the city. The first 1.5 miles has been completed, and another 6.5 miles are in various stages of planning and development. After years of neglect, Schuylkill Banks is a recreational trail and greenway where more than 16,000 people a week enjoy the outdoors in the heart of the city.

The ADA accessible greenway is free and open to the public daily. Bridges spanning the greenway break the space into 'rooms' each with slightly different landscaping, hardscaping and accessories to create visual interest. Benches along the length of the trail create spaces to relax, while trees, pergolas and bridges create shady areas to escape the summer heat. Public docks along the greenway provide river access for non-motorized river craft. SRDC and the City of Philadelphia use Schuylkill Banks as a venue to provide free and low-cost programming, such as movie nights, fishing festivals and river tours, to thousands of Philadelphians throughout the summer and fall. This riverfront amenity has improved quality of life for Philadelphians who were always in close proximity to, but could never fully enjoy, the river. Perhaps the best indication of the positive impact of the Schuylkill Banks trail and greenway is the thousands of Philadelphians who cannot imagine what they would do without being able to run, walk, fish, kayak, recreate and relax along the river on Schuylkill Banks.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.)

Schuylkill Banks merits the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence because it has revolutionized the way people view and interact with the Schuylkill River. For generations Philadelphians were cut off from the Schuylkill, both by industry that built up along the riverfront. Many people wanted to recreate along the river, but were unable to do so because it was cut off from neighborhoods by railroad tracks and formerly industrial land was completely overgrown and contaminated. For most of the 20th century what limited activity did occur along the riverfront was illicit, making the space even more dangerous for interested neighbors. By creating an attractive, accessible greenway SRDC and the City of Philadelphia have reintroduced thousands of Philadelphians to their river. What was a derelict tract of land is now an alternative transportation corridor, urban wildlife habitat, pollution management plan, and community asset that unites diverse Philadelphians

2011
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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FOR URBAN
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, signifcant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

The primary goal for this project was to revitalize the tidal Schuylkill River corridor through the creation of a dynamic riverfront greenway. Repairing the bulkheading and remediating the soil along the riverfront created a safe and healthy environment for people, animals and plant life, while creating an attractive and inviting space for Philadelphians and visitors to recreate and reconnect with the river.

In addition to creating a vibrant riverfront, SRDC and the City of Philadelphia hoped to attract new development to the banks of the Schuylkill River. Since the first stretch of Schuylkill Banks opened, several new condo and apartment buildings have opened within walking distance of the greenway, most using proximity to the park as a selling feature for potential residents. The greenway is also a selling feature for businesses looking to relocate into new office buildings in the area, such as the Cira Centre and the newly renovated IRS building.

Part of SRDC and the City of Philadelphia's efforts to energize this stretch of riverfront includes providing public programming, such as free movie nights and public festivals, as well as affordable riverboat tours and kayak tours. These programs are exceptionally popular, creating destinations and serving thousands of individuals each year and bringing together Philadelphians and visitors from all walks of life.

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve? How many people are served by the project?

Schuylkill Banks runs through the heart of Philadelphia, impacting more than 20 neighborhoods. These neighborhoods had been cut off from the river for more than 100 years, so neighbors are elated to finally be able to access and enjoy the Schuylkill. Many people report that they have lived by the river for years but were unable or afraid to go near it, and that Schuylkill Banks has completely changed their lives. Community members use the greenway for active recreation, as a corridor for commuting and as a space to relax outdoors without having to leave the city. Hundreds of community members of all backgrounds come together to enjoy free movie nights hosted by SRDC and a number of other festivals and events along the river. Most people who frequently use Schuylkill Banks live within several blocks of the river; however it also attracts regional, national and international visitors on a regular basis. The greenway is also a jumping off point for many cycling and running events in the city, and has become a gathering place for educational, ethnic and religious institutions looking for a convenient and attractive riverfront venue.

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

1992 - Schuylkill River Development Council is created to encourage creating of a riverfront trail
1996 through 1998 - City of Philadelphia bulkheads Schuylkill Banks from Locust Street to Martin Luther King Drive
2000 - Paved trail opens on Schuylkill Banks
2002 - Schuylkill River Development Council becomes Schuylkill River Development Corporation
2005 - Docks installed at Walnut Street and Bartram's Garden, Greenway landscaping installed from Locust Street to Race Street
2006 - Meet Me on the Banks summer and fall programming begins
2008 - Water Works South Garden is landscaped to mimic the 1876 South Garden
2009 - Landscaping installed from Race Street to Martin Luther King Drive, public meetings are held to gather input on potential Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk and Pedestrian Bridge, Schuylkill Banks wins Philadelphia Sustainability Award
2010 - Composting restroom built by Walnut Street meeting a frequently sited trail user need, Construction begins on Grays Ferry Crescent greenway segment, City of Philadelphia receives TIGER grant to fund four projects along Schuylkill Banks

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

Funding was provided by various public and private sources as follows:

Federal Highway Administration (ISTEA, SAFETEALU, etc.) - $16,700,000
PA Department of Transportation - $700,000
PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - $990,000
PA Department of Community and Economic Development - $955,000
William Penn Foundation - $913,000
City of Philadelphia - $4,000,000
Schuylkill River Development Corporation - $58,000

Total - $24,316,000

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

The project addresses the urban issue of reusing formerly industrial space. Many formerly industrial sites in Philadelphia sit vacant, contributing to urban blight in potentially vibrant neighborhoods. Schuylkill Banks shows that these sites can be successfully remediated and repurposed to provide much needed open space for neighbors, bringing new vitality to the area.

Lessons learned while creating Schuylkill Banks can be adapted to other riverfront settings in Philadelphia and other cities. Specifically, Schuylkill Banks is a model of inter-agency collaboration, community outreach, improving the environment and overcoming obstacles with neighboring land owners. Since the first 1.5 miles of Schuylkill Banks opened, new coalitions have formed in the Greater Philadelphia area calling for the expansion of the Schuylkill River Trail and for a continuous riverfront greenway along the entire Philadelphia riverfront. Other organizations across the country have also contacted SRDC requesting guidance on beginning riverfront greenway projects.

2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER **PERSPECTIVE**

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ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services.

Name Claire Donato | Title Senior Associate

Organization Mark B. Thompson Associates | Telephone (215) 985-1000 ext.111

Address 502 South 24th Street | City/State/ZIP Philadelphia, PA 19146

Fax (215) 985-1012 | E-mail cdonato@mbtarchitects.com

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Signature  Date November 29, 2010

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

The Fairmount Water Works, along with its surrounding landscape, was considered one of Philadelphia's most beautiful places and formed the basis for what would be become the Fairmount Park system. The original Cliffside Paths (c. 1820s), set into the rocky face of "Faire Mount," ascended from the Water Works to an elevated reservoir, offering visitors breathtaking views of the Schuylkill River and the surrounding area. The South Garden, dating to the 1830s, provided elegant strolling grounds for city residents and welcomed tourists from the nation and from abroad. The decommissioning of the Water Works in 1911 reduced the popularity of the Water Works and its surroundings; the entire site subsequently fell into despair and important original features were lost. By the 1980s, the landscape was unrecognizable when compared to the numerous historic images depicting the gardens in their heyday.

In order to create an appropriate context for interpreting the significant cultural landscape of the Fairmount Water Works, the design concept for the project was firmly rooted in the restoration of the historic landscape. Additionally, it was important for the design concept to address 21st century planning objectives by creating important pedestrian and recreational connections from the Water Works to the surrounding city streetscape, and to the Schuylkill River Trail which links city and suburban residents from Center City Philadelphia to Valley Forge.

Material selections were guided by historic documentary and physical evidence. Original extant materials, including remnants of the marble fountain dating to the 1830s, were incorporated into the restoration. Pavilions, benches, lightposts, brick pathways, cliffside trail alignments, railings, fences, and plant material selections were recreated based on detailed analysis of historic plans, maps, paintings, photographs, and annual reports kept by the project engineers throughout the 19th century. Together these restored features create a unique landscape which creates a sense of memory for the City and provides a welcoming respite for today's park users.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

The project design transformed a neglected and under-utilized landscape at a prominent site in Center City Philadelphia along the Schuylkill River. The gardens and the recreational trail see widespread daily and year-round use by residents and tourists. Just as in the 19th century, pavilions, paths, statuary, and a dazzling fountain again attract visitors to this National Historic Landmark.

Through the restoration, and through related educational resources - including a planned exterior signage program and the Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center - the project also achieves specific interpretive goals to educate the public, providing an important environmental message about the Schuylkill River as the source of Philadelphia's drinking water, a story that is relevant both historically and today. The site and the landscape connect the City's residents to, and encourage them to protect, the natural resource that that has allowed the City to grow and thrive for over three centuries.

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

The decommissioning of the Water Works in the early years of the twentieth century, and the demolition of the Fairmount Reservoir by 1921, reduced the popularity of the Fairmount Water Works, and its Cliffside Paths and South Garden. Alterations to the Spring Garden Street Bridge in the 1950s further cut off access to the Water Works landscape. As public use of the landscape declined, many important site features, including pathways, benches, and original sculptures and ironwork, disappeared. The seriously deteriorated condition of the South Garden and Cliffside posed safety concerns and did not provide a fitting setting for the Water Works, which was newly restored in the early 2000s.

This comprehensive loss of original fabric posed a great challenge. The character-defining features of the landscape had to be preserved, restored, and reconstructed using historic documentary evidence and fragments of physical evidence. Conservators and specialty craftsmen were found to work with the traditional materials and methods required for the project.

As a public park on public land, funding through City capital budgets could not provide the level of resources required for this type of restoration. The project leadership was determined that the quality and scope of the restoration should not be compromised, and the funding challenges were overcome through a dynamic public / private partnership between the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation and the Fairmount Park Conservancy. A multi-phase implementation schedule was developed to allow construction to proceed while funds were raised over a period of several years.

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context.

The design was carefully developed to reflect the original landscape design but to integrate the design within the current context of the City. The design creates important pedestrian and recreational connections from the Water Works to the surrounding city streetscape, and to the Schuylkill River Trail which links city and suburban residents from Center City Philadelphia to Valley Forge. The new trail and path alignments also now directly connect the Water Works with nearby Fairmount Park attractions at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Azalea Garden, and Boathouse Row.

2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT **PERSPECTIVE**

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PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project providing services other than physical design or planning (e.g., legal services).

Name Nancy Q. O'Donnell Title Director, Philadelphia Green

Organization Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) Telephone (215) 988-8800

Address 100 North 20th Street City/State/ZIP Phila, PA 19103

Fax (215) 988-8810 E-mail nodonnell@pennhort.org

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Signature Nancy O'Donnell Date 11/23/10

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

PHS partnered with Schuylkill River Development Corporation to bring improved landscape and other amenities, such as a fishing pier and a river overlook, to the northern end of the Schuylkill Banks trail and park. In conjunction with SRDC, PHS provided oversight and guidance to the designer, Lager Raabe Skafte Landscape Architects. Additionally, PHS helped select tree species, located and tagged the trees in the nursery, and oversaw tree installation.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

Schuylkill Banks has transformed the river's previously underused downtown waterfront into a vibrant, active asset for the immediate neighborhood, larger city, and region. It connects residents and visitors to the river in a way that was not possible prior to the park's development. The park is in constant use, and allows downtowners safe access to a recreational trail that extends from downtown Philadelphia all the way to Valley Forge, PA. This connection is critical for commuters as well. The park provides opportunities for active and passive use including, biking, running, fishing, strolling, relaxing and daydreaming. Its programs bring in hundred of people for kayaking, movies, Halloween and Easter parades, to name a few. All of these activities have a beneficial effect on the lives of many Philadelphia area residents, as well as tourists.

The park has an economic effect as well. The sprouting of new mid-rise residential buildings with views of the park and the river prove the park's value as a spur to real estate development.

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?

Cities need access to their riverfront. While this type of development is occurring around the country, Schuylkill Banks is an exceptional example of how to conquer seemingly impossible odds to create a park successfully. Access to the site was blocked for many years by the rail line that separates the city from the water. The park is extremely narrow in some portions. Several points are only accessible from bridges that arch 25 feet over the level of the trial. All of these obstacles have been overcome in some cases through inventive design; in the case of the railroad through persistence in finding access solutions that were acceptable to all parties. For our organization, this park is instructive in regard to partnership-building, community outreach, strong leadership, and appropriate design.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspect of the project is the trail itself as it follows the river-- it's relationship to the river; the trail can be enjoyed at a leisurely walk or a more strenuous pace.

The least successful aspect is the difficulty of the connection under the Spring Garden Street Bridge where visibility of oncoming traffic is poor.

2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a staff representative of a public agency directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name Mark Focht Title Executive Director

Organization Fairmount Park Telephone (215) 683-0202

Address One Parkway, 10th Floor, 1515 Arch Street City/State/ZIP Philadelphia, PA 19102

Fax (215) 683-0205 E-mail mark.focht@phila.gov

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Signature Mea. Ff Date 11.20.10

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

Fairmount Park owns Schuylkill Banks and manages the greenway in partnership with SRDC. Fairmount Park staff reviewed and approved contract documents (drawings and specifications) for the project and the Park Commission approved the overall concept.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

Schuylkill Banks was intended to expand recreational opportunities within Philadelphia and to be an economic development driver for increased residential conversion in this area.

Schuylkill Banks is located on a thin sliver of land sandwiched between an active freight railroad track and the Schuylkill River. Many compromises in design (width, alignment, etc) had to be made to create a cohesive trail and greenway. Fairmount Park and SRDC worked together, with public input, to solve these issues.

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

Schuylkill Banks is a tremendous benefit to the City of Philadelphia. This popular multi-use park gives river access to thousands of people in Philadelphia who were previously separated from the river despite its close physical location. Easily accessible green space, like Schuylkill Banks, significantly increases the quality of life within the built urban environment of Philadelphia. It allows Philadelphians to commune with nature and to exercise, leading to a healthier and more grounded population. In addition to benefiting current residents, this helps to draw new residents and businesses and further stimulate green growth in Philadelphia. The trail running through Schuylkill Banks also allows people in Center City, South Philadelphia and West Philadelphia an easy connection to the Schuylkill River Trail, which allows access to a vast trail network further north in the Fairmount Park System. This greenway space is not only a recreational asset, but also allows pedestrian and bicycle commuters off-road connections between 30th Street Station and Center City, easing traffic and reducing vehicle emissions.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

This project shows the value of having a strong non-profit partner to assist with developing and managing city owned park space. SRDC works vigilantly to maintain existing park land along Schuylkill Banks by tending landscaping, picking up litter, removing graffiti, and hosting public programs, allowing Fairmount Park to focus on larger matters such as seeding and mowing grass and emptying trash cans. SRDC also works to develop plans and find construction funding for additional riverfront park projects, which will eventually become part of Fairmount Park, adding value to the parcels that will be developed as well as the park system. The partnership between SRDC and Fairmount Park could be an instructive model for other non-profits and governmental agencies in Philadelphia and similar agencies in other cities.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspect of the project is the greenway itself, which has completely transformed the riverfront corridor. Recently Inga Saffron, the architecture critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer, wrote that "the most transformational project that Philadelphia built in the last decade wasn't a museum or a skyscraper, but the skinny mile-long strip of plain asphalt that hugs the Schuylkill in Center City. On a crisp fall day, you can find runners from Penn, fishermen from Grays Ferry, and yoga devotees from Fitler Square jostled together on the 12-foot-wide recreation path, drawn by big-sky views of the sparkling river. If Schuylkill Banks isn't an urban success story, I don't know what is."

The least successful aspect of the project is the narrowing of the riverbank at some areas, such as under the Chestnut Street Bridge, which sometimes leads to congestion along the trail.

2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE



DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by the person who took primary responsibility for project financing or is a representative of the group which did.

Name Joseph R. Syrnick Title President & CEO

Organization Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC) Telephone (215) 222-6030 ext. 102

Address 2929 Arch Street, 13th Floor City/State/ZIP Philadelphia, PA 19104

Fax (215) 222-6032 E-mail joseph.syrnick@srdc.net

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Signature Joseph R. Syrnick Date 11.30.2010

1. What role did you or your company play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement.

SRDC is the lead agency in the redevelopment in the tidal Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. Working in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, SRDC was awarded grants, built a constituency for the project and now maintains portions of the trail and greenway.

2. What trade-offs or compromises were required during the development of the project?

Originally, the project was conceived with much more hardscaping (pavers, granite walls, etc). This increased the cost and thus prior to construction much of this was re-designed with planted areas. In hindsight the change was probably beneficial as the more natural development is more eco-friendly (riparian buffer, stormwater management, aesthetics, etc) and more resilient to the occasional flooding after a heavy storm.

3. How was the project financed? What, if any, innovative means of financing were used?

The project was funded primarily with federal transportation grants matched by the City of Philadelphia capital funds. SRDC secured an early ISTEA grant for $6.8M that pushed the project from a concept to a reality. We believe this was one of the first ISTEA grants given to a non-governmental entity.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of the project?

The success is measured by the 16,000 weekly users of the trail and greenway. Many users say the trail has "changed their lives." The one imperfect aspect of the project is the constricted width and restricted access caused by the adjacent railroad. However, the project designers worked around these constraints considering them challenges as opposed to obstacles. The result, while perhaps not perfect, is a great overall success.

2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER **PERSPECTIVE**

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ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services.

Name Timothy Boles, PE | Title President

Organization Boles, Smyth Associates & The Delta Group | Telephone (215) 561 2644

Address 2400 Chestnut Street | City/State/ZIP Philadelphia PA 19103

Fax (215) 561 0501 | E-mail tfboles@bolessmyth.com

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Signature Timothy J. Boles | Date November 27, 2010

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

The design concept was to make the long, narrow parcel of inaccessible land between the navigable reach of the Schuylkill River and a freight rail line accessible to the public for recreational uses. The goal was to turn this derelict parcel into a valuable community asset, a riverfront park, available to the densely populated downtown area.

This park would be accessible to workers on their lunch breaks, students and staff at the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University and others. The connection to the Schuylkill River Trail near the Philadelphia Museum of Art extends the trail network (planned from Philadelphia out to Pottsville) into the downtown area of the City of Philadelphia.

The Tidal Schuylkill River Master Plan – Creating a New Vision dated March 2003 identifies this section of the Park and trail network as a key link in the extension of the Park to the south . Completion of this segment of the Park, known as the upper reach, is a major step in the plan to extend the Park and Greeway to the southern end at Fort Mifflin at the confluence of the Schuylkill River and the Delaware Rivers.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

One of the most important programmatic function of the project was to create safe and reliable access to the land at numerous locations. In order for the park to be useful and safe, access was needed from the crossing street overpasses and across the railroad tracks. Without access at multiple key locations the park would have been an undesirable and unsafe destination for most users. The numerous connection points allow users to use the park for recreation as well as for pedestrian and bicycle commuting without fear of being trapped in a dead end or inaccessible area of the park. Frequent and sometimes long term blockages by the freight rail cars required all users, including handicapped, to have alternate access options in the event that they cannot access the trail as planned. The restored river bulkhead also makes the park accessible to boat traffic for both recreation and security

The Schuylkill River Park Project began construction in 2002 and improvements continue to this day. The recently completed South Street Bridge provides access to the Park from the roadway above to complement the access from overpasses at JFK Blvd, Market Street, Chestnut Street and Walnut Street.

Another significant function is that the trail in the park completes another one mile section in the Schuylkill River Trail which will extend approximately 130 miles when completed. 56 miles are currently open for use with another 23 miles in design or construction.

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

One of the greatest challenge may have been the sheer duration of the project. The determination and foresight of the Philadelphia Streets Department, however, kept the project moving forward over many decades as design and construction effort could be funded.

The cost of constructing access ramps, stairs and railroad crossing and river bulkhead required that the project be completed in stages. This meant that elements constructed in early phases went unused until the trail and other park amenities could be completed.

Other challenges included years of negotiating rights-of-way and establishing land ownership in poorly documented areas. Much of the land along the river was not described on recorded deeds and with numerous changes of ownership of railroad properties it was difficult to establish property boundaries who retained the underlying rights to the land. The railroads also had concerns about the use of at-grade railroad crossings by pedestrians and how they might behave when cut off by freight trains.

Securing environmental permits and minimizing impacts to natural resources including wetlands and endangered species was also a challenge as much of the bulkhead work occurred within the River.

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context.

Construction of the park recovers vacant, blighted, and inaccessible lands which had long been a nuisance and safety concern to adjacent communities. The park is now a valuable asset to the community that enhances property values instead of having a potentially negative impact.

The trail and park provide much needed space for recreation and non-vehicular transportation uses away from vehicular traffic which is a rarity in this urban settings.

The park connects of urban cultural and recreational centers to high density residential and commercial districts. The park provides non-vehicular access to the Philadelphia Zoo, the Art Museum, Fairmount Water Works, Fish Ladder at Fairmount Dam, Schuylkill River Trail and Greenway as well as the Walnut Street Boat Launch and Docking Facility (constructed as part of the is project).

The trail completes of another critical link a regional recreational trail system connecting with the system that continues north along the river and will ultimately link with other trails and greenways such as the East Coast Greenway and the Tinicum-Fort Mifflin Trail.










SCHUYLKILL BANKS









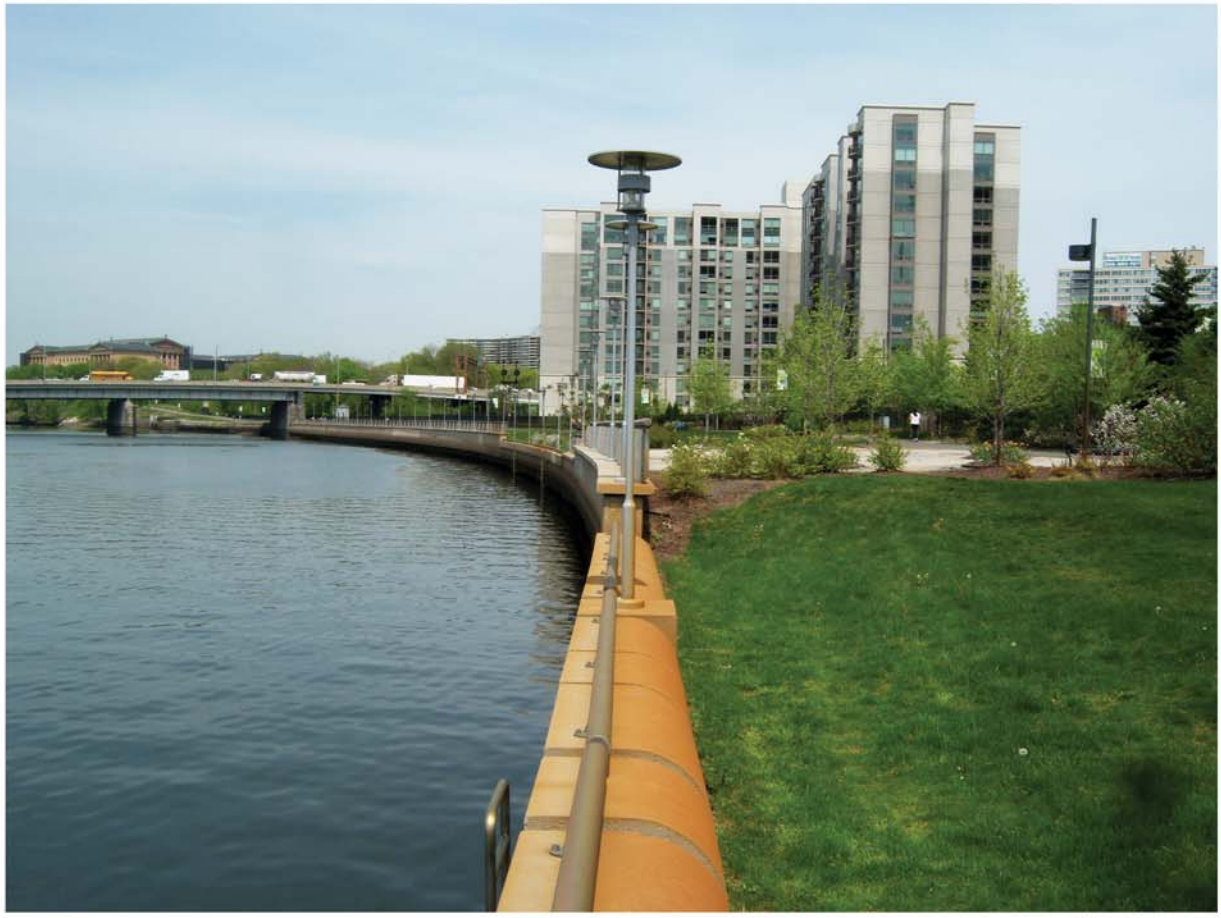



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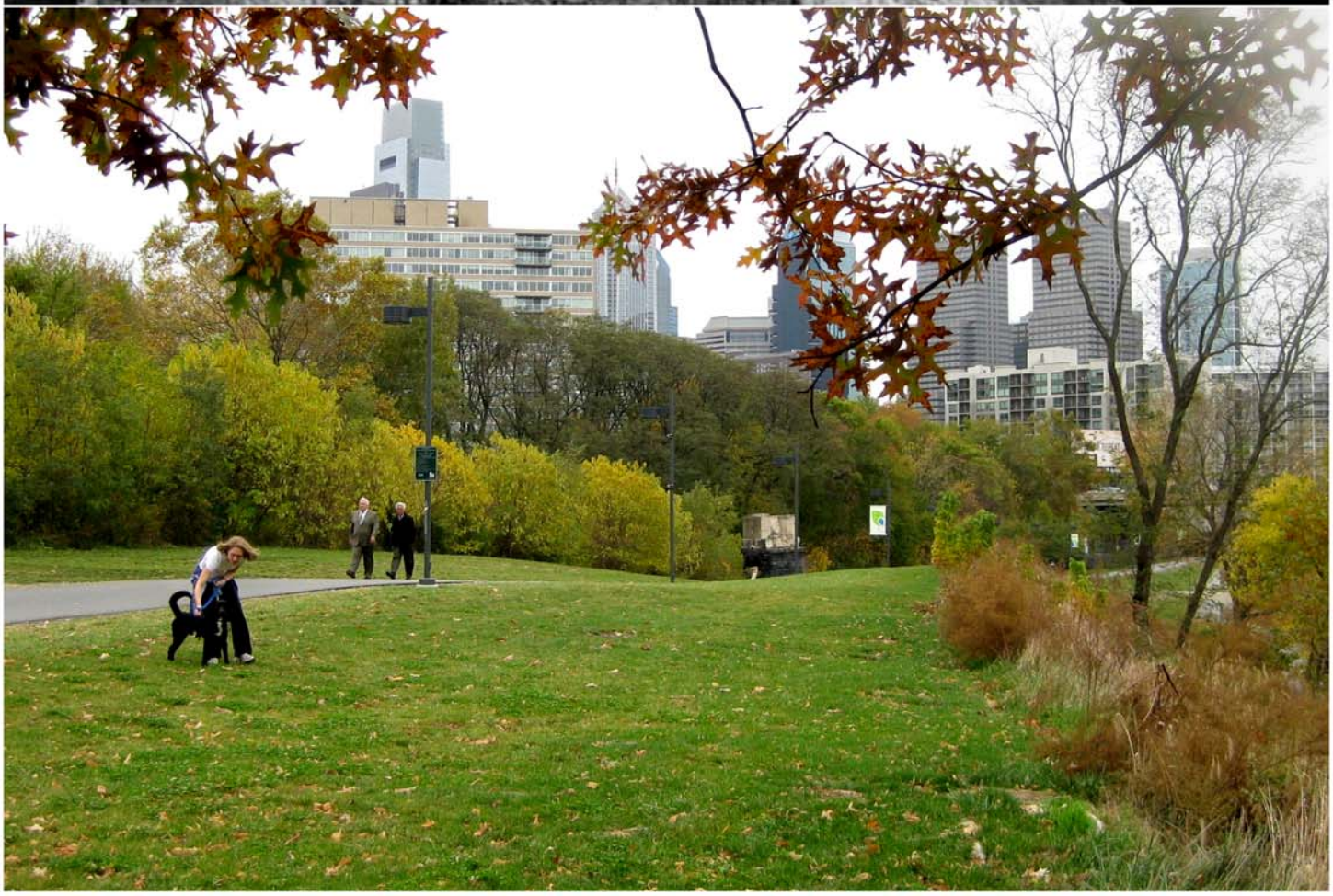

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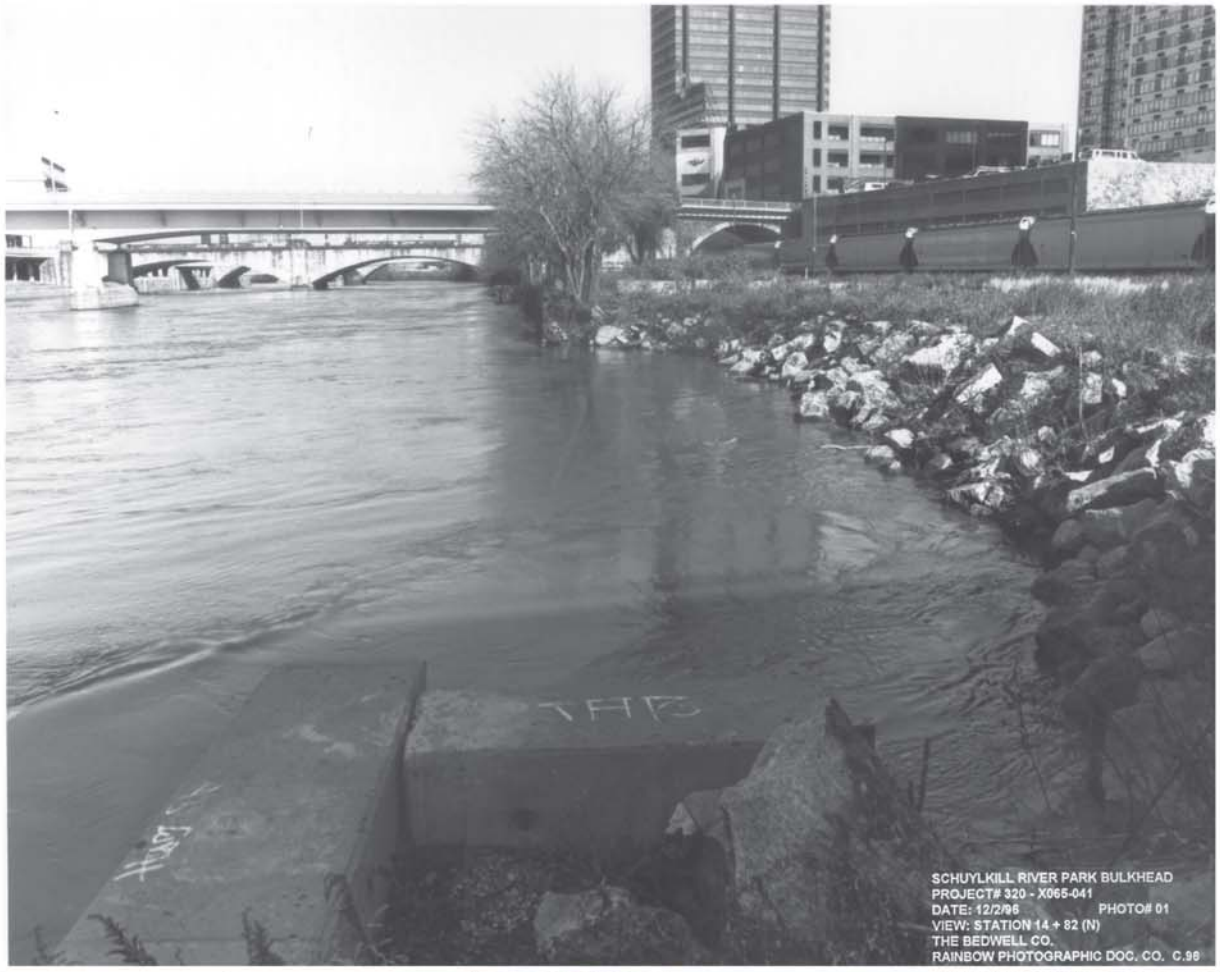



SCHUYLKILL RIVER PARK BULKHEAD
PROJECT# 320 - X065-041
DATE: 6/24/97 PHOTO# 04
VIEW: RACE STREET (N)
THE BEDWELL CO.
RAINBOW PHOTOGRAPHIC DOC. CO. C.97








SCHUYLKILL RIVER PARK BULKHEAD
PROJECT# 320 - X065-041
DATE: 12/2/96 PHOTO# 01
VIEW: STATION 14 + 82 (N)
THE BEDWELL CO.
RAINBOW PHOTOGRAPHIC DOC. CO. C.96





Schuylkill Banks Map





Parking

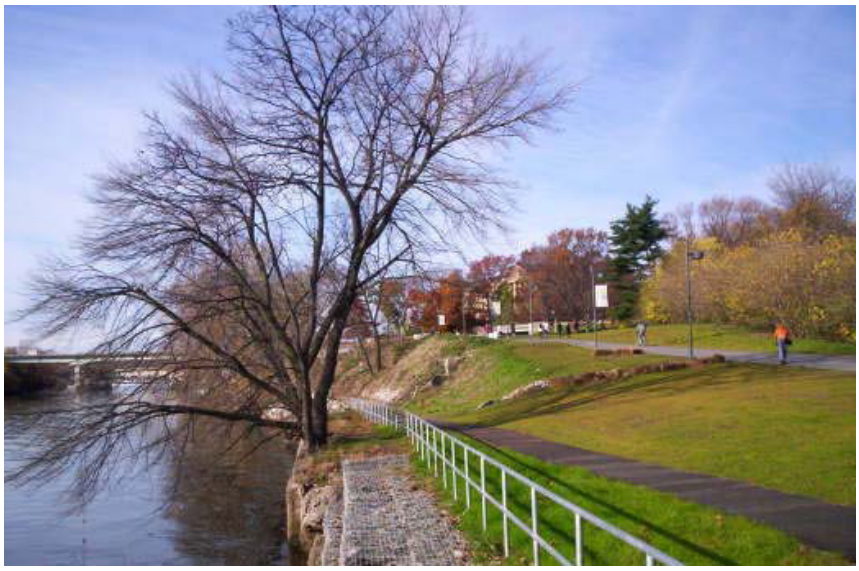


Photo by the author

I am just a bit in love with the Schuylkill Banks. I know how everyone likes to joke about how icky the river is, but really, I find it to be quite beautiful. I may have been some sort of water dwelling creature in a previous life; something about large bodies of water just hits me. A few Saturdays ago, I spent the better part of an hour sitting on the edge of the bank, down by Locust street, just staring at the Schuylkill.

Strangely enough, the one part of the Banks that I don't enjoy is riding my bike on the trail. It feels all too treacherous—people don't pay attention, pedestrians don't stay to the far right, spandex clad bikers zoom by without shouting out "on your left!" It may all be fine on weekdays or whenever it's not crowded, but on sunny weekend days, I'd rather walk it. That said, the trail that starts along the Schuylkill Banks is the same one that goes up to Valley Forge, which is quite an enjoyable ride once you get beyond Manayunk.

You can take a boat ride on the Schuylkill from the Banks, which I have wanted to do for a long time and haven't yet had the chance to do. And now it's winter, so I'll have to wait another few months. The tours cost about $20. One takes you down to Bartram's Gardens, while the other introduces you to the "Secrets of the Schuylkill."

There are a great many things in store for the Schuylkill Banks. Three signs at the base of the current trail (Locust Street) explain the new plans as well as the history of the river. More immediate construction projects include adding stairs to the bridge at JFK Blvd, so that pedestrians can access the Banks from there as well as the bridges at Walnut, Chestnut, and Market streets. The north end of the Banks has recently been redone, with the addition of a stone plaza, a pergola, and stairs leading to a lower trail (which I have not yet checked out—if you have let us know!). Future plans include a bridge so that you can access the park from Locust Street and Schuylkill River Park, even if those pesky trains are parked there, a boardwalk extending from Locust to South Streets, and turning Crescent, located between 34th Street and Grays Ferry Avenue into a greenway with a park and multi-use trail. These projects are expected to be completed sometime in 2010 or 2011. The ultimate goal is for the trails/greenways to stretch from the Waterworks down to Fort Mifflin, for a total length of eight miles. I personally can't wait until it's all finished.

By amy in Miscellaneous on December 9, 2009 4:00 PM

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Posted on Fri, Oct. 29, 2010

Changing Skyline: Duck boats pose a threat to Schuylkill Banks



By Inga Saffron

Inquirer Architecture Critic

The most transformational project that Philadelphia built in the last decade wasn't a museum or a skyscraper, but the skinny, mile-long strip of plain asphalt that hugs the Schuylkill in Center City. On a crisp fall day, you can find runners from Penn, fishermen from Grays Ferry, and yoga devotees from Fitler Square jostled together on the 12-foot-wide recreation path, drawn by big-sky views of the sparkling river.

If Schuylkill Banks isn't an urban success story, I don't know what is.

That success is now under threat from two intrusions aimed at tourists, including a hasty plan that would allow a private company's amphibious duck boats to use the park to access the river.

Barely three months have passed since a Ride the Ducks tour boat's fatal collision on the Delaware River, yet the Nutter administration has already given the company a green light to dig a massive open-air trench through a glade at the north end of Schuylkill Banks, just off Martin Luther King Drive. The trench would slope under the trail to allow the duck boats to descend to the river.

Come spring, Ride the Ducks officials expect to start running 60 boatloads of quacking tourists through the park each day. The company is so confident of winning approval for its access road, the recording on its reservation line urges people to join in a "new sightseeing adventure on the Schuylkill" beginning March 5. Let's hope federal safety officials have determined the cause of the Delaware collision by then.

The second intrusion isn't as destructive as an invasion of duck boats, but it, too, would alter the park's easygoing ambience.

A group of private activists is promoting a plan for a giant water screen and fountains in the middle

of the tidal river. Inspired by a Las Vegas attraction, the big sprays of water might be described as an ephemeral billboard, and would serve as a backdrop for video art and images of city attractions. The backers already have secured promises of $2 million in state money for the project, called Water Magic, and support letters from a half-dozen city leaders.

As dissimilar as the two projects are, each would profoundly change the character of the waterfront park, shifting it from a residential amenity to a tourist attraction with moneymaking potential.

Nothing is wrong with encouraging out-of-towners to visit the Schuylkill's grassy banks. But in its eagerness to accommodate the tourist-centric projects, the Nutter administration appears to have been blinded by dollar signs from tourism.

What's wrong with letting a park just be a park?

The real value of Schuylkill Banks is that it provides the kind of social space that today's urbanites crave. The 1.2-mile park, which has its own administrative agency, is important because it extends Kelly Drive's range of activities right into Philadelphia's densely populated heart.

Few cities can boast such convenience. The trail is a short jog from downtown offices, West Philadelphia universities, and a tapestry of neighborhoods - making it both a commuter route and a leisure destination. Mayor Nutter deserves credit for weaving the park into the city's bike network with new crosstown bike lanes on Spruce and Pine Streets. As technology gives people more flexibility to choose where they live, amenities like the park help make Philadelphia a more competitive option.

But the allure of the park itself will surely diminish once bus-size duck boats start rumbling through the trees.

Neither Ride the Ducks' vice president, Robert Salmon, nor the city's deputy managing director, Brian Abernathy, would agree to release the proposed road alignment, explaining that the company was still working out the engineering details with a consultant. But based on interviews with three people who have seen the scheme, it sounds like many key decisions already have been made.

Early on, the city agreed that the duck boats would ply the lower Schuylkill, below the Water Works dam, because there is too much sculling activity on the upper portion. The problem is that train tracks and highways on both sides of the river form a substantial barrier for the boats - at least along the portion of the river convenient to Center City.

In fact, Abernathy insists, the only Center City entry point that is *not* blocked by rail tracks is the triangle of land immediately east of the pergola on King Drive. This gateway is where the park broadens out toward Eakins Oval. Years ago, the administration of then-Mayor John F. Street set aside the triangle for skateboarders, who have just amended their design to accommodate the duck boats.

But before the ducks came into the picture, the Schuylkill River Development Corp. saw the area as the park's front door. It built the pergola as a trailhead to welcome people to the park. The area has evolved into a major hub, a gathering place for parades and group events.

This crowded spot could soon be the place where the lumbering duck boats make a right turn to enter the park. Since the river is 20 feet below the level of the path, the ducks will have to find a

way to get down to the bank. The working plan suggests embedding the access road in a sloping trench, to separate the vehicles from park users.

The trench, which would be paid for by Ride the Ducks, would run under the park's asphalt trail on its way down to the water. But it's too soon to know whether the trail would remain flat, or whether the duck boats would need so much overhead clearance that the company would have to raise the path with a footbridge over the open cut.

Constructing the trench would be easy. But camouflaging it is another matter. The gentler the angle of the slope, the longer the trench's approach. Joseph Syrnick, the park's director, said the access road may have to run parallel to the path for some distance before tunneling into the bluff.

To prevent park users from falling into the trench, it would no doubt have to be fenced and lighted. The trench's roadbed is expected to be the width of a car lane, about 10 feet. But since the trench's earthen walls would slope, the opening at the level of the park could be 20 feet wide.

In the midst of the green landscape, such an open cut couldn't help but look like the entrance to a parking garage.

These are just a few of the land-based issues raised by the ducks' move to the Schuylkill. What happens when the clumsy vehicles plop into the river, which is increasingly populated by kayaks and other small craft? How will runners and bicyclists on the trail respond to the attraction's signature quacking?

Since Ride the Ducks intends to keep its home base on Independence Mall, what happens if the vehicles become snarled in crosstown traffic as they travel up the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, with special quacks for the Barnes Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art? And who will supervise the trench construction in the park - Ride the Ducks or the city?

Abernathy assured me that the final design for the ducks' access ramp would be presented to neighborhood groups and approved by City Council. But that just means stakeholders get to argue about the details. Moving the ducks to the Schuylkill Banks is already a done deal.

No doubt, the success of the park since its opening in 2004 took the city by surprise. Plans for the project sat on a shelf for more than four decades before waterfront activist John Randolph nudged the Street administration into action.

Now that the public has embraced the trail, Randolph seems intent on gilding the lily. Along with another activist, Rob Stuart, he is promoting the plan for Water Magic, the giant water spray that would serve as a screen for videos. They say that the content would be artful and not commercial, and that the videos would be chosen by experts.

The screen, installed on a barge, would be the first phase of a larger project that would include 20 fountains running down the midline of the river between Market and South Streets. The fountains would be programmed and lighted for an elaborate water ballet that the pair say would attract droves of tourists. The added benefit is that the sound of water would mitigate noise from the expressway.

Maybe so. But don't we have enough screens in our lives? A park is the one place where people can go to escape the relentless assault of images.

Before parks became just another draw for tourists, cities valued them as a way to soothe the rough edges of urban life. Tourists, after all, come and go. What cities need are residents who are

here for the long term.

Contact architecture critic Inga Saffron at 215-854-2213 or isaffron@phillynews.com.

Find this article at:
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October 14, 2010

Light Drift, A Temporary Nighttime Public Art Display, To Set The Schuylkill River Aglow for Three Nights, Starting Friday, Oct. 15

Posted by Ted Scheid **Filed in:** EVENTS

Like 17 2



The new art installation will be located on the Schuylkill Banks, between Market and Chestnut Streets.
(Image courtesy Mural Arts Program)

If you notice a few strange glowing orbs along the Schuylkill River this weekend, have no fear — it's not an invasion of glowing jellyfish. Rather it's *Light Drift*, an interactive, riverfront public art installation and experience that is part of Design Philadelphia.

For three nights only — this Friday, Saturday & Sunday — from dusk until dawn each night, visitors can interact with 100 vacuum-formed, non-toxic, recyclable orbs.

The orbs, located both on land and floating in the river, communicate with each other using sensors and radio signals.

As viewers engage and occupy the orbs along the park, the grid of lights in the water becomes an index of the activities on land. Multiple viewers can even create "intersections of linear patterns," encouraging viewers to "play" with each other.

The interactivity of the orbs is designed to bring the people together by providing gathering spaces for watching the river turn into a flickering constellation, creating new connections on the river's edge.

Light Drift is the brainchild of installation artist J. Meejin Yoon of MY Studio in Boston, Massachusetts. It's presented by the Mural Arts Program in partnership with Fairmount Park, Schuylkill River Development Corporation and Philadelphia Water Department.

The Opening Reception for *Light Drift* will be held on Friday, October 15, 6:30 pm on the Schuylkill Banks between Market & Chestnut Streets.

Light Drift
An interactive, riverfront lighting experience
Three nights only – October 15, 16 & 17, Dusk to Dawn
Free and open to the public
Schuylkill Banks (between Market & Chestnut Streets)

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Jose Garces apparently couldn't wait til tomorrow... RT @chefjosegarces JG Domestic is NOW OPEN at the Cira Centre! http://jgdomestic.com in reply to chefjosegarces 15 hrs ago

Philly Film Festival debuts tonight w/ premiere of Black Swan; director Darren Aronofsy & PA Ballet dancers to attend: http://bit.ly/dsq3xe 16 hrs ago

Awesome! The Phillies Ryan Howard will present the Top 10 List on Letterman tonight, on CBS3 at 11:30pm. via @PhillyGossip 21 hrs ago

Phillies Pep Rally today at 12 noon w/ the Phillie Phanatic at 15th & Market across from City Hall *weather permitting* http://bit.ly/9MR1th 22 hrs ago

Tomorrow the Independence Visitor Center is hosting their 6th annual Battle of the Soft Pretzels at 12 Noon. It's free: http://bit.ly/bm8MRx 23 hrs ago

New video: get a behind-the-scenes look at the locally-sourced and uber-delicious Renaissance Sausage food truck: http://bit.ly/czRta9 1 day ago

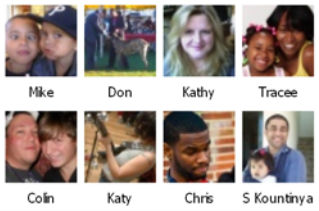
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Schuylkill Banks River Tour: A Float Through History

Posted by **Samantha Lazar** on October 13, 2009



In Dutch "Schuylkill" means "hidden river." During Philadelphia's early history it was "hidden" because it was so far away from the center of town, which was alongside the Delaware, that few city dwellers ever ventured over to its banks (though my main man Benny F. was a big fan of its tranquility and liked to relax on its shores). During the industrial era people *wished* it was hidden, but had a hard time avoiding its filth and stench -- for years a slaughterhouse near 30th Street poured steams of blood and offal directly into its waters. Nowadays, though, the Schuylkill doesn't deserve its dirty reputation; The Schuylkill River Development Corporation has been working hard to revive the river, and it is no longer the wasteland of its industrial days. Over 45 species of fish now thrive in its waters, people run and jog alongside its lush banks, and kayakers, pleasure-boaters, and fisherman (in addition to collegiate rowers, of course) abound on nice days. How do I know so much about the river that divides University City and Center City? **Schuylkill Banks** invited me along for a **"Secrets of the Schuylkill"** tour!

The Schuylkill Banks River Tour is an hour and a half long gentle cruise up and down the river, and is a fabulous way to see the city, both for visitors and for any Philadelphian who'd like to learn some history. While taking in views of boathouse row, the Greek Revival style Water Works (so beautiful from the water side, you have no idea!), and Center City's skyscrapers, a guide tells stories about the Schuylkill's history and its current re-development. In addition to learning lots of fun facts, details about all the bridges that span the river, and the future of the running path -- four thousand feet of new trail will be built within the next year! -- the trip is much more scenic than you'd expect. In addition to the foliage, I caught glimpses of white ducks, herons, and an osprey (who knew?!).

Another boat trip, **"Boat to Bartram's Garden,"** is also offered. This one will pick you up at the Walnut Street dock as well, but it will bring you downstream to America's oldest botanical garden, which is also a National Historic Landmark, where you'll disembark to tour the house and grounds. Though the boats are covered to shelter you from the elements, tours only run for the rest of the month before stopping for the winter. So make sure to catch one soon before the water turns icey!

Schuylkill Banks River Tour
2499 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(888) RIV-PHIL
www.schuylkillbanks.org

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New Coalition To Rescue Philadelphia's Riverfronts

By Haywood Brewster | -- 10/5/2009

Nearly 40 groups are calling on city and state government to revive the public riverfronts along the Delaware and Schuylkill

The Coalition for Philadelphia's Riverfronts (CPR)—a new alliance of more than three dozen civic, neighborhood, governmental, faith-based and business groups—is launching an unprecedented and coordinated effort to revive Philadelphia's waterfront areas.

The groups that are part of CPR want to create a public greenway for clear, easy access to the waterfronts along both the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers. The greenway would help recapture Philadelphia's heritage as a waterfront city and bring it into the 21st Century. Greenways typically contain trails for hiking, jogging and biking, and they provide environmental benefits that improve the overall quality of life. Riverfront greenways already have helped revitalize such cities as San Antonio, Chicago, Pittsburgh and San Francisco.

Existing projects such as new waterfront access along Schuylkill Banks and at Pennypack Park on the Northern Delaware show how cleaning up and maintaining a greenway along the river can serve to revitalize neighborhoods. In fact, Philadelphia exists where it does because of the two rivers. Access to the waterways was vital for business, health and pleasure.

"Philadelphia has an extraordinary opportunity to revitalize our city by restoring our riverfronts so that they achieve their enormous cultural, economic and environmental promise," said Rachel Vassar, Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture) Philadelphia Outreach Coordinator and Coordinator for the CPR campaign. "It is time for a riverfront revival. It is time to make a continuous, connected, high-quality greenway city policy."

The groups involved in the Coalition for Philadelphia's Riverfront go beyond the traditional environmental organizations. They include development corporations and faith-based associations, civic organizations, governmental agencies and "friends" of all sorts.

The Coalition is asking City Council and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission to make the greenway a priority. City Council, according to the Coalition, should pass an ordinance requiring the land along both rivers be reserved for a future greenway, and with the help of the Planning Commission, add the greenway to the official city plan. At a minimum, the new law should require that all new riverfront development be set back far enough from the water to allow for a high quality trail with room for biking and walking and green space to help with stormwater management, filter pollution, and attract wildlife back to the river's edge. This policy should be applied to all riverfront neighborhoods with the same high standards.

CPR also is calling on the city to look into creative financing options such as tax incremental financing mechanisms, as well as possible state and federal funding, to support the greenway.

"Greenworks Philadelphia sets an ambitious goal of providing park and recreation resources within 10 minutes of 75 percent of residents. Developing parkland and open space connections along the city's rivers is a critical component of this goal," said Katherine Gajewski, director of sustainability for the city of Philadelphia. "The Mayor's Office of Sustainability looks forward to working with the Coalition for Philadelphia's Riverfronts as we strive to enhance our riverfronts and provide recreational opportunities for the benefit of all Philadelphians."

Besides the obvious recreational benefits—walkways, bike paths, access to rowing, kayaking and the like—CPR advocates the greenway project for several other reasons:

• It will improve water quality, since a good vegetated buffer can help filter pollutants before they enter our drinking water supply.

• As more and more Philadelphians commute by bike, the greenway will provide them faster, and more environmentally friendly, ways of getting to and from work.

• New recreational space will add to the public health, by offering places for residents to walk, run, cycle, and play. Additionally green space that includes plants and vegetation can combat the urban heat island affect and help filter air pollutants, reducing heat-related deaths and asthma and lung disease.

• Greener riverfronts enhance economic and commercial development. More beautiful and accessible riverfronts provide more attractive places for businesses to locate and bring in jobs. Business owners value open space and river views when choosing their locations.

“The greenway along the river will increase adjacent property values and should be a basic part of riverfront planning,” added Joseph R. Syrnick, president and CEO of the Schuylkill River Development Corporation. “Public access to the riverfront is a key component of the quality of life in Philadelphia.”

For more information: www.coalitionforphiladelphiasriverfronts.org.

The Coalition for Philadelphia’s Riverfronts is supported by the William Penn Foundation.

COMMUNITY TREND 10-1-09

COMMUNITY VOICES

Many ways to enjoy a day at Schuylkill Banks

Go boating and kayaking at the riverbank, or simply relax with a walk or picnic



Oh, The Places You'll Go

By Melissa Treacy

It may officially be fall these days, but the adventures available at The River Tours in Philadelphia help to stretch the feel of the summer season a little longer.

Through Oct. 24, the organization offers various guided tours along the Schuylkill Banks, making it an "ideal fall destination."

"Fall in Philadelphia is so much more than cascading leaves or kids heading back to school," said Dava Guerin, media contact for Guerin Public Relations, the firm in charge of promotions for Schuylkill Banks. "For thousands of people who love the outdoors, but want to stay close to the city, Schuylkill Banks is here."

Schuylkill Banks' events include river tours, kayaking and fishing. The group's 1.2-mile outdoor riverfront allows for the space for activities well into the fall season.

"[The space] has made it one of Philadelphia's most popular riverfront venues," said Guerin.

Overall, the Schuylkill Banks encompasses an eight-mile stretch of the riverbank. The river is a tidal river, which flows through the downtown of Philadelphia. The Banks is a portion of the river flowing south of the Fairmount Dam.

The Schuylkill Banks, a Schuylkill River Development Corporation Destination, includes the landscaped trail and "greenway" on the east side of Center City, between Locust Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, just below the Fairmount Water Works.

The organization offers a variety of activities along its banks. The River Tours, for example, include a one-hour tour that leaves from the Walnut Street Bridge at 6:30 p.m. on select Thursdays, and at 2 p.m. on Saturdays.

"The Secrets of the Schuylkill River Tours include interesting facts about the Schuylkill River, and the Boat to Bartram's Garden Tour offers a self-guided tour of the historic house and garden," said Guerin.

The Garden Tours are offered on select Sundays at 1 p.m. Tickets are $20 for adults and $15 for students and children under 15 years old.

Another popular tour available through Schuylkill Banks is enjoyed with a kayak.

"The Hidden River Outfitters Kayak Tours was the first to introduce people to the adventure of kayaking on the Schuylkill River," said Guerin. "Thousands have enjoyed paddling along the Schuylkill with Ted Danforth, an experienced kayak instructor and adventurist as their guide."

The Kayak Tours have been extended through the fall, and will start again on Sunday, Oct. 11. Tickets are $40. Paddling and safety instruction, as well as equipment rental, are included in the cost.

No matter the season, Schuylkill Banks is a great pick for a fun weekend activity.

"Schuylkill Banks is open year-round for many outdoor activities such as biking, walking, running or simply watching the tides," said Guerin.

Visitors to the organization will want to plan ahead for parking. Since the Schuylkill Banks is adjacent to a Center City neighborhood, there is two-hour parking on the streets near 25th and Locust streets.

Metered parking is also available along Walnut, Chestnut and Market streets, as well as Schuylkill Avenue. It is a busy part of the city, however, and guests should arrive to their events early to allow time to search for a spot.

Another word of warning is that the South Street Bridge is currently closed for construction. This also contributes to congestion and may make it more difficult for some visitors to access the area.

Again, if you plan ahead and allow yourself some extra time for travel, you will have plenty of time to enjoy your adventures awaiting along the river.

Besides its scheduled and guided tours, the Schuylkill Banks offers a space for all to enjoy other activities like biking, running, skating or walking. Many use its facilities for picnics, studying or just relaxing along the river.

These activities are, of course, free, and all in the region are welcome to drop by and use the space for these recreational purposes at any time.

For more information on Schuylkill Banks, or to volunteer or make a contribution, visit the Web site at www.schuylkillbanks.org.

A full schedule of tours and events is also listed on the organization's Web site.

Green Connector

MARTIN ZIMMERMAN

America's East Coast Greenway, a 3,000-mile vision, moves toward completion.

IN 1991, A HANDFUL OF CYCLIST AND PEDESTRIAN advocates—later named the East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA)—convened at the Amsterdam Avenue hostel in New York City, where an audacious formulation captured their collective imagination: a seamless 3,000-mile (4,800-km) route of nonmotorized travel connecting Calais, Maine, to Key West, Florida. An "I-95 for the people," is how ECGA executive director Karen Votava describes it.

Unlike government agencies, the ECGA neither owns nor builds trails. Instead, it works with local and state government agencies to secure land and funding for the greenway.



A new pedestrian bridge is planned over the CSX rail tracks from Center City Philadelphia to the Schuylkill Banks, an eight-mile-(13-km-) long corridor along both sides of the Schuylkill River.

Through ongoing relationships with state volunteer committees in all 16 states along the route, its staff members coordinate site selection, build consensus, oversee design consistency, and promote the overall greenway vision to the general public. The estimated cost for the completed system is $3 billion, with up to $1 billion having been either allocated or spent so far. To date, 500 miles (800 km) of the trail have been completed—about 20 percent of the entire route.

The greenway movement continues to gain momentum because greenways are considered sound investments. Research shows that the financial investment in a typical greenway pays major dividends in the form of increases in land values for the adjoining property owners. Moreover, because greenways often take advantage of existing public rights-of-way, land acquisition costs are kept to a minimum.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) initiated a major change in federal policy. By shifting to an intermodal approach from an automobile-focused one and allowing funding of off-road transportation systems, ISTEA enabled construction of the East Coast Greenway and thousands of other greenway projects throughout the United States.

The East Coast Greenway is unquestionably the longest of these projects. When completed, it will connect 25 large cities and more than 270 smaller ones along a route traveling through downtowns and along the streets of urban neighborhoods. It also will link rail stations through a joint partnership with Amtrak and is using abandoned rail corridors. Near Baltimore, it even swings in a loop around the Baltimore/Washington International Airport. Many portions of the trail are overlays on existing routes, such as the Charles River Esplanade in Boston or the Mount Vernon Trail in northern Virginia. The goal is to stitch the myriad threads together into a world-class destination—a 3,000-mile (4,800-km) span that reveals not only the rich civic history and culture of the eastern seaboard, but also its sweeping coastal scenery.

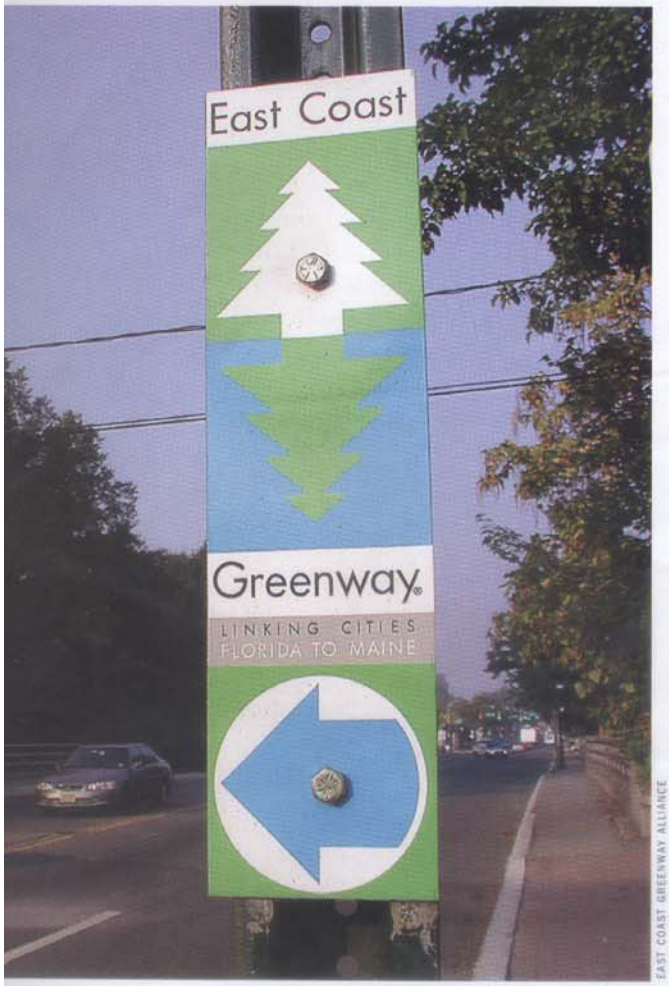
Three key segments of the East Coast Greenway illustrate differing development strategies as the route progresses southward from Maine. In the Center City District of Philadelphia, it is the armature for a major riverside cleanup and large-scale infill projects. In the Mid-Atlantic, it assumes a more subtle role, connecting urban, suburban, and exurban environments that link Baltimore to Washington, D.C., via Maryland's capital city, Annapolis. Across the Georgia border in northeast Florida, the greenway is beginning to play a significant role in the four-county First Coast region by helping fashion regional alliances and embellishing a healthy, tourist-based economy without sacrificing ecological resources.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia's Schuylkill River has a long history of neglect and mismanagement dating back to the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th and early



When completed, the East Coast Greenway will connect 25 large cities and more than 270 smaller ones along a route traveling from Maine to Florida.



EAST COAST GREENWAY ALLIANCE

Research shows that the financial investment in a typical greenway pays major dividends in the form of increases in land values for the adjoining property owners.

Other Greenway Links Near Completion

Progress has been made toward completing links in the next 12 months in several states, including North Carolina, Massachusetts, Maine, and Georgia.

White Oak Greenway, Cary, North Carolina

A new section of Cary, North Carolina's White Oak Creek Greenway is to open to the public by early September, advancing the goal of linking one designated East Coast Greenway trail with another soon to be designated. The White Oak Trail lies between the American Tobacco Trail, which is part of the greenway route to the west, and an extensive trail system in Wake County to the east. A true community connector, the trail when complete will also link three parks, ten subdivisions, and schools.

Border-to-Boston Trail, Essex County, Massachusetts

After many years of limited state support, the Border-to-Boston Trail is moving forward with the announcement that the state highway department has issued a request for proposals for preliminary trail design. This is a key moment in the history of a trail segment that is planned to wind through eight north shore towns, linking Boston to New Hampshire.

Maine Trail Additions

Construction of the 87-mile (140-km) Down East Sunrise Trail in Maine is beginning this year, and work is scheduled to begin for a new 1.6-mile (2.6-km) segment of the Eastern Trail in Old Orchard Beach. A contract has been awarded to national engineering, architecture, and planning firm HNTB to design 6.1 miles (9.8 km) of the Eastern Trail from Biddeford to West Kennebunk, including design of a new bicycle/pedestrian bridge over the Maine Turnpike. Later this year, installation of East Coast Greenway trail markers should be completed on Portland's Eastern Prom Trail.

Coastal Georgia Greenway

Progress is being made all along the route of the Coastal Georgia Greenway, planned to connect South Carolina to Florida. This year's activities include a greenway-inclusive design of the Back River Bridge between South Carolina and Hutchinson Island, Georgia. In conjunction with local and regional partners, the East Coast Greenway Alliance has identified as a priority for funding a trail linking Savannah's River Street, the Savannah College of Art and Design facilities, the Savannah Visitors Center, Battlefield Park, and the proposed First Century Campus adjacent to the Savannah-Ogeechee Canal.

19th centuries. Views of the Schuylkill, translated from the Dutch term "hidden river," continue to be blocked by outsized tank farms, an active CSX rail line, derelict warehouses, and the massive concrete superstructure of Interstate 76. Though recent remediation efforts have made the river less polluted than might be imagined, extensive work remains to eliminate the scars of the past.

Urban redevelopment proposals date back several decades, but it was not until 1992 that a coordinating entity, the nonprofit Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC) headed by former city engineer Joseph Syrnick, was created to shepherd the transformation of an eight-mile- (13-km-) long corridor along both sides of the river. Branded Schuylkill Banks, the redevelopment area extends from a point just north of the Philadelphia Art Museum to where the river flows into the Delaware. When completed, this segment of the East Coast Greenway trail, of which 1.2 miles (1.9 km) has been constructed, will be the unifying pedestrian and bicycle element for the entire eight-mile length of the Schuylkill Banks development.

Taking its urban design cues from master planning studies by Sasaki Associates and EDAW Inc., and supported by a host of complementary civic and government allies, the Banks will be developed in four geographical zones where high-density mixed uses are to be complemented by shoreline enhancement and restoration. Reconstruction is critical for six existing bridges, and a new pedestrian bridge is planned over the CSX rail tracks from Center City to the Schuylkill Banks, funded in part by the National Civic Initiatives arm of the Pew Charitable Trusts. Extensive landscaping and site-specific furniture to cost $16 million are currently in the design phase.

Merging with the Schuylkill Banks from the west, a 24-acre (9.7-ha) site adjoining Amtrak's 30th Street Station is being devel-



GLATTING JACKSON KERCHER ANGLIN INC. 2008

The 600-mile (970-km) Florida segment of the East Coast Greenway constitutes 20 percent of the total system, with much of the route offering views of beaches and wetlands.

oped by the University of Pennsylvania, while farther to the south and southwest, efforts to strengthen diverse existing neighborhoods are a high priority. The estimated price tag for total buildout of the Schuylkill Banks is $2.4 billion, of which $170 million in public funds will fuel private sector investments.

Baltimore/Washington

The 65-mile (105-km) segment of the East Coast Greenway being implemented from Baltimore's Inner Harbor to Washington, D.C.'s downtown core is one of the more complex linkages in the entire system. One highlight is at the Baltimore/Washington International Airport loop, where the path encircles the runways and connects directly to the terminal facility—the first path in the country to link to an airline terminal. From there, the greenway heads southeast 13 miles (21 km) toward the outskirts of Annapolis on a route provided through the rail-to-trail conversion of the former Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis freight line.

On-road segments in Anne Arundel County lead through the center of Annapolis, where the route follows the former South Shore portion of the defunct rail line to Prince George's County. Along the way, the greenway connects to Odenton, Maryland, a former railroad terminus, and Greenbelt, where 1930s international style architecture can be seen in the only intact town dating from the Great Depression era of federal public works projects.

Both the Anne Arundel and Prince George's county segments also demonstrate the greenway's ability to address the need for trails in sprawling suburban contexts. The greenway is credited by local parks staff as the catalyst for expansion of complementary, publicly owned off-road trail systems. "Using the East Coast Greenway as a model, we sought out neighborhood groups who desired trails for connectivity to schools, shopping, and other daily travel needs," says David Dionne, chief of trails and natural areas at the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks. "These groups provided the credibility to overcome resistance by a minority of adjoining property interests."

From Prince George's, the greenway crosses the District of Columbia line and joins the streets of dense D.C. neighborhoods, then merges with the Metropolitan Branch Trail for a short distance, paralleling the Metrorail's Red Line leading to the Union Station intermodal transit and shopping complex one block from Capitol Hill. A marker will soon be placed in the station plaza designating this location as the symbolic halfway point for the 3,000-mile greenway.

Florida

The 600-mile (970-km) segment of the East Coast Greenway planned through Florida constitutes 20 percent of the total system. The ECGA recently accelerated efforts to develop an 80-mile (130-km) segment parallel to highway A1A through Nassau, Duval, and St. John's counties in the First Coast region of northeast Florida. More than 6 million tourists and First Coast residents per year take advantage of the amenities and varied landscapes of the region. The permanent population exceeds 1.5 million in the Jacksonville metropolitan area, the First Coast's largest city.

Some of the state's most treasured landscapes can be found here, including beaches secluded at the end of bush trails, marsh paddling trails, and rare unspoiled coastal wetlands. In and near the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve are to be found traces of the first permanent European settlements in North America.

For many years, progress had been hampered by the lack of regional oversight, but meetings in Jacksonville in March 2007 brought new partners to the table, and last September another round of meetings was convened involving 35 regional leaders to develop a plan for several trails to complement the greenway. Another result of these meetings was formation of the First Coast Trails Coalition. Meanwhile, ECGA staff members continue their push southward to connect the greenway, partly by ferry, with the already completed Overseas Heritage Trail, a 107-mile (172-km) route through the Florida Keys.

When completed, the East Coast Greenway will be publicly owned and maintained to benefit an estimated 79 million residents and visitors per year. With 500 miles (800 km) completed, the greenway already claims a global presence in demonstrating a heightened practical response to the challenges posed by peak oil and global warming. In its presence at the local level, the greenway connects people to jobs, schools, and any number of other destinations, while, at the same time, helping improve air quality, promoting active, healthier lifestyles, and tying bustling city centers and sprawling suburbs to the multiple ecologies of the landscape. **UL**

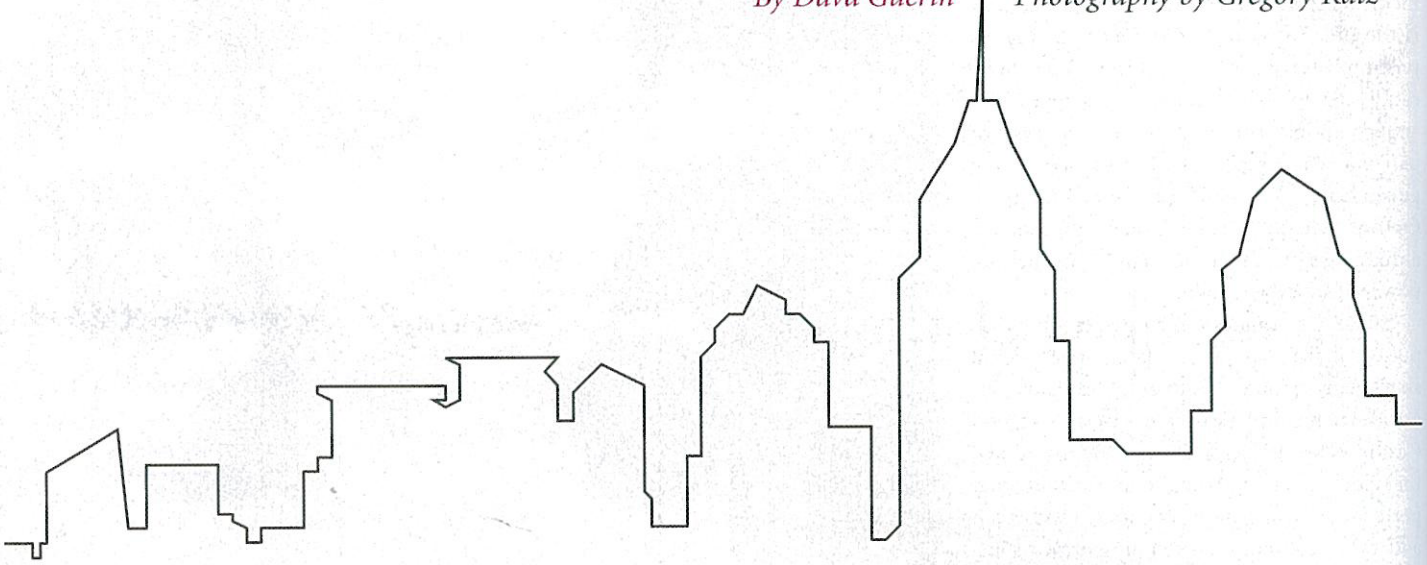
MARTIN ZIMMERMAN, a retired architect and city planner, writes from Charlotte, North Carolina, where he is active with the Charlotte Area Bicycle Alliance and the Carolina Thread Trail.


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SCHUYLKILL BANKS

PHILADELPHIA'S NEW RIVER CITY REALIZED

By Dava Guerin *Photography by Gregory Katz*



What was once a run-down tract of industrial land is now a hot, new urban waterfront destination. And it's changing the way visitors experience the once un-glamorous lower Schuylkill River.

Maybe it's the stuff of legend, but the story goes something like this: After watching Gene Kelly dance with Leslie Caron along a waterfront promenade in the movie, "An American in Paris," an energized resident called the Fairmount Park Commission and asked, "Why couldn't we have something like that here in Philadelphia?"

He was talking about the lower banks of the Schuylkill River—the three-mile stretch of waterfront from the Fairmount Water Works to historic Bartram's Gardens. Historically used for industrial purposes and an eyesore to residents, the Schuylkill, which means "Hidden River" in Dutch, is clandestine no more. Instead, it is a shining example of the power of partnership and the collective vision of Philadelphians who believe that by working together they can alter the landscape of the city's major waterfronts.

As Joe Syrnick, president and CEO of the Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC), the non-profit agency charged with the redevelopment of the lower banks of the Schuylkill River, recalls, the first real discussions about revitalizing the river took place thirty years ago. One of the leading landscape architects at the time, John Collins, believed that the city could literally transform the under-utilized space into a viable urban, waterfront destination. His vision, along with the support of Philadelphia mayors Rizzo, Green, Goode, Rendell and Street, as well as city agencies, foundations, and the private sector, laid the groundwork for what would become, "A complete change in the way we think about the river," according to Syrnick.>>>

Opposite page: Joe Syrnick, left, President and CEO of the Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC) and Jerry Sweeney, CEO of the Brandywine Realty Trust and chairman of the SRDC.



"I can't tell you what a good feeling it is to hear from the people who use the Banks regularly, that it has literally changed their lives," Syrnick said, with great pride. "It makes me feel terrific. It's such a warm feeling; even better than writing a check."

extension of the Schuylkill Trail to Bartram's Gardens; the beautification and creation of "Station Square on the Schuylkill," a public square on Market Street between Schuylkill Avenue and 30th Street, which will serve as the front door to the city's academic, commercial and transportation hubs; and a program to green and beautify targeted neighborhoods around the Tidal Schuylkill River.



Among the organizations that have helped SRDC and Sweeney transform the river is the Fairmount Park Commission. Under the direction of Mark Focht, executive director, the park is an "operating and programming partner," to Schuylkill Banks, one of the 63 parks that comprise the largest urban park system in the nation. "It's all about partnership," said Focht. "We have been very involved in this important project because it provides residents a way to reconnect to the river, and this idea of reclaiming the waterfront keeps it in all of our collective consciousness which translates into dollars and other support," he said.

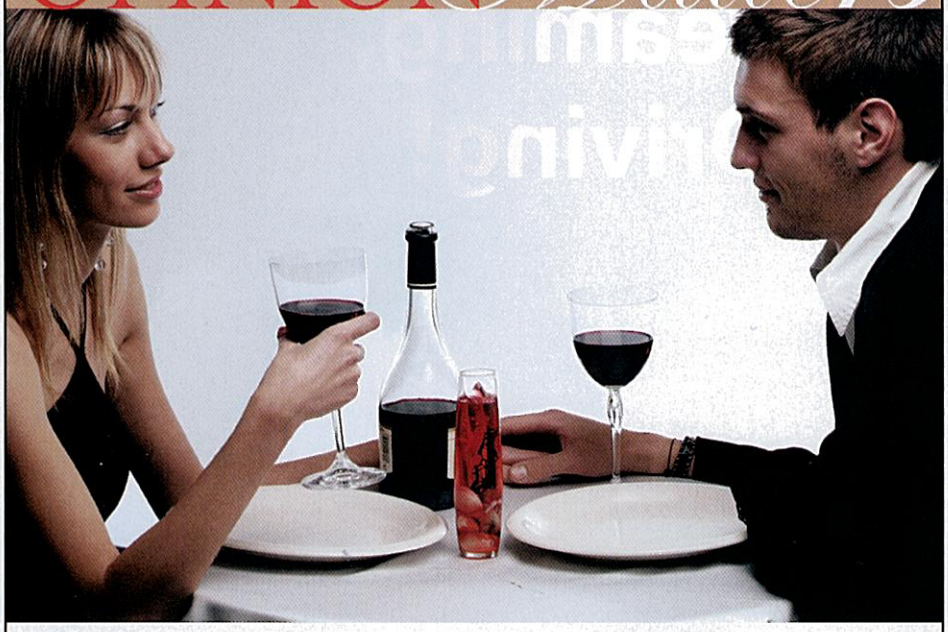
Focht also said that the development along the lower part of the river creates what he calls a "green backbone," which connects communities, and exposes more and more of the city's population to the joys of the river. "We're literally opening the front door to huge parcels of land that will eventually become new neighborhoods and communities," Focht added.

Boats, Pets and Flicks, Oh My!

Now that Schuylkill Banks is entering its third season of programming, the venue is lush and ready for the estimated 16,000 visitors who now use the park and trail each week. Last year SRDC launched its popular Riverboat Tours, with a generous grant from the Sweden-based company, SCA Americas, which has based its American operations in Philadelphia. For the first time in history, recreational riverboat tours travel the Schuylkill on a regular basis, giving passengers a birds-eye look at the flora and fauna along the six mile loop.

But there's nothing like being on the water for Sweeney, who visits the Banks almost every weekend with his sons and can't get enough of the

YOUR OPINION *Matters*



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place. "The first time I took a ride in the kayak I felt like this was a very unique experience. There you are, right on the water, and you see the cars going by and the buildings right there. It's the most powerful experience, and I can see why the kayak and boat programs have become so popular."

For the past two years, the river has also been the spot where regattas have been held for amateur rowers of all ages. The funds for these efforts have come from Toll Brothers at Naval Square, which has developed condominiums and luxury townhouses in the historic former U.S. Naval Hospital and Home along the lower banks of the river.

For Syrnick, a passionate dog enthusiast, the idea of using the venue to bring people and their pets together was a labor of love. "When we look to create programming on the Banks, we try to appeal to a wide range of people, and so many of our constituents said they would like an event for their 'best friends' as well. So we came up with our annual 'Pet Fest' event which we do each year in partnership with Town and Country Kennel."

Other programming includes a special movie series called "Suspense on the Banks" featuring the films of the legendary Alfred Hitchcock, and music and dance events throughout the summer.

But when all is said and done, and the bricks and mortar attach themselves for perpetuity, it's really what's inside that counts. "I can't tell you what a good feeling it is to hear from the people who use the Banks regularly, that it has literally changed their lives," Syrnick said, with great pride. "It makes me feel terrific. It's such a warm feeling; even better than writing a check."

You can take that to the Banks! LS

Dava Guerin lives in New Hope, PA.

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Outsider art

In a contemporary twist on a 19th-century tradition, Art in the Open will let viewers stroll the Schuylkill and see artists at work.

By Sally Friedman
FOR THE INQUIRER

Ah, the Left Bank in spring ... . A century or more ago, that would have meant Parisian strollers in their finery watching artists at their easels, painting *en plein air* — outdoors.

This week, Philadelphia sets that scene on its urban ear, offering the same concept, 2010 style. The city's first Art in the Open festival, Wednesday through Saturday, will feature knitting-needle symphonies, tree-wrapping, floating sculptures, and bird-house neighborhoods, along with more traditional artistic expressions.

In this incarnation, artists will be out on both the right and left banks (of the Schuylkill), and strollers are earnestly invited to bear witness — no finery required.

The *plein air* tradition may have morphed into something delightfully quirky, but its goals remain the same: creating joy and pleasure as artists and spectators come together under the sky.

And therein lies a tale.

See **ART** on H8



Philadelphia's Art in the Open festival seeks to create joy on both banks of the Schuylkill. In "Scarlet Ibis," top, by Laura Anderson Barbata, Ria Walters portrays a gigantic long-legged wading bird. Immediately below are "The Grand Resource," by Austin+Mergold, and two details from the installation. At bottom is "Flyway" by Ellie Irons and two details. At far right is "Floating," by Ava Blitz. These artists, and dozens more, will be creating new work Wednesday through Saturday.

Philadelphia fête puts the art outside

ART from H1

Back in 2007, Ed Bronstein, a Philadelphia architect-turned-artist, had experienced his first open-air painting festival, organized by the Wayne Arts Center. And he had fallen in love.

"It was just such a glorious experience that I began envisioning an even larger, grander, more diverse festival," recalls Bronstein, who found himself lost in visions of artists using the richness of Philadelphia's landscape as a framework, and the Schuylkill as a backdrop. He learned all he could from the Wayne event's organizers, who warned him it would be a monumental challenge.

Undaunted, he drafted a news release for a *plein air* event that did not yet exist. It included dates, format and details, and it outlined events and workshops involving major Philadelphia-area arts institutions. He even began planning lodgings for out-of-town artists.

"It was definitely a little wacky, but I still sent that press release out to several arts friends I thought might take an interest. I didn't know what to expect."

Lo and behold, within weeks he had two equally passionate partners.

Deenah Loeb, executive director of the City Parks Association of Philadelphia and a longtime champion of the city's arts and culture community, did not recognize that the news release wasn't authentic. She was instantly ready to climb on board.

"I've always been interested in how we use and live with our water resources," Loeb says, "and I was certainly intrigued by how we could do that through the arts."

For Mary Salvante, gallery and exhibitions program director at Rowan University Art Gallery in Glassboro, the appeal also was immediate. Her background includes years as a New York studio artist, and, more recently, arts consultancies with the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program and the Main Line Arts Center, among others.

But Salvante's was a cautious voice: "I knew from my own experience that Ed's timetable was way too optimistic and that there was no way he could do this in the fall of 2008, as he had hoped."

Despite the subsequent hours of meetings and proposal-writing, and the passion of the three planners, there was no way the three could have imagined the financial tsunami that hit just as their project was unfolding.

"The low point came when all of our grant applications were denied last year," says Bronstein, who had ample experience in architecture, including work on Baltimore's waterfront and for Philadelphia restaurateur Steve Poses, but none in arts administration. "I had a lot to learn."

It was at that disappointing juncture that the trio realized they'd have to make it happen themselves.

They began seeking assistance through donated services, while soliciting funds. Like-minded friends who could afford to contribute did, and Bronstein, who largely oversaw that challenge, managed to raise and personally donate the $12,500 needed for ancillary costs.

"We got so much encouragement from the local art community that we did feel validated," he said of the others who shared the vision of the festival, with the Schuylkill as its source of inspiration.

Art in the Open Philadelphia became a reality.

■

Head for the banks of the Schuylkill from Wednesday though Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and here's what you'll find: From the Fairmount Waterworks at the Philadelphia Museum of Art to Bartram's Garden three miles to the south, 36 artists will be at work. Along that route, visitors can pause to watch their progress, or even engage in art projects using materials provided free.

But don't expect to see only painters. One of the most exciting aspects of Art in the Open, its planners say, is the diversity of expression — it's not your grandfather's *plein air* festival.

The earlier tradition is rooted in the second half of the 19th century, when working in natural light became important to such French Impressionists as Pissarro, Monet, and Renoir.

But today's art world is vastly different, so, along with 14 painters using various techniques, Art in the Open will feature sculptors, digital media artists, and artists who work with sound, or with found objects. All were selected through a juried process, and most hope to interact with the public as they work, rather than just being observed.

Dance and photography, along with mixed media, will be represented on the Schuylkill's banks, reminders that 21st-century art is redefining boundaries and traditions.

Monet and Renoir could never have imagined, for example, a *plein air* event in which knitting is the artistic focus, with visitors encouraged to join Baltimore artist Laure Drogoul in her "Mobile Musical Knitting" adventure.

Drogoul will invite participants to join a circle, with knitting needles attached to tiny microphones to amplify their clicking. The result, after sound mixing, will be an aural experience highlighting what Drogoul calls the "symphonic expression" of the collective knitting process.

Denise Karabinus Telang of Portland, Maine, will focus on drawings of birds and foliage and the changing light on the riverbank. She herself will be inside a tentlike structure surrounded by bird-feeders, separate from the external world, yet still part of it.

Working from a temporary outdoor digital photo studio, Blaise Tobia of Philadelphia will create "assembled images" — digital panoramas demonstrating just how far the art of photography has come.

"I want to show that beauty is all around us," says Tremain Smith, who spent years as a community organizer in West Philadelphia before returning to art; she now tries to combine art with social concerns.

Her project focuses on found objects along the Schuylkill and the geometry of buildings as seen from the river. "I'm excited about being outside, next to the river, and surrounded by the urban landscape," says Smith, who uses paper, cloth, and rusted metal pieces in her work.

For the Philadelphia team of Jason Austin and Alek Mergold, whose work incorporates architecture, landscape design and installation art, the outdoor project is a chance to examine all three at once. Austin and Mergold will be creating birdhouses inspired by Philadelphia's iconic rowhouses.

"We aim to have the public ponder the life of their fellow urban inhabitants, the birds, and how the functions of aviary habitats — dry, sheltered and well-ventilated spaces — are similar to those of our own," Austin explains.

Nancy Agati, another Philadelphia artist, is interested in the movement of the Schuylkill's water. "I've been particularly captivated by the powerful currents and churning eddies that form at the base of the Waterworks waterfall," says Agati, whose drawings will be made on silk or Tyvek.

She says she hopes to get feedback from passersby — "the direct reaction to my art, so I can understand how I'm communicating to an audience."

She also expressed what so many involved with the festival feel on the practical level: "We can all plan, of course, but ultimately, nature — namely weather conditions — will have some control, too."

Art in the Open will take place rain or shine. Artists may make provisions for shelter, but the hope is that, while winter 2010 was harsh, spring 2010 will turn its kindest face to the banks of the Schuylkill.

Edward J. Sozanski's "Art" column does not appear today.



MICHELE BRODY

"Presencing" by Michele Brody. Art in the Open grew out of an organizer's visits to the Wayne Arts Center's open-air festival.

A Sampling of Art in The Open Events

Art in the Open Philadelphia will take place from Wednesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., along the Schuylkill from the Fairmount Water Works to Bartram's Garden. The event is free and open to the public. There are fees for some associated special events. For complete information, visit **www.artintheopenphila.org**



SOURCE: Art in the Open Philadelphia — The Philadelphia Inquirer

1. Kickoff Reception

Tuesday, 5 to 7 p.m.
City Hall
Join Mayor Nutter and chief cultural officer Gary Steuer to view existing work by the participating artists. On display Tuesday through July 31. Use Northeast Entrance of City Hall for opening. Photo ID required. Free and open to the public.

2. Guided Walking Tour

Thursday, 5:30 to 7 p.m.
Meet before 5:30 p.m. at the Main Information Desk of Amtrak 30th Street Station for a tour of the Schuylkill riverbank. Free. Sponsored by the Schuylkill River Park Alliance.

3. One hour boat tour of the Schuylkill

Saturday, 2 p.m.
Focus on the history from the early 1700s through the 21st century. Adults, $20. Students, children 12 and under, $15. Continues through Oct. 30 on Saturdays. For location information: 1-888-748-7445.

4. Drawing Together

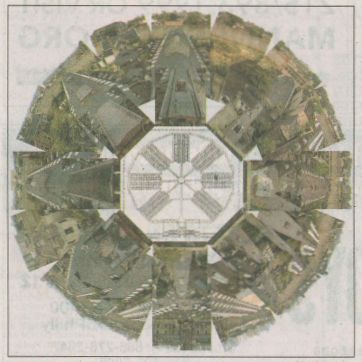
Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
A group experience at the Philadelphia Museum of Art Sculpture Garden overlooking the Schuylkill. Free with museum admission.

5. Art Sale

Next Sunday, 3 p.m.
Selected works created at the festival will be offered for sale at the University of the Arts Rosenwald Wolf Gallery, 211 S. Broad St., (through June 20). Opening reception from 3 to 6 p.m. on Sunday. Free.

Partial List, Affiliated Arts Organizations:

Philadelphia Museum of Art
City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program
Philadelphia Department of Arts and Recreation
Fairmount Park Art Association
Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance
University of Pennsylvania
University of the Arts
Schuylkill River Park Alliance



BLAISE TOBIA

Blaise Tobia's collage "Model of Models (Eastern State Penitentiary)," one of the artist's digital panoramas.

Happy trails

Developers of the recreational trail along the Schuylkill near Center City are doggedly moving ahead with their latest welcome improvements.

The Schuylkill River Development Corp. is nearly ready to seek bids for work on a section of the trail at Grays Ferry. The work will include landscaping and buffering from the site of a DuPont plant nearby.

In the past eight years, SRDC and its private partners have constructed a remarkable greenway in a long-neglected part of the city, from the Waterworks to Locust Street along the east bank of the river. The recreation trail, movie nights, boat rides, and kayak tours have made the city a more enjoyable place to live and work.

As many as 16,000 people per week enjoy the trail. The goal is to build a contiguous walkway eight miles long, from the Fairmount Dam all the way to Fort Mifflin near where the river meets the Delaware.

Over the next two years, there are plans to build a footbridge over the river at Grays Ferry and a section of the trail on the western riverbank leading to Bartram's Garden. The SRDC also has about half of the funding it needs to build a half-mile-long boardwalk adjacent to South Street, which is a key middle section of the project.

Among the recent improvements is a rebuilt JFK Boulevard bridge that is more friendly to pedestrians and allows easy access to the trail.

The SRDC is working with the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, and the Brandywine Realty Trust to implement this valuable vision of a bucolic riverside. The effort also has received federal, state, and city grants.

The project is a natural companion with plans to remake a large swath of University City on the west side of the river. It creates value for the city and should be supported by even more private and public fund-raising.