

Progress of the Nine Mile Run Greenway Project

A Community Dialogue (1997)

In 1997, the project facilitated a community program exploring consensus on the issues of urban open space in the context of the Nine Mile Run (NMR) Brownfield property. The process involved a series of workshops and on-site tours to provide participants with a place-based understanding of the valley. The workshop series and its associated community dialogue clarified the issues associated with public open space on the slag-impacted landscape and around the sewage-impacted urban stream.

The consensus from the process was that the greenway should contain a clean flowing stream (i.e. be regarded as water centered); include trails for use by hikers, bikers and other users; and feature neighborhood connections by enabling transportation into and through the site.

A Brownfield Intervention (1998)

In 1998, the project team began a two step program of assessment and conceptual planning. First a series of ecosystem and infrastructure assessments were conducted by a botanist, entomologist, wetlands scientist, stormwater engineer, riverbed engineer, landscape architect and urban historian. This step of the program provided a baseline inventory of the interconnected systems of human infrastructure, plants and wildlife at Nine Mile Run. Much of the assessment phase materials can be utilized by the City of Pittsburgh, upstream municipalities and the various institutions which will be working on the restoration and development of the future NMR Greenway.

The objective for the second step of the program was to harness the knowledge of the interdisciplinary team to brainstorm a variety of concept approaches and solutions for the NMR Greenway. This team outlined five physical areas (nodes) as marked on the map, as unique opportunities and challenges. Our expert team has prepared a set of two design alternatives for each node. We have developed these conceptual design alternatives as a starting point for the public discussion in 1999.

The Transformation (1999)

The project returns to the community with the set of conceptual design alternatives for the five nodes of Nine Mile Run. Each node will be addressed with images revealing existing conditions, ecosystem enhancement alternatives, and infrastructure intensive alternatives. Community members will be engaged in a consensus-based planning process to clarify a set of guidelines for a sustainable open space/greenway at Nine Mile Run.

The process will begin with the series of site tours and interaction with the project team and others who have studied the site over the past two years. The participants will visualize the greenway and conceptualize the alternative plans first-hand. Then, in the summer, the NMR Greenway Project will host a workshop with roundtable discussions over maps, images and drawings to finalize the guidelines which will inform the final design.

The goal of the Transformation phase is to establish design guidelines for Nine Mile Run which meet the opportunities and challenges with an approach that is aesthetically rich, economically affordable and sustainable over the long term. The guidelines will then be supported by a business plan developed by the project team in partnership with Pittsburgh City Planning. This package will be finalized in late 1999.