

Project

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Public Access and Habitat Corridor Roundtable Discussion

Stephen: My name is John Stephen, I'm with Friends of the Riverfront as well as with this Nine Mile Run Greenway Project. I hope that this discussion will resolve one conflict that I have: that of active use versus passive use. When I first discovered the valley, I was on a bicycle—I bicycle here often—and I see the wonderful recreation opportunities that exist here in a great network of greenways throughout the city, first and foremost being the Three Rivers Heritage Trail along the river. There are other uses for the property. The habitat there is coming back to life. There are many access points. Court Gould is here to help as well. He is a consultant for the Wildlife Habitat Council...if you would like to explain what that organization is, Court.

Gould: The Wildlife Habitat Council, allied with Nine Mile Run, promotes greenways as habitat corridors not only for wildlife, but also for the benefit of communities, reattaching people to the watershed, and also the material benefits related to quality of life and regional economics as well. We are working on a project to have a more collaborative approach to Pittsburgh's three rivers, greenways, and their habitats.

Stephen: To begin with, I'd like people to talk about how they use the site now, how they access the site, and describe a little bit about how you would like to use the site in the future. Please discuss what you feel are the most valuable resources within the valley.

Lawrence: I don't live in the East End now, I moved here 15, 20 years ago and I used to visit the site fairly regularly when I lived in East Liberty. I space my visits out now. There is fairly heavy undocumented use. The city doesn't think that anything that they don't pay for exists; if they don't have to pay the Parks Department, there isn't any recreation. I feel that I use it less, because it would be nicer as a park, but it would be less "messy" nature, more manicured and kept, there will be a less "bushy" nature.

Stephen: There are a lot of wonderful greenways that have a kind of back woods nature.

Lawrence: Yeah, I'm not saying it shouldn't be there, it's probably useful actually.

Stephen: It's interesting to think of this project as a greenway project. A greenway has a rather vague definition at this point in time; the meaning of this word has different natures at different sites. But the city does have an existing greenway programs where some of the hillsides are set aside and adopted and used for very passive recreation.

Collins: Could everyone state their name and what they did the last time they were on the site?

Benton: I'm a runner, and I've run through the site several times.

Lieberman: I like walking through the site and having it as an access to the riverfront where I can see the city.

Barrow: I use it as an access to the river and on down to Schenley.

Kass: The last time I was on the site, I took a tour of the combined sewer overflows.

Lambert: Before the tour this morning, I rode down the site last night on a bike, had a good time. I'd like to be able to read a book down by the river.

Peffer: I live in the neighborhood on Mt. Royal Rd. We don't really use the site because of the pollution and because it is very hard to access it conveniently. It is rather unattractive and polluted the way it is.

Kotovskiy: I access it usually through Frick Park, I hike through there to visit friends, and I use it for access to the river as well as to Schenley Park.

Rothschild: I live along Frick Park and my major concern is the impact of this project.

Whitney: I live in Regent Square. I like using the area for running. The last time I was in it, however, I brought friends to see it—friends from the Allegheny National Forest—and they thought it was great. They'd never seen a slag dump up close. They were surprised by the amount of vegetation on the site.

Vincent: I'm here from the Chartiers Nature Conservancy. I'm here to learn.

Newburn: The last time I walked the site I saw a ratsnake; I was surprised to see it on the site.

Kruth: I'm from Squirrel Hill. I'm interested in wildlife corridors and greenways. I'm interested in people and nature.

St. John: I'm interested in the interconnectivity of the greenways and parks; I am a runner. I'm also involved with the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh which is interested in parks and open spaces.

Doyle: I'm a naturalist at the Allegheny County Parks, and this is my first time here. I have yet to completely explore the area, and I was very impressed with how the slag piles look; I wasn't expecting nearly as much vegetation. You've got a real opportunity here. I hope it is used not for political reasons, but for ecological and recreational reasons.

Tamminga: I teach landscape architecture at Penn State, and I'm involved in the site in terms of a small student research project looking at landscape ecology, open space, and greenway issues and some of the social concerns involved with Duck Hollow. I have five students working on this.

Staples: I'm from Squirrel Hill. I'm involved with mountain biking and walking on the site; it's great access to the river. I bring my out-of-town guests to see the site.

Schaier: I'm with Friends of the Riverfront. I'm curious as to the business aspects of this, and how the housing will affect the site.

Collins: I'm with the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry and the Greenway Project and I guess my favorite way to see the site is through my bike rides through the site to get home to the South Side from CMU. You can get lost on the way home.

Smith: I was born and raised in Pt. Breeze and Frick Park. I'm a resident of Banksville now, which is really a small run corridor and I live right on the edge of 15 acres of woods.

VanderVen: I'm a resident of Squirrel Hill, and I'm within easy walking distance of the north end of Frick Park. I like walking into the site from Fern Hollow and go on down to the river. I'd very much like this changed into a corridor which leads me all the way to the river.

Solomon: I'm a former chemist, currently a lawyer, Squirrel Hill resident. I started walking down here almost as long ago as Jon did, a half century ago. I typically bird watch and botanize down there. I think it's beautiful in a stark and amazing kind of way. It reminds me of the far west, of the Badlands. That kind of ugly/pretty is what I mean.

Savage: The last time I used the site was for biking. I'm interested in how to reconcile all the various ways people use the site and try to maintain the site, but not in a manicured fashion.

Lawrence: I belong to the Friends of the Green and Seldom Seen. It's a natural area of about 40 to 50 acres in Pittsburgh. It's the main sizable open space south of the Mon River before you go out toward Upper St. Clair. Last time I was here, I was with friends from the Seldom Seen group and they were bird watching and I was enjoying the outdoors.

Gould: On my last visit, I was enjoying a walk along the informal path by the stream, and bird watching and looking at all of the vegetative growth. It's amazingly healthy.

Stephen: We've heard a broad array of experiences, and what we should really think about is what are the essential experiences of the site that we should capture. Most of you have had some type of wonderful experience at the site, realizing that it is not a pristine wilderness, but it is a work in progress. I was wondering if we were able to work on getting more people actually down to the site to experience it...Paul mentioned that he had a worry, that he doesn't want to use it because he hasn't had many of the experiences of the wilderness that the others do. What is it that we can do as we start to develop the greenway project, to educate people to get them down to the site? What are the essential experiences that we should try to capture? Any thoughts as to what are the habitat lessons that we can explain?

Solomon: I'm not sure, but it seems that fixing that bridge might be a step in the right direction; is this what you are talking about?

Stephen: Well, that's a start; it speaks to the access issue.

Collins: Yeah, it creates a relationship to the stream.

Kruth: Do you think the bridge would give better access to the greenway?

Solomon: Yeah, they should at least fix it so that I could more easily traverse it.

Kruth: What is the status of culverting/not culverting the stream right now?

Stephen: The general trend right now is to continue to analyze the economic relationships between the scope of the development and how much grading has to be done, and in the end, how much they have to culvert. This is a determination that the URA is progressing through right now. No final decisions have been made yet. Maybe there are some ideas that we could integrate into the planning process about the value of the stream or what should be done about the steep slopes so maybe they could make a better decision.

Peffer: From the focus group a week ago Thursday, I understand they want to move 4.2 million feet of the slag and now they're talking about 2.2 million, so they're talking about moving a lot less slag.

Stephen: The amount of grading is being cut back; as they scrutinize the economics of grading.

Collins: So what's the cause and effect on the greenway? Jerry, you've come out publicly against the culvert. Why do you see the culvert to be such a problem? What good comes out of the culverting? What bad comes out of the culverting?

Kruth: What I have expressed in the past is the stated position of the Audubon Council. What I have felt is that maybe one has to look at the topographical realities and try to mix in with economic conventionals. My original position was this, if you place the stream in a culvert you actually sever that continuity. If you look at the stream as part of a living organism, if you pinch it somewhere, you actually choke something off. If you want to take that kind of esoteric view, which I think can be valid. That was my public position on this but in talking with you and a lot of other folks (including Mr. Schnieder) if no houses are built, there is no greenway. That is a position being alluded to here. That being the case, perhaps the stream then has to be culverted. But when you do that, then, the whole issue is people's use; if you want to follow the stream and suddenly it disappears, then you are going to have to rise. One of you, again I think it is you, John, who has said that some Squirrel Hill residents felt it would be tragic if that culvert takes place. That severance of the stream would damage the corridor if you have a stream that suddenly enters a pipe. But again, if you look at the topographical realities, how do you cut a corridor that remains wide enough to allow two bicyclists to pass given that material and try to retain some type of continuity? And what happens to housing plan phase III? Does that remain isolated on one side of the grand canyon, while on the other side remains housing plan phases I and II? So I am not sure and my own position has become more malleable.

Stephen: The culvert would cut off the habitat corridor for things that depend on the stream, clearly. We've seen beaver further up, up towards Commercial Avenue and the meadow area. I think its clear that the culvert would certainly cut them off.

Tamminga: There's also a linear and vertical discontinuity. There are organisms that use the stream and then move into an

upland terrestrial habitat, salamanders and so on....The eastern newt needs to live it's juvenile and adult stages in the stream, and in it's eft stage it needs to move uphill so to speak. It can't do that if this place is culverted, so there's that sort of vertical cross section as well. And the newt is an example of a creature that goes up and down the slope, looking for the stream at the bottom of the slope.

Schaier: One of the things that we should look at when we discuss the culverting is who is the person, or group, or body who is making the decision as to this, because it is this person or group we need to influence to say one way or the other. And is there a deadline for it also.

Stephen: There's no deadline for the decision. The developer would have the say on the economics; there are regulatory agencies that would have some say as to what type of culverting could be used.

Tamminga: Could we just carry to concept of no development, no greenway a little bit further? What becomes of Nine Mile Run if there is no development?

Stephen: There is no denying that the corridor exists and that it is being used by habitat and there is also some work to be done with sewage remediation regardless of whether the development comes to be. My thought is that the greenway exists. It's just how much are we going to change it.

Peffer: As I understand it, if the Nine Mile Run project does not go into effect, with the housing and the additional revenue, it would greatly reduce the money available for a greenway. I think it is a clear statement. Without the Nine Mile Run housing project on both sides, there would be very little money for the greenway.

Lawrence: The other thought is that if there wasn't the development, the city would peddle the heaps for something else like a shopping mall. Some future administration will want taxes from it.

Smith: I think its premature to say that if they don't build housing on both sides in very much the manner in which it's been shown, that there won't be a greenway, I think that this is probably not correct. They can very much affect the kind of buildings and what kind of greenway there will be. You can build it on the cheap and you can build it on the expensive; there are a thousand ways to build.

Newburn: One of the things that I found once I started touring the site, is that I never realized how beautiful the site was, you know, right by the trailer, and I think

this is because of the lack of access for the public and the parking issue. When we talk about public leverage about what happens to the site, we can make the area around the trailer and that path more accessible. I think you could build a constituency of some type or a regular usage down there, that beautiful section, if we could figure out a parking thing—maybe on the field right near the trailer—so that people aren't parking on the street. I know there's parking in Frick Park and near Duck Hollow, if somehow we could isolate it out at a center. So maybe, as far as access is concerned, could we open that or create some sort of gravel parking lot as this process continues, or is it too dangerous to do something near Commercial Avenue?

Stephen: It could be done. There are a lot of bicyclists and walkers that go through the site. But definitely creating car access would open it up to a lot more people.

Kotovskiy: It seems to be that the housing/culverting issue maybe should be looked at in a different way. It seems to me that it could make the housing much more attractive, that there doesn't need to be a conflict. It seems to me that the housing would be much more attractive if it was on a stream, there were nice walks along the stream, and you could get to the river, that maybe there could even be a marina back there, with boats tied up. The fact that you live there and it is really Squirrel Hill is fine. That is one selling point. But tying it meaningfully to a waterfront, and a waterfront that opens up on a big waterfront could be a big winner to enhance the housing project. I wish we could learn to look at this differently, and learn to take advantage of the existing topography.

Solomon: Is the steepness of the slope a vegetation issue? Because steep slopes are nothing unusual in Pittsburgh. There are stairways on many slopes. If there was a stairway on a hillside vegetated with flowers, it would be a real nice walk down the stairway down to the creek, maybe have a little bridge across it at the bottom of the stairs.

Stephen: I asked John Oyler that kind of question and he did not say anything intimidating about the reforestation possibilities.

Smith: I don't want to talk too much, but we've also built roads in a lot of places like Schenley Park and Bigelow Boulevard, and we have terraced vertically, but let me go back one topic to access. Maybe we're talking about too many topics at one time, but when we're talking about access, let's

be very practical, and say with an area like this, a damaged area, there is a natural constituency of people who would like to access a place like this. They tend to drink beer and tend to ride machines that make a lot of noise and they tend to dump trash, and as we create more access, the people who say, "That's great..." are not necessarily the people who are going to come down to admire the vegetation.

Peffer: Since we're talking public access, the traffic study, completed by GAI Associates, indicates right now that approximately 38,000 cars on Browns Hill Road. And on Forward Avenue and Commercial Avenue, we're already averaging 52,000 to 54,000 cars a day—right now under current circumstances. So this will affect public access with the development and the greenway. It's said that potentially by 2008 that if all 900 homes are on line that Forward/Commercial will have gridlocked traffic which will affect the greenway, I believe, the way I see things right now.

Doyle: Speaking of money for the project, public access can be greatly improved by having enough, and the right volunteers. Working in South Park, it just amazed me about how many resources are out there, like Eagle Scouts. I get an endless number of requests for staff projects. There are people out there who also want to practice construction techniques. These are possible sources of help.

Gould: I just wanted to comment on an observation of what we are talking about directly: public access is a forerunner for appreciation of the greenway and the habitat, and that greenway and habitat does make a material contribution to property values. There are studies across the nation that document that property values escalate the closer they get to a greenway, leaving the community a place to ride or stroll or walk. John knows better than anybody that Friends of the Riverfront commissioned a consultant to study the impact of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail in terms of tourism dollars on the City of Pittsburgh. The number of dollars was significant. But maybe what we are talking about here is further study of economic value of this greenway to property values.

Kruth: John, how many of today's tax dollars would be used to maintain the greenway? What would be the net benefit? I suggest to you that you get somebody to come forward with a number, advance that figure. This could affect the controversy surrounding this.

Rothschild: With the Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III scenario we are looking at roughly 150 rentals. It will not be all single family homes.

Staples: They still pay taxes.

Collins: Excuse me, all this conversation is very good and this is a dialogue that needs to happen, but we set up here to talk about greenways. Could we please confine this discussion to greenways? One of the questions I think is important to ask is how is this greenway unique? How is it different from the other greenways in Pittsburgh? What is the value to the local community, the adjacent homeowners in terms of greenspace and recreation, and also what is the value of it in terms of the larger region? How do you explain to somebody the import of this? How do you explain to somebody in the South Side the importance of this, the South Hills, the importance of this?

Tamminga: I think that this site has some really interesting stories to tell. Where else do you have this industrial heritage of Pittsburgh with the resilience of nature in the middle of the city? The potential to link up with the Three Rivers Heritage Trail is fantastic. So just as a learning experience there is a lesson of who we are as Pittsburgh, who we are, where we are going. Listening to the others, it seems as though it took effort to gain access. We are all able-bodied. As this becomes a movement, I worry that it may start to become elitist. I believe we should be inclusive, so that everybody can access Nine Mile Run, including those in wheelchairs.

Lawrence: Going off of that, I believe that few people have an idea of the topography of this place; it could be 10 acres or 3,000 acres. If they live on the edge, they don't have a concept of how large it is. True, these are not the people who use it now, most people who see that place who aren't kids, see it twice a year or less. We have tours of up to 30 people of which about seven are core people. So we are reaching out, for many of these people who never go in by themselves. They don't really know where they are going. Unless there was a fail-safe way of knowing they could get out, I don't think they would ever go in by themselves. That does take quite a civilization of the slag pile. You need a loop trail that comes in and goes out.

Collins: Yes, I understand that people these days don't have much of a sense of topography. But people know that if you go in that you will hit the Monongahela; valleys with streams are usually surrounded by water and if you orient yourself to that, it's pretty hard to get lost.

Lawrence: But that's you; you grew up in the rivers. To orient people, do you hand lead them on walks, or provide a trail?

Solomon: I guess you bring people by bringing them, or they meander in by themselves...it's a beautiful place to look at. Frick Park served for us as city kids, as a remarkably wild place. They used to have Frick Park Junior Naturalists. The Nature Center there was a window into science for me. Drifting back to culverting would be a sad thing.

Kass: I'm fairly new to Pittsburgh. This is the only stream in Pittsburgh that is not culverted. This makes it very special. This project is particularly relevant to my generation in its approach to remediating, which is very relevant to our generation. If teachers took it upon themselves to make projects about Nine Mile Run, this could be very useful for the next generation as well.

Liberman: I wanted to say that when people speak about how beautiful the area it is, I have a hard time identifying with it; it has a bad image problem. You could use the most vivid words to describe it, yet somehow, a segment of the population sees it as a dump. They've grown up here. Realtors give it no value. They see it as a dump.

Stephen: I go back to getting people down there. It's the best thing we can do. It is a challenge, but it really does impress people. We need to educate people about the challenges too.

Whitney: But the city doesn't want us there. There's a no trespassing sign.

Kruth: I think one thing is really obvious—look at how many people utilize the place, look at all of the people here today. There are no through roads. That makes us different. That is why there is beaver here. Have there been other streams of this type that have been culverted and if so, what has the effect been?

Doyle: I've got to wonder if 5, 10, 20 years down the line an eyesore will be the only end result of culverting.

Lambert: Someday, it has to be replaced. No culvert can last for eternity. It's going to have to be dealt with in the future.

Doyle: Why is the culvert needed?

Stephen: It's really for the economic footprint of the development, and also for the management of the slopes.

Collins: Mike, is this correct?

Benton: Culverting right now is just one of the options. We're just looking into what is possible right now...looking into scenarios of moving the slag around.

Staples: There is a strong commitment to not moving the slag to somebody else's yard.

Vincent: I want to mention regarding the abilities for the Scouts to help out. Down where we are with the Chartiers Greenway project, we had about 120 Scouts one Saturday morning, and it was pouring down rain but they came out anyway. And they hauled away all these car parts, about 50 tires, all kinds of stuff. They were in the ravines pulling trash out. They did it all in one day. Then you call in a city truck and they get it and haul it all away. So when someone says, "Hey it's a mess down there," you can say, "No, we were down there and cleaned it up." This is something that can be done. It just takes an organizational effort.

Lawrence: Sometimes the mess is "code word" though. A lot of people really fear and hate nature. They see a woodchuck and they fear getting attacked, and things like that. They see grass more than an inch high and they fear rats everywhere. That kind of thing isn't quite as common in this part of the city. But I don't think that it is entirely absent. So instead of saying they hate nature, they say that it's a dump. Every natural area that anyone ever wanted to save was "just a dump," because there was always some dumping.

Smith: Let me address a couple of things...it's hard to develop a very large stream. It's hard to culvert it simply because it runs enough water that you don't want to put a culvert there because it can become a dam. Saw Mill Run becomes a dam every now and then and they are currently buying out Ansonia Place. The large creeks are hard to do anything with. They are hard to develop. In 1910 Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. wanted to create a park along Saw Mill Run, like Nine Mile Run here. It is hard to do. It sounds like it should be easy, but when you start to think about how to do it, it gets very much harder. I find it hard to imagine talking about Nine Mile Run without being able to walk alongside and seeing the run in some fashion. In other words, if you can't walk along it and see it, is it really Nine Mile Run? The answer to that question is no. That does not mean you can't build a two lane road along side it. It doesn't mean you couldn't only have a walking path. It doesn't mean that you may not have a row of houses on fairly spacious lots. There are a lot of things you can do with the corridor. The main thing you have is the corridor from the river up past the Irish Center, through Frick Park toward Linden School in Point Breeze. The unique

thing is that it is a corridor. You can bridge it, you can put roads through it but it is still a corridor.

Kotovskiy: With this idea of a corridor; it is a corridor that leads to three things that are wonderful. Frick Park, surrounded by very large population areas, the river... Pittsburgh is a study of disconnection from the riverside. We've always had problems with access to the river. This kind of pulls a big chunk of the city into a riverside context. People drive many miles to go to the Ohiopyle when we have this resource here. It could be a real regional asset right here. It could be absolutely spectacular here if done right. Tying the two ends together is just a spectacular opportunity and culverting seems to be against that.

Kass: I have one last comment regarding the parking issue which is so central to access discussions. There is a dilemma in my mind in that giving people access is central to this project because the main function is to educate people about the habitat and open space. Yet the idea of giving up even one parking space of the natural space for cars seems like a terrible idea. For those people that want to use their cars to access recreation, there are so many places where they can do that with parking access. In the interest of having a balance it seems to be very nice to have a place that does not sacrifice any space for that use.

Savage: You can go to Fern Hollow to park, you just have to know. I don't think very many people know that you can park there and get to the site.

Staples: How do you get in...there are dozens of ways to get into the site...

Stephen: You just have to make it clear.

Barrow: It looks like the park ends at Commercial and no one knows to cross it. And it is dangerous to cross there.

Stephen: Commercial is acting like a barrier to the greenway.

Barrow: And if there was a way to walk over or under it, it would be easier for people to explore.

Peffer: As we talk about access to, I was on the river last night, and I had to drive all the way over to the North Side to get to a dock, and then we had to come all the way down to see Squirrel Hill. The only other place for a small boat to stop is Sandcastle. It's beautiful on the rivers, but there's nowhere to stop.

Collins: Maybe it could be an essential element of greenspace design is to put in a public dock.

Peffer: I think there should be something, it would attract a great amount of activity.

Smith: I once spoke to the Mayor about the dock in the South Side. It was so popular, I asked him, "Why don't you build another one?" He gave me a typical Pittsburgh response, "But we already have one."

Lawrence: It's the city's budget that maintains them. I don't think we should be completely provincial but it is completely understandable why they would be reluctant to put in more boat ramps.

Peffer: Why don't they charge?

Lawrence: They can't, they were put in by the Fish and Boat Commission and their regulations don't allow fees.

Collins: I live on the South Side and watch the fishermen come in and buy ice and beer...they're good for the city.

Lawrence: I'm not saying we should be hostile to people outside of the city, but the city budget...and Sandcastle did offer a piece right by the Glenwood Bridge. And no one took them up on the offer of a free boat launch. There is a possibility. The Fish Commission will give you the money to put in a ramp, but the local government pays for upkeep.

Solomon: Any chance of a private developer to put in a dock and turn a profit?

Lawrence: There are some private ramps.

Peffer: But ramps are different than docks.

Staples: What was the connection between the Fish Commission you mentioned...?

Lawrence: They have a fair amount of money to build public access sites, but they make the local government say they'll maintain it forever....

And usually that local government represents a small percentage of the people who use it.

Staples: They can't charge?

Lawrence: Yes, they in turn can't charge, it's one of the conditions. I think if you own an \$8,000 boat you should be able to afford a buck or two. I don't keep up on all of this, but a few years ago there was discussion of paying back the Fish Commission so the city could charge for use of the ramp. I don't know how it turned out.

Kruth: Coming back to the greenway, there are not many streams through urban communities. There are not that many times that Mother Nature gives us a second chance. Marilyn Skolnick of the Sierra Club has said that maybe too many houses are being built there. Maybe you guys, as part of your charge of what you are doing here should address are we trying to create a greenway, are we trying to extend a park,

are we trying to attract housing? Should the question of the number of housing units drive the discussion of the composition of the corridor? Or should the greenway stand as a shining example of how we can reclaim a brownfield.

Stephen: Maybe we should focus in on our interests of the greenway, thinking how to develop a business plan for the greenway. We talked about the challenges of maintaining a greenway as a budget item for our team, but we need strategic thinking about how there will be funding for the project. There's actually a model of stormwater utilities with a fee for stormwater management. Looking at the benefits of a greenway to the houses and the watershed around it, we should consider using a utility fee added to local houses to maintain the greenway.

Collins: I think it is interesting how everyone uses the site as corridor, and how they access it. What are the arguments you can make for the existence for the greenway, what benefits are there to the city?

Kruth: Then you come back to this: Is this to be a greenway or a housing development with a bit of a green? What are the economics involved?

Tamminga: All over the country, you can see that it is economically imperative that we build above the 100 year flood plain. You can talk a little bit about the economic value of recreation, or a marina, but you can't put a dollar amount of a greenway.

Kruth: I understand that.

Smith: Just to show you what a cynic I am, I think 99.9 percent of the drive is to build the housing project. However, I think that there is also a push by the state to clean up the stream, and there is certainly a popular constituency for parks. You probably can't put in the housing if the park constituency, the green constituency, opposes it. In terms of what is really driving the Mayor and Council, what is really considered important is that you have a thousand houses on the top of slag mountain.

Peffer: Isn't one of the most expensive costs cleaning up the sewers?

Collins: Sewage was a big problem in 1910 and is still a big problem; no assessment has been done. Someone is going to end up paying the piper in the end.

Peffer: That should be included in the greenway project. It needs to get a dollar amount. It directly affects the greenway. We know that fines are not being enforced on the communities with overflow problems and that is a shame. It could be part of the funding source for us as well.

Collins: Part of the problem is that if the developer has a carefully bound area to develop. It is not in the developer's economic interest to solve the problem. What we have done is to try to leap frog the economic interests and the aesthetic interests to pursue a watershed approach to the problem. At this time, the County Health Department is mapping the watershed and sewer lines for the first time in probably 50 years. There are tests that are being done that are helping to quantify the problems within the water. At this point, everyone knows there are problems but no one knows who owns what sewer or who is responsible for fixing the problem. There is no economic driver behind that, it is citizen will.

Peffer: I'm glad to hear about the testing. This cannot be an effective greenway without cleaning up the water.

