

Project

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Cluster

Adam Young, University of Pittsburgh

Linda Whitney, Regent Square resident

Government

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of Pittsburgh

Sustainable Open Space Roundtable Discussion, Table 2

Stephen: I'll get us started, but I don't want to lead the discussion. We have a landscape architect here, and we'd like to focus on the map as much as we can. When we reconvene at the end of the evening, we'll give a report on what we talked about at this roundtable. What I'd like to do first is go around the table, and introduce ourselves, and state what our interest in this project. My name is John Stephen, cofounder of Friends of the Riverfront, and a project coordinator for the Nine Mile Run Greenway Project.

Swan: I'm from Homewood. I'm executive director of the Rosedale Block Cluster, which is a community grassroots group. We have a Head Start daycare and several other social service programs. I've had occasion to work with several people here, and while I don't know much about Nine Mile Run, we have 1,500 lots in our community which belong to the city, and I'm interested in seeing how we can work with those.

Whitney: I recently bought a home on Hutchinson Street in Regent Square. I moved here from the South Hills because I'd started coming here to run in Frick Park with friends and fell in love with it. I lived for 20 years in Elk County, Pennsylvania, which is in the middle of Allegheny National Forest, so this was like a little piece of heaven which I didn't know was here. If there is a chance we could extend Frick Park to the river, I'm very excited about that.

Alexander: I'm very glad to meet Dianne Swan with whom I've corresponded. I'm a member of the committee of the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition that produced the master plan which indicated Nine Mile Run was suitable for residential use, identifying the link with the river and Frick Park, so I have a historical interest in this project.

Bell: I live in Squirrel Hill, well, you call it Duck Hollow. I live as close to the river as you can get. I know they're developing Homestead and Munhall, and I'd like to see our side developed as well, but not so much so that we can't stay!

Ridenour: I'm a consulting landscape architect. I've spent most of my career in Pittsburgh, and have been involved with rivers, greenways, Rails-to-Trails, and things like that.

Wadell: I work for the city of Pittsburgh, with the real estate division. I am also a carryover from the old Pittsburgh Greenway Program when it was a program of the Planning Department.

Young: I'm a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, studying the history of art and architecture. I'm currently writing a paper on the reconstruction of brownfields into public spaces. I'm also a student of Kirk Savage's.

Savage: I teach in the art department at Pitt; I've been working with the CMU team for the last few months on this project. I also live in Edgewood, on the edge of the culverted part of Nine Mile Run.

Benjamin: I live in Wilksburg; I have a reputation in my family – whenever they come to visit, I drag them down to my wonderful slag heap. Even though it's ugly in one respect, it's awesome in another. I'd really love to see Frick Park extended down to the river.

Hurley: I come with a lot of baggage. I grew up in Point Breeze, and slid up and down the slag heap, fished in Duck Hollow, and did all the things kids did. Career wise, I'm an urban planner. I've worked for a number of municipalities in Pennsylvania. Most recently, I worked for the Mayor when this project was getting off the ground. Currently, I work for the Pittsburgh High Technology Council, managing the Environmental Business Network, and working with the Environmental City Initiative. We're the people trying to get the greenway portion of this project underway.

Reaves: I live in Squirrel Hill, and I'm a city planning/regional planning consultant, and member of the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition.

Kostalos: I'm in the biology department at Chatham, and have worked on Nine Mile Run off and on for 20 years. I'm interested in preserving as much of this as we can.

Hirsch: I'm a grad student in at CMU and have recently begun working for the STUDIO on the Nine Mile Run project. I also live in Wilksburg.

Stephen: Throughout this project, we've been reaching out to various groups – schools, environmental groups – talking about the project and getting people involved. I'm really excited that we have wide coverage of the watershed represented tonight. I'd like to make sure, as we have our discussion, we identify

organizations, individuals, and businesses that we can reach out to and involve in our Community Advisory Board for the conservation plan. So one of the first things we could consider identifying are the organizations and individuals who should be at the table in this process.

Reaves: The landowner isn't here. Bill works for the city, I guess, but...

Stephen: The city is here, but they're at another table.

Reaves: The adjacent neighbors? Someone from Duck Hollow is here.

Bell: There are only 20 families in Duck Hollow.

Reaves: It would be good to have the communities up in the Rosemont area, the Beechwood area, who are raising all the hell about development here.

Stephen: Those groups have been involved. There are members of the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition on the project steering committee. Reiko, one of the team members, has been going out to the Homewood Montessori School, and has been developing a Nine Mile Run curriculum. The kids have really involved their parents. If there are schools in this area of which we should be aware, we should start identifying those.

Whitney: I think that Allderdice has been involved. Their biology teachers have used Frick Park for a variety of projects.

Alexander: I have a question. When we're talking about 'the project,' are we talking about the development project for the whole site, or are we talking about the Nine Mile Run Greenway Project?

Stephen: We're talking about the valley, the greenway link.

Alexander: We're not talking about the housing on the upper tiers?

Stephen: Not tonight.

Alexander: So you're asking who should be involved with the Nine Mile Run Greenway Project.

Stephen: Right. We're talking about the ecological aspects, the restoration aspects, like we heard from our presenter.

Benjamin: I'd like to point out an organization in Wilkinsburg. Hosanna House. Teenagers are their primary focus; they're an incredible organization in Wilkinsburg. It would be worth informing them at the very least. They're an incredible source of community energy.

Swan: Leon Haines is the Executive Director.

Benjamin: The other thing I just noticed is that the Kelly School is right next door to where the stream used to be. That could be an interesting link.

Alexander: I guess there are a lot of teenagers who use this site. I took my 20-something son out there last weekend. He knew all about the site, and I was surprised. I guess there must be people using the site in a way we're not aware of. Homeless people, or teenagers, I don't know.

Stephen: It's a place for adventure – bike riding, etc. It would be interesting to think about teenage groups, like YMCAs or YWCAs to see if we could do some organized activities down in the valley, so the greenway could be connected to the community. I think Wilkinsburg has a YMCA too.

Reaves: I saw the guy from Pittsburgh Pro Bikes here tonight. It's interesting, because they probably sell a lot of bikes. I know my son was riding bikes at Nine Mile Run for awhile, but there was a lot of theft.

Benjamin: There was, but the mounted police cut down on that.

Bell: Well, they're not supposed to be riding through there. The Urban Redevelopment Authority doesn't want them to; they've been taking cars out of there, too. They have a cement block to prevent people from trespassing. I guess the liability would be too high if somebody got hurt.

Benjamin: That doesn't stop anybody, though.

Stephen: Do you think there are activities that should be encouraged?

Bell: I know they party up there, up on the plateau. I can hear them at night. They burn fires up on the hill.

Reaves: Mountain bikes should be accommodated, I think. They're using Frick Park. I think they'll use whatever is there, and it's better to plan for them now rather than wait until later.

Stephen: Are the bikers just in the valley, or are they up on the slopes? I know the problem in Frick Park is that they go off the trail. Some bicyclists want steep hills and declines. You think about the slope of Nine Mile Run. Maybe we should plan for their use now. Since it's already damaged landscape, maybe involve them in restoring the site, including some of their needs for trails. Involving them in the process could give them a sense of ownership.

Waddell: Gatto Bike Shop is also a factor.

Alexander: What about rowing on the Mon? What riverfront organizations are there?

Bell: Sandcastle is directly across the Monongahela River from the site. Right now, there is fishing on the river. You can't catch much, but they do fish. They catch catfish, but you can't eat them.

Whitney: Someone told me they saw a kingfisher there, at Duck Hollow.

Stephen: There is surprising diversity. Part of the education process is to bring people down there and to show them what you can find. You mentioned the riverfront, and rowing, and fishing. Are there organizations we could contact? There is the rowing organization in town. The fishermen are harder to reach, because it's an individual pursuit.

Bell: They come from all over.

Stephen: What is it that attracts them to this site, and how can we use that for growing a constituency?

Bell: On the other side, you can't get to the river because it's all private property. That's why they have to come to our side. (Pause) Our side! Like I own the river. I guess I feel like I do, I've lived there for a long time.

Ridenour: Aside from the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition, are there any other community organizations that should be invited to the table here?

Alexander: I'm surprised the Jewish Association for the Aging – well, they've changed their name, but I'm surprised they haven't spoken up for this development. They're right there. That's a community group with a big interest in the site.

Stephen: The cultural aspects are interesting. I noticed there's an eruv where they're lining the area of Squirrel Hill so orthodox Jews can do certain things on the Sabbath. The line goes right up through Nine Mile Run. It would be interesting to get them involved in this process. Maybe do that through the Jewish Home for the Aging.

Bell: They've got the Riverview Apartments now too; they're right up there.

Reaves: The Swisshelm Park people are also real organized.

Kostalos: It would be ideal if we could get involvement from the civic organizations located in the municipalities whose sewage flows through the area. Because they are not located in the city, they don't see the pollution in Nine Mile Run as a problem; the sewage is out of their community and into somebody else's. So, that would be Wilkesburg, Edgewood, the suburbs east

of the city; they have to be part of the solution.

Savage: Speaking for Edgewood, this issue rarely, if ever, gets into the Edgewood newsletter, for example. They're much more concerned with the busway and things that directly affect them. There should be a way to get this onto the agenda, into the newsletter, and the agenda of the borough authorities. I think there would be interest if we could get this onto the agenda; I think there are enough people who realize that we have some responsibility for our contribution to the sewage problem, and there would be benefits. It's a short walk from where we, in Edgewood, live to this site.

Hurley: The reality of it is that the park is a regional park. Whether people want to believe it or not. While it belongs to the city, and the city has a responsibility to it, it is truly a regional park and there are three upstream communities that, as you said, need to take some responsibility for it. It's used by the Edgewood community and the Wilkinsburg community. I'd like to see upstream action taken, because that's the source of most of the effluent with which the park has to deal.

Reaves: Well, there's been talk for years about that problem, and there is a mechanism to deal with it. I'm frustrated that it has not been pursued. The state of Pennsylvania has plans for sewer studies, and they'll pay half. And I think the estimate is that the total would be about a half a million for this study, and they would pay a quarter of a million, and the four municipalities would have to contribute the other half, which in the great scheme of things, isn't a lot of money. It's frustrating

Wadell: My understanding is that there has to be a joint approach taken by the County Health Department and ALCOSAN.

Reaves: I don't think ALCOSAN has to be involved. They could do it, but they don't have to. The real issue is why they haven't. This process puts some fire to their feet.

Stephen: There has been some action. The County Health Department is working to convene the engineers of the different municipalities, and they are trying to identify some of the sources of the sewage problem. It's not to the level of a full-fledged plan yet, but they might be on their way.

Alexander: It's providing leadership for that.

McElwaine: Exactly. You've just hit on the problem, which is you have, as so often in Western Pennsylvania, these overlapping governmental agencies, with lots of responsibilities, but no real authority. And we all get nothing to work. That's exactly what we're talking about here, where ALCOSAN runs the treatment facilities, and has no ability to control what goes on above it. Again, the County Health Department has some authority, but ultimately, it comes down to decisions made in Wilkinsburg, Swissvale, and the city of Pittsburgh. This is not just a Nine Mile Run issue, this is a Pennsylvania issue. We've got a dysfunctional governmental system which is as present in the sewers as everywhere else. I think the compromise would be to eventually move PennVEST funding which the state established years ago, back into the City, and out of Southpointe, and out of Butler County. To have ALCOSAN take over management of these pipes in exchange for a fee from the boroughs, municipalities, and the cities, (because they don't know what they're doing) and finally to start to enforce the laws that are on the books.

Reaves: I don't disagree with anything you've just said, in fact I agree with everything. The one factor which frustrates me is that the state does have the hammer, under current law, to bring these municipalities together, but they are not willing to use it. If we know where the pressure points are, then this process can help make it happen, or at least to start hammering on the right people. Like the Secretary of Environmental Protection.

Stephen: They're at another table.

Ridenour: Maybe that's the outcome of this process. The citizen's groups really have to apply the pressure, and create the political will. Every level of government has some responsibility here, and nobody's doing anything. There's just a lack of initiative or leadership, and so often, it has to come from a handful of citizens. When you put the spotlight on the Nine Mile Run,

Waddell: The key here is the pollution in the stream. If you're going to make it a viable area or corridor, why isn't the County Health Department involved with these teams? Shouldn't they be involved with these groups here?

Waddell: That's what I was wondering – if they have people here to get the message. Why can't they be petitioned to organize this? They have the power to do this, if they would organize this. How do you get that going, without some pressure from groups like this?

and look at the potential that it can have as a greenway, and really make it a big issue, sooner or later those government agencies have to claim responsibility for the combined sewer overflows.

Reaves: I think that gets back to what Andrew was saying. The upstream communities aren't hurting. They're just dumping, and the city's hurting.

Waddell: Maybe we better find a politician running for office and make this one of the planks, or something.

Waddell: Groups like this should make them hurt, because they're creating the problems.

Benjamin: One of the things that's frustrating for me is that everyone wants to turn their backs on Nine Mile Run. It's walled off with concrete, there's not even a sign that says, "This is Nine Mile Run." If you stumble on it at the soccer field, as you approach that stream, you don't know there's a stream there, and if you do come close, there's a sign which says "Stay away, it's dangerous, caution, it's radioactive." Even the tiniest little welcoming measures are not being made, and it seems to me you ought to be able to spend trivial amounts of money to take away those barriers and let people get into the site. Just declare, "It's part of Frick Park now," and let people walk in there. Police it to keep the garbage dumpers out, and make it clear that this is now a community resource, and let people meet it. The only reason I stumbled on it was totally by accident. I thought Frick Park ended somewhere over there near Commercial Avenue, and my wanderlust took me down to the end of the stream, and I said, "hey, there's something more on the other side – what's going on?"

Stephen: The team has a trailer down on site, and I think it's wonderful when people do find their way to it, and we engage them in the process. They learn about it and get excited. I'd love to be able to improve that access from Frick Park down to where the trailer is, and find ways to work with the City Parks Department to promote that connection, so people know there's something down there beyond the end of that parking lot, beyond the soccer field.

Kostallos: To some extent, I think people make too much of a big deal about the fact that it's not pure water. You're never going to be able to drink it – when you see people cleaning up after their dog and throwing the waste into the storm sewer, that's their version of disposal. The stream is never going to be pristine. We can improve it a lot, but it's not hazardous. I've played in the stream, studied the stream

for 20 years. I've never gotten sick and I don't wear gloves when I go in there and I don't wear boots. It's not dangerous, or awful. All those signs making it sound like you're going to die if you dip your finger in it, I think is overkill. The stream is not that bad.

Bell: We used to swim in that river a lot.

Kostalos: There's sewage in it, yes. Would you drink it? Would you feed it to your children? No. But still, there's some live things down there, we've seen beavers down there, birds and other animals drink out of that stream all the time without it killing them. It's not pristine, but it's also not awful. It really bothers me that people regard it as an open sewer. It's not. It has some real value.

Bell: How is the expressway going to effect the greenway? The expressway is definitely coming over this side.

Stephen: It really doesn't effect the greenway that we're talking about, upstream from the river. The effect is at the endpoint, where the greenway engages the river.

Bell: Will there be a way to get under?

Benjamin: Can we culvert the expressway?

Waddell: The Planning Department is trying to design for a very broad expanse over that entrance where Nine Mile Run comes out, so there will be a wide, high opening that acts as an entrance and not a blockage.

Bell: In other words, it's not going to go along the railroad tracks.

Waddell: Yeah, but it's going to go higher. It will be elevated.

Reaves: I think Dean had a good point. I think we should lobby for it to go into a tunnel under Duck Hollow.

Kostalos: That would be so cool. Are you serious?

Reaves: Oh, yeah.

Benjamin: Put the expressway in a culvert, leave the stream alone.

Bell: Put it underneath instead of over top.

Reaves: Yeah, I mean, not the whole way, just at that point, where it would impact both the stream and the community. The designers working on this are good, but as good a design as they come up with it's still a big highway. I've never understood why they don't put it under.

Bell: We definitely don't want it. It's going to be a lot of noise, a lot of traffic. We wanted them to improve the roads we already have, but there wasn't enough input, so actually, people don't make a difference.

Kostalos: Are there plans for trails on that side?

Stephen: Yes. Let's start drawing some of this on the map. There is a plan for a trail all the way along the river.

Ridenour: (*drawing*) I'm going to try to color code all this. We've spent a lot of time getting ideas off our chests, I think we should get at this in a more systematic way. The natural features, the natural assets are listed here. The trail will go all the way along the riverfront, this is part of the Steel Industry Heritage Trail, the Three Rivers Heritage Trail –

Stephen: Just the Heritage Trail.

Ridenour: (*indicates map*) The Glenwood Bridge is down this way. This is one idea for a connecting trail. Actually, they're talking about one on both sides of the river; one that would also go through the Homestead Works. This is part of the Steel Industry Heritage Trail, which would connect with the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, and would go down to McKeesport and Clairton, connecting with the Yough River Trail and the Montour Trail. This is a major regional trail system proposed here, and I think one of the original ideas all along has been to connect Frick Park with this trail and come down along Nine Mile Run.

Bell: That'd be nice.

Ridenour: I like to think of it as a no-brainer. It's such an obvious, good idea.

Stephen: (*indicates map*) Dean mentioned trying to get more people down there, to improve the connection to Frick Park. We should start thinking about establishing the greenway from Frick Park to the riverfront and connect up to that. Let's start up at this end, where people are already using the Frick Park area.

Alexander: Does the Run go in a culvert under the expressway? I couldn't find that connection when I was there.

Stephen: It goes underneath Commercial Street, here. That's actually one of the barriers to this connection, how to improve that connection across Commercial Street.

Benjamin: It really is a pedestrian nightmare!

Alexander: You can't walk along the edges of the stream from Frick to –

Waddell: It's difficult. You want to wear wading boots –

Reaves: No you don't!

Kostalos: I wouldn't go in bare feet, but –

Savage: But how does the stream go under Commercial Street? In a culvert?

Stephen: Yeah, in a pipe. It's very tight, and in heavy rains, that's a bottleneck. It backs up and floods.

Kostalos: It wouldn't be too much of a trick to put a pedestrian bridge over Commercial Street.

Bell: Yeah, that would be nice.

Kostalos: It isn't an expensive project, and it would make that connection so people aren't risking their lives as they try to cross Commercial Street.

Reaves: Or put Commercial –

Benjamin: Not a tunnel!

Reaves: No, not a tunnel, but in a depression, have the street dip down 20 feet and create a pedestrian crossover

Kostalos: If you put Commercial down 20 feet, when it rains, it would be under water.

Benjamin: Could Commercial be raised? Could you build a bridge, and take the stream out of the pipe?

Ridenour: You could. Is there enough conflict between vehicles and pedestrians at this point, or in the future, that it needs to be continuous?

Reaves: It's a blind crossing.

Benjamin: I'm an experienced pedestrian, and when you get there, you're dodging these bullets that come whizzing around the corner.

Bell: It's dangerous.

Ridenour: (*indicates map*) Maybe when you design the greenway, you locate the crossing over here, further, and not at the creek. I just drew in the route of the stream itself, the natural meandering. That doesn't mean the trail has to follow the stream exactly. I think whenever this area is designed, that issue would be considered.

Benjamin: I guess the question I was getting at is: what are the barriers to creating the minimal annexation to Frick Park? Without moving a rock, with the stroke of a pen, you could just say, "This is now part of Frick Park." Put up a sign saying, "The Nine Mile Run Slag Trail," or something like that, and put a sign leading out of Frick Park, saying, "It's a hike at your own risk trail." Instead of putting up the gated barriers saying, "Keep out, you're going to die," say, "C'mon in, there's a cool place here." I'm sure there are reasons that it's not done. What bureaucratic hurdles do we need to bash through? They've got to be a lot less than getting a million dollar grant!

Myers: Let me tell you one that we've already gone over. When the team at the STUDIO asked for access to this property, legally, they said, "Well, you've got to prove to us that there's a certain level of insurance coverage for all the people doing research on this site." We had to provide proof of that insurance, put it on paper, and...you know what I'm saying? They are

the property owners, and they have not made amenities to the property. They feel people can be...well, you know what I'm saying.

Ridenour: When we talk about the owners, who are we talking about? The URA?

Stephen: The URA.

Ridenour: So everything below Commercial Street is private URA—

Stephen: Public/private.

Bell: I still walk it with my dog. No one stops me and says, "You're not allowed here."

Benjamin: Well, technically, we're all trespassing!

Reaves: Even though one of the basic things the URA's going to decide when they do the plan, is to define the greenway that would be turned over to the city as parks. The rest of the site would go into private ownership. That's why they don't want to define the parks yet, because they don't have the final plan. So they keep hands-offing a final decision on the boundaries of the greenway. Your point is well taken, but I think it's going to come at the appropriate time. What I think you have to lobby for is to make sure that the corridor is ample through there so it is a direct connection and the stream stays open and not culverted. I think that's the basic thing.

Benjamin: I think the difficult part is which comes first, the chicken or the egg. You want all these communities to feel like there's a resource that belongs to them, yet there's no resource they can use. There's no motivation for them to come and do it, unless you're a nut like me, who likes poking around.

Alexander: I really like your approach to this site, because it fits in with what we heard in the lecture—the incremental, step-by-step approach—by taking designing cues from the site. One way of developing the site is to observe the way people use the site and what species of plants and animals inhabit the site. That makes sense to me; I think breaking down the barriers to access is one of the first steps.

Benjamin: Can we maybe push the barrier across Commercial Street, up through and past the trailer a couple dozen yards? Maybe we can't get the valley yet, but we can get the—

Bell: You can walk it, nobody's going to stop you.

Benjamin: I know that, but—

Ridenour: I don't think there's a question of whether or not there's going to be a connection between Frick Park and the River. I think that's probably policy. It's a question with URA of how much, and how it's going to be done. So why don't we give them an idea of how we think it ought to be done? Let's draw them a map which shows –

Reaves: Sometimes there's a tendency to overdesign, to overbuild. I think we ought to be as natural as possible to begin with, and see what happens. Eileen, you mentioned earlier that people fish down at Duck Hollow. Fine, let's make sure that they are and can continue to fish there. We don't need a big fancy promenade.

Benjamin: Kids swim down in the Nine Mile Delta.

Bell: Yes, they do. They shouldn't do that; their parents are not aware they're down there. We've had kids drown down there. They're taking a risk, because that river has a drop off, and they could drown very easily. I'd like to see a boat dock, and maybe some stores open up down there.

Ridenour: You're talking about the river. We don't have a lot of time; I think we need to really focus on the corridor.

Myers: But she's right in a way. If there were things to "go to." If you could buy a bottle of water.

Ridenour: You mean pedestrian access, by using the trail?

Myers: Yes. You would have a destination. You could walk down to the river, and get something to eat, for example. Even the fishermen go there to watch the ducks; it would be nice if there was someplace to go to the bathroom, other than the bushes.

Hurley: I'm concerned about the relationship between the development and the stream. There's a potential for this to be sort of a gated community on the citadel.

Bell: We're separate. Have you ever been down there? You know we're not going to be right on the greenway.

Hurley: I know, but there ought to be lots of sidewalks coming from Squirrel Hill right through the development to the greenway.

Bell: And you know what our roads are like. It's very dangerous. So many near-miss accidents.

Ridenour: *(indicates map)* Didn't a bridge exist here, before they built the Homestead High-Level crossing?

Benjamin: There's a really great picture of that in the Homestead Library. If you go into the library, there's a picture prominently displayed on the wall depicting a view across the river towards the site.

Bell: The Jewish Home used to be Brown's Mansion. That's a millionaire's home.

Ridenour: John, for my information (since I don't live in the neighborhood) you're not studying this part upstream from Commercial Street at all, are you?

Stephen: The stream is being studied. That area is a wetland.

Waddell: As you deal with the effluent in the stream, how you clean it, there have been discussions of increasing portions of the wetlands area in the existing Frick Park, and opening up portions across the road, to replace what you remove. If you take out the ballfield, you open up a new ballfield.

Benjamin: The ballfield is a good place for a marsh.

Stephen: It is a marsh, and that starts to extend Frick Park down towards the river, incrementally again.

Waddell: Years ago, when I was a kid, teams played football there, and it has gone downhill in a very bad way.

Ridenour: Isn't there an existing trail that goes up the hollow? (indicates map) Is this called Fire Lane Trail, right here?

Stephen: There's a hiking trail that goes down to the stream, but Fire Lane is the much bigger trail.

Ridenour: (indicates map) Did they open this? I see parking here. Did they come down from Edgewood into this parking lot? And there's another trail here along the creek? So is the idea to extend the greenway up this way, or to continue up through –

Savage: There's another trail that comes this way –

Ridenour: Why don't you draw it in?

Savage: I'm not sure, upside down. (indicates map) It kind of runs this way, comes right up to the edge, comes back down. It's a mountain bike trail. It ends where the culvert is located.

Ridenour: This is all wetland.

Benjamin: There's lots and lots of deer all through here.

Bell: Wild turkey, too.

Ridenour: Wild turkey! Where do you think wild turkey come from? How do they get there? Do they come from the river? They don't come from Wilkinsburg. There's more wildlife there than we know about, huh?

Hurley: One thing that we are discussing with the Corps of Engineers is conducting a river habitat analysis which will give us a benchmark, a basis for developing ways to increase the wildlife population as the area develops. This would probably happen over the next year to year and a half.

Stephen: Would that include the stream?

Hurley: No, just the river.

Bell: One morning, I was walking my dog, about 8 o'clock in the morning, and I stopped a passing car then asked, "How many deer just walked up our street?" Six deer walked straight up our road! They didn't bother the driver's car, though, he got past them. And my husband goes far away to hunt!

Ridenour: We heard today from the landscape architects for the developer, that they're looking for alternatives (indicates map). Rather than installing a huge culvert, they're thinking of coming this way, crossing at a lower level with a stone bridge, which would be high enough for a greenway underneath it, and then go up the other side.

Stephen: You mentioned the stone arch bridge concept. It would be interesting to replicate that at Commercial Street, and raise Forward up so the greenway could go underneath it. Matching stone arch bridges.

Benjamin: One of the nicest trails in the entire area is right along the crest of this ridge.

Ridenour: (*indicates map*) Are you telling me there's a trail up along here?

Benjamin: Right. There's access all along it. It's a wide open trail, and it's incredibly lovely. Hardwood forest, nice view.

Ridenour: And it just sort of happened?

Benjamin: I think it's natural. It's the edge of the big bowl.

Ridenour: Does it continue all the way around?

Benjamin: (*indicates map*) Well, this is all slag here, but if you climb the slag at this grade, you wind up back on the original bedrock.

Reaves: Who owns that plateau? Is that Duquesne Light?

Ridenour: Isn't that part of the site?

Stephen: It's leased out. WJAS has their antenna there. It's city-owned.

Benjamin: It's probably the most prime real estate in the entire development.

Alexander: We haven't mapped views at all, the visual aspects of this. We're talking about plateaus, you should be able to tell where the views are, but there are some spectacular views along here.

Ridenour: Well, let's put them on here!

Alexander: I don't know the site well enough.

Ridenour: I don't either. Let's put the trails we know about, and the views we know about.

Benjamin: (*indicates map*) You just put a great one there.

Ridenour: Along the top of the slope here. Where does it start?

Benjamin: Actually, it starts in these people's backyards!

Ridenour: (*indicates map*) But you could tie it into this street, there. It's going to be ruined by the highway?

Reaves: No, no, no.

Benjamin: I'm sure they're going to be building the houses in there, it would be wonderful to somehow not shut it from public access.

Ridenour: Exactly! This should be a public trail.

Hurley: The discussion is that the main roads would be located around the edges of the ridge. The park space would meet the edge of the road, creating public access. That was discussed.

Alexander: I'd also like to keep some evidence of slag, of the historical nature of the site. I don't know how that can be done.

Bell: I'd like to know what they're going to do with the slag? How are they going to level it?

Alexander: They're not going to; the minimal amount would be a lot.

Ridenour: Basically, all the plateaus above green area are going to be developed for housing. Some of this mounded earth, this slag, is going to be brought in to fill this area. So everything within this valley is steep slope. We want a trail, or a road, or a trail and a road, all the way around here.

Bell: Are they going to leave us there?

Hurley: The discussion so far is to not disturb Duck Hollow.

Benjamin: They can't afford to buy you out, so that's why you're safe.

Ridenour: (*indicates map*) Okay, so this is all housing, all up here.

Bell: Is this Pittsburgh?

Ridenour: Part of it is, then you get into Swissvale. This is called Swisshelm Park, up here.

Benjamin: The initial plan was to fill in the whole valley.

Hurley: No it wasn't. There was initial discussion that you'd have to move between two and four million cubic yards of slag. The Mayor has been adamant since day one that his desire is to create a greenway, and there would be a connection from Frick Park to the river.

Ridenour: It would be helpful if folks who live in this area could indicate the potential trails from the top into the valley, and access to the greenway.

Benjamin: The reason for my emphasis on that was, given the current political structure, the stream is going to remain dirty and obnoxious until these communities develop the political will to change the sewage system.

Reaves: Or the state uses the hammer.

Benjamin: Why should they do that if they can't get to the stream? If there's going to be a de facto wall put up, which makes the stream inaccessible, it will make it less likely that they will be motivated to clean up the stream. However, if their kids are going hiking down there...

Stephen: You're talking about connections upstream as well?

Benjamin: I'm talking about Wilkinsburg, Edgewood, Swissvale. Otherwise, frankly, it's a rich man's enclave. Why should we pay any more cents to clean up our sewage?

Ridenour: What are the possibilities for access? Where are the places? (*indicates map*) Certainly right here, along Commercial Street, you could get into the site.

Benjamin: The old Foodland area is the nearest arm of the stream.

Young: Again, there's no sign, there's no way you'd know about it unless you attended one of the workshops, or you're an explorer.

Benjamin: Which, again, is part of the attraction for me!

Bell: There's really no reason to go down, except to look at the river.

Ridenour: Where's Rosemont, which one's Rosemont? There's a development there already.

Savage: Again, you're trespassing if you go in there. There's a sign at the end of Rosemont which says, "No Trespassing."

Benjamin: Rosemont is an example of what should not happen. It's a private road with no indication that there's river access.

Bell: You mean you could come down off of their street to the slag?

Benjamin: If you have a good jeep, you can make it all the way down from there. Walking, easily.

Reaves: (*indicates map*) There's another access here (off of Forward Avenue above the Squirrel Hill Tunnel).

Kostalos: That's going to be the main access to Phase One of the development.

Ridenour: Are all these streets going to be public or private? If they're public, you could have trail access off the public street all along here.

Hurley: Pittsburgh is a fenced culture; everybody's backyard is fenced. You can't walk three blocks very easily.

Kostalos: This is probably a minority view, but, when something is nice, it doesn't stay that way for long. I want to protect this area for wildlife habitat, so I'm not sure you want 80 thousand bits of access. Some of what's nice about it is that it's isolated, it's wild, it has some natural assets. I think you have to have a balancing act between access without turning it into a concrete structure. The more you develop it, even as a greenway, the less natural it becomes, the more you lose wildlife habitat. The turkeys are going to go if you have too many people down there. A lot of the people who go down there now like it because it doesn't have great access, and there aren't thousands of people down there. One of the things about Frick Park is that it was specifically developed with the ballfields and the playgrounds around the outer perimeter, so the interior is protected. I'd like to see something like that done, so at least some of this is protected as a natural area to be enjoyed by humans and nonhumans.

Ridenour: One of the categories to consider here is use. Passive use, active use, organized, athletic, education. Do you feel you could have a multiple use site for all those activities? I think what you're talking about is a density, or level of use. I'm not sure how you're going to control that. When you get all those new units up on these hillsides.

Kostalos: Yeah, but the more access you put in, the more you encourage.

Alexander: I think the slopes are steep enough...

Kostaslos: You get steep protection. I'd like to see some of that integrated.

Ridenour: We started off talking about access and use to get people down there, so they know what this is like, then begin to support it. So there's a time element. What's the current access, and what's the future access. I don't even think we're talking about that at this point.

Alexander: She's talking about ideal access. Do we want it all to be accessible, or do we try to protect some portion?

Benjamin: We all have ideas of access. My idea of access is you need hiking boots and feet to get in there.

Kostaslos: Even so, if you have too many people with hiking boots and feet... look at how the trails have deteriorated in Frick, with the mountain bikers. I have nothing against mountain bikers, but they tend to go off the trails, and they've made a whole bunch of new trails which have deteriorated very badly. Trees are dying, hillsides are eroding, because there is too much use by mountain bikers who want to go straight up and down steep slopes. There's real damage being done to the park because one biker isn't a problem, 25 bikers are a problem.

Hurley: Part of it also is some of the close proximity. Trails have not been maintained in 20 odd years. You've got trails that are not easy to pass with a pedestrian and a bike, and it's easy to go off the pedestrian trails with a bike. Plus, there are a lot of new trails that have been created by deer, who weren't here 25 years ago. Now, there are a number of deer killed every year on Forbes Avenue, near Homewood Cemetery. It's a dangerous situation.

Stephen: We have to wrap up.

Benjamin: We can start a hunting season!
Hurley: I used to live in Point Breeze, near Mellon Park, and we had a deer in velvet walk down our street. The deer have eaten my shrubs.

Stephen: We're going to have to start wrapping up soon. Two things I've heard us discuss is the importance of education, and incremental access, and the definition of that access. We have to understand ways of limiting and controlling that access. It's a balancing act.

Ridenour: It is a balancing act. That's the key point. You have to provide enough access so that humans can get in there and appreciate what they have, but not to the point that it becomes a dominant impact. Right now, this section here has a lot of trash and a lot of problems because it has not enough access. As we've seen in Rails-To-Trails, whenever there's not many people using it, it's abused. They dump things there, and all that. We're

assuming there isn't going to be any vehicular traffic in here, maybe we say there shouldn't be any mountain bike access either if they are causing that much of a problem. Or maybe they're to be kept on the paved trail.

Reaves: There are regulations in Frick Park. The difficulty is, there's no one in there to enforce it. A pedestrian isn't going to knock off a biker going by. It's not a logical place to have a lot of cops, either, because then it doesn't feel like a nice park.

Bell: And we don't have the money to pay them.

Reaves: There are mounted police patrolling Frick Park; I think it's four or six months out of the year, and they stopped some of the bike thefts that were happening.

Ridenour: So I guess the fact that this is not used much means anybody can do anything they want down there. Once this gets developed as a greenway trail, then there'll be more people. They tend to police themselves most of the time.

Kostalos: I'd hope that there'd also be a volunteer group to conduct clean-ups. Some of the greenways are nicely cared for, they have regular clean-ups.

Waddell: How about Adopt-A-Trail people, like the Adopt-A-Highway people?

Ridenour: Does Pittsburgh have a system of Friends of the Park?

Stephen: Yes, there is a Partners in Parks.

Alexander: There's a conservancy for Schenley Park.

Ridenour: I think there's a group by Riverview Park.

Kostalos: Something could be organized around Frick and the greenway. I think people would be happy to take it on, to clean it and monitor it.

Bell: There is an unstructured group of people who walk their dogs there everyday. When we have the spring clean-up, people come and pick up all the garbage. I believe they make it a safer place for me to go by myself.

Ridenour: We've seen abandoned rail lines totally change over, and become extremely popular, well used, and very safe. In addition, you have volunteer monitors and maintenance people. It's working very well. A greenway trail like that could do the same thing here.

Bell: The major problem is crossing Commercial Street. I see that as the major holdup to Nine Mile Run. I know dogwalkers would be over there if they weren't afraid of getting hit. The street has a right-angle turn, so no matter where you cross, you can't see the cars coming.

Reaves: Was one of the ground rules indicated by these two yellow areas to keep them separate, so you could have a greenway?

Ridenour: Oh no, it's going to be connected. One of the first ideas was to put a huge culvert and connect it across. (indicates map) Now the current thinking is to come down here like this and come across here like this. This would be the location for the new bridge which would be high enough to let the greenway flow underneath it.

Reaves: I'm asking is that a desirable feature? (indicates map) Can't people on this side of the stream relate here; the people on that side relate there, with no through access, so the park comes through, with no connection?

Benjamin: They didn't think the existing road network could sufficiently handle emergency vehicles and other things, and a connection to neighborhoods that would still be somewhat distinct. You would relate that side more to the existing one there, and this side to this one, and you'd still have a connection.

Reaves: Is that connection vital? Has anybody brought that issue up? To keep that corridor, so it remains natural without that connection. Does that hurt?

Ridenour: If it's done the right way, I don't think it has to hurt.

Hurley: The discussion has been to make that a very difficult connection, so it doesn't become a major thoroughfare.

Reaves: It would become a shortcut, which is a traffic problem.

Benjamin: If you're commuting to the eastern suburbs, there's only three ways to go. There's the Parkway, there's Forbes Avenue and Penn, and maybe if you're really smart, you know about Commercial Street. It's a tough thing getting across that Nine Mile Run valley for commuters, if you open up another hose they're going to –

Reaves: You don't want to have another Commercial Street! It's real windy, but people manage to go down there real fast.

Benjamin: Probably because it's faster than the other routes available.

Ridenour: So we want to increase access from the other communities to encourage them to buy into this process, including Wilkinsburg and Swissvale, because they're using it now. One aspect I thought about awhile ago, didn't get to throw it in, was that the County Parks and the City Parks are now funded by the Regional Asset District. Traditionally, this has been thought of as a City responsibility, yet it's used by the adjacent communities. Why

can't we change that for Frick Park? I don't know about the other parks, but here, where the whole eastern side of the park is bounded by other municipalities—

Kostalos: County parks have more trouble than city parks. I'm not sure I'd want to change—

Ridenour: I'm not saying the county, but the whole concept of a Regional Asset District. The moneys are coming from the whole communities. The city is getting regional funds to maintain Frick Park, with the idea that those communities are using it, so why don't they truly begin to think of this as a regional park? Embrace those communities and get their involvement and create more access from those communities, then you might see a difference in attitude. But from a governmental standpoint, I don't think that's going to happen; I think it's got to happen from a handful of citizens who care about Frick Park, and reach out to those communities and make it happen in that way.

Stephen: What we started talking about was grassroots education. Not only do we have to be offensive here, we have to be offensive in getting the attention of groups upstream.

Ridenour: All these governments have their own problems, and they don't want to be bothered with this. And obviously the city doesn't have much control.

Hurley: The responsibility of the County Health Department to make them responsible for getting these people together to control that upper end, that's what bothers me.

Ridenour: I think the citizen's group could make enough noise to create that as a priority, and make an issue out of it.

Hurley: And if we could tie in regional assets to get some money to help do this, maybe that's a way to put some money behind their enforcement.

Stephen: Time to break up and reconvene. We'll get reports from the different tables.

Ridenour: Well, thank you all for your input