

Project

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Sustainable Open Space Roundtable Discussion, Table 3

Collins: As you can see, we have a real diverse group of people. We have a variety of maps. We have the river valley which includes parts of Frick Park and the development site. We have the history maps. One of the things to consider is how do we begin to expand this watershed mentality to make it a part of peoples' daily lives. We also have a USGS map. What we're looking for is community assets, cultural assets, natural assets. Some of you may want to tackle more philosophical questions: citizen activism, sustainability, and uses. Please draw on everything you have here.

DeAngelis: This is mainly to Jack and Sue. Where do you do your birding?

Solomon: Right up here at the nature center.

DeAngelis: On the map, I mean.

Solomon: On the map? It's literally here in Frick Park. Although occasionally we've been birding in Nine Mile Run. Ned was just down by Beechwood Boulevard there and there's the nature center.

Wagner: Are we going to essentially break into two groups? First group deals with issues one, two, and three, and the next group four and five and, then, six and seven scattered over the two groups?

Collins: Yes, and if anybody feels like they want to break off and do citizen activism and sustainability, that's okay. Otherwise, we'll try to get it in as part of this discussion. We can swap and everybody can stay within this area. We'll assemble for a final wrap up and prepare a final presentation. We have a lot to accomplish so, over on this side will be community and cultural assets and that side will be natural assets and use.

(The table breaks up into three separate discussions. The transcription that follows is one of the discussions; the recording was sometimes interrupted by noise from the other groups.)

Ahern: I'll help you but I don't know where these things are. I'll be glad to help you map and label them.

Smith: I have a [feature] to [indicate] on the map and it's historical/cultural too.

Ahern: In ten years I would think you'd have a lot of things to put on there.

Smith: About here (pointing at a spot on the slag plateau) there's a newly wooded area that has vernal pools; it supports breeding populations of red wing black birds, and song sparrows. I was hoping somewhere along the line when they incorporate green space into the residential development, they would incorporate this as it is. It is toward the end of the successional process, but due to vegetation and the increase in trees on that site, I don't think it will be integrated into the development. It's not going to support vernal pools anymore and it's sort of on its last legs at that. But I think it is on an otherwise flat area.

Ahern: Is it coming up and seeping out somehow?

Smith: It could be coming through the natural wooded hillsides and seeping out. I'm not sure.

Ahern: Is this part forested here?

Smith: Yes.

Ahern: This is slag too, right?

Smith: No this isn't; this is wooded hillside.

Ahern: Okay, that's the edge of the slag. And that's the steep slope there.

Smith: That's 907, while that's 776 (referring to an area on the topographical maps). This is actually a depression but that depression is no longer really there. That used to be like a big pit where they buried refrigerators and stuff like that. The least disturbed areas, however, are primarily in the riparian zone and in the hillside. I mean the slag heaps are pretty themselves even though they don't have a lot of older vegetation.

Ahern: Excuse me, I should mark that this pit is no longer there.

Smith: That pit is no longer there.

John S: How much slag are they going to take out? A million yards or something like that?

Ahern: I only just came in today, but the original proposal calls for over a million cubic yards of hills to be moved.

John S: How much is there now?

Ahern: I don't know, but the current proposal is down to one billion. I believe the policy is that they want to get all the slag that remains on site. They don't want to truck it somewhere else.

Wagner: As we identify research—what's here, whatever the slag may be and what might be done with it—one thing we should do is identify areas. Then ask the question, is this area, even though the substrate is slag, even worth investigating for protection? If we're looking at natural features.

Ahern: At the moment, and I don't mean to push your question aside but, we're completing an inventory of all your knowledge about this place. Then, hopefully, we can synthesize and I can help you with that. What I learned today about this project was the development proposal is integral with the greenway component. It's kind of driving this thing. They have to create these areas to build the housing on and the developers have expectations about the slag heaps.

John S: Let's retreat a bit and talk about the slag dump. I mean, that's not [viewed as] an eyesore.

Kass: That's something I think is interesting as far as the features of the slag. Wastelands are natural features when looked at for aesthetic value. It is interesting to discuss what the slag might look like in the end. People talk about putting up a layer to grow trees, but it's unrealistic that the slag will ever have large trees on it. It's really interesting to think about the green space in terms of the features since you have an expanse that may never [be populated by] trees. That will be a unique habitat.

John S: There is a unique feature—it looks kind of volcanic.

DeAngelis: In the cultural aspect, the mills are gone. There's nothing to tell you this is a tremendous little area except as a kind of archeological mountain.

Ahern: I see what you mean.

Wagner: I mean everything's natural in geologic times. What are you guys talking about here?

Ahern: I'm just keeping notes on valued industrial artifacts.

Kass: Well it might be valued more if the area next to it was a really rich green space.

Wagner: Just to get some stuff on the map, where are some areas you are familiar with?

Gangewere: There's more forest land on this side.

Ahern: All the way down?

Gangewere: Yes, quite a ways down.

Kass: And actually this is really forested also, no?

John S: Yes. On the left there is a lot more slag but you get a lot more successional growth.

Ahern: This is 'show and tell' of the vegetation.

Smith: Yes, I think this area is slag but these areas are wooded. But some slag was dumped on the interior. Maybe from further down this way and the mills down this way.

Wagner: Are there any sections [or geographical features] of stream you consider relatively intact?

Smith: It's hard to tell because I think most of the trees there are older than 80 years

VanderVen: Only one part of the stream hasn't been touched because there's a trunk sewer that runs right down the stream.

Smith: Relatively close to the channel.

VanderVen: The slag pile [extends] to Homestead.

Kass: Naturally, it won't be scoured anywhere near the extent it would on a regular stream. But certainly, relatively speaking, it has the most natural feeling because of the vegetation.

Smith: This wooded area, here, I think, is secondary growth.

Kass: Is that not slag?

Smith: No. This probably bears the closest [resemblance to] a natural western Pennsylvania forest.

Wagner: When you put this all together and you ask the question cultural versus natural, and you're looking at community assets and resources, one thing that seems natural to show [is the comparison and contrast of a recovering forest on relatively natural substrate, and an area that is being remediated]. For educational opportunities, that's great.

Ahern: Do you know where along the slag slope there is vegetation?

Smith: These slopes are bare right here (points). This is wooded here. This [resembles] a succession pattern; this is bare and this is invasive vegetation (a lot of Japanese knotweed, honeysuckle and so

forth). Then you have locust trees here. But I have heard that those trees were seeded [in an attempt] to revegetate the slopes.

VanderVen: They did that along the Parkway.

Smith: Yes, they did that over here, too, but I think that also happened here.

VanderVen: That growth of locust extends

Ahern: I walked through there today and I saw them.

Kass: I wondered if there's an explanation; is it just steepness that keeps it bare?

Smith: It's probably the most recent dumped area.

Brown: You mean over by Old Browns Hill Road?

Smith: Yes.

Ahern: Does it have something to do with exposure?

Smith: Yes, that's true. It seems this is darker slag than the [substrate] here or further this way (*points to map*).

Ahern: If it's darker and faces more south, then it's going to be a lot hotter than the other slag; it could be really dry, it could be the texture. The stuff is really variable; it was hammered with a pick ax, while some of it was poured molten.

John S: Steam seeps out if it. I guess it's from the pressure.

Ahern: No it's from a chemical reaction but supposedly it's benign.

Smith: Are you talking about the steam vents? I have heard it's from the calcination process.

Ahern: Yes.

Wagner: How about this area here (*points*)?

Kass: This is one of the nicest. Actually, I don't know the whole site intimately, but it really is beautiful.

Ahern: Why beautiful?

Kass: I guess it's the density of growth. The undergrowth is thick—a lush green—more so than a woodlands.

Brown: Yes. The old railroad bridge is there?

Kass: I thought it was further down but maybe that is [the location].

Brown: Yes that is real nice and wooded.

(Discussion shifts to another point on the map.)

Kass: That's the meadow there...

Gangewere: Are there any floodplain factors or a seasonal water effect?

Ahern: I don't think there would be much because the streambed has very high gradient into it. It may in this area but I wouldn't expect it to.

Kass: The banks are so steep.

Ahern: Here it is already 15 feet above the regular water level, just here.

Gangewere: At what point does Nine Mile Run begin?

Ahern: It starts at the culvert near the Foodland.

Wagner: One reason I was interested in this area is because the tributaries below the Parkway provide one opportunity to control input into Nine Mile Run. But, I don't know, there's a lot of impervious surface. This (points) in itself is a project. I'm not familiar with these little valleys but, they may have some of the more natural substrates [present]. Maybe that whole area is a resource, a [community] project for education. Hydrologically, they built this project called Nine Mile Run, and it presents an opportunity to influence water quality.

Gangewere: What's this?

Ahern: This is a subwatershed unit that could be managed to improve water quality, if this is going to be a part of a greenway system that goes along the river at some point. It actually goes both ways now.

Gangewere: If you get on the river and head downstream, can you go across the bridge?

John S: No, you're under the bridge.

Ahern: The trail will come down this way and probably cross one of the bridges maybe cross over the railroad bridge.

Gangewere: As a kind of cul-de-sac, serving the people here, Nine Mile Run has a special importance because it's their park. But as part of a greenway system that links the city, you are going to be inviting people on bicycles to come over somehow, maybe over the bridge, and enter Nine Mile Run and Frick Park. It's part of the network, and that's part of making the trail. I think it's good actually.

Ahern: You see it in places like Philadelphia's Fairmont Park; there are a lot of bike trails following stream corridors.

Fairmont Park is a greenway park. It follows the rivers and creeks and then it goes up to larger recreation areas. It seems to work quite well.

Kass: When you talk about green space as a linkage, the linkage is here, between Frick Park and the river. Certainly, it isn't a pristine environment but it is a different environment, [with a presently weak linkage. Would that linkage to the river be a determining factor in the greenway's formation?]

Gangewere: Yes. I think it's possible to go on your bike from South Side to Frick Park.

Ahern: You can do it now. John Stephen does it. He's an avid biker. It's a little difficult.

Wagner: It's an issue of sustainability, really, and whatever a sustainable community is supposed to be is a function of that from here into town. Obviously Frick Park should [provide] access [which] brings in issues of multiple use. So many greenways and trails are opportunistic: here they are and we should use them. It sounds like this is an opportunity to do that [to offer access from home to work, to recreation areas....]

Kass: What about the linkage in terms of wildlife? Is there wildlife that you think would take advantage of the expanse?

John S: I think more wildlife would come if there was an expanse.

Wagner: It will integrate all these species. Don't know what's going on with the grading but, in addition to a trail or a couple of trails, we need wildlife corridors too. The question is: can you have some of everything and or will you have some of nothing? Are we trying to combine too many uses? So much of what we are [proposing] depends on what happens here. How does this get graded? This is a huge area. Is it better to have a pedestrian trail on the top instead of a trail along the valley?

Kass: Well there's a natural trail there now [but, perhaps, frequency of use and subsequent impact on the area, would be a determining factor for trail location].

Gangewere: The Mayor's talking about very expensive houses up here and that's probably going to happen. That's a whole new neighborhood and those people are going to view this as their park, from their houses into Frick Park.

Kass: The [possibility] is that these people may not want [trail access through their] neighborhood. That's their right. That's human nature.

Gangewere: The trail can link neighborhoods. The isolation of the old neighborhoods is the historic Pittsburgh quality which has pluses and minuses. It sustains the integrity of the neighborhood but it keeps everybody provincial. That is, they don't go from one neighborhood to the other.

John S: It's not as bad as it used to be.

Gangewere: But the greenway, is going to be a linkage.

Ahern: A social linkage.

Gangewere: Yes, a social linkage. Schenley Park and Squirrel Hill will link to the downtown. These people are going to bike from here down to there in 20 minutes and 45 minutes back, uphill. The people up here are probably going to figure out a way to get downtown on a bike trail?

Ahern: Yes, hopefully.

DeAngelis: I was interested in the point you were making about the decision down here. As I understand it, there is a disconnection between the slag heap and this community. If you fill that gap, then you could widen that part of the stream valley, thereby make it more accessible. Is that what you are suggesting?

Wagner: Yes, just in terms of expanding where we have more options in terms of a pedestrian trail. If you are going to emphasize some sort of habitat and wildlife, for instance.

Kass: But I don't think anyone would go very far with actually pulling the base of the slag heap back at all. Are you talking about pulling the slope back? But then in addition to that, in pulling the whole thing back you're talking about enormous amounts of slag.

Wagner: And basically the risk is if you can't widen it there, then a certain amount of manipulations are going to occur. Part of the design, if you're going to have a trails system here, [is to consider the residents' point of view]. It's different than putting a trail through an existing neighborhood where people are accustomed to a certain kind of use. So [this situation is] a little bit different from the traditional trail situation. It's really an open palette here to some extent.

Kass: But you're saying it's a unique opportunity to be able to incorporate [these ideas] before [the community is established]?

Wagner: Yes. It's a lot easier to establish it right away before [the community] exists.

Kass: [How do you interpret this] from a citizen activist point of view? There's going to be so much going on there—the whole green space perspective. [Do you consider] the green space [after] you have this impending massive amount of people in position? In addition, these workshops [generate] swells of excitement about gathering around the Nine Mile Run habitat, but no one can really gather around much yet because we have to wait and see what [the housing developers are going to do].

DeAngelis: [This has been] the state of problems from the get go. [For this to function as a habitat, as well as incorporating other uses,] you have to pay a lot of attention to how the stream works. So where does that leave you?

Gangewere: That means that the bottleneck for this whole greenway is right in here, leaving Frick Park and connecting to the river. And the bottleneck, as narrow as it is, has got to be very carefully maintained because everybody is going to go through it.

DeAngelis: If these things are true, if it is a bottleneck, then the logical answer is that they violate the principles. But if the reality is culturally they can't afford to do it, then you make the best of it. Then you contour this and put that in the culvert. You can give people a degree of access.

Gangewere: How narrow is it?

Brown: [Covering the stream presents the problem of covering a 54 inch sanitary sewer in the valley.] If you cover it, it's going to overburden the old sewer and that could present real problems.

Ahern: When you cover the stream, you're eliminating any possibility to improve the water quality or to [improve] the wildlife habitat or to help people. It's the aesthetics. Also, the hydrology becomes different now that the water moves fast through a pipe instead of through a channel where it can get spread out a little bit. The people all of a sudden don't know there is a stream there because it's not there just like upstream. The people don't know they are living on top of a stream. There's a big cost to doing that and the trend is to take streams out of pipes and not put them in.

DeAngelis: I agree with you but look at the water quality. It is not really effected here. Look, it's less than a football field here, I think, from the mouth. You do have some structural problems and there is an expense involved, but there is an expense in opening up so it helps the habitat, too. You have to look at the very particular circumstance right in this area.

John S: As far as talking about widening and preserving the stream, there's a cliff up there. I mean, you choose to move it back onto the cliff. I don't know how expensive [it will be] to move the slag but the [vegetation] is going to grow back. You're not going to change that. Instead of going through the stream; go on top of it on the cliff side. That's how they built the trail in the first place.

Kass: Are you talking about chopping it back to put a trail on it or are you talking about chopping it back to have the stream enter the river at a different spot?

John S: Leave the stream there. I don't know if it's harder or more expensive than moving the slag. You could chop that back and it's still [going to revert] to it's natural state.

Gangewere: Is there a place where you can walk the streambed down to the river? I mean, where in the immediate city can't you do it at? Panther Hollow. You can't do it on the North Side, I don't think. There's no place where you can walk down a stream and get to a river. There are roads that cross it; there's railroad tracks that cross it.

Kass: Well that's not going to change here though.

Ahern: I think what you're articulating here is the spiritual, aesthetic value. Just to be able to look through a vantage point and see down the stream connected to the river so people would say there's value to that. People are connecting with the natural system. They can see where the rain goes as opposed to seeing the stream disappear into a pipe.

Kass: If it's truly very restrictive here and we want to say that making it wider is not an option and that putting into the culvert is not an option, is it an option to think that a lower portion of this stream is going to be allowed to be a natural environment and that the access would come higher up and people just wouldn't be in that stretch?

Wagner: You mean up on the cliffs?

Gangewere: There are lots of options. Maybe you double the tracks for the bikes and pedestrians and build a bikeway 50 feet above and [establish a] pathway [on] the hill.

Ahern: Yes, I think it can be designed from what I saw briefly. Really the slope areas further up (somewhere around here where the slope comes right down from the water around here) it's quite narrow. In here, this is very, very steep. Once you come around this bend there are a couple landmarks. Pipes cross here. It's very narrow and it's not something you could see from a vantage point. You're in a canyon.

John S: I grew up on top of that hill. I can't think of a place....

Ahern: Even in that area, the trail is designed a little higher on the slope. If the trail is properly constructed, then it can [traverse] the slope. But the challenge is to [create] space for the stream at the base of the slope. The stream is a dynamic system that is eroding. It's a major feature in that area.

DeAngelis: Is there any option in this area to build a dam?

Ahern: One of the reasons it's less feasible (I'm not saying it isn't feasible) is because of the high gradient of the stream. If you have a low gradient stream, you can build a ten-foot dam and you can create a large impoundment. But when you have a high gradient stream, and you build a ten-foot impoundment, it just won't hold up because the slope is steep.

Kass: Another issue is eliminating odor [which results from] the pooling of the water. They're going to eliminate that pooling by getting rid of any spot [where] water might collect and [stagnate]. I don't know [if that will eliminate the odor].

John S: Eventually this sewer problem will have to be cleaned up.

Kass: Well the storm sewer isn't going to be cleared up for a long time. That [is] a long-term solution. The dry weather sewage situation has a short-term odor/garbage solution. A mid-term solution will [produce] fairly good quality. The storm situation [with] the combined sewer overflows [will require substantial financial resources].

Wagner: You know, I think [these are conceptual decisions]. That is the idea of focusing on the stream, not on the sewage module. Focus on the stream as a natural wildlife corridor [; focus] on the stream as a pedestrian bicycle use with all these constraints. We are comparing this area this area. I think it's pretty obvious that this side of the greenway tends to have more natural features in the valley. This side is open for development of some kind, manipulation of some kind. So maybe the decision is: do we pull out the people from here, particularly higher impact people that can always walk on here with minimal trail? Bicycling becomes a whole other issue. So maybe the choice is asking [what drives the incorporation of] trails into this section of the project? Use this section of the project as restoration and semi-natural area. Maybe

we are looking at the core of the site, over here, [and] combining stream value. So maybe [this locates] where people are and [this locates] the natural features. Maybe the aesthetic point of view [can determine access—] biking or walking up here and actually looking down and seeing these slopes. People live here, people traffic through here, people move through this area and I don't think you want to bike down there.

Kass: Yes that was the question, I thought. The bikers have been thrown in but the bikers don't necessarily go down there. They do now but, if we're talking about moving incrementally toward a more natural habitat, maybe a trade-off [has to be made]. It may be more important to have bikes there for the encouragement that that means throughout the city.

Wagner: Have bikes where?

Kass: In the base.

Wagner: Why do bikes have to be here?

Kass: Well because if they are coming from the riverbed it's a gradual gradient to get into Frick Park rather than having to climb up a very steep hill.

Wagner: But what are the options in these areas with reconstruction? (*Looking at a topographic map.*)

Kass: With reconstruction of the trail? Well a bike can do pretty well along a lot of that now. Right now you descend right around [here]; you go up a hill, then come back down around where that bridge crosses.

Wagner: Without moving tons of slag, is it possible to [construct] an eight-foot corridor of moderate slope that moves from this area up on to whatever this ends up being? If it's going to be housing, this [area] could be graded and [function in the same way] back down to that area.

Ahern: I would say that you want both. You want bikes along the corridor and you want to have an alternative and, also, to allow these people to get down from here and for these people to get up there.

John S: Well there is a road that goes up into the slag dumps.

Wagner: Why bikes there?

Ahern: As part of a city-wide bikeway system to connect Frick Park to downtown. It's over 100 feet higher than the railroad here. It's a significant jump in a short distance. It's going to be a really heavy climb to get up here as opposed to

following the stream corridor. There's kind of a natural preference for following the water.

Kass: That's why I said a trade-off. I agree with you. If we were really prioritizing this as a great natural environment, we might not put bikes down there. But it makes a big difference for the bikes to get between the two elevations here along this slow gradient verses up here.

Ahern: The larger issue is of all the uses you want [to incorporate at the bottom]. Do you want to have a multi-use trail [for hiking], riding bicycles, and jogging? I don't know if you could cross-country ski around here. [With] a multiple-use trail, you can do those things. That's something in urban areas and many areas. I don't know if safety [is an issue here]. Having a presence of people regularly rather than being the only person in this valley and therefore being vulnerable to being attacked [; is that an issue?]

Gangewere: One of the issues about bikes is separating the bike from the walkways in areas where there [are] a lot of walkers. [In] places where [bikers and walkers] occupy the same space, on the South Side [, for instance], they have a biking path [with] a hard surface [permitting a fast commute] to downtown and there's a separate eight-mile path for walking closer to the water and there's no reason why in a place like this you couldn't keep a separate use. You could have your walking path not too large, five feet or so, with parts of this down near the water. Sometimes it gets flooding and sometimes it's bare but the bikers are maybe 25 to 50 feet above. They are on a road that [could run] alongside the mountain and above the stream.

DeAngelis: We're talking about two different types of bikeways. The bikeway you're talking about in this valley is for recreational use. Anybody that lives in this area that's going to bike to work is going to go through Oakland to downtown. For whomever bikes, you know how easy it is to get right in through here. So there are probably some decisions to be made for extreme bicycle safety and [related issues] but you don't have to think about this kind of a route. This is not smart. This is a recreational route.

Kass: Well that's not true if you're only coming from downtown. You must make a distinction. You could make a recreational route more challenging then you might want to do with a community bikeway. Commuting bike people are going to bike here.

Gangewere: That's true. You wouldn't even have to make it a hard surface. You could make it gravel. I think the main point is that it is too narrow down here to have all these multiple uses. It's impossible.

Wagner: You have to ask, what is the priority. First, ask the question what do you want it to be and then ask [if that is possible].

Ahern: That's a valid question, what do you want it to be? Do you want to save that area for more nature, wildlife protection or try to compromise it to accommodate more bicycle use.

Kass: Would the issue of the trail up above and the view of the valley and that being a really nice feature, seem like it should be a priority? [Should] the edge of the cliff, usually a very desirable spot, be a public spot as opposed to [the providence of] those who live there?

Gangewere: That's one of the selling features of this whole development. The height looking down into the valley. I don't think they'd neglect that but I don't think they'd get bikes up there from down near the riverbed.

Kass: It might be hard to [persuade people] that there needs to be significant public space right where the best view is [located].

Wagner: Answer this question. People who buy into this development [will most likely] be interested in accessing the shops, and doing things outside of the space. How will they deal with these constraints? How will they get on their bikes and go to the South Side? How will they put on their backpacks and climb up here to go shopping in Squirrel Hill?

Kass: Well, the development is also pitched to the person who would otherwise move to the suburbs.

John S: I don't think these are the kind of people to put on their backpacks and bicycle.

Gangewere: Well they can't sell houses in Washington's Landing fast enough. Yet those people put up with a terrible intersection and those houses are selling like hotcakes. There is a bike path that will connect that island to the North Side. People are spending a quarter of a million dollars to buy houses on an island in the Allegheny River that's hard to get to by car. But they have a bike path.

Wagner: It seems like this is marketed. It's going to be pretty pivotal in determining how everything else fits together. These

people are primary to designing this area. They don't want the hassle of having a corridor over here for others in the city. This becomes isolated community which at most tolerates the greenway rather than supports it. I don't have a good take on that.

Kass: You're right. It is being marketed as a new urban community.

Ahern: We must note it as an issue to keep in mind.

Collins: We've got ten minutes to sum up here. Does anybody want to take responsibility for pulling this whole thing together? Making a nickel tour of what we've been up to?

Ahern: Any volunteers from the local contingent? Well I love to (summarize) but a lot of you have much more at stake in this than I do and spoke pretty clearly about it.

Kass: I don't know if I could pull all of [this together in a] coherent way.

Ahern: I can make a brief summary.

Kass: I think you would have the most objective take on what went on.

Collins: Let's touch on what was going on over here as well as what was going on with Petra and John.

Kass: Do you guys want to start?

Kuehl: Sure. We addressed very briefly sustainability and divided it into cultural, ecological and economic sustainability. John gave most of the background information because I'm not a Pittsburgher. He said the development of [the greenway] is driven by the development of the slag mountain housing development up here. He believes it should be more a traditional residential, upscale design similar to upscale housing in Squirrel Hill. There is a possibility that a tunnel [will be] built underneath the neighborhood that connects into Squirrel Hill, making it more attractive for [commuters] and increasing the traffic flow. Down points of this design [are] noise pollution, fumes, and vibration. John thinks the design of it is crucial in assessing what kind of impact it will have on the neighborhood. The other residential development is in the south, here; we call it the green residential development. We left that open, because this should be an area that can be treated more experimentally. The designers can come in and do green design, etcetera. It's close to a little neighborhood, Duck Hollow, which is a

traditional Pittsburgh neighborhood that is more contained and has more sensitive environmental issues. Ecological sustainability in this area is very much geared towards the greenway along the river and the slag heaps need to be revegetated. That's the biggest problem right now. Revegetation of the slopes should introduce viable plant communities, a landscape that is self-renewable like an organism and doesn't need to be a pristine woodland. It should be a self-sustainable system; maybe in the future, the slopes can be developed for recreational activities and putting paths on. The cultural aspects of sustainability of this area is driven by the proximity to Squirrel Hill. People are using this area right now. Culturally, we've found that some Jewish people have some of their rituals in this area and they use it to enhance their holidays and to walk there. Other people use it just for physical activities. The cultural connection to other parks in Pittsburgh can [be accomplished by] designing bridges and other architectural features so people have a sense of place and connect to other historical landmarks in Pittsburgh. It has an educational [value] and [establishes] a much stronger sense of place than there is now. That's it.

Smith: Let me get in a quickie and say as long as I have a lot of earth moving machines that it would be nice to drill a tunnel from the Parkway and come out on Browns Hill Road. It was not meant to be in any sense a major feature. I just couldn't resist it, being a transportation planner and of course it's an obvious extension of Frick Park.

Collins: Buzz, do you want to talk about what was going on over there?

Miller: I'm not sure if I could sum it all up here but... we started off talking about some of the traditional or the historical features of Nine Mile Run itself. There was a salt lick and then eventually a salt mine at the mouth of Nine Mile Run. I guess there were also natural gas wells in this area before it actually became a slag dump. At the top of the saline path there was tavern which I think was also a brothel, owned by someone named Stuart. In the '40s or '50s it was owned by one of his descendants who died. Consequently, it [became] dilapidated—didn't have electricity and [other amenities]. Whoever bought it [converted] the place to apartments. Beechwood Boulevard itself was a railroad bed for the coal which was mined along the coal seam which was adjacent to what now is Beechwood Boulevard. Then we started talking about the cultural development that

came into being [in response to] the old natural resources of the area. The lower income people lived closer to the river and streams like Duck Hollow and upper income people lived in the lighter air and the views [afforded by] Beechwood Boulevard in the upper area of Squirrel Hill. We started talking about bikeways coexisting, with a bias toward birding and botany. I guess one [solution] is creating a bike path that is not conducive to barreling through the area but is meandering, slowing the path, just like water moves slower when it meanders around oxbows. [Design] a paved bike path that meanders and maybe crosses over a couple of ways or a couple of places. What sprang to my mind are the bikeways and paths in Rock Creek Park and Slag Oak Creek Park down around D.C. and Maryland, which have very similar bike paths that meander. Also, the birding there is excellent given the fact that it's so urban. [We also discussed how geographical boundaries can determine settlement patterns.] We were talking about working class boundaries, not only did attitude play into boundaries but railroad track [location, for example] (you know, living on the wrong side of the tracks). What else did we have here that I didn't get to?

Solomon: Wetlands and opening up some of the streams.

Smith: Wetlands further upstream and elevation would define wetlands and the contiguous landscape.

Collins: There was a point that Nancy made. You can identify wetlands [areas], elevation-wise, you can start to make links throughout the entire watershed that might start to promote this kind of ecosystems planning approach. Upstream you might be able to identify more of the original wetlands in the process.

Smith: I guess we didn't have a very outlined conversation or come up with an outline from our conversations. It's like a smattering of a broad range of things.

Kuehl: But I think that the connection you make to the old historical neighborhoods, is something unique [to] Pittsburgh. I think what makes it interesting driving through Pittsburgh is the diversity. Not everything is the same; it doesn't look like somebody slapped down one type of suburb. It's different everywhere. People have a unique identity with their neighborhood. Some people even claim that they speak different languages.

John S: Could I ask a practical question? How do you propose to create a meandering bike path with switch backs in such a narrow corridor?

Solomon: Bridges across the stream.

Smith: And winding between existing trees. Stuff like that.

Wagner: Then that doesn't become a function aspect. It becomes a decoration type thing.

Smith: True.

Ahern: You may be disturbing more of the wooded area than you otherwise would if you have an area where the bikes are going through; then there's an area where the noise is a factor. It could impact on a much larger area.

Smith: You're thinking of peddle bikes rather than motor bikes. If you have a meandering motor bike path of course your throttling, so we'll assume that it's peddle bike and it is recreational. Yes, I guess it's an arbitrary decision but you have to make some decisions.

Kuehl: But the creation of the bike path doesn't necessarily [have to be completed] in one phase. There are a lot of stream bank stabilization problems right now, and it might be very difficult to construct a bridge in this area. Those are the bioengineering questions that have to be answered first before you can go and make it really pretty. Maybe initially you have to have very simple bike paths; maybe [they] only go one way or another. Then, maybe in ten years when the city has more money and there is more awareness and people have a demand for these kinds of things, then you can put in a more complex path system.

Kass: Well why don't I try and then whoever will fill in the blanks, because I'm going to miss most of it. I think we talked a lot about the constriction of the proposed greenway area. We talked a lot about linkage. A lot of the discussion about linkage [focused on] what [areas] we [want to link]. People tended to think we were linking to people in this corridor more than wildlife, perhaps, or at least that's what we talked about a lot. We talked about the [existing] bike trails and [trails that are] going to exist more along the South Side and along the Mon, and [the logistics of circulation through] this corridor. A lot of the discussion was about what would take place with the constricted mouth here; whether bikes and people [are an appropriate presence. The location of the bike path and issues concerning its function were discussed, as well as what these paths would connect. What does this mean for Frick Park?] I think some people felt it [would be a positive move] because Frick Park is such a great resource. Some people [felt the area] would lose the bucolic nature

if more people [had access to] it. Into this discussion of constriction there was some [concern for the access options introduced by culverting or other infrastructure, such as a bridge]. We tried to talk about the green space. I think we got most of our intimate knowledge of the place when Buzz came over and helped. I think a lot of us haven't been on the site much so we didn't know of many really specific areas. We had trouble [identifying] the green spots, but everybody thinks the east bank is in a natural state right now. There were some statements about this valley as an interesting connection to the community or an interesting tributary issue that we didn't really understand.

Wagner: I think I can [respond to] that. We were just pointing out that below Frick Park are two small tributaries that move up into those neighborhoods and furnish an opportunity to effect water quality, effect runoff, to do a variety of things. It is a sort of small sub watershed within Nine Mile Run. It's an opportunity for a project involving the community in water quality monitoring [,for example]. One thing we discussed a lot that kind of fits in with the rest of the discussion has to do with the Slag Mountain Housing Development. I guess it's proposed that this would be a fairly standard suburban development, perhaps upscale. [The success of the greenway is dependent upon the compatibility of the residents' interests and values.] A big question I think everybody has to ask in terms of functionality is: if this is really going to function in terms of commuting and in terms of people moving through this area to get to shopping facilities, etcetera, then that should be made a priority and those kinds of accesses need to be planned. In terms of the most natural [sections] of the site, obviously, this slope over here has at least two areas of relatively undisturbed topography. Maybe this is the core area. Obviously, any development over here is what they are going to be [examining]. Some more thoughts?