

Benjamin Franklin Parkway Action Plan

Community Meeting – July 31st

Next American City, Storefront for Urban Innovation

Project Goal:

Develop an action plan for the Parkway that is based on civic engagement and, ultimately, leads to a set of projects that can be funded and implemented in the next few years.

Agenda

6:00 - 6:30: Registration and socializing

6:30 - 6:45: Introductions and Welcome

Michael DiBerardinis, Commissioner, Department of Parks and Recreation

6:45 - 7:00: Overview of the Project and of the Work Tonight

Harris Steinberg, PennPraxis

Harris Sokoloff, Penn Project for Civic Engagement

7:00 - 8:15: Small Group Work

Moderators: Shakira Abdul-Ali, Germaine Ingram, Ted Enoch, Ellen Petersen

8:20 - 8:30: Plenary Discussion

Key action ideas and next steps

8:30: Adjourn

PHILADELPHIA
**PARKS &
RECREATION**



Parkway Project

Meeting Location: Storefront for Urban Innovation – 2016 W. Girard Ave.; Grp #4

Meeting Date: July 31, 2012

Moderator(s): Shakira A. Ali

About the group: A paragraph about the group: number of people, demographic break down, energy of the group, etc.

This group was comprised of 12-14 participants. Most were from the neighborhood; one was a British immigrant living in the area. Most were Anglo-Americans; there was one African American male – a life-long resident in the neighborhood. Several participants were planning professionals – urban or transportation planners, or engineers. The group maintained good energy; most of the energy was spent on discussing possible uses for the Parkway for neighborhood residents. There was a good amount of discussion regarding the traffic, but more energy was focused on activities – e.g., Pop-up activities, which many seemed to like.

1. Why people came out to the forum this evening

- Keep the grandeur of the area alive; no ‘dumbing down’ of the area
- Necessity of having Green Space, which also features cultural icons
- Just purchased a retirement condo in the area, and so we just ‘showed up’ to see what was going on
- “Love it! It’s my front yard!”
- Want the area to be more “walkable” for residents
- Too dominated by cars; oriented towards visitors; unused open spaces
- Enjoy walks on the Parkway
- Underutilized; geared to Special Events vs. Neighbors; never think of going there now that I’m south of the Parkway
- Parkway is Philly’s “Grand Gesture,” however it is a sterile one
- How to make use of the open spaces
- It’s a lonely walk; too difficult to cross streets
- Connecting the City; I’m from Chicago – dream of activities along the Parkway
- There are not a lot of accessible (low cost) activities anymore

2. Who uses the Parkway:

- Residents living on the Parkway
- Sister Cities Park
 - Café; Activities for kids
 - Water activities
- Parents, Grandparents, young children (it is striking to see the number of strollers!)
- Children from this neighborhood
- Older seniors enjoy walking here
- UPenn Community – via bridge way (also from Drexel)
- Athletic users
- Visitors, tourists, City occupants
- Homeless community – environment has gotten more uninviting for this group
- Commuters – bikers and walkers
- Dog walkers; runners

3. People/groups who do not use the Parkway, and why not:

- Teens never use the Parkway, unless it snows
- People in their late 20's – early 30's – don't come regularly
- Movie goers – to the Franklin Institute
- College students
- There's no food (cafés, carts, etc.) to bring in groups of people to sit
- Very old seniors don't come – distances like the space – are monumental

4. What people do along the Parkway (uses):

- Unlike Rittenhouse Park - where there are no streets to cross; Parkway is more challenging to make use of
- Never seen much use of the Park space (e.g., Imagination / Free Play)
- Guided tours of all the plaques, monuments, statues, etc.
- Kite flying; dog walking
- Group seating would be attractive; useful

5. In addition to those current uses, here are some other things they could do there: (with possible “early action items” starred):

- Dog Park
- Play ground
- Ball courts (basketball, bocci, cricket, volleyball)
- Chess tables
- Frisbee
- Eakins Oval – make into a large lawn space
- Amphitheatre space / (temporary) bandstand – for music performances
- Birding; Guided walks
- Sketching; street performers
- Cafes
- Bus shelters, rest rooms
- Sculpture Park
- Pop-up / Temp art; exhibits
- Crosswalks are problematic
 - Lights should add extra time for pedestrians
 - Also need crosswalks on Penn. Avenue between Fairmount & 22nd Street and Hamilton
- Anything to 'calm' the traffic to make it easier for those on foot
- Like Times Square – create lanes for bikers – tables in the middle of the street

6. Why the Parkway is important:

- Gem of the City
- Has aesthetic value
- Multi-Purpose
- Identified with Philadelphia
- Civic space – Common ownership
- Grand space
- Should be inviting – asking residents to become active and a part of the space
- Exercise space – recreational space is missing
- Neighborhoods need spaces that can be filled by the Parkway
- To make Parkway become “its Own Event” – part of the experience of going to the Museum

- “Low” culture is as important as “high” culture – e.g., the Rocky Statue
- We want large open events (due to costs it’s hard for the neighborhood)
- Yoga, dancing
- Summer Streets / Cyclovia – cycling on the street – e.g. in Bogota
- Various Parks – specified for use / helping to create an “identity” for each space
- Should be high quality definition – in keeping with grandeur of museum
- Fix traffic signals for pedestrians
- Crossovers that would allow foot traffic that is not held hostage by traffic
- Food – interesting; with wifi; affordable; variety; with restrooms

7. If we can’t do it all, the things we should do first are:

- Lawn – Eakins Oval – band shell; seating
- Lighting / crosswalks – support for people with visual and auditory impairments
- Street performers
- Street tours / guided tours
- Recreation, music, cafes, including for animals
- Parks
- Food

Parkway Project

Meeting Location: Next American City, 2816 Girard Ave

Meeting Date: July 31, 2012

Moderator(s): Ellen Petersen

About the group: There were 6 women (1 Asian, 1 African American), and 2 men

1. Why people came out to the forum this evening
 - Resident, son hit by car due to traffic (he is fine now)
 - Resident who bikes, takes the bus, see area as underutilized
 - Parkway user, member of Fairmount sports association
 - Resident of Germantown who uses the parkway, drives it too, and is scared by the traffic
 - Architect student, parkway user
 - Parkway user, lover of green space
 - Philadelphian Building resident and Parkway user
2. Who uses the Parkway:
 - Charity Groups for walks and runs from March until July
 - Tourists
 - Bikers
 - Commuters
 - Museum go-ers
 - Neighbors
 - People visiting neighbors
 - Large diverse groups at big events
 - Fireworks-city dwellers attend; charity runs are the suburbanites
 - Homeless
 - Rocky statue visitors
 - Double decker buses
 - Kids in play spaces
 - Families of baseball league kids
 - People who work in the area

3. People/groups who do not use the Parkway, and why not:
- Older people-too much traffic, too much walking, not a lot of bus stops
 - Physically challenged people
 - Younger kids-it is hard to navigate due to distance and lack of amenities (no food or rest rooms)
 - People who can't walk there from other parts of the city
 - *Not a destination* Parkway for cars, bikers, commuters but *a pass-through* Parkway

4. What people do along the Parkway (uses):

- Museums
- Sister Cities
- Visit residents of the Philadelphian
- Iroquois statue is a spot that attracts people
- Statue of bulldog (which could be more visitor friendly, revamped)*
- Softball, stickball, volleyball
- Bikers (see barriers)

5. In addition to those current uses, here are some other things they could do there: (with priority action starred):

- Eat ****
- Bring cyclists by connecting the bike paths from other parts of the city in a circuit, make it safe ****
- Pop us sculpture event***
- Capitalize on huge swath of river people who go to Kelly Drive not the Parkway. Maybe a running path or circuit?***
- Need better or different signs for people to navigate along the Parkway*
Current signs are sparse or have the wrong info (e.g. distance to City Hall)
- Kid event-re-enactment of historic games. Could be done in collaboration with the Please Touch Museum*
- Institutions can do things outside their buildings-portable easels, activities. Good for Parkway and museum traffic****
- Pedestrian zones created, moats for cars
- Ben Franklin kite contest *
- Bicycle safety program

- Bicycle rodeo
- Kinetic Bike Sculpture Derby (like the one in Kensington)
- Art “Crawl”
- Outdoor temporary art by selected groups of artists
- Orienteering on the Parkway (like the Amazing Race)
- Scavenger Hunt
- Waterworks tie-in
- Frisbee Golf
- People could sit. Very little sitting space that size***
- Walking circuit**
- Jogging path-soft circuit
- More water fountains
- Ad hoc cultural events-movies, tai chi, yoga cafes****
- Audubon Bird programs. Guided or self guided tours or labels? Tie in with horticultural society***
- Rental kiosks for tie-in parkway items-athletic gear, best of museum store
- Rental fitness store for athletes
- Timing of lights
- Red light cameras
- Cafes
- Solid “chute” lanes for cars to reduce hazards
- Light up pedestrian crossings
- Speed bumps, rumble strips
- Charity event considerations-closes down parkway for minimal people at times. Upsets a lot of neighborhood activity. Should be more judicious. Move to other parts of the city for certain charity events?

6. Why the Parkway is important:

- Home to great cultural institutions
- Huge
- Grandeur
- Gorgeous
- Entrance to the city
- Charity events provide visibility
- Symbolic
- Great historic value, design, part of original plan for the city

- Anomaly-a big “gesture” in many respects
- Ironic -big gesture, nothing there

7. If we can't do it all, the things we should do first are (*Please note * which notes group priorities from list of things to do. They each had opportunity to mark their top three priorities):

- Eat ****
- Bring cyclists by connecting the bike paths from other parts of the city in a circuit, make it safe ****
- Ad hoc cultural events-movies, tai chi, yoga cafes****
- People could sit. Very little sitting space that size***
- Pop us sculpture event***
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- Capitalize on huge swath of river people who go to Kelly Drive not the Parkway. Maybe a running path or circuit?***
- Walking circuit**
- Need better or different signs for people to navigate along the Parkway* Current signs are sparse or have the wrong info (e.g. distance to City Hall)
- Kid event-re-enactment of historic games. Could be done in collaboration with the Please Touch Museum*
- Ben Franklin kite contest *

8. Barriers:

- No chairs, restaurants or bathrooms
- Too many cars going too fast
- No safe separation of cars from pedestrians and bikes
- Tourist buses are expensive and not for residents
- Phlash bus not marketed for residents-can these and other amenities for parkway tourists be made available for residents?
- Transportation to get Philadelphians from other parts of the city to the Parkway
- Closing of West River Drive at noon creates traffic nightmare and fight over the bridge

Parkway Project

Meeting Location: Urban Innovation/Next American City

Meeting Date: July 31 2012

Moderator(s): Ted Enoch

About the group: A paragraph about the group: number of people, demographic break down, energy of the group, etc.

A curious and creative group of 20 and 30somethings attended the Benjamin Franklin Parkway Action Plan forum tonight at the Next American City's Urban Innovation storefront location on Girard Avenue. Beakout group 1, moderated by Ted Enoch, followed suit and was comprised of a group of 7 young adults, balanced close to evenly as to men and women. The group appeared to be all white people and most were college graduates and some were currently in grad school. The group was productive and invested and could have continued generating new use ideas for much longer than the allotted time.

1. Why people came out to the forum this evening

- I was curious about the forum and wanted to hear other ideas.
- I have a personal interest in the Parkway and have a professional interest as my graduate program relates to urban planning and development.
- Wanted to learn about new ideas for the Parkway.
- I am a daily commuter to 30th street and move across the Parkway twice a day.
- I am a biker and routinely bike through the Parkway and I also have a professional interest.
- I am a walker and often use the Parkway.

2. Who uses the Parkway:

- Tourists
- Pedestrians
- Commuters
- Runners
- Homeless
- Drivers
- Athletes, runners, skateboarders, bikers kids, dogwalkers, soccer players, football players
- Families
- Little Leaguers and other little kids in parks

- Shoppers
- Event Goers
- Residents
- Local Workers
- Lunch Goers
- Swimmers and waders in the fountains
- People who need parking, “parkers”

And when asked if there was a difference between “Stakeholders” and “Users” the group identified these **additional stakeholders**:

- Residents
- Institutions
- The City – Images, Iconic, Our “Front Yard”
- Businesses
- Property Owners
- Commuters – Drivers, Bus Riders, Bikers, Walkers
- Regional Commuters
- PA State, concerned with traffic flow and connecting Philadelphia with the broader region

3. People/groups who do not use the Parkway, and why not:

- Many, the area is vastly underutilized
- Families, due to traffic, safety, lack of restrooms and food
- Many others, due to confusion, lack of clarity about public/private space, who is welcome, what is ticketed and what is free
- Non-neighbors, because it is not overly inviting or accessible
- Students, many are disconnected, such as lack of easy access/connection to West Philadelphia, lack of WiFi and spaces suitable for studying
- People with disabilities due to traffic and access issues

And general barriers for any and all were thought to be:

- Lack of/poor signage
- Lack of mass transit options to, throughout and from Parkway

4. What people do along the Parkway (uses):

- Please see 1 and 2 for current users, including those reasons listed for why people came tonight. But also, it is clear that events are major users for the Parkway, but there can be a broader range of scale for events.

5. In addition to those current uses, here are some other things they could do there: (most were “early action items”):

- **Numerous programming ideas:**

- Theater, film or music events, ranging in size, type and scale, as long as they are regular and recurring, encouraging folks to feel secure that if they go to the Parkway on a Friday night, they will be rewarded with some activity and not stranded with nothing to do
- Food trucks and food truck events
- Night markets
- Kids festivals, playground improvements or new sites, help kids “grow up” with the Parkway, encouraging multi-generational use and connection.
- Encourage Museum and Institution Programming or programming that relates to art, science, biology, etc...
- Interactive Sculptures
- Lighting for night activity. Some functional, some creative and interactive
- Pilot bike sharing, perhaps at Eakins Oval, or closer to downtown
- Cafe or Kiosks or increased vendors near PMA and other locations
- Eakins Oval should lose the parking and become a cafe with bathrooms and seating
- Or more vendors at PMA landing
- Work more closely with Universities (starting with Drexel) and Civic Associations for programming and promotional opportunities

- **Making Parkway more pedestrian friendly (at times or in general) ideas:**

- Weekends or non peak hours, close lanes to auto traffic, similar to MLK Drive
- Lanes should open up around Logan Circle, perhaps using large movable planters to designate park space from driving space
- Any creative way to expand and maximize Logan Circle access and use
- Streets can be painted to demarc non auto space
- The internal lane can be opened to foot/bike traffic only, similar to the DC Mall with only traffic on outside lanes
- Clarify crossings for pedestrians with better signs, painted lanes, etc...

- Study and alter traffic light patterns to make pedestrians more comfortable
- **Infrastructure ideas that will promote activity and use naturally:**
- Wi-Fi areas
- Improve bike lanes, starting with the great disappearing bike lane that vanishes as you enter Eakins Oval from the Spring Garden bridge.
- Improve/Increase access to the S. River, starting with a stairwell just to the south as you enter from MLK Drive. Currently there is a guard rail that blocks pedestrian flow.
- The abandoned railroad beneath Pennsylvania Ave. should be converted to bike/walking trails
- Shuttles can connect W. Philly/students and other bordering neighborhoods to the Parkway and then throughout.
- Make an actual dog park. Look at 2601 Pennsylvania or the beginning of Kelly Drive

6. Why the Parkway is important:

- Due to its beauty, its views, its unique diagonal design and panoramic vistas
- Optimal view of our skyline
- The green, open spaces in an urban environment
- The numerous cultural institutions, an entire day can easily be spent here
- Commuters greatly value this for its access to the city and connection to West, North and Northwest areas
- The varied mixed uses that promote such a range of activities
- It's a unique place to live
- Proximity to S. River
- The history of the area, stemming from the 1920's City Beautiful Movement, akin and parallel to Paris
- Beautiful
- It's incredible potential
- It's design and range promotes spontaneity
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7. If we can't do it all, the things we should do first are:

- Recurring, dependable programming activities that may range in type and scale, but through their reliability will promote "spontaneous" visits and forays by friends and families to "see what's going on in the parkway tonight..."

- Creative traffic shifts and creation of pedestrian spaces/friendliness.
- Enhance access and connectivity (shuttles, connections to S. River, etc)
- Programming from or related to museums and institutions.
- Spaces that promote working/thinking/reflecting... Spaces that attract students and thinkers, artists and readers...

Parkway Forums

Location: Next American City Headquarters, 2816 Girard Avenue

Date: July 31, 2012

Moderator: Germaine Ingram

There were 8 members of my break-out group. One person arrived about mid-way through the session, so we had to go back a bit and orient her to the model for the discussion. There was one male in the group; 2 African American women, and the remainder Anglo women. There were two people that I would guess are in their late-20s/early 30's. The average age of the rest of the group was probably about 50. There were a couple of people with K-12 teaching backgrounds; one person who said that she is in real estate; two people were engineers/architects (the engineer teaches at Penn); a graduate student at Penn who studied with the engineer in the group. Two women live right by the Parkway; most others said they live in Fairmount or near the site of the forum; one person said he is a former resident of the Parkway area and still travels the Parkway frequently. A couple of people had been to previous forums.

This was an amiable, talkative group. I had to work hard to keep up with the bubbling up of ideas---their views tended to be nuanced, so that at times I had to stop and ask questions to make sure that I was getting down the gist of their comments. For the most part, they listened to one another and built on each other's comments. There were some contrasting views, but nothing that I would call disagreements. We were able to come to consensus on the main ideas/criteria for action fairly quickly.

1. Why people came to the meeting

~ Just moved to Philadelphia; Wanted to see the different dynamics at the four forums (This person attended every forum.)

~ Her terrace looks directly out on the Parkway. She likes to be on the ground floor of new initiatives. She wants to consider how her experience as a former high school teacher can contribute to ideas for Parkway programs for young people

~ Former resident of the area; stills travels the Parkway almost daily; interested in particular development projects, such as the East Coast Dreamway and planning for new uses for the abandoned rail tunnel. Considers the Parkway a local, regional, and national asset.

~ A resident of Fairmount; an engineer and environmental planner; her interests are both professional and as a resident of the area

~ Lives on the east side of Girard College; is inspired by Sister Cities Park; small improvements help her imagine what more can happen.

~ City planner; has an academic interest in the process and seeing that citizens think.

~ Lives at 12th & Pine, an architect; sees the Parkway as "one big sculpture"; walks to the Art Museum

~ Lives in the area; involved in real estate; came because she thinks it's important for more African Americans to be involved in planning discussions.

2. Who uses the Parkway?

Festival planners and festival goers
Races, marathons, other big events
People who use it to get from one place to another
People who take evening walks
Bikers
People who come to “look at it---look at the green space”
Kids who play in Sister Cities Park
Drivers
Dog Walkers
Sports enthusiasts
People who sit in the grass to read, relax, reflect
Picnickers
People who come to see the art and sculpture
Exercisers
People who eat their lunch there
Teen hanging out
Couples
People playing in fountains
Homeless people
Tourists, tour buses
Freight trains underneath the Parkway

3. Who doesn't use the Parkway?

~The elderly---the Parkway is too wide, scary intersections, not pedestrian-friendly; nothing to do
~People from the suburbs---They're concerned about safety, inadequate parking, traffic
~Philadelphians from outside the Parkway area---public transit is not convenient, and transportation options are not well-publicized or well-labeled.
~ Pedestrians---there are no destinations, unless you're going to a museum; it's mostly a highway; there are no high-quality routes for pedestrians to travel
~ Museum goers---nowhere else for them to go once they leave the museums
~ Bikers---it's not safe
~ People with children---the intersections are hazardous, nowhere to sit or get shade
~ People who visit attractions like historic Philadelphia---there isn't enough information about public transportation; not good signage; there is no easy transportation from 30th Street Station to the Parkway (the #7 bus could be rerouted to run from University City to the Parkway)

4. What do people do along the Parkway

See answers to #2

5. Why is the Parkway important?

~ It's a different scale from the rest of Philadelphia
~ It connects downtown Philadelphia to Fairmount Park

- ~ It's a gathering place for big events that attract people from all over the city and beyond
- ~ It's a "classy" part of the city
- ~ It's visible from the Expressway and the trains
- ~ It's "iconic"----"the best urban gateway in the country"
- ~ It has the potential to be a super connector between neighborhoods north and south of the Parkway
- ~ It's where arts & culture meet natural environment
- ~ It serves as a place of "respite" for the whole city
- ~ It can be a civic center

6. What would make the Parkway more usable and accessible?

- ~ Bathrooms----permanent facilities that maintain the look of the area
- ~ Sitting areas----areas that would accommodate about 40 people for outdoor classrooms, small presentations
- ~ Label the botanicals---it could be a place where teachers can take young people and children for nature study
- ~ "Pop-up" art/amenities
- ~ Movable chairs
- ~ Places for quiet reflection
- ~ Trash receptacles
- ~ Something to transform the memories of the Youth Study Center-----an alternative experience for those whose primary experience with the Parkway was associated with YSC-----a serenity garden or family sculpture
- ~ Off-road trails
- ~ Vest-pocket parks
- ~ Respite from the large-scale of the Parkway
- ~ Close down traffic on inner lanes for part of the day
- ~ Make Eakins Oval a space for changing art projects, or for activities for kids and seniors (one suggestion was a large map)
- ~ Adult playgrounds
- ~ Noise control (combat the revving of motorcycle engines)
- ~ Good food----cafes, kiosks
- ~ Night bike rentals

7. What are the priority ideas/criteria?

- ~ Make spaces human-scale: make "buffered spaces", reflective spaces; make it like a little town where people use the square to gather. Create multiple destinations, with multiple uses, along the Parkway. Create spaces that encourage people to move up and down the Parkway, with places for them to stop, gather, converse, eat, etc. Create a sense of "shelter" with "outdoor rooms".
- ~ Bring activities closer to the Parkway----things such as kiosks. Use wasted space.
- ~ Respond to the natural movement patterns of Parkway users.

~ Create more convenient transportation along, and to and from the Parkway.

~ Feature local assets and culture----use plants that are indigenous to the area, emphasize games and cultural practices that are traditional for Philadelphia, or international games and practices that reflect the diversity of the Philadelphia community.