

# Benjamin Franklin Parkway Action Plan

Community Meeting – July 24<sup>th</sup>

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

## 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, Bryan McHale, Loretta Raider

**8:20 - 8:30: Plenary Discussion**

Key action ideas and next steps

**8:30: Adjourn**

PHILADELPHIA  
**PARKS &  
RECREATION**



## Parkway Project

Meeting Location: Penn Horticultural Society – 100 N. 20<sup>th</sup> St., 5<sup>th</sup> Fl. – GROUP #\_

Meeting Date: July 24, 2012

Moderator(s): Shakira Abdul-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 approximately 12 – 14 participants – all Anglo-Americans. (There may have been one person of mixed or African descent, though my memory can't verify that.) Approximately four participants were residents from other municipalities, but who were passionate about the Parkway for their own reasons. The average age of the group was probably around 55 years old. There were about three young adults between the ages of 23 – 35. Most were fairly informed about the area itself – its history; plans for the area; characteristics of the area. There was good energy throughout the duration of the discussion; several times, people broke into side-bar conversations, led by a question or comment from one of the participants. There was a LOT of discussion related to the traffic on the Parkway, with emphasis on how to minimize the speed of the traffic, as well as the difficulty that non-drivers have in making use of the Parkway. Most were interested in addressing the traffic to make it easier for non-drivers to use the space, as well as traverse the space.

### 1. Why people came out to the forum this evening

- In the Park all the time (as runner; dog walker)
- Passionate about this area
- Parkway is the “Crown Jewel of the City, and it could be better
- As urban planner / traffic engineer – crossing the Parkway everyday
- As urban planner, maintain signage for the area
- The ‘highway’ quality of the Parkway creates a disaster in what is otherwise a jewel of an area
- Use the library regularly; space might be better used
- Cross regularly / occasionally hang out in the area; interested in what might be possible
- Avid cyclist! (EIGHT of them in this group!)

### 2. Who uses the Parkway:

- Tourists
- Institutions that attract tourists
- Parents with children (Parents with strollers; Play groups)
- People ‘passing through’ – in cars as well as on foot
- Dog walkers
- Cyclists
- Skateboarders
- Organized sports leagues & spectators
- Field Trip Groups
- Homeless people
- Couples on dates
- Students
- Food trucks & other vendors
- Residents & employees
- Restaurants, hotels, cafes
- The “City” (as a Stakeholder)

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

- The rest of the City – the Parkway isn't really a "destination" for those not in the neighbor
- Residents in this area – it's not a "destination" for us either
- Restrooms
- Older kids (teens)
- (more) Cyclists
- Pedestrians (strollers)
- People avoiding dangerous crossings
- Not a destination. Nothing to do.
- Nothing there "draws" the neighborhoods, e.g., water fountain with flowing water
- Senior citizens
- Desolate at night; nothing after 5pm
- No restaurants
- Barriers (fences) don't encourage people movement
- Very little "cover" – makes access weather-dependent
- Skateboard park (noted that this should be completed soon)
- Speed of the traffic makes leisure in certain spots unpleasant

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

- Walking
- Driving through
- Needs "doggie stands" with refuse bags
- Jogging
- Parking
- More bikers would come if we had "Bike" lights – (2 other states have these; lights targeted and synchronized exclusively for bikers)
- Public plays (free!) in the mall area
- Movie Nights
- Paint on Bike Lanes becomes slippery when it rains
- Bike lane ends at 22<sup>nd</sup> & Winter Streets – creates a problem for bikers
- Need buffer zones
- Really aggressive driving impedes all other activity
- Exploration – in/around the Museum, Franklin Institute, etc.
- Sister Cities Park – it's a great destination

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

- Re-open Water Works Pool behind the Museum
- Or ... Pop-Up Pools
- Create a "Friends of the Parkway" group comprised of local residents / stakeholders to generate and schedule area programming
- Food trucks
- More parking
- Community Centers (e.g., glass enclosed – welcoming) – to generate activity
- Pop-up Ice Rink for winter activity
- Public garden with Plant Stand
- Tables in front of the Library – restaurateur [can be contracted] to service the area; include outdoor heaters

- Chess tables
- Reduce car lanes to including boulevard lanes – at the edges (e.g., 2 lanes – leaving 4 lanes in the center for the faster traffic)
- Traffic Enforcement – to manage traffic for non-drivers;
  - Pedestrians have ROW! Make drivers more aware of this through traffic lights & signage
- Better analysis of existing traffic patterns to highlight “gaps” that might be available for other activity, when traffic is moving more sparsely – e.g. after work hours, for dancing or zumba
- All the museums should upgrade exhibits
- Free Admission hours at the museums and community institutions, e.g., on Sunday mornings

## 6. Why the Parkway is important:

- Holds (one of) the “Image” of our City
- Artery that could connect a lot of different neighborhoods
- Allows me to be outdoors, engage my / the environment, creates / contributes to the Community
- Has a great “Brand” already – everyone knows the venue
- The most Artistic Mile in the world
- Public Institutions – important to “take it back”
- Highlight the architecture of the Museum – designed by an African American architect
- Great Community resource – that has potential to be so much more – for a resident, tax payer or citizen
- Research opportunities for students (free access)

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

- Remove 4 lanes of traffic
- Make free admittance to museums (e.g., Sunday mornings)
- Blinking lights to cross walks
- Bide / Pedestrian specific lights
- More public events
- Pop-up Events – e.g., plays, ice skating, dancing
- Slow the traffic down
- Moveable chairs
- Traffic-less public events

## Parkway Project

Meeting Location: Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

Meeting Date: July 24, 2012

Moderator: Germaine Ingram

There were 14 people in this group, about evenly split between men and women. I estimate that the age range was from late-30s to 60s/70s, about half in their 40s/50s. Everyone lives or works in close proximity to the Parkway. This was a professional group----designers, organizational leaders, academics, headmaster of a private school.... The group was overwhelming Anglo, with one woman who presented as Asian. A couple of people grew up outside the United States. Remarkably, half or more of the people moved from New York to Philadelphia, one as recently as 3 years ago.

The participants knew how to converse well. They listened to one another's comments and built on them. They expressed diversity in viewpoints thoughtfully and respectfully. There were no overt disagreements in the group; in fact, I often heard "I agree with what people have already said." They felt comfortable drawing out distinctions between what they heard and their own viewpoints. They were engaged with the subject matter and shared the floor; there was little cross-talk. As one participant left, he said "This has been very stimulating."

At the beginning of the session, one person asked how much money was available to implement citizen recommendations, and questioned whether these forums would make a difference if there is no money for implementation. My response was to repeat what was said in the opening----that we are looking for ideas that take a short amount of time to implement and do not require significant financial expenditure. I also said that, judging from the previous forum I moderated, people had ideas that take more will, planning, and execution than money. I also suggested that she pose her question to Mike DiBerardinis at one of the remaining forums.

### **1. Why people came to the forum.**

Most people came to share particular concerns about life in the shadow of the Parkway. This question produced a litany of disappointments regarding the Parkway.

- -the Parkway is "beautiful but lifeless"
- -there is unmet potential in the Parkway---he crosses the Parkway every day and sees lots of confusion.
- -the Parkway isn't well-traveled; few pedestrians; no shelter; no activities to encourage use.
- -crossing the Parkway is hazardous, especially when you have children with you.
- -there aren't enough features and amenities
- -it's confusing and not very friendly.
- -Chose to live near Parkway because he thought it could serve as an outdoor living room---but was disappointed. You don't go there to hang out outside.
- -the Parkway does not serve a sense of community; in fact, it divides neighborhoods that would normally be drawn to one another.
- -the Parkway is "owned by the automobile"
- -the "grand esplanade needs to be more of a civic space"
- -Parkway cuts off access to St. Clement's Church and interferes with ability of parishioners to attend services, especially on weekends when there are large events.

- -Parkway lacks intentionality as a space for children. Wants to see more access and open space.
- -Interested in development of biking and good trails along and near the Parkway
- -General reasons given for attending were “I’m noseey”, and “I’m interested in design.”

## 2. Who uses the Parkway

- -A group that previously used the Parkway but no longer do are those who walked the lawn that was in front of the Youth Study Center. It was a “wonderful pedestrian space that has been lost” as a result of construction of the Barnes Museum. There need to be more “informal, tangential spaces.”
- -Homeless people
- -Tourists
- -Baseball Teams
- -Schools/students
- -Families
- -Teenagers
- -Commuters, including drivers, bikers, and walkers
- -Bikers, both for commuting and recreational reasons
- -Skaters
- -Skateboarders
- -Runners
- -People who attend festivals, concerts, and other events along the Parkway.
- -One person noted that the Sister Cities Park creates a split in ages----younger children go to the SC Park, while older ones go to the Logan Square and Art Museum fountains

## 3. Who doesn’t use the Parkway

- -the local community
- -recreational walkers
- -dog walkers
- -young couples
- -street musicians
- -people who live in adjacent neighborhoods---there’s nothing to do but go to the museums or play baseball.
- -visitors and tourists----the Parkway is difficult to negotiate. After they go to the museums, they drive or take a cab elsewhere.
- -Food trucks

Many of the reasons that the foregoing groups don’t use the Parkway were captured in a contrast between the Parkway and Rittenhouse Square: Rittenhouse Square is a “destination”; it has a sense of place; it’s a square---it creates a barrier from traffic, and traffic is more controlled; businesses surround it. There was discussion about whether the “squareness” of Rittenhouse Square makes a difference. Someone said, “but look at Dupont Circle in DC”---there is a sense of place even though it’s a circle---there are businesses that enclose it.

Someone noted a “friction” among the various uses and needs associated with the Parkway; there is no effort to integrate the uses.

## 4. What people do along the Parkway

This is captured in section 2.

## 5. What would make the Parkway more useful and accessible?

- -Deal with the traffic----change the lights; make the lights longer (someone noted that recent changes in traffic lighting has made an improvement)
- -Rethink the crosswalks: Look at how pedestrians move (or try to) and use that research to inform where crosswalks are placed; widen the crosswalks; construct crosswalks in a way that they become small “places”---for reflection, repose, conversation, etc.; place crosswalks in more places along the Parkway;
- -One person noted that the Parkway is an exception to the walkability of Philadelphia’s downtown----make the Parkway more like the rest of downtown in its responsiveness to pedestrians.
- -Show outdoor movies
- -Have free outdoor concerts----capitalize on Philly’s rich reservoir of musical ensembles and performing artists
- -Invest in a portable stage that can be used for performances along the Parkway (DanceUp recently purchased a portable stage with Knight funding. The stage is available for rental)
- -Hire an events planner for the Parkway----organize Philly’s arts talent for outdoor events.
- -Commission temporary arts structures.

## 6. Why is the Parkway important?

I opened this conversation by quoting Harris Steinberg’s statement about the Parkway being the city’s “premier civic space”. Comments that emerged were:

- -the Parkway is a center of cultural activity
- -it can bring lots of revenue to the City if it were better utilized.
- -In most urban centers, when you look out from an elevated place, you see “pockets of green”; in Philadelphia, you see “green everywhere”. The Parkway contributes to that.
- -One participant commented that “civic” is different from “community”. The fact that the Parkway has an iconic quality that makes it a civic asset does not necessarily serve a sense of community, or keep it from being a barrier to community-building. We need to use every green space to build a sense of community.
- -There needs to be more of a sense of diversity in uses of the Parkway----grand scale as well as small/human scale.

## 7. What to do first

The resonant comment in this part of the discussion was that there “needs to be more park, and less way”.

- Create the feeling of an outdoor living room---
  - Use the “porch” idea (although a person who frequents 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station every day said that not much goes on there.)
  - Calm the traffic
  - Expand crosswalks and the number of crossings
  - Create “finer-grained”, human-scale activities
  - Use movable chairs
  - Make Eakins Oval the centerpiece for the outdoor living room

- Expand opportunities for businesses in the area around Logan Square (south of the Basilica)
- Make food and drink more accessible along the Parkway. (One participant stated her concern that food trucks might mar the beauty of the Parkway. Another participant commented on how food trucks have improved the culture in University City, and how celebrated chefs, like Jose Garces, are marketing their food through food trucks.)



## Parkway Project

Meeting Location: Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

Meeting Date: 2/24//12

Moderator(s): Loretta Raider

### **About the group:**

**Our group had 12 members, 3 women and 9 men. Ages ranged from 20's to 70's, all white and one Asian American. Half of the group live in the immediate Parkway area, half live in other areas of center city, East Falls, Mount Airy and Cheltenham, Montgomery County. The group was engaged, knowledgeable, full of ideas and interested in contributing to a plan of action for the Parkway. Everyone listened respectfully and there was a lot of building on one another's ideas.**

1. Why people came out to the forum this evening
  - Committed to improvements for kids.
  - Would like to be a part of the change.
  - (2) Have seen things improve and would like to see more.
  - Here on behalf of the people without cars and would like improvements to on behalf of pedestrians.
  - (2) Interest in Urban design.
  - My parents told me to come.
  - As a local resident for 42 years visiting the Parkway everyday I want it to be welcoming to all including pedestrians and cyclists.
  - Came to hear ideas and would like to find a way to unify the area.
  - Would like to improve my uses of the Parkway both culturally and recreationally.
  - As a member of the Regional Plan commission I would like to bring more visitors that work in the Delaware Valley to use the Parkway for recreation.
  
2. Who uses the Parkway:
  - Residents: Families, full age range preschoolers to seniors
  - Individual athletes: Skaters, Runners, Skateboarders and Cyclists
  - Event Goers: Parades, Festivals
  - Walkers
  - Pedestrian commuters
  - Drivers

- Commuters
3. People/groups who do not use the Parkway, and why not:
    - Diners (no restaurants)
    - Audiences (no performances)
    - Residents (no place to congregate, no seating and safety issues)
    - Museum goers (because they are pushed back people do not stay on the Parkway)
    - Shoppers (nothing to buy)
    - Active runners/athletes (difficult to cross streets, no flowers or grass in some areas, too much grass in some areas, safety issues)
    - Dog Walkers (just pass through, safety issues)
    - Most people in general do not use the Parkway because of the traffic (8 lanes of highway, traffic lights take too long to cross, cars speeding)
    - In general most do not find it an inviting place to “hang out”
  4. What people do along the Parkway (uses):
    - Visit the museums
    - Congregate in inviting area around the Rodan
    - Visit Sisters Park
    - Attend Festivals and Big Events
    - Visit the Art Museum: Rocky statue and run the steps
    - Visit the Library
    - Dine at the Four Seasons and a few other restaurants
    - Bring children to the Playground
  5. In addition to those current uses, here are some other things they could do there: (with possible “early action items” starred):
    - \* Eateries: hot dog stands, beer/wine gardens, trucks
    - \* Traffic Calming: the following are the group’s specific ideas
      - Have more stop lights with mid block crossings and a longer sequence
      - Add 4 way stops
      - Add speed tables and raised cross walks
      - Close one of the throats disconnecting Kelly Drive, Divert some of the traffic onto Springarden (not all agreed as soon residents felt this would make it difficult for residents)
      - make it easier for pedestrians to get through

- advertise to alert pedestrians why the parkway is closed, create more signage
- Paint the speed limit
- \* Enhanced Pocket Parks: create an area on the South side for people to congregate. Include a rest room, eatery, dog park, playground, carousel.
- \* Shut off traffic in the area, close off entirely for a non-event. Try it as an experiment to see what happens.
- \* Kiosks
- \* Outdoor Library
- \* Provide Transportation to 30<sup>th</sup> street
- \* Connect transportation from Parkway to Regional Rail Service
- \* Carousel
- \* Farmers Market
- \* Rest Stops: places with chairs not facing traffic
- \* Night Market/Food Market

6. Why the Parkway is important:

- Area of High culture and Education in Phila.
- Ease of Use
- Connects the dots from Love Park to the Art Museum
- Place to be not just a pass through
- Pedestrian Way (need to diminish traffic etc.)
- Link with Center City

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

The following are the group's top 3 priorities

1. Enhanced Pocket Parks
2. Traffic Calming
3. Eateries

**Meeting #2 – Pennsylvania Horticultural Society – 7/24/2012**  
**Group # 1 – (Moderator) Bryan McHale**

**About the Group:** A group of twelve, mostly officers and members of civic associations including Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Spring Garden Civic Association, and Fairmount Civic Association. Very passionate and engaged with a distinct experience of having to deal with Parkway issues on a regular basis.

**Why People Came Out:**

- Neighborhood interest
- Antiseptic nature of Parkway design
- See what everyone has to say. What are the differences?
- Please Touch Museum use to be just off the Parkway.

**Who Uses the Parkway?**

- Tourists
- Neighbors
- Visitors to institutions
- Children
- Homeless
- Sports teams at the sports fields
- Fitness enthusiasts
  - *Question – Why is Kelly Drive a destination but not the Parkway?*
- Cars & Drivers
- Walkers
- Special Events
- Researchers at the Main Library
- The institutions themselves are users
- Tour buses
- Churchgoers
- Dog walkers
- Transit users
- Families
- Swimmers at Logan Fountain
  - *Question – How should the fountains be used? What is city policy?*
- Photographers and Painters
- Art installations established by artists from Moore College of Art.

*Concern – There is a difference between “being on the Parkway” and “going to the Parkway.” It shouldn't count to just go to a museum on the Parkway.*

## **Who doesn't use the Parkway? Why not?**

- Families and Children – Not enough play areas, sometimes too dangerous with bikes/cars/etc.
- Suburban residents due to certain perceptions of “coming into the City” and due to traffic and lack of parking.
- Picnics have no place to set up.
- Institution users are only hit and go, they rarely spend time on the Parkway.
- Tourists don't use the Parkway due to lack of food and activity
  - *Comment – Paris has more activity along similar thoroughfares.*
  - *Question – What are vendor laws for along the Parkway?*
- Fitness people go straight to Kelly Drive or Schuylkill River Trail
- Residents also use Schuylkill River Trail and Kelly Drive
- Hard to cross the Parkway
  - No signage
  - Not enough time
- People cross the Parkway but don't linger on it.

## **What do people do along the Parkway?**

- Reading
- Sleeping
- Walking
- Driving
- Lingering along the Parkway in Fall or Spring
- Sit on new benches
- Go to events
- Runners – Run to “Rocky” steps
- Baseball players (at the fields)
- Art creation (photographers, painters, sculptors) either of the Parkway or on the Parkway.
  - *Question – How do people know about any of the art on the Parkway?*

## **What else people could do along the Parkway:**

- Mini Golf (like at Franklin Square)
- Eat and Drink
- Adult Playground (as shown in slideshow)
- Dog Park
- Bicycling – If there were less traffic
- Tennis / Basketball courts
- Increase residential density along the edges
- Bookstore cafe
- Places to rent things to use along the Parkway
- More institutional programming along the Parkway
- Limited size concerts – bandstand
- Movie screenings
- Tango dancing

- More passive space
- People watching with more social spaces, tables and chairs
- More night uses with better lighting
- Attractive transportation in a loop through the Parkway District
  - *Concern – Loud open tour buses are a negative*
- Restrooms
- Slower Traffic

### **Why is the Parkway important?**

- Premier Boulevard
- Main Artery
- Historic Public Places in the US
- Cultural Center
- City's Main St or Front Door
- Symbolic Icon
- Green lead-in to Fairmount Park
- Draws people in for Events such as 4<sup>th</sup> of July and is how many people come back into the City.
- Open Space with vista
- Release from Density
- Pathway to where you need to go
- Glamour, Romance, and Prestige to living on the Parkway
- Good sell for tourists
- Promotes the City
- Good to show off on walks with out-of-towners
- Open for everybody
- City does well cleaning up after events

### **Tensions / Barriers:**

- Lack of maintenance
- Drivers
- No communication with the neighborhoods about closures for events
- Feeding the homeless
- Crossing the Parkway is difficult
- Crime that comes with big events
- Lack of restrooms and water fountains
- Institutions moving to digital signage could ruin view of the Parkway.
  - This is in tension with the general lack of useful signage along the Parkway
  - Put signs high enough not to be defaced
- Density vs. Open space is a tension now but could be remedied if crossing the Parkway could be addressed.

**First steps:**

- Playgrounds and Dog parks are most important due to the complete lack of those facilities along the Parkway.
- Cafe that can't drive away with tables / chairs / restrooms
- A Martini Bar style outdoor location.
- Traffic calming / lane reduction
  - Could close center lanes on weekends rather than just for special events. Use for markets, exhibitions, etc.
- Mini Golf