

Designing, building & operating the Rail Park

VINE ST TO CALLOWHILL ST
SCM

CENTER CITY DISTRICT

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Friends of the Rail Park advancing broad park vision CCD is focused east of Broad Expanding original park that CCD completed in 2018

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Our work: designing, financing & building a trail & park from Vine Street to Fairmount Avenue

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Engineering, design & management team

Angelo Waters, Urban_Engineers

Studio Bryan Hanes
Bryan Hanes
Rebekah Armstrong
Prakul Pottapu

Center City District
Andrew Jacobs
Patricia Ma
Paul R. Levy

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Legislation introduced in City Council by Mark Squilla on June 15, 2023 City Council approved & Mayor signed in December 2023

City of Philadelphia

BILL NO. 220113

Introduced June 15, 2023

Authorizing the City to acquire Reading Viaduct

Support from
PCDC
Friends of Rail Park
Callowhill Neighbors
West Poplar Neighborhood
14th Ward RCO

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Owned by Reading International a movie theater company that operates no railroads Holdings in Australia, New Zealand, California & NYC Bought former bankrupt rail assets in 1980s on a speculative basis CCD & City have met with them multiple times since 2017

ANGELIKA
CINEMAS

READING INTERNATIONAL

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Legislation delegates to CCD (Act 45 Authority) responsibility to:

City of Philadelphia

EXHIBIT A
Terms of Proposed Lease
Five Yards Between Vine Street and Eastlawn Avenue

1. **Landlord:** The City of Philadelphia, through its Department of Public Property ("City").
2. **Tenant:** Center City District ("CCD").
3. **Premises:** The premises consists of several parcels located in the area bounded by Vine Street, Eastlawn Avenue, 10th Street and 12th Street, which consists in detail as follows:
4. **Commencement Date:** The date that the City or the premises owner to the City, or its authorized by Commission Date Letter, which shall be attached to the Lease.
5. **Term:** Thirty (30) years.
6. **Rent:** Rent or Free Base shall annually be \$1.00 per year.
7. **Improvements:** CCD shall make substantial improvements to the premises, including but not limited to construction of sidewalks, landscaping etc. The details of the improvements shall be contained in a Construction Plan and attached to the Lease.
8. **Use:** The Premises shall be used for open space, pedestrian, public use and public park purposes, including such activities as are customarily occurring in parks in Center City.
9. **Utilities:** Utilities shall be paid by CCD.
10. **Maintenance:** CCD shall maintain and repair the premises. The City will provide public services management, with those services provided by the City, or other public or private entity, for operations. Plans describing the work to be performed by CCD shall be approved by the City prior to the commencement of the work. The City and CCD shall cooperate in the development of funding mechanisms to support the long-term maintenance of the park to fulfill all the obligations of the Premises to the City.
11. **Equal Opportunity:** Tenant Improvements to the premises and its ongoing operations will be conducted in accordance with the policy described by the City of Philadelphia's Equal Opportunity program as Executive Order No. 625, signed November 13, 2013, which goal will be included in the Lease, and will be provided for attention to all contractors bidding on the Tenant Improvements and park maintenance.

- Raise funds for legal process leading to acquisition
- Raise funds for design/engineering & for renovation
- Create, maintain & manage park
- City & CCD have executed a development agreement for implementation & will execute long-term 30-year lease

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Proceeding in partnership with Steering Committee

Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation
 Callowhill Neighbors Association
 West Poplar Neighbors
 14th Ward RCO
 Friends of the Rail Park
 Coordinating with City of Philadelphia

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Will be 6th park CCD created since 2003

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CCD completed Phase 1 - \$11 million in 2018

Urban Engineers
 Studio Bryan Hanes

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Ownership transferred from SEPTA to the City

Parks & Recreation manages, programmed by Friends of the Rail Park

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Our goal is to build on the success of Phase 1

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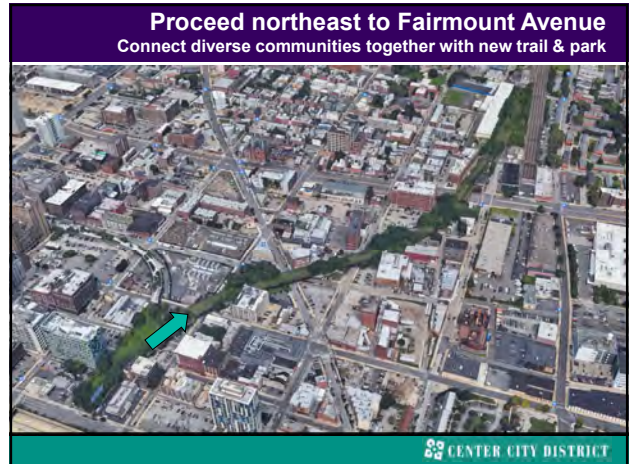
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6/10 mile; 3,150 linear feet; 6.8 acres of new public space from Vine to Fairmount in an area with no parks

- 2023: William Penn Foundation, Connelly Foundation & Poor Richards Charitable Trust \$2.5 million design
- Community engagement summer 2024.
- Design development complete 12/31/24
- January 2025 : Federal Reconnecting Communities Grant awarded --- delayed--
- William Penn Foundation, Connelly Foundation and Poor Richards Charitable Trust provided \$400,000 - January 2026 to study & design additional options
- \$2 million Reconnecting Communities Grant contract execution expected May 2026
- Construction bid documents; Fall 2026

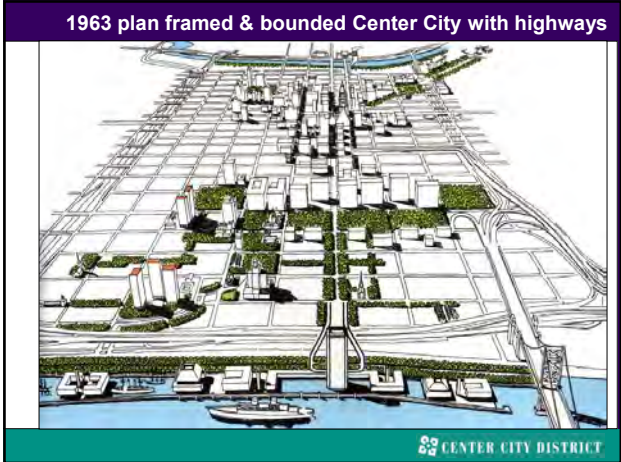
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Why this park? Look south from Center City
Experience walkable continuity from CBD to thriving rowhouse neighborhoods

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Filling in gaps in the fabric, a few blocks from the viaduct



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Ending at Fairmount Ave:
Future bike lane connections to Temple



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A block from long-term affordable housing
& mixed income housing in East Poplar



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A block from long-term affordable townhouses
Richard Allen Homes



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Immediately adjacent to market rate housing
in West Poplar



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Trail & park that connects diverse communities together
Links them to opportunities & services in Center City



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Precedents: Paris Promenade Plantee, 1993



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NYC Highline started in 1999



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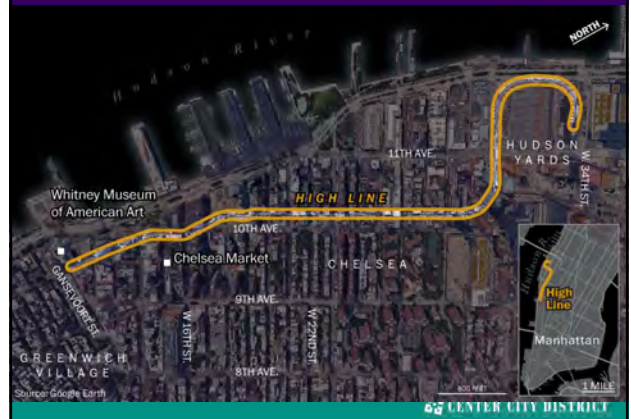
Opened in 2009, expanded 2019 & 2023



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Former industrial area, lower west side Manhattan



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An anchor park for a new community



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A continuing stimulus for new development



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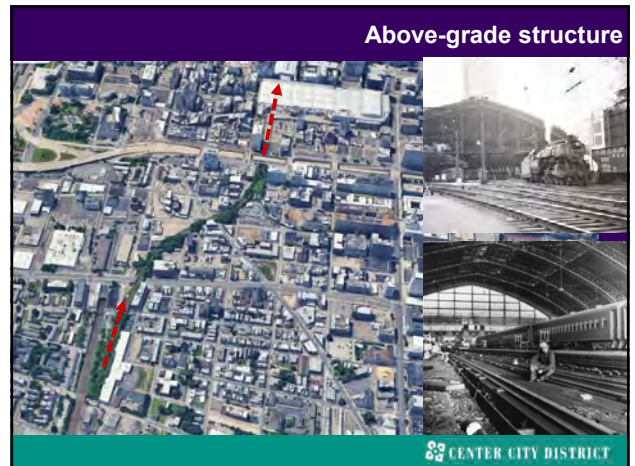
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Brought riders into Reading Terminal from 1893...



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Until new tunnel that goes underground at Spring Garden made it obsolete in 1984



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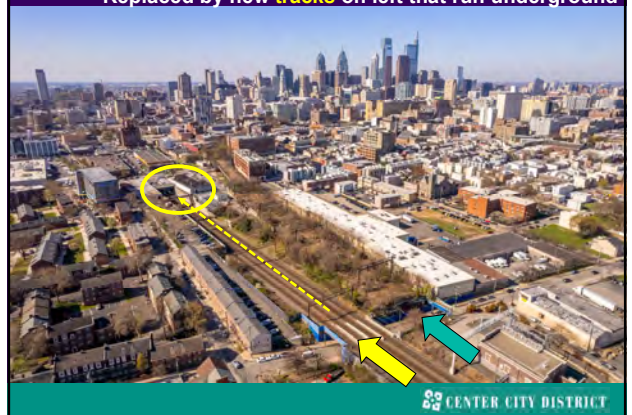
With the opening of the commuter rail tunnel



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Elevated bridge demolished at Fairmount
Replaced by new tracks on left that run underground



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Headhouse converted for Convention Center use: 1994



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Viaduct condemned & demolished south of Vine St
To make room for Convention Center



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Leaving a stub end at Vine Street



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Became the path for Convention Center truck ramp



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During the last 43 years, the balance languished, returned to a natural landscape on top of contaminated soil



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Neglected with minimal maintenance 4 decades
How weeds can become trees in 43 years



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Created unsafe conditions in tunnels



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Scary sections under bridges



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**Magnet for illegal dumping
Both underneath**



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On top the viaduct



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Reading's neglect: Two fires in September 2025



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Blighting element that has deterred development



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25% of area vacant & undeveloped land



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**It can become a central civic asset
& connecting path for multiple neighborhoods**



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**20% of units surrounding viaduct
Long-term affordable housing**

In the area bounded by Spring Garden St and Girard Ave., Broad St to 6th Street 52% of all housing units, 1,916 units, are affordable, supported by federal, state or city resources, 1,839 are funded by federal and state resources, 77 units are subsidized by the City, 82% of the units in the area have subsidies that continue for at least the next 10 years.

■ SUBSIDIES EXPIRING WITHIN 10 YEARS

PHASE 1 THE VIADUCT CENTER CITY DISTRICT

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**Supportive of an inclusive development strategy
In surrounding area: housing, jobs & business opportunities**

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**What are we improving?
Phase 2 = minimum of 60 feet wide**

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Twice as wide as phase 1: 30 feet wide

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Twice as wide as Chicago's Bloomingdale trail

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Twice as wide as NYC's High Line

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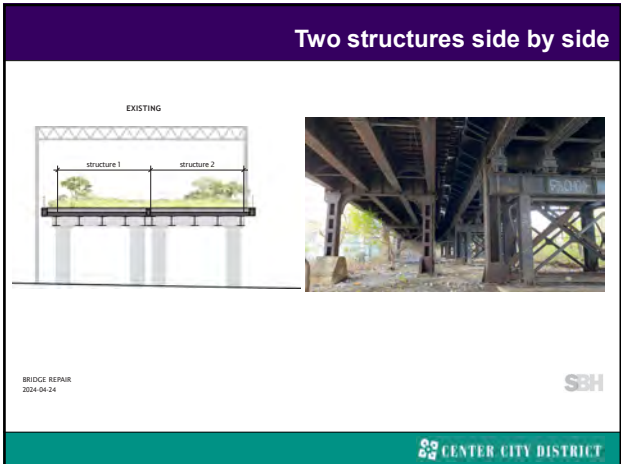
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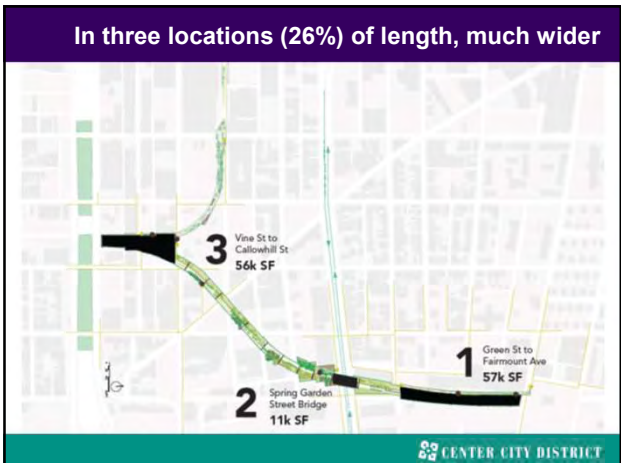
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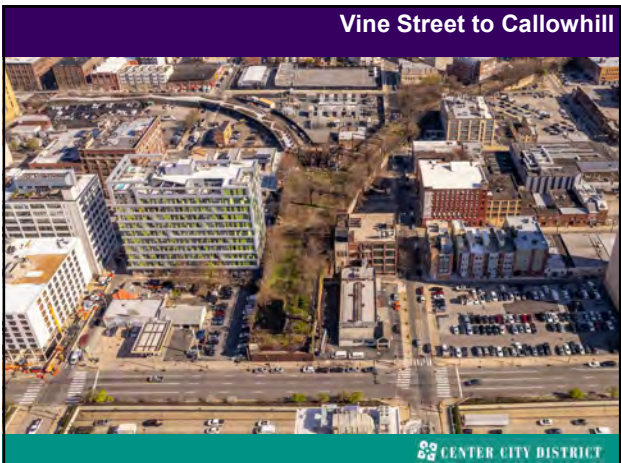
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Masonry & stone retaining walls & earth fill



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Same at Spring Garden Street



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Green Street to Fairmount Avenue



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Like Phase 1



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It is less expensive to renovate than to demolish



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Urban Engineers: Full demolition: \$120 million (2025)
Includes \$46 million removal/disposal of contaminated soil



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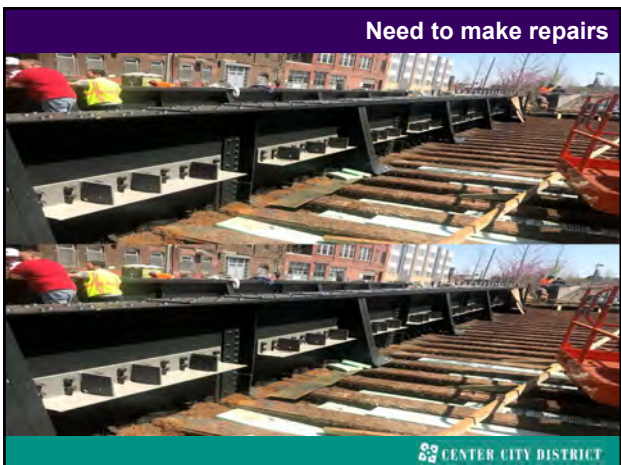
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To protect underside supporting steel



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Lead paint abatement: reuse catenary structures



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Approximately 60% of cost of phase 1: bridge reconstruction & creation of base park: we will need to do that again



URBAN ENGINEERS

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About 40% of the cost in new amenities
Many can be deferred, added in stages later



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Design development cost estimates at 3 levels:
20% contingency

- (1) Base trail, modest amenities half-width: 2027-2028
\$75- \$80 million (Dilworth \$55 million in 2014)
- (2) Half-width trail, wider in 3 places: 4-5 years
+ \$40 million = \$115 million
- (3) Full width trail, full amenities: 5-10 years
+ \$74 million = \$149 million

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Proposed design & construction approach
Rather than take a decade to raise \$150 million.....



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A simple path, half-width, full distance now
Basic amenities, fencing, lighting, stairs & ADA accessibility (\$75m)

The image shows a photograph of the Viaduct Greenway on the left, a wide, paved path with a railing and trees. On the right is a map of the Center City District with the greenway route highlighted in green, labeled 'VIADUCT GREENWAY'. The map also shows 'THE STITCH' and 'PHAZET' areas.

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Trail weaves back and forth, from side to side (74%)
Depending on where we can get access for stairs & ramps

The image features a map of the trail route in green, showing it weaving between streets. A cross-section diagram at the top left shows the trail on a raised viaduct structure supported by pillars. The map labels streets like 'SPRING GARDEN STREET BRIDGE' and 'VINE ST'.

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Design & include spaces now for pop-up activation & programming

The image shows a map of the 'BASE PROJECT' with 10 numbered points (1-10) along the trail route. A legend on the right includes a scale comparison with icons for 1000 SF, 3-4k SF, and 6-8k SF. It also defines 'Access Point' (Street level and Viaduct level) and 'Programmable areas' (on upper level in base project and on upper level in base project).

BASE PROJECT
2024 08-28 PROGRAM & ACTIVATION

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Basics: unit pavers, benches, canopy trees, lighting

The photograph shows a section of the greenway with unit paving, a wooden bench, and a canopy tree. A person is sitting on the bench. Labels 'Canopy tree' and 'Unit paving' are overlaid on the image.

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Potential activation spaces for programming under viaduct

The image shows a map of the 'FUTURE EXPANSION' with potential activation spaces under the viaduct highlighted in yellow and green. A legend on the right defines 'Programmable areas at street level', 'Programmable areas on upper level in base project', and 'View end'. It also notes 'Part of the "side half" and fenced off. No improvements included in base schematic Design estimate.'

FUTURE EXPANSION
2024 08-28 PROGRAM & ACTIVATION

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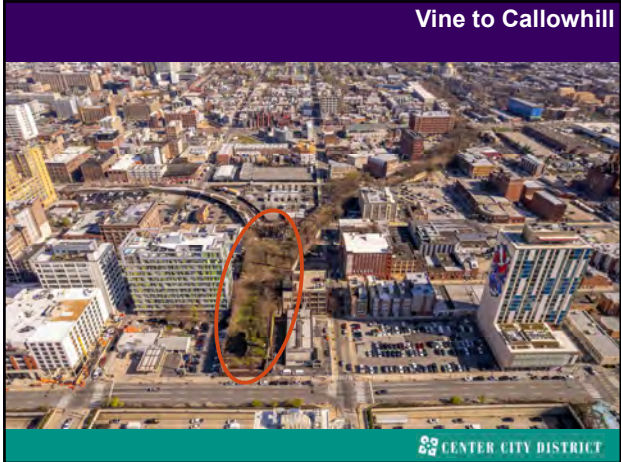
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Look ahead to the three wider sections
Depending on success with fundraising

The image shows a map highlighting three wider sections of the trail: 1. Green St to Fairmount Ave (57k SF), 2. Spring Garden Street Bridge (11k SF), and 3. Vine St to Callowhill St (56k SF).

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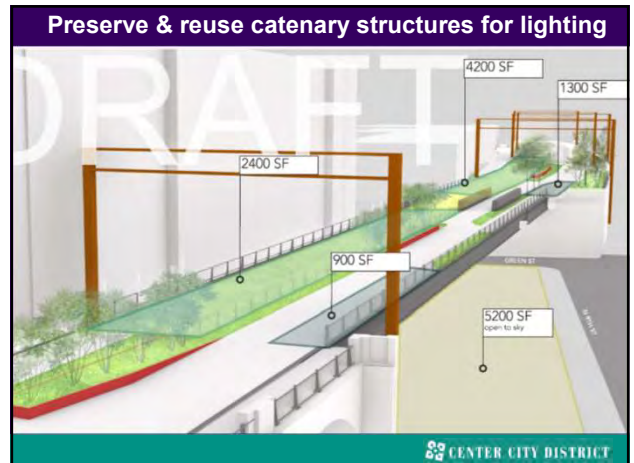
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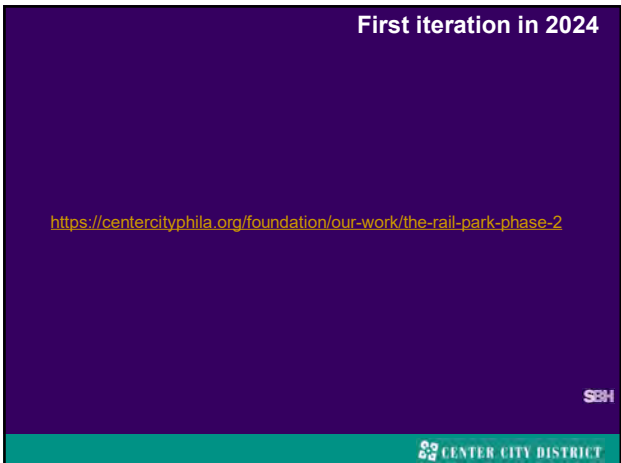
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Summary of Connect the DOTs engagement

- People are excited about the possibility for the Viaduct to introduce people to their neighborhoods & local businesses.
- Participants want the local communities & their history to be represented in the art and landscaping of the Viaduct
- Participants emphasized need for lighting, cleanliness, art, & greenery to increase feelings of welcomeness & safety in order to improve underpasses and bridges.
- The communities that the Viaduct runs through are unique & diverse neighborhoods, that should be reflected in the design of the Park

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Summary of Connect the DOTs engagement

- Participants want the Viaduct to prioritize the local community with local amenities rather than focusing on tourists
- Participants primarily want to use the Viaduct Greenway for relaxation & as a respite from the city.
- In addition to space for relaxing, people also want the space to function as a walking path & a space for gathering/local events.
- There should be vendors on the Viaduct; an opportunity to connect with & support local businesses (particularly food-based businesses)
- Participants wanted the Viaduct Greenway to serve as a community gathering spot for local organizations, with programming that could allow community members to gather

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Concerns

- Primary concern was the potential to displace residents. Housing should remain affordable & the Viaduct should serve as an amenity for neighborhood residents, rather than become a tool for displacement.
- Participants are excited about the possibility for the Viaduct to beautify the neighborhood, drawing people to local businesses & surrounding communities as a whole, improving the neighborhood by increasing safety, and adding an additional community amenity.

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Summary of findings: Park & path top priority

How do you imagine yourself using the Viaduct?

Usage Category	Count
As a green/quiet space	120
As a space to participate in community programs or activities	67
As a commuting path	67
Other (please specify)	7

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Summary of Findings

What approach for the greenery/landscaping for the Viaduct would you most prefer?

Approach	Count
Wild and Open	47
Wild and Enclosed	12
Managed and Open	37
Managed and Enclosed	31

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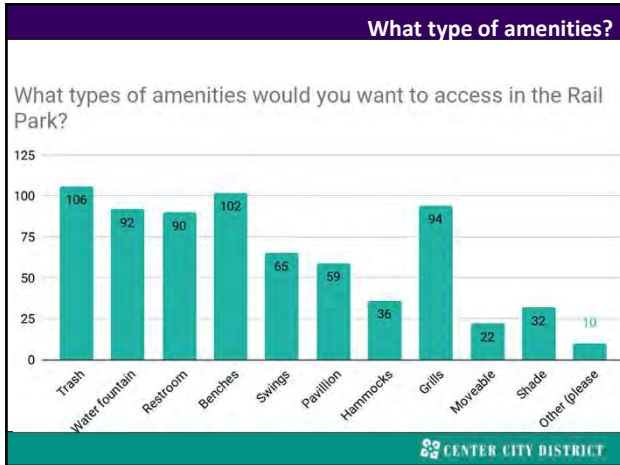
Barriers to mobility in the area

Which of the following obstacles make it difficult for you to get to where you want to go around this area?

Barrier	Count
Lack of bike lanes	57
Bike share or rideshare are expensive	11
Lack of safety	75
Poor lighting	58
ADA accessibility	15
Other (please specify)	34

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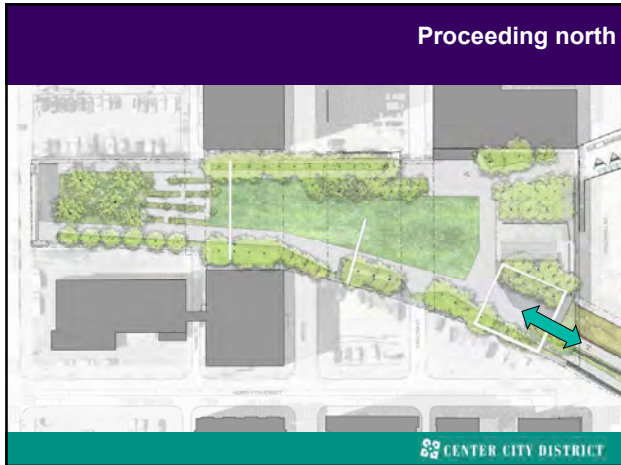
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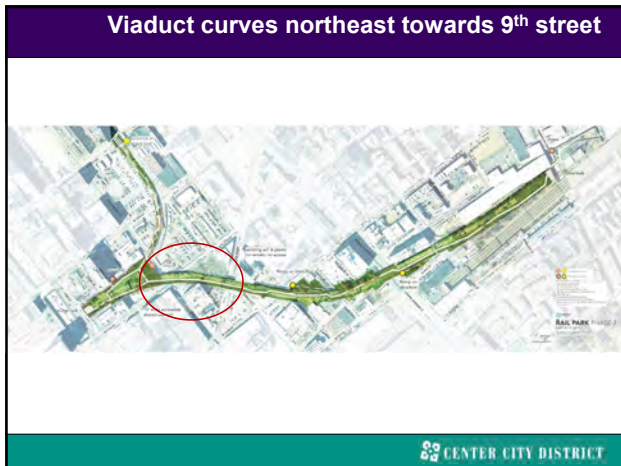
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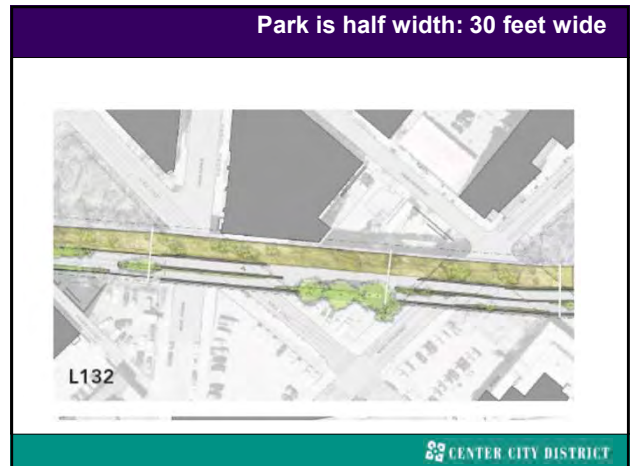
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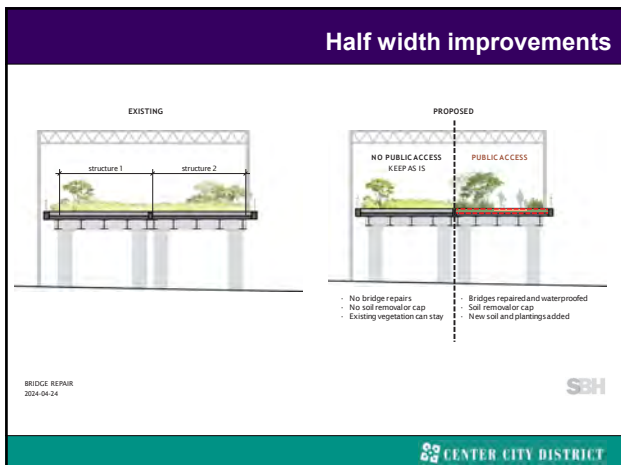
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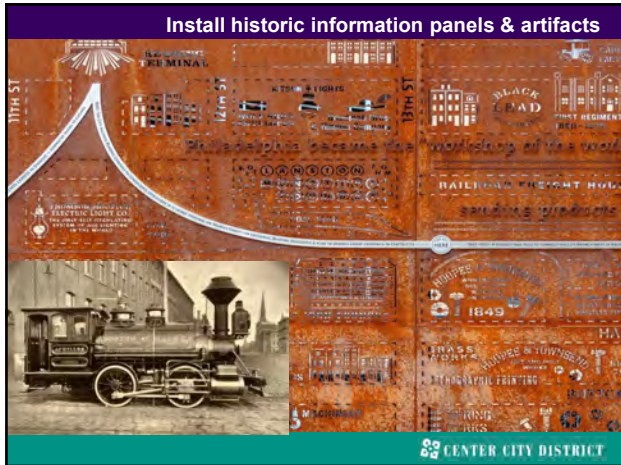
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Also a 60 foot wide continuous masonry bridge
Base level trail



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Add iconic swings



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Future addition of maintenance facility



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On the site where Reading demolished train station



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Café at park level



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Potential elevator location



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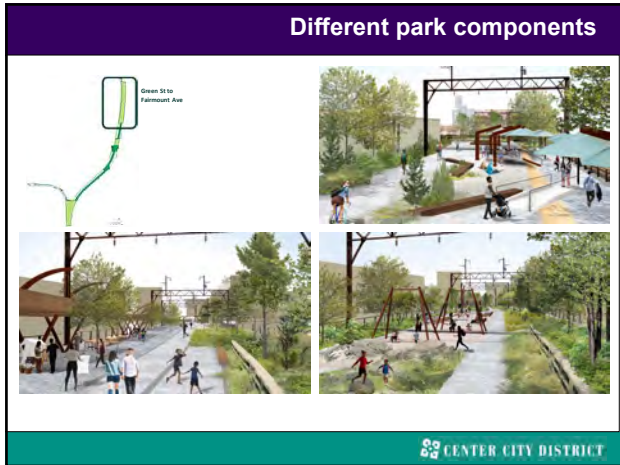
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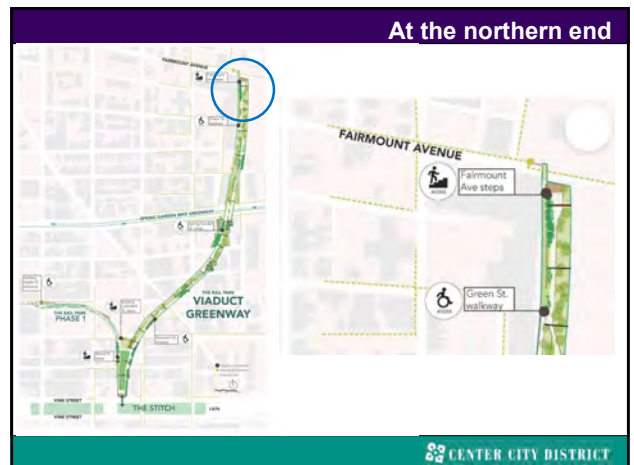
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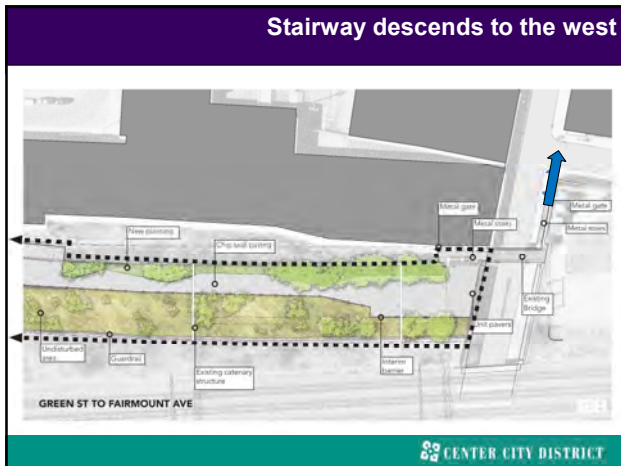
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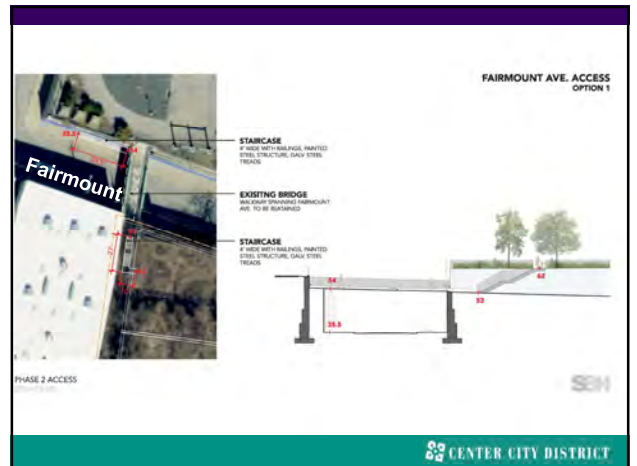
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Ramp on south side of Spring Garden Street

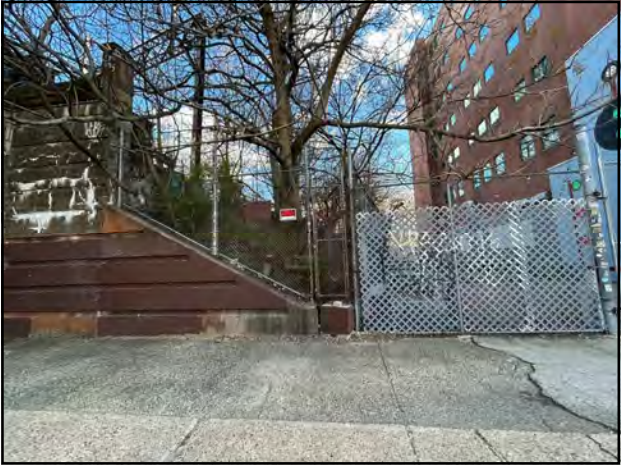


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Ramp location



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Spring Garden, looking south



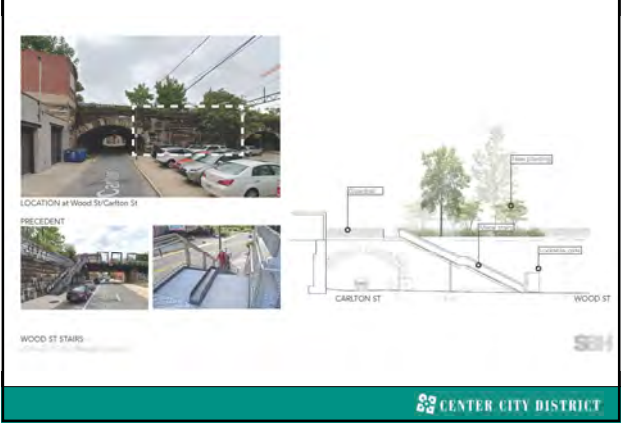
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Wood Street stairs



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Wood Street stairs: west side



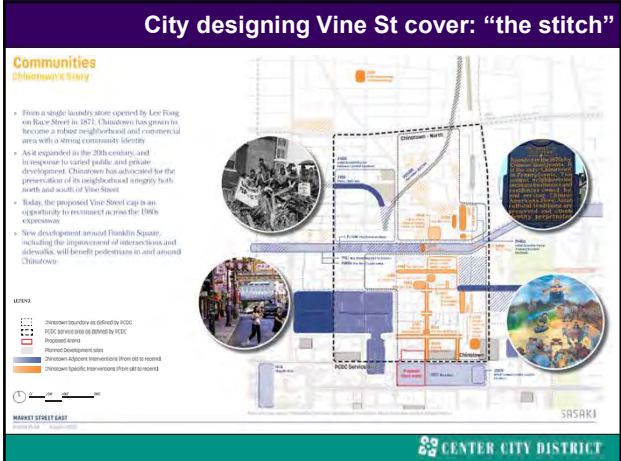
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**Funding \$5.5 million raised for construction documents
Capital costs**

- **Construction bid documents by fall**
- **Grant proposals pending**
 - State Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program
 - Federal BUILD grant
- **Other sources to be pursued**
 - State
 - Foundations who have supported design
 - Private donors

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**Acquisition of site
City of Philadelphia approved legislation**

**Donation
Purchase
Condemnation**

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Reading International is a movie theater company
 Holdings in Australia, New Zealand, California & NYC
 Share value steadily declining
 Bought former bankrupt rail assets
 CCD & City have met with them multiple times since 2016

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Margaret & Ellen Cotter: 2017

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Reading's negotiating stance

They asserted that they are still a railroad therefore exempt from local taxes, codes & powers of condemnation

Spring 2024 City/CCD filed at the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB), agency oversees rail lines, to confirm that all railroad rights extinguished by Conrail back in 1982

Reading has removed track, demolished train station; made no repairs; viaduct severed at either end

STB ruled definitely in September 2025 Reading is not a railroad. Legal wheels turning, appeal, but also negotiation

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Remediation costs alone = \$26 million + \$20 million in bridge repairs

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Appraisal placed at \$0 given remediation costs
 Reading has asked for \$25 million

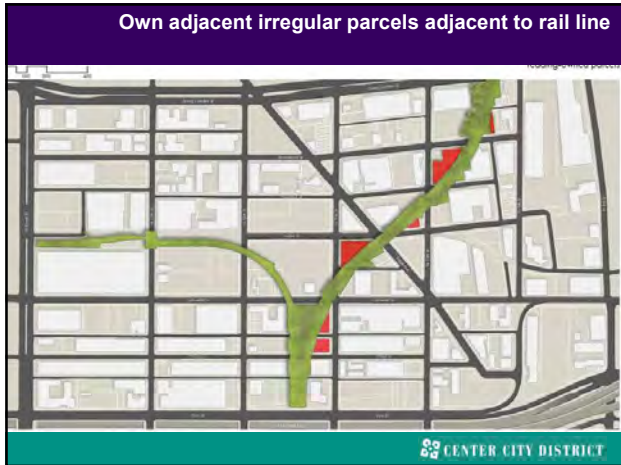
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Reading not only owns the Viaduct

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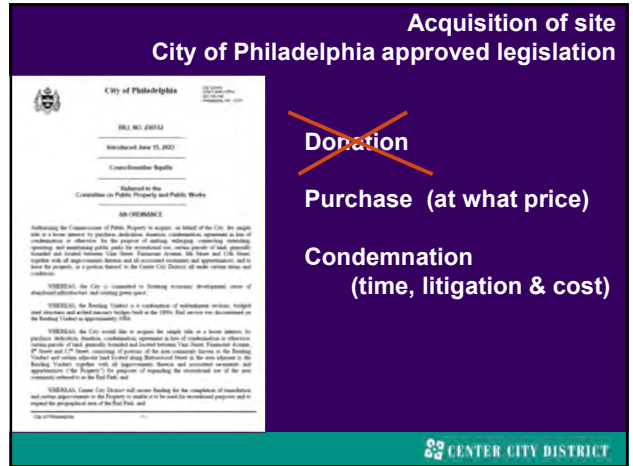
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Retail/café platform: a requirement for adjacent projects?



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AtlantaBeltline



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AtlantaBeltline



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AtlantaBeltline



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Particularly with new construction "eyes on the park"



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Suggested café at park level



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To keep momentum CCD has proceeded with design, community outreach & fundraising



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Construction bid documents by fall 2026
Base trail, half-width full length \$75 million



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Maintenance plan



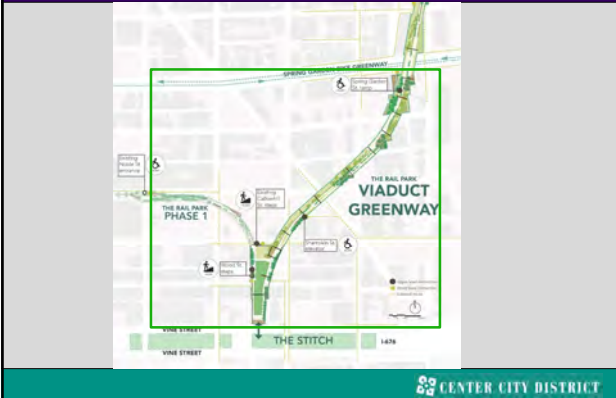
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Basic clean, safe & landscape maintenance
\$2.5 million



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Resistance 10 years ago to BID
in primarily residential area



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Exploration of TIF district 2 & 4 block radius



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Downtown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ #3) Extended to Buffalo Bayou Park for maintenance

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Four blocks includes Vine St Stitch

Dedicate increment to Rail Park & Stitch maintenance?
 Basic Rail park operations = \$2.5 million annually
 No multi-owner TIFs
 Impact of abatements
 Requires Council approval
 Benefits within broader boundaries?

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Calculation in 4 block radius

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Atlanta Tax Allocation District Atlanta BeltLine (investatlanta.com)

TAD Development Objectives
 Atlanta Beltline is sustainable redevelopment project that is transforming the city. It will ultimately connect 45 intown neighborhoods via a 22-mile loop of multi-use trails, modern streetcar, and parks – all based on railroad corridors that formerly encircled Atlanta.

the Atlanta Beltline supports:

- Affordable workforce housing (separate fund)
- Economic development
- Job creation
- Public health
- Streetscapes
- Public art
- Environmental clean-up
- Historic preservation
- Sustainability

Atlanta Beltline Affordable Housing Trust Fund (BAHTF) promotes creation & preservation of affordable housing within the Beltline neighborhoods

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<https://www.investatlanta.com/developers/opportunities-incentives/residential-housing-incentives>

The Atlanta Beltline Affordable Housing Trust Fund (BAHTF) is a dedicated funding source supporting the creation and preservation of affordable housing within the 45 neighborhoods surrounding the 22-mile Beltline corridor. It provides grants to developers for building or renovating units and assists low-income households with housing costs, often targeting residents at or below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

•Funded Activities: The trust fund is used to fill financial gaps in multifamily projects, ensuring affordable rental housing, and supporting homeownership, often in collaboration with organizations like the Atlanta Land Trust.

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Even with acquisition & maintenance unresolved Moving toward construction documents

VINE ST TO CALLOWHILL ST
 S&H

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Final presentations



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Final Presentations: Problem/objective

West Market & JFK from 15th St. to 30th St. station remains the highest density, primary job node in the city of Philadelphia at the center of the public transit system

It is the largest source of tax revenue for the city of Philadelphia and for the CCD

But its land use model is obsolete & is challenged by the events of 2020 and new modes of work

The goal is to reinforce the strength of this area but by rethinking many aspects of its form and mix of activities




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Final

Why your group believes that
East of 20th ----- West of 20th
Is the critical place to start

You've all done your own individual version of diagnosing the challenges & opportunities & have suggested certain types of improvements that need to occur, you need to integrate diverse perspectives into a coherent strategy



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Final

Strengths
Weaknesses
Improvements

- early, easy, visible moves
- harder, longer-term transformational investments



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Implementation: how does change happen?
Who drives the bus?

(1) If the governance structure in Philadelphia for these issues remains the same (fragmented), what is the best path to motivate & inspire a handful of players to lead a new path towards change?

(2) if we could create new public space/retail implementation corporation, what more could it achieve & how could it be sold as an idea to all the diverse actors

(3) if the public/private governance structure that exists in many Asian cities, could magically be imported directly into Philadelphia, what more might get done (include several case studies from other cities that many of you offered in your papers) & what would be the challenges that such an approach might create in a setting unaccustomed to this type of top down planning & development?



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