

## *Wrestling Public Benefits from Derelict and Neglected Roads, Rails and Rivers.*

### **THE PROSPECT.**

Valuable lands and waters are being discarded because their first use has become obsolete and most communities and developers are not clever enough to envision a productive life for the second or subsequent generations of use. Fortunately, some communities, urban designers and philanthropists are envisioning new uses for discarded roads, rails and rivers. Four examples demonstrate the power of envisioning the re-purposing of derelict properties for public use.

### **THE PROJECTS.**

#### **The High Line in New York.**

The elevated rail line that is now “the High Line was once designated for demolition”. “Joshua David and Robert Hammond founded Friends of the High Line, a non-profit conservancy, to advocate for its preservation and reuse as a public space.” The 1.45 mile linear park is heavily landscaped with access to apartments, hotels, restaurants, shops and artwork. The space is also heavily programmed with performances free and open to all.

#### **Miami’s Underline Trail and Park.**

The park will extend from downtown Miami to Dadeland under the Metrorail’s elevated tracks. Ambitious plans for construction of the Underline, a 10-mile-long “linear park” for people on foot and on bikes that would run beneath the elevated Metrorail tracks, got a significant lift with the announcement Wednesday of a \$22.3 million federal grant for the project.

#### **The Promenade Plantée in Paris.**

The abandoned rail line sat fallow for nearly 20 years. The 2.8 mile tree-lined linear park is heavily landscaped with accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists. The park is at times on the viaduct, at times in tunnels and at times at grade. Shops, restaurants and apartments have immediate access to the park.

#### **The Riverwalk in San Antonio.**

This 2.5 mile heavily landscaped waterfront began its resurrection in the 1930s but not until the 1960s did it gain momentum that resulted in today’s successful urban space. Architect Robert H. H. Hugman [1902-1980] is the man behind the dream. The Paseo Del Rio Association was formed in 1969 “to promote the continuous improvement and development of the Riverwalk.”

#### **The Bentway in Toronto.**

This 1.0 mile linear park will be built under an expressway starting April 2020. The park will access gardens, markets, restaurants and theaters. Philanthropists “Wil and Judy [Matthews] recognized the unusual beauty underneath the expressway and the potential for the space to connect the city to the waterfront...” The project is led by a project-specific organization.

### **The Swiss River Canal, Geneva.**

Flowing through the idyllic southwestern tip of Switzerland is the Aire, a small river that winds through the countryside close to Geneva, then across the French border, through the village of San-Julien-en-Genevois. This temperamental ribbon of water has been a major flood risk to the region's agriculture and neighboring towns: it was reined in by a canal once in 1896 and again in the 1940s before the Canton of Geneva finally launched a competition for a plan to tame the river in 2001.

### **The Beltline, Atlanta.**

Atlanta BeltLine, Atlanta's spectacular outdoor space, comprises 22 miles of unused railroad tracks **circling the core** of the city's in-town neighborhoods. From trails and walkways to open green space and parks, the Atlanta BeltLine connects people to neighborhoods, dining and cool places throughout the city. A world-class amenity similar to New York City's High Line, the Atlanta BeltLine is also home to Art on the BeltLine, the Southeast's largest temporary public art project.

### **The West Orange Trail, Winter Garden FL.**

The 22-mile trail connects Oakland to the west with Apopka to the north, but the City of Winter Garden is the hub, the location of shops and restaurants, bike shops, a renovated live theater, three museums and a public space in the heart of town that is crowded with residents and regional visitors.

### **The Point is to Examine Every Resource for its Potential as a Re-Purposed Community Asset.**

How were these under-utilized or neglected marvelous assets recognized and re-purposed winning interest to find funding sources for substantial investment?

- Someone had a vision and recognized the value of an abandoned place or space that happened to be in a great location.
- The vision was executed in a high-quality manner even though some projects took decades.
- The resultant public spaces and places were connected to many private and public community venues.
- The visions were based on the ideal of providing free and full access to the entire community.

**Look around, see what you find, see what no one else sees.**