

High Line Park

New York City, New York, U.S.A.

In the mid 1800's, so many accidents occurred between freight trains and street-level traffic on 10th Avenue in Manhattan that it became known as "Death Avenue." After years of debate, New York state and city governments, along with the New York Railroad, agreed to develop a 13-mile-long elevated railroad. Opening to trains in 1934, the High Line brought tons of produce and manufactured goods to Manhattan. By the 1950's, with the rise of interstate trucking, rail traffic along the High Line had fallen dramatically. In the 1960's, the Southern section of the High Line was demolished.

In 1999, Friends of the High Line was founded by Joshua David and Robert Hammond to advocate for the High Line's preservation and reuse as a public park. In 2002, Friends of the High Line finally won a lawsuit challenging City's plans for demolishing the remaining tracks. A year later, a design competition was launched to solicit proposals for reusing the High Line. More than 720 teams from 36 countries entered. The team selected is led by Field Operations, a landscape architecture firm, and includes Diller Scofidio + Renfro, as well as noted horticultural designer, Piet Oudolf.

The High Line Park now runs more than 20 blocks from Gansevoort to 20th street. The second phase running from 20th street to 30th street will launch in 2010. The High Line is essentially a green roof on top of an elevated railroad track. There are multiple layers within the "living roof," including a porous drainage layer, gravel, filter fabric, subsoil, and topsoil. Materials used in the High Line were selected based on life-cycle costs. Special concrete designed to last long was used to reduce the waste caused by later replacements. Parts of the High Line use recirculated water. Plans are underway to harvest rainwater from the roofs of nearby buildings. Native, drought-resistant plant species were

tailored to the High Line's micro-climates. Ipe, a type of Brazilian wood, was used for decks. There has been some concern about whether the wood is sustainable given it is often illegally sourced from the Amazon.

The open section of the High Line begins near the meeting of Gansevoort and Washington streets. A staircase leads to a central promenade platform, offering views of the plantings. Friends of High Line Park Founder, Joshua David, envisioned an atmosphere "less like a park and more like scruffy wilderness." A range of native plants, including sumac and hardy urban plants, is used along with scabiosa, a "pincushion flower." Juneberry shrubs were also in fruit during the spring's inauguration of the park. The High Line's designers sought to retain as much of the original High Line's gritty urban character as possible. *The New York Review of Books* recently said the park "celebrates rather than obviates the collision of natural and man-made environments."

The High Line Park is now run by the New York City Parks Department. From outsider to a central community platform, the High Line demonstrates how derelict industrial sites can be reimagined. Other cities are also exploring reusing abandoned transportation infrastructure.

Friends of the High Line will employ youths aged 16–21 as part of its "Youth Corps" program. Additionally, the High Line Schools program now offers curriculum guides, which were co-developed with the New York City Laboratory School for Collaborative Studies, for grades two through seven. Class visits to the High Line are also part of the educational program.

Project Resources

DESIGN TEAM 2004-2009

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Diller Scofidio + Renfro Architecture

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Buro Happold Structural / MEP Engineering

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Robert Silman Associates Structural Engineering/ Historic Preservation

Joseph Tortorella; Andre Georges

Piet Oudolf Planting Design

L'Observatoire International Lighting

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Pentagram Design, Inc. Signage

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CONSTRUCTION TEAM

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