

FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

Centennial Commons OVERVIEW

The Fairmount Park Conservancy has been working closely with Parks & Recreation, Studio | Bryan Hanes, and the Parkside community to envision and implement a new recreation/play space along the Parkside Avenue edge of West Fairmount Park, which will provide new amenities and better access to the park for residents of East Parkside as well as thousands of daily visitors to the Please Touch Museum and the Philadelphia Zoo.

The site, which was the central hub of the Centennial Exhibition of 1876, has a rich history, but has been left under-developed and under-supported for decades. In 2005, a Centennial District Master Plan was commissioned and published by the Conservancy – in partnership with the Fairmount Park Commission and other stakeholders – outlining a 20 year plan to invest \$300 million in infrastructure improvements throughout West Fairmount Park and the surrounding community. Nine years removed from that plan, most of the ideas that have been implemented have focused on the Centennial District as a regional destination, but have lacked the fine-grained interventions that touch the daily lives of the surrounding communities in a meaningful way.

With the support of the William Penn Foundation in 2013, the Conservancy commissioned Studio | Bryan Hanes to develop a plan that would engage both residents and regional visitors in the activation of an educational, exploratory play/recreation space at the site – a key portion of Fairmount Park’s Centennial District and a critical building block to its future success. In active collaboration with the community and adjacent stakeholders throughout 2013, a program for the site emerged that will provide for attractive, accessible open spaces for a variety of constituents.

The space will be divided into three sections: the ‘Youth Area’, which will focus on nature-based and exploratory play for children in the range of 5 to 12 years of age; the ‘Btwens Area’, which will provide a unique opportunity for play and socialization for an age group often ignored in the public realm, and the ‘Neighborhood Edge’, which will include passive recreation areas for all ages, seating and picnic areas, landscaping, a seat wall, a rain garden, and softened park edges.



Proposed designs for components of the future Centennial District Park by Studio | Bryan Hanes

The Conservancy has engaged Studio | Bryan Hanes in the design and implementation of the project over three distinct phases, beginning with the design of the Neighborhood Edge component of the project. We will begin construction of the Parkside Edge section in fall 2015, first enlivening the Parkside Avenue edge of the park and demonstrating to the Parkside community that positive change is coming to West Park.

Fundraising efforts are currently underway for this project at various funding levels. While the implementation of the work will be substantially supported by the William Penn Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, we are soliciting additional funders, and we will be developing unique naming opportunities for key sections and amenities of the new park space.

The total cost of the Centennial Commons project is approximately \$7,000,000.



The proposed site plan for the Centennial Commons - Courtesy of Studio | Bryan Hanes