

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary offerings of the Borough in terms of parks and recreation is its riverfront along the Allegheny River. The Tarentum riverfront spans a distance of 1.24 miles and is divided into two sections by the Bull Creek tributary. The longer section, 0.83 miles, is owned by the Borough, lies to the east of the creek and is primarily recreational in terms of zoning and actual use. The smaller section to the west is .41 miles in length and is zoned industrial. This section falls under the control of two property owners. The publicly owned portion of the Borough's riverfront currently offers a variety of recreational activities including boat docks and fishing areas.



A large section of the privately owned portion of the riverfront is located within the floodplain and is the site of one of the Borough's larger industrial employers. The property's economic value and location in the floodplain limit its use

to serving as a portion of the trail system and acting as a green buffer to the contiguous industrial area.

The primary impending impact on the Borough's riverfront is the County's passage of legislation that will lead to the creation of a 128-mile long park along the Allegheny, Monongahela, Ohio and Youghiogheny rivers. When completed, the park will become the County's tenth regional park and will touch more than half of Allegheny County's 130 municipalities. The new riverfront park will also hold the distinction as the world's longest urban linear park. The Allegheny River portion of the riverfront park will also function as a portion of the proposed Allegheny Valley Trail, which would run from the City of Pittsburgh to Harrison Township within Allegheny County and ultimately extend to Lake Erie. Ordinance #38-06, which authorizes "the Law Department, in conjunction with the Allegheny County Parks Department, to obtain appraisals and title reports, to negotiate and acquire the required property rights in fee simple absolute, and to prepare the necessary petitions, resolutions and all other documents, as required, for the County to obtain legal title to riverfront property in a band no less than 50 feet and, where appropriate, including hillsides, on at least one bank of the Monongahela, Youghiogheny, Allegheny, and Ohio Rivers for their entire length within Allegheny County, for the purpose of creating a countywide riverfront park."

Allegheny County has engaged a consultant to prepare a master plan for the trail from Millvale Borough to Harrison Township. This plan will consider the highest and best use for various sections of the riverfront. Currently, these uses range from the Pittsburgh Rowing Association in Millvale to boating, fishing, and picnic areas elsewhere. Since the master plan will consider the appropriate uses for the riverfront, we are using the Borough's Comprehensive Plan to consider methods of financing those uses.

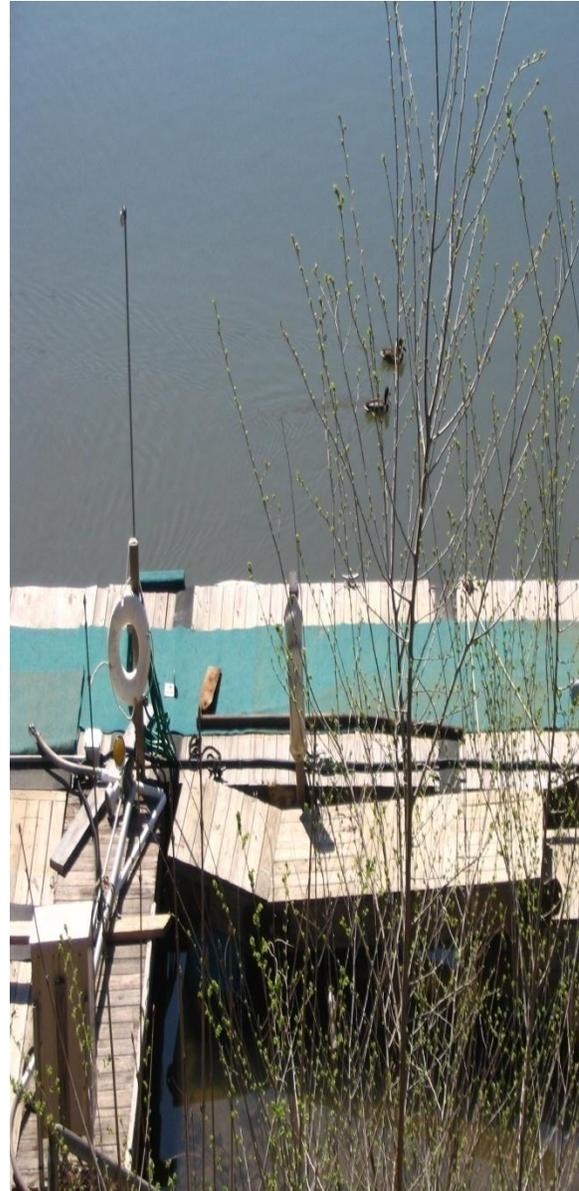
The Allegheny County Parks Department has established four primary goals as part of its operating mission.

- *Recreation*
- *Natural and Cultural Resources*
- *County-wide Open Space*
- *Management and Financing*

The goal of Management and Financing covers “a number of complex issues associated with managing, operating, and funding the parks system, including organizational structure; staffing; maintenance; public and private sector partners and volunteers; public outreach and communications; safety and security; and financing. The goal also covers County consideration of utilizing user fees to recover the cost of operating and maintaining its facilities. Special consideration should be given to the use of fees because they may impact the use of facilities which often serve as default recreation facilities for low-income people.

STRATEGY

An alternative to the use of taxes or user fees is the creation of a Riverfront Recreational Assessment District that will utilize an assessment of increased revenues to businesses that benefit from riverfront recreation, allowing each municipality to adopt legislation allowing for a 1% assessment from businesses that locate in the District. The host municipality would keep 0.5% of the assessment and the remainder would be transmitted to Allegheny County to help defray costs in other municipalities which choose not to adopt the assessment or where the topography and/or access make retail facilities impractical.



One of the best known businesses in Tarentum is Gatto Cycles, which sells both road and dirt bikes in addition to motorcycles. Gatto Cycles could offer bike rentals through a small riverfront kiosk facility. Other beneficiaries of this type of district may be skateboard repairs, bait shops, other recreational equipment providers, and food and beverage operations. The riverfront park can help create a new market for



recreation related businesses and, in turn, the increased sales revenue will provide money for the maintenance of the park. Consideration should be given to limiting opportunities to businesses already located in the municipality and all uses must be consistent with the appropriate local ordinances.

The idea of special assessment districts is not new and in Pennsylvania existing legislation permits Business Improvement Districts, Neighborhood Improvement Districts, and the assessment of industrial properties within the boundaries of industrial parks for the purpose of infrastructure development and maintenance. There are also other examples of similar districts elsewhere in the country. In San Diego, Maintenance Assessment Districts allow property owners to create special assessment districts to tax themselves to provide services beyond what the local government can provide based on the normal

tax revenue. A recreation improvement and maintenance district levies taxes on property owners within the Lake Elsinore School District boundaries in California to pay for upkeep of and improvements to its fields, courts and other recreational facilities accessible to the public.

In terms of the Allegheny County riverfront park system, the suggestion is made to allow local municipalities to assess the sales of businesses located in a special assessment area contiguous to the riverfront park. The assessment area should be contained by some existing boundary such as the street nearest to the riverfront. The assessment will be optional for municipalities and will be in the amount of 1% of sales. The municipality will retain 0.5% for its own use, and the other 0.5% will be remitted to the County for use throughout the entire park system including those municipalities where the terrain and riverfront uses do not allow ancillary retail operations.

TARENTUM RIVERFRONT CONNECTOR

The other project that may be considered is a pedestrian/bike bridge that would connect the sections of the riverfront on both sides of Bull Creek.

While we offer this as a possible riverfront project, routing the trail away from the riverfront to Sixth Avenue will detour users through the Borough's commercial area.

