

# Pittsburgh, PA USA

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Imagining the  
Post-Industrial City



The J&L Steel Mill on the shore of the Monongahela River, with the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning in the distance.

photo: W. Eugene Smith  
c. 1955

**E**merging from the collapse of the steel industry has been neither quick nor easy for Pittsburgh. Over the last two decades, the loss of the city's primary economic engine has given way to new industries and to the rediscovery of the region's scenic and ecological heritage, in its extensive forests and three major rivers.

Another legacy of the steel industry lay in the many riverfront brownfields near or in the city. With prime real estate becoming available for remediation and redevelopment, the city has seized the opportunity to develop a comprehensive waterfront development vision.

Currently, Pittsburgh's park system is anchored by four major city parks which date back to the beginning of the 20th century. Schenley, Frick, Highland and Riverview Parks were acquired through a combination of the city's philanthropic tradition and crosstown rivalries. In addition, Point State Park, completed in 1974, holds National Landmark status and has quickly become an icon for the city.

"...If any one would enjoy a spectacle as striking as Niagara, he may do so by simply walking in Pittsburg, and looking into hell with the lid taken off."

—James Parton,  
writer, in *Atlantic  
Monthly*, January 1868

## Three Rivers Park: A New Vision for Pittsburgh's Waterfront

### City Statistics

**City Population:** 369,879

**City Area:** 35,584 acres

**Density Level:** 9.8

**Park Acreage:** 2,735

**Park acreage per 1000 residents:** 7.39

**Governing bodies:** Public Works Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and various public-private partnerships

**Expenditure per person:** \$26.

In 2001, the Riverlife Task Force, a public-private partnership of community leaders, published "A Vision Plan for Pittsburgh's Waterfronts." This plan was the product of more than 18 months of public meetings and forums, and proposed "to create in the heart of Pittsburgh a great urban river park that will open the rivers up to the community, bring people back to the water, bring life back to the city and transform the region's image. The focus of the plan is simple: to provide continuous public access to the rivers and along the edges, connecting and expanding on the parks that now punctuate the shoreline in a continuous flow of trails, bridges, green space, and waterfront amenities. The park is envisioned as a series of interconnected places and destinations that altogether will comprise a single, grand public space called "Three Rivers Park."

The Riverlife Task Force continues to actively promote this vision as a long-term goal.

[www.riverlifetaskforce.org](http://www.riverlifetaskforce.org)



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## Major Components of Pittsburgh's Open Space System

### a. Connective corridors

Three Rivers: Allegheny, Monongahela, Ohio  
Bridges and tunnels  
Trail System (development ongoing), including Allegheny Riverfront Park

### b. Anchors

Four major city parks: Schenley, Frick, Highland, Riverview  
Point State Park

### c. Neighborhood Parks (152)

### d. Brownfield Remediation

New uses include parks, greenways, commercial and mixed-use

### e. Regional Greenways

City agencies and special interest groups foster building connections with larger trail systems and greenways

### f. Other

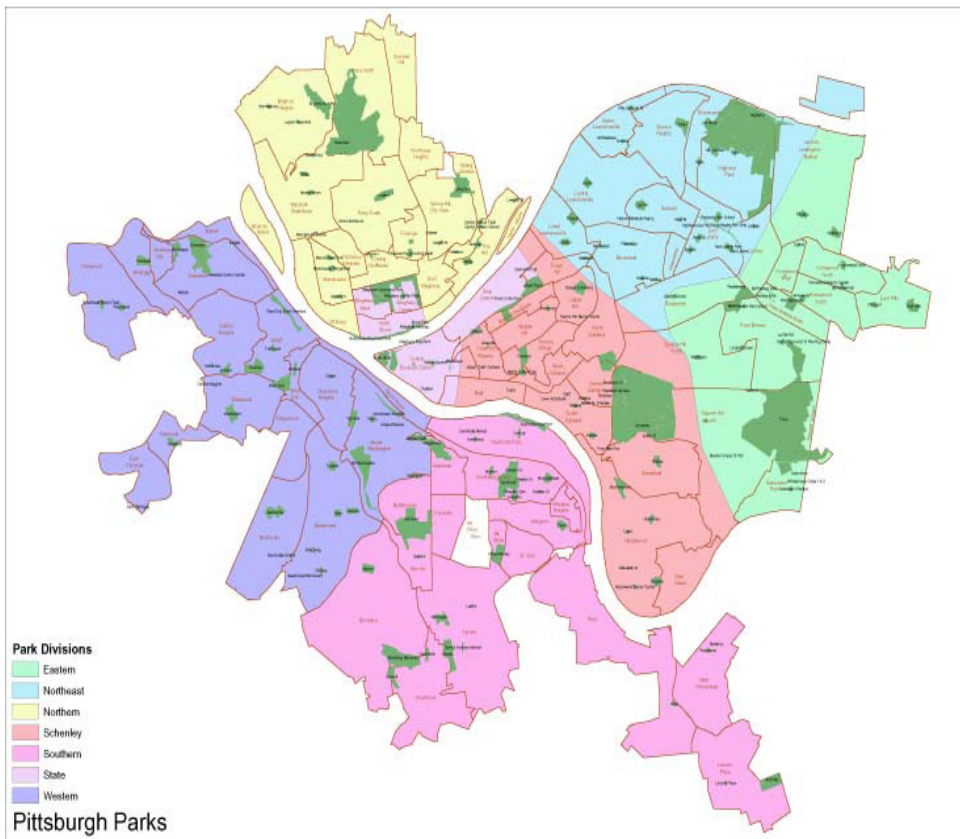
Mount Washington -- steep grade precludes intensive development  
Open spaces owned and managed by corporations, universities, and other institutions  
Sports complex parking -- doubles as social gathering space on game days and occasional special event space



On May 13, 2005, Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy was named an Honorary Member of ASLA for his work in transforming the physical environment of the city.

Pittsburgh's Parks.

<http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/pw/assets/maps/park-maintenance-map.pdf>





## Funding Mechanism and/or Planning

- Maintenance and Repair for city parks is funded by a variety of sources. In 1998, the Department of Parks and Recreation had the following budget (Harnik):

General Funds	\$5,195,000
Fees	\$1,213,000
Private Grants and Donations	\$ 580,000
State and Federal Support	\$1,737,000
Capital Income	\$1,139,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,864,000</b>

-The park system also relies heavily on volunteers (2,800: Harnik) and “friends of” groups such as the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy for maintenance and programs.

- Public-Private partnerships, such as the Riverlife Task Force and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, are funded by a combination of private grants (listed below), and the support of city and state agencies. In some cases, specific projects may also qualify for Federal monies.

### Funders - Riverlife Task Force

- Alcoa Foundation
- Beckwith Machinery/Beckwith Family Foundation
- Continental Pursuits LLC
- Dollar Bank
- Eden Hall Foundation
- Forest City Enterprises
- Garden Club of Allegheny County
- Grable Foundation
- Laurel Foundation
- McKenna Foundation
- Mellon Financial Corporation Foundation
- Oxford Development
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Pittsburgh Steelers
- PNC Advisors Charitable Trust Committee
- PNC Foundation
- Richard King Mellon Foundation
- Rob Roy Industries
- The Heinz Endowments
- The Hillman Foundation
- The Pittsburgh Foundation
- UPMC Health Systems
- Woodmere Foundation

## Lessons Learned

In the last three decades, Pittsburgh has transformed itself from one of the most polluted cities in the country and is on its way to becoming one of the greenest. From an economy reliant on heavy industry, to unemployment twice the national average in the 1980s, Pittsburgh is now viewed as a city with great potential for new economic development. Now a leader in green building, its momentum in the remediation and redevelopment of urban brownfields is also growing.

[www.pittsburghgreenstory.org](http://www.pittsburghgreenstory.org)

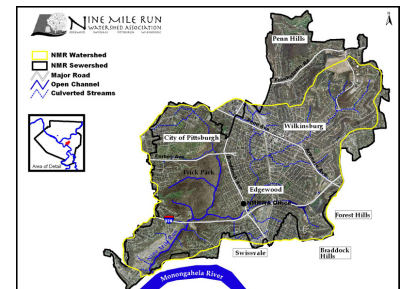


## Story in a Box - Nine Mile Run

Nine Mile Run is a 6 square mile watershed which runs underground in three suburbs of Pittsburgh's east side before resurfacing in Frick Park and eventually flowing into the Monongahela River. It has been heavily impacted by both industrial and municipal waste. The catalyst for restoring the watershed began at the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon University, and the idea of restoring this post-industrial open space inevitable caught on with civic leaders. Now underway with the help of the city of Pittsburgh and the Army Corps of Engineers, the restoration efforts are progressing in close partnership with community stakeholders and artists.

Stream restoration techniques include stream channel reconfiguration, installation of pool and riffle sequences, and stream bank stabilization. Invasive plant species are being removed and replaced with natives. Constructed wetlands will enhance the watershed's ability to handle stormwater runoff, as well as native species habitat.

These restoration efforts are strongly coupled with programs to engage citizens in caring for the watershed, including a rainbarrel program and an Urban Ecostewards program in which citizens can assist in monitoring the ongoing restoration efforts of Nine Mile Run.



## Leadership in Brownfield Development



### The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh

By securing funds from a variety of public and private sources, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh has developed a successful track record in remediating former industrial sites and developing them for new uses. Showcase projects include:

- Washington's Landing on Herr's Island (shown at left)  
mixed-use, residential and recreational
- The Pittsburgh Technology Center  
office, research and meeting space
- South Side Works  
mixed use - retail, office, entertainment, housing
- Summerset at Frick Park  
new housing



### Resources

A Vision Plan for Pittsburgh's Riverfronts. Riverlife Task Force, October 2001.

"ASLA Names Eight New Honorary Members."

<http://www.asla.org/press/2005/release0516.htm>

Dettore, Jerome N. "Brownfield Development in Pittsburgh: Recycling and Reuse of the Steel Industry's Abandoned Mills." Oct. 16, 2005. [www.pittsburghgreenstory.org/html/brownfields.html](http://www.pittsburghgreenstory.org/html/brownfields.html)

Harnik, Peter. Inside City Parks. Washington, D.C. Urban Land Institute, 2000. pp. 87-93.

"Nine Mile Run, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania"

<http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/pm/9mile.htm>

"Nine Mile Run Greenway Project Conversations in the Rust Belt: Brownfields into Greenways" <http://slaggarden.cfa.cmu.edu>

"Nine Mile Run Watershed Association" <http://www.ninemilerun.org/main.html>

"Pittsburgh Mayor's Office" <http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/mayor/>

"Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Greenway" <http://www.alleghenyridge.org>

Point State Park Comprehensive Master Plan, December 2, 2003.

"Riverlife Task Force" <http://www.riverlifetaskforce.org>

Stephenson, Sam, ed. Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Project. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001. p. 9.

Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh. "Showcase Projects" [http://www.ura.org/showcaseProjects\\_washLanding.html](http://www.ura.org/showcaseProjects_washLanding.html)