New York City has recently undertaken a large-scale urban redevelopment project that is a symbol of successful adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure. The High Line is a 1.45 mile elevated public park designed by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, owned by the City of New York and maintained by Friends of the High Line. The park is built on a historic rail line elevated above the West Side streets of Manhattan in New York City. Originally built in the 1930s, the High Line was once a busy freight route but with the growth of interstate trucking in the 1950s it became obsolete and since 1980 no trains have run on it. The idea for the elevated park originated in 1999 in order to preserve and transform the historic railroad structure that was under threat of demolition. A community based non-profit group, Friends of the High Line, was formed to work in partnership with New York City to preserve the structure as a public park.

1.1 KEY INTERVENTIONS

In 2002 Friends of the High Line gained New York City’s support and the High Line was filed with the Federal Surface Transportation Board for rail banking, making it policy to reuse and preserve the high line. In 2004 a public hold call competition resulted in the selection of James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro as the winning entry for the design of the high line. The architects envisaged a new paving and planting system that would allow for various segments of paved surface and richly vegetated surface. The design proposes three main strategies for the high line: to respect the linear nature and scale of the High Line by creating a subtle sequence of public spaces that allow visitors to experience the surrounding landscape; to create internal gathering points that can be used for public events; and for the first time on the 2.3 mile long stairways, and hidden niches encourage visitors to experience time at a slower pace than New York City demands.

The final design strategy was to respect the linear nature and scale of the High Line by creating a subtle sequence of public spaces that allow visitors to experience the surrounding landscape. These squares, paving area and niches would have cost to demolish it, the High Line offers a seemingly endless blocks of concrete and glass.

1.2 MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

With over 2 million visitors within the first year of its opening, the High Line serves as an oasis for recreation, a space for gathering, and an opportunity to experience a different perspective of life urban assets. The High Line demonstrates that innovative thinking can turn liabilities into priceless assets.

The High Line offers an important example of how adaptive re-use and innovative thinking can turn liabilities into priceless urban assets.

CONCLUSION

Inspired by the melancholic beauty of the ruin, today where nature has reclaimed a once vital piece of urban infrastructure, the High Line has proven an integral component to the social and economic transformation of this industrial neighbourhood. Reused and repurposed at a fraction of what it would have cost to demolish it, the High Line offers a substantially number of private investment from New Yorkers that generated over US$2 billion in private investment surrounding the High Line. The mayor also stated that on top of the 8,000 construction jobs those projects required, the redevelopment has added about 13,000 jobs in the area.

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SOURCES


Huffington Post, “High Line Park An Economic Powerhouse For Meatpacking District” 6 June 2011


Michael Bloomberg, has proclaimed that the investment in preserving the High Line as a public park has generated over US$2 billion in private investment surrounding the park.

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Huffington Post, “High Line Park & Economic Powerhouse For Meatpacking District” 6 June 2011

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The investment into the project also generated over US$2 billion in private investment surrounding the High Line. The mayor also stated that on top of the 8,000 construction jobs those projects required, the redevelopment has added about 13,000 jobs in the area.
NEW YORK CITY

The High Line in New York City is a symbol of successful adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure. A historic rail line above Manhattan’s West Side, it was converted into a 1.45-mile elevated public park. Designed by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, owned by the City of New York and maintained by Friends of the High Line, it has become an integral part of the social and economic transformation of the industrial neighborhood. Re-purposed and completed at a fraction of what it would have cost to demolish it, it offers an important example of how adaptive re-use and innovative thinking can turn liabilities into priceless urban assets.

A symbol of creative, adaptive re-use of existing infrastructure
An oasis for recreation and interaction
Provides habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna

COORDINATES
40°43’N 74°00’W
AREA
1,214.4 km² (468.9 sq mi)
POPULATION
8,175,133
DENSITY
6,732.0/km² (3,707.6/sq mi)
GDP (USA)
$14,44 trillion
URBAN POPULATION (USA)
82.1%

Generated over $2 billion in private investment
Created 12,000 jobs in the vicinity
Over 2 million visitors to the High Line in its opening year
Created 8,000 construction jobs, and 12,000 jobs in the vicinity

SOURCES
1 The Sundeck - Iwan Baan © 2009
2 The Tenth Avenue Square - Iwan Baan © 2009
3 Looking South - Joel Sternfeld © 2000
4 The Tenth Avenue Square - Source: Iwan Baan © 2009
5 Falcone Flyover - Iwan Baan © 2011
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