

The 2017



First Prize: **\$5,000**

Register for **FREE**:

Now - October 06, 2016

www.PhiladelphiaCFA.org

Competition Dates:

October 07-28, 2016

Submission Deadline:

October 28, 2016

Entry Fee (per entry @ submission):

\$25 | student team

Awards Ceremony:

February 2017 (tentative)

Transforming The Tunnel: The Rail Park



BACKGROUND

Philadelphia's City Branch is an unused network of 115-year-old depressed rail lines that transported goods and people into and out of Center City Philadelphia. In 1992 the tracks were taken out of service and now lay dormant.

Friends of the Rail Park, a non-profit advocacy and fundraising group, has developed a vision for a 3-mile linear park and multi-modal transportation corridor on the unused rail lines that connects 10 neighborhoods with Center City, Fairmount Park, and some of Philadelphia's most important cultural institutions along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. They envision the park as a series of interconnected neighborhood gathering spaces with a focus on health and wellness, arts and culture, and environmental and educational programming, as well as serving as a bicycle and pedestrian thoroughfare. Phase 1 of the Rail Park is slated to break ground by the end of 2016.

Beginning near 21st Street, at the western edge of the depressed "Cut" section of tracks, is a covered "Tunnel" section (50 feet wide by 25 feet high) which extends five blocks before the tracks reemerge and slowly ramp back above ground by 31st Street. The open pit just east of the tunnel will be referred to as the "Tunnel Entrance" and the open tracks to the west of the tunnel will be referred to as the "Tunnel Exit" for the purposes of this competition.

THE CHALLENGE

You are challenged to imagine a future for The Rail Park's tunnel ([2017 Competition Site Boundaries](#)) that answers the following question: **Taking into consideration the three-mile vision for the park, what design interventions could improve access to, pedestrian and bicycle transit through, lighting in, and programming for the Rail Park Tunnel, making this covered section a useful, fun, and safe public space for all?** Your visionary proposal should include the following elements:

Vision Plan

Access

How will people gain access to the Tunnel? Consider how access points might be created by connecting with the streets and cultural institutions above. How will your design address the abilities of users from different age groups and with different physical abilities, including users with limited mobility, sight, or hearing?

Mobility

How will your design address the needs of walkers, runners, bikers, and those interested in pausing in the tunnel? How will your design integrate into the larger visions for the City Branch, especially its value as a transit corridor protected from (but accessible to) the busy streets above?

Safety

How will your design address both the actual and perceived safety issues of transiting through a long, dark, covered tunnel in need of structural repairs? How will your design make the tunnel and street above both feel safe and be safe day and night? How will people exit the tunnel in an emergency?

Fun

How can your design transform the tunnel and streets above into both a civic commons and a useful passageway? What physical interventions and cultural programs could add elements of fun and education?

Early-Action Installation

Design a temporary, cost-effective installation for the land above the Tunnel Entrance ([Installation Location - purple outline](#)) to demonstrate the real-life impact of part or all of your vision so that residents and visitors can understand your proposal. Show us what your installation looks like and how it works. Perhaps you:

- Develop an entryway structure for the tunnel (What other functions could this structure provide as a cultural or neighborhood amenity?)
- Explore an alteration to the streetscape that would connect the Rail Park with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Build a segment of the tunnel (at ¼ or smaller scale?) showcasing your design interventions.
- Or something else!

RESEARCH + RESOURCES *(be sure to view them ALL!)*:

[Official Competition Site Boundaries](#) | [The Rail Park website](#) | [CAD File of Center City Philadelphia \(.dwg\)](#)
[Overview of The Rail Park \(.pptx\) \(2016\)](#) | [Master Plan for the Rail Park's "Cut" section \(.pdf\) \(2016\)](#)
[DVRPC Transit Feasibility Report \(.pdf\) \(2016\)](#) | [The State of Center City Philadelphia Report \(.pdf\) \(2016\)](#)
[Philadelphia Central District Plan \(.pdf\) \(2013\)](#) | [Benjamin Franklin Parkway Plan \(.pdf\) \(2013\)](#) | [Photos \(.zip\)](#)
[Engineer's Society of PA Report on the City Branch \(.pdf\) \(1916\)](#) – section views of tunnel on pages 315-320

We **STRONGLY** encourage proposals from diverse teams that include individuals from a variety of fields: architecture, urban planning, design (industrial, graphic, etc.), landscape architecture, public health, economic development, real estate law, or other fields which might bring innovative ideas to your proposal. Proposals from diverse teams have historically done best in this competition.

REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility

The 2017 international competition is open to all college/university **STUDENTS** of **any discipline** and academic level (undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral) who are actively matriculating at a college or university for the duration of the competition (October 07 - 28, 2016).

Entries may be submitted by individual students or by student teams of any size, as long as members of each team are all matriculating students. Teams may include students from one school or from several schools, but all team members must be currently matriculating students.

Presentation Board

Entrants **MUST** electronically submit one (1) PDF presentation board which measures 80" wide x 40" tall (203cm x 101.5cm), optimized for "web viewing" (smallest file size possible – you should be able to get it down to ~10-20MB). Turn **off** the "preserve layers" option when saving. Boards may be designed in full color or monochrome.

Your board **MUST** include:

- **Project Title** (title font must be *at least* 1.5" (4 cm) in height – suggested: Arial font at 150pt)
- **Defining Image** which provides an overview of your vision for the competition site. This image is meant to help people unfamiliar with your project gain a quick understanding of your design solution. This image could be a beautiful site plan, a computer rendering, a fun sketch, a funky collage, an infographic – anything that best summarizes your vision. This image can be of the entire site, a section of the site, elements within the site, or represent abstract ideas about your solution. We want you to be creative with this image; just remember its purpose is to explain your vision succinctly. This image should be the first thing people notice about your competition board, so make sure its big enough, bold enough, and is placed conspicuously - it could even take up the majority of your presentation board.
- **Renderings, diagrams, maps, and/or plans** which explain your treatment of (see full descriptions of these categories on page #2 under "The Challenge"):
 - a) **Your Vision Plan**
 - i. **Access** | How will people gain access to the Tunnel? Consider how access points might be created by connecting with the streets and cultural institutions above.
 - ii. **Mobility** | How will your design address the needs of walkers, runners, bikers, and those interested in pausing in the tunnel?
 - iii. **Safety** | How will your design address both the actual and perceived safety issues of transiting through a long, dark, covered tunnel?
 - iv. **Fun** | How can your design transform the tunnel and streets above into both a civic commons and a useful passageway?
 - b) **Early-Action Installation** | Design a temporary, cost-effective installation for the land above the tunnel entrance to demonstrate the real-life impact of part or all of your vision so that residents and visitors can understand your proposal.

Your board **MAY** include:

- Any graphical elements necessary to convey your proposal, including drawings, photographs, charts, graphs, logos, renderings, etc.
- Text to help describe your proposal and graphical elements. All text on your board must be **at least** 3/16" (1/2 cm) in height (suggested: Arial font @ 18pt).

Slide Show

Entrants **MUST** also electronically submit one (1) **9-slide PowerPoint** (.ppt or .pptx) presentation. The purpose of this slide show is to help tell the story of your proposal and will also become the basis of your public presentation at the awards ceremony, should your team win.

- Slide shows must consist of exactly nine (9) slides
- Your slide show should be in widescreen format (9:16)
- The first slide in the presentation should consist of:
 - The title of your project in large, bold letters in the center of the slide
 - Your Defining Image as the background, sized to fill the frame (it is okay to crop edges off your image to make it fill the frame). You may want to fade this image out slightly so that your project title is easier to read.
 - No additional text or images
- Content for the remaining eight (8) slides must be taken directly from your Presentation Board. Each slide should consist of:
 - One main image or graphic (a set of graphs or charts is fine, as long as they are each large enough to read or understand). All images used on slides should be low-resolution (72 dpi), to keep the overall file size small
 - Optional: one sentence of text OR up to three short bullet points per slide (keep it brief!). Make sure all text on the slide is large enough to read when viewed in presentation mode without zooming in. Less text is better.
- Your presentation should also include 20-seconds worth of talking points in the “Notes” section for each slide (these are visible to the presenter of the slide show, but not visible on the slide itself). These can be formatted as a paragraph or as bullet points, but should help the judges understand what you are trying to explain with the slide. These notes will also form the basis of your public presentation, should you win.
- Take care to organize your slides into an order which best tells the story of your proposal and lead viewers through your concept in a logical order.
- Your slide show should **NOT** include any transition animations between slides, nor should it include any timing (jurors need to be able to flip back and forth through slides during the judging process)

Anonymity

Your Presentation Board, Project Title, and Slide Show (including notes) **MUST NOT** include any personally identifying information including:

- Team members' name(s)
- Teachers' name(s)
- School name(s), city(ies), or country(ies)
- School logo(s)

Jurors must be able to review your entry anonymously – any information on your submission materials that allows jurors to identify you, your team members, your school, or your teachers will disqualify your entry.

SUBMISSION

- Entries must be submitted online via: PhiladelphiaCFA.submittable.com
- Entries **MUST** be received in full by 11:59pm EDT on Friday, October 28, 2016 (03:59 GMT, Saturday, October 29, 2016). Begin submitting your entry well before the cutoff in case you run into any network or payment issues!
- Entry fee (\$25 per submission) to be paid online by credit card via submission website at time of file upload.
- Project Boards must be submitted as .PDF files, optimized for “Web” viewing (smallest file size possible), with “Preserve Layers” turned OFF.
- Project Board .PDFs and .PPT Slide Show files must be named using the following standard: **YourProjectTitle.ext** (no spaces between words - each word beginning with a capital letter)
 - example: *OurVisionForPhilly.pdf* | *OurVisionForPhilly.pptx*
- You may add, remove, or change team members at any time up until you submit your entry. Simply include the required information about all your final team members in the “Team Members” section of the online entry form when you submit your entry.

JUDGING

This year’s jurors include:

- **Byron Comati**, Director of Strategic Planning | SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority)
- **Michael Garden**, Vice President | The Rail Park
- **Alan Greenberger**, former Deputy Mayor for Economic Development + Commerce | City of Philadelphia
- **Gail Harrity**, President and Chief Operating Officer | Philadelphia Museum of Art
- **Natalie Nixon, PhD**, Director of the Strategic Design MBA | Philadelphia University
- **Eleanor Sharpe, AICP**, Deputy Executive Director | Philadelphia 2035

Jurors may be added or removed at any time without notice.

Submissions will be judged on the following criteria:

1. Adherence to the Requirements as described above
2. The overall ability of your team to create and communicate a cohesive vision for the project site that answers the following question: **Taking into consideration the three-mile vision for the park, what design interventions could improve access to, pedestrian and bicycle transit through, lighting in, and programming for The Rail Park’s tunnel, making this covered section a useful, safe, and fun public space for all?**
3. The ability of your proposal to articulate and address the needs of the project stakeholders (the community, potential funders, nearby cultural institutions, the city, tourists, etc.) in the short-term (via your Early-Action Installation) and over the next 25 years (by the year 2040)
4. The quality of your visual information, especially your ability to cleanly and effectively communicate your ideas using images, graphics, and slides

Note: Submissions which reach beyond the specific requirements of the competition to explore how the competition site could better integrate into the surrounding community have historically been better reviewed by our jurors.

The jurors’ decision will be final.

AWARDS

Award winners will be publicly announced in December 2016, once the judging process is complete. **First prize is \$5,000.** Additional honorary (non-monetary) prizes may be awarded at the judges' discretion. All award-winning teams will be reimbursed up to \$1,000 USD total towards travel and lodging costs to attend the awards ceremony if they are located outside the Greater Philadelphia region.

The awards ceremony in Philadelphia honoring the winners is tentatively planned to be held on the evening of **Wednesday, March 8, 2017** (exact date, time, and location will be announced when confirmed), and will also feature a talk by the 2017 Edmund N. Bacon Award winner, who will also be announced in December 2016.

Winning entries might be physically and/or digitally exhibited at the awards ceremony. Entries might also be exhibited at the Center for Architecture and Design during the summer of 2017 and/or later. Winning entries might additionally be displayed at other locations around Philadelphia or the world and will always be available for viewing on the Center for Architecture and Design's website.

QUESTIONS

Administrative questions about the competition can be directed to David Bender, Associate Director, at david@philadelphiacfa.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

You may find it valuable to review [winning entries from past Better Philadelphia Challenges on our website](#). (Or [click here to download the winning 2016 entry boards + slide shows](#))

About the Better Philadelphia Challenge

Founded in 2006 in memory of Philadelphia's iconic 20th century city planner, Ed Bacon [1910-2005], this annual competition challenges university-level students (undergraduate, graduate, and PhD) from around the world to address real-world urban design issues in Philadelphia that have application not only to our city, but to urban centers around the globe. This challenge is organized by the Ed Bacon Memorial Committee of the Center for Architecture and Design.

About the Center for Architecture and Design

Founded in 2003 by the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA Philadelphia), the Center provides the public with a place to explore architecture, urban planning, and design, allowing you to understand how these disciplines affect us all in our daily lives. Using Philadelphia's distinctive breadth of architecture, pioneering urban design, and manufacturing heritage as the foundation for conversations, we educate through exhibitions, walking tours, guest speakers, publications, hands-on workshops, design competitions, festivals, and children's programming. The Center also serves as the physical home for AIA Philadelphia, the AIA Bookstore, and the Community Design Collaborative.

About the Edmund N. Bacon Prize

Bestowed annually on an accomplished figure who has made outstanding contributions to the fields of urban planning, development, and design through conviction of vision, effective communication, and commitment to improving their community. This prize is presented at the same awards ceremony which honors the Better Philadelphia Challenge winners and features a keynote address by its recipient.

About Edmund N. Bacon

Philadelphia's most iconic city planner, Ed Bacon [1910-2005] was Executive Director of Philadelphia's City Planning Commission from 1949-1970 and is the only city planner to ever grace the cover of Time Magazine. His impact on Philadelphia's urban environment began with his epic 1947 *A Better Philadelphia* exhibition, which drew nearly 400,000 people over five weeks to its visionary displays covering two floors of Gimbel's Department Store.