

Successes In Stewardship



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Freeway Cap Parks Encourage Stakeholder Coordination, Reconnect Communities, and Promote Healthy Ecosystems

In many cities, multi-lane highways bisect communities, disrupting connections to jobs, necessities, and amenities. Freeway cap parks—recreational parks built overtop high-density roadways—can rebuild lost connections and reduce the noise, pollution, and blight that freeways may impose on communities.

Freeway cap parks are not a new concept, but they have recently increased in popularity. Freeway Park in Seattle, Washington preceded this modern movement to improve city livability by transforming a dangerous highway into a public park in the late 1970s. Freeway Park is a 5.2 acre green space built over Interstate 5 in downtown Seattle. The Rose Kennedy Greenway in Boston, Massachusetts is another freeway cap park that provides recreational space in an area fragmented by roadways. Previously, 1.5 miles of elevated freeway ran through downtown Boston, separating the North End and Fort Point Channel neighborhoods from the rest of the city. During the early 1990s to 2000, Interstate 93 was moved underground and a greenway was built at street level. The area now features five parks that host art exhibitions, food trucks, concerts, and a carousel.

Two recently completed freeway cap projects include the Park Over the Highway in St. Louis, Missouri and Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, Texas. Both parks resulted from coordination among many stakeholder groups and partner agencies, along with support from a variety of funding sources. These projects and their predecessors represent a locally driven and federally supported movement to re-establish community connections that have been lost due to past highway projects. One such Federal program is the U.S. Department of Transportation's [Ladders of Opportunity](#) initiative that uses infrastructure investment to create jobs, connect people to goods and services, and to revitalize neighborhoods and regions that have been overlooked in the past. Freeway cap parks also promote walkability, integrate resiliency, and improve ecosystem health.

Park Over the Highway Project Reconnects Gateway Arch to Downtown St. Louis

The Gateway Arch in the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Park has long been the focal point of downtown St. Louis. Until recently, the park grounds had been separated from the rest of the city by Interstate 44, making it difficult for visitors and locals to safely move between downtown and the park. Several years ago, local leaders decided to improve the connectivity and safety of the area by building a freeway cap park over I-44.

Bolstered by public support for the project, the National Park Service (NPS), which maintains and manages the park, completed a general management plan for improving the park grounds in October 2009 and launched a design competition two months later to identify a landscape architecture firm that would rejuvenate the park grounds and seamlessly reconnect them to the city.



Completed freeway cap and Arch park grounds construction (courtesy of CityArchRiver Foundation)

A nonprofit organization called CityArchRiver Foundation was established to raise private funds and oversee the overall project, which included plans for the freeway cap park over I-44. The freeway cap park, called the [Park Over the Highway](#), is separate from the National park grounds, but it connects the grounds and the Arch to the rest of the city. In September 2010, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA), a Brooklyn-based landscape architecture firm, won the design competition to renovate the park. MVVA designed the freeway cap park so that it would be integrated with the park grounds, and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) built it.

The park grounds renovations and the freeway cap were funded using a combination of private and public money, including \$9 million from a 2011 Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program grant. In 2013, voters in S. Louis and St. Louis County approved Proposition P, which raised sales taxes in order to dedicate proceeds to improving the grounds and the city's surrounding regional trail network.

Snapshot of the Park Over the Highway

Partners

- CityArchRiver Foundation
- Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates
- Missouri Department of Transportation
- National Park Service

Funding Sources

- Donations to the CityArchRiver Foundation
- St. Louis Proposition P funds (stewarded by Great Rivers Greenway)
- Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery

As part of the overall planning process, NPS and its partners worked with a universal design group to improve accessibility throughout the park grounds. This ensured that visitors of all abilities would be able to easily enter and use park facilities, including the freeway cap park. The Arch, the park grounds, and the adjacent Old Courthouse, are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, so NPS made additional considerations during planning to meet requirements included in [Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966](#). These considerations included input from stakeholders in the area and as a result, NPS was able to mitigate project impacts to cultural resources.

MoDOT began construction on the Park Over the Highway in 2013 and completed work in 2015. The park, also considered a part of Luther Ely Smith

Square, was incorporated in the overall design for the Arch park grounds upgrades. Though much of the park grounds are under construction, the Arch remains open. The freeway cap is also open to visitors and will eventually provide a safe, easy-to-access passageway between the city, the park, and the riverfront once all renovations are completed in 2017.

Klyde Warren Park Bridges Gaps Between Uptown and Downtown Dallas

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and its partners successfully reconnected uptown and downtown Dallas using a 5.2 acre freeway cap park. Similar to the freeway cap parks in Seattle, Boston, and St. Louis, Klyde Warren Park in Dallas was built over a highway that had divided the city since the late 1960s.



Klyde Warren Park is a green oasis in the midst of Dallas' many concrete-laden roadways (courtesy of Klyde Warren Park)

In the case of Klyde Warren Park, the impetus for the cap came from The Real Estate Council (TREC), an organization for commercial real estate agents in the Dallas area. TREC awards impact grants to projects in the inner city that will improve neighborhoods' housing stock and quality of life. Using funding from a TREC impact grant, and donations from Jody and Sheila Grant and Texas Capital Bank, the Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation (WRPF) conducted feasibility studies on the cap project. WRPF, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that manages Klyde Warren Park, raised all of the private funding necessary to build the project. The city of Dallas provided \$20 million in bond funds and TxDOT provided \$20 million in transportation enhancement program funds from the State. About \$16.7 million of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds were also used on the shovel-ready project.

The city of Dallas granted TxDOT the right-of-way to build the project but maintains the rights, and the Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation signed a 40-year lease with the city to operate, maintain, and manage the park for up to 90 years. Bjerke Management Solutions led the project team with Jacobs

Engineering and the Office of James Burnett (OJB), a landscape architecture firm. The North Central Texas Council of Governments provided support on improving pedestrian and bicyclist access to the park.

From the planning stages, WRPf made sustainable design and accessibility the cornerstones of the project. The park was awarded Gold Certification in the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program due to the many sustainable features, including planting native species that are more tolerant to drought and reclaiming water onsite to irrigate plants in the park.

One anticipated environmental benefit of the park has been the ability of native plant species to attract pollinators, including hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. The park includes a butterfly garden that encourages visitors to learn more about native Texas wildlife. Several hundred trees have also been planted throughout the park, which provides visitors with relief from the sun and reduces the urban heat island effect created when dense, concrete-covered areas trap heat.

Since its completion in 2012, Klyde Warren Park has become a landmark for the city, attracting more than 1 million visitors each year. The park is easily and safely accessible by bicycle, on foot, or using public transportation. What was once a dangerous and desolate stretch of roadway is now a safe haven for pedestrians and bicyclists from across Dallas.

Freeway Cap Parks Offer Unique Experiences, but Provide Universal Benefits

Freeway cap parks, like the cities in which they are built, each come with their own unique history and features. They also share a common goal of reconnecting urban areas that have been previously divided by highway projects. These parks have been coordinated across a variety of stakeholders, utilizing many funding sources.

Both the Park Over the Highway and Klyde Warren Park demonstrate that the only way to successfully bridge communities through freeway cap projects is to engage all interested stakeholders, seek diverse funding sources, and focus on their ultimate purpose, which is to improve connections and quality of life for nearby residents and visitors.

Snapshot of Klyde Warren Park

Partners

- City of Dallas
- The Real Estate Council
- North Central Texas Council of Governments
- Texas Department of Transportation
- Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation

Funding Sources

- American Reinvestment and Recovery Act
- City of Dallas
- Donations to the Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation
- TxDOT state transportation enhancement program (STEP)

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Look What's New!

- The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently released [*PEL Benefits: Measuring the Benefits of Planning and Environmental Linkages*](#), a report that explores and documents the benefits stemming from the incorporation of [*Planning and Environmental Linkage*](#) (PEL) strategies into State, regional, and local planning and project development processes. This report includes five case studies from across the country that detail different implementations of PEL strategies and their attendant benefits.
- FHWA released [*Pollinators and Roadsides: Best Management Practices for Managers and Decision Makers*](#), a report that describes the best vegetation management practices, methods, tools, and resources available for practitioners to use to improve pollinator habitats and health along roadsides.
- As part of Round 7 of Implementation Assistance Program for the second Strategic Highway Research Program, FHWA will host an informational product webinar on PlanWorks on March 17. PlanWorks is a systematic Web-based resource that supports collaborative decisionmaking to deliver projects that meet environmental, community, and mobility needs. [Click here](#) for additional details.