

DanielStathamArchitects

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THE HIGH LINE REDEVELOPMENT, NEW YORK, USA

The High Line is a 1.45-mile (2.33 km) section of the former elevated freight railroad of the West Side Line, along the lower west side of Manhattan. It runs from 34th Street near the Javits Convention Center to Gansevoort Street in the Meat Packing District of the West Village. The High Line was built in the early 1930s by the New York Central Railroad and was an active railway until 1980. In the 1990s, it became known for the wild grass and trees that grew on the abandoned railway. Community support of public redevelopment of the High Line for pedestrian use built beginning in 1999 and funding was allocated in 2004. When the High Line is converted to public open space, you will be able to rise up from the streets and step into a place apart, tranquil and green. You will see the Hudson River, the Manhattan skyline, and secret gardens inside city blocks as you've never seen them before. You will move between Penn Station and the Hudson River Park, from the convention centre to the Gansevoort Market Historic District, without meeting a car or truck.

Our architectural language for this scheme was inspired by natural formations within the landscapes of the United States. This visual precedent became a design filter to realise abstract forms that evolved to have similar physical forms to 'talus's' within a landscape. This vertical vision became an experimental montage upon the New York skyline. Earthy textures inspired through the natural world provided a continuous, gentle, elevated and ascending/descending 'raised' park through the city with the layering of green organic patterns in the form of natural vegetation upon it. Each 'talus' is arranged in such a manner to consolidate its own identity along the 'raised' park and yet being part of a cohesive architectural language along the entire length of the line. Intervals between 'talus's' give way to meandering pathways that follow the original tracks set between zones of planting. Distinctive talus forms became part of the semiotics to this scheme defining zones and districts within this West side of Manhattan.

The structural strategy for the scheme is designed to minimise loading onto the existing High Line structure, while providing a strong, dynamic and the illusion of hanging forms. These 'insertions' in the form of abstract 'talus's' consist of a central spine formed from modular steel space frames. A steel framed platform is placed above to cantilever to the peripheral condition of the railway track. The live and dead loads are transferred to the columns within the existing structure. The structure accommodates services necessary at high level. Pavilions for eating and resting, rest rooms, water features and outdoor auditoria for summer events.

Each of the access strategies are tailored to the individual locations which has a direct impact on the size and proportions of the means of access design. Where the site permits we propose to hang a series of lightweight ramps from the underside of the railway track. The physical impact of the ramp shall be camouflaged with a series of lightweight cables that have a dual purpose acting as structural rods and a 'net' for the foliage to connect and grow from. Where access is more confined stairs will be hung and supported by the 'talus' elements that drop down from the elevated park level. Lifts will also be necessary for disabled access at variable locations along the park route.

The planting of wild plants and flowers has been integrated into the scheme and are low maintenance and sustainable in all seasons. The areas in between each of the 'talus' elements shall be planted with a selection of birches, maples, acacias, common witch hazel and short grasses. Zoned garden areas are introduced for relaxing and meeting. Vegetation from evening primrose to Virginia creepers occupy these areas to heighten the senses while the talus objects themselves are treated to encourage the growth of mosses. The entire design strategy has been conceived to allow for future rail-Banking works to the line. The 'talus's' may either be lifted above the line of the tracks or even relocated to another location along the line.

This project was awarded for its functional, environmental and creative use of space. It was short listed and exhibited in the High Line exhibition in New York City.