

## SECTION VI: IMPLEMENTATION, “RAMP-UP” YEAR

### INTRODUCTION

In order to provide a working model for MWDC to carry out the Pilot Projects listed in Section 5, and to help build support from neighbors and potential future funders, an initial “ramp-up” year project will be carried out. A first year budget of approximately \$290,000 has been created for Pilot Project #1 (Grandview Avenue Viewing Platform) and Pilot Project #4 (Defining View and Use of Natives for Landscaping along the Grandview Avenue Viewing Platforms). These projects were chosen because of their highly visible location and the significant and immediate impact their implementation will have on visitors and residents. It will establish a sustainable landscape of native plants surrounding one viewing platform, approximately 20 yards (down slope) x 50 yards (across the slope) from Grandview Avenue to allow for long-term, unobstructed views of the city with minimal maintenance. The importance of these projects is especially significant as the City of Pittsburgh plays host to a large national audience in the summer of 2006 for the Major League Baseball All-Star Game.

In addition to funding the landscaping and planting of the Project, the budget also accounts for the hiring of a full-time Parks Director and Assistant to oversee new Park operations, and a move into new, larger office space. A budget for stewardship training is also included in the full budget, as well as adequate funding for related educational, promotional and capacity-building efforts. The purchase of needed equipment and materials has also been built in. For complete *Ramp-Up Year Budget*, see Appendix J.

#### **Ramp-Up Project #1: Revegetating Open Area Adjacent to Monongahela Incline**

**Project Description:** Adjacent to the Monongahela Incline and Station sits an open parcel of minimally managed land. Bare soil, grass, and small saplings represent most of the cover. Some miscellaneous trash accumulates and access is limited given that the area is fenced. Use of this area is consequently limited. The area is steep and the erosion that is obvious along many sections of the incline right-of-way begins here. Although large trees may not be appropriate for this site, small trees and shrubs should be compatible with the maintenance and use of this area. Once established, the vegetation on this site would supply superior habitat to that now existing and link to downslope forest. Also, the aesthetic quality of the site would be much improved. The project would involve initial removal/control of invasive plants, planting and seeding of native plants and possibly use of innovative substrate enhancement with locally generated compost. (See Figure 11 Location of Pilot Project “Improving Habitat,” near Monongahela Incline, Grandview Avenue.)

**Timeline:** The physical implementation of this project could happen very quickly. Early to mid-spring during cool, moist weather would be the preferable time to begin planting efforts. Control of existing invasive plants, although not a large problem, could be accomplished later in the growing season of the previous year and followed up at the time of planting.

**Benefits:** Improvement of habitat, reduction of erosion and superior aesthetics would be the desired outcomes of this project.

**Challenges:** The biggest issue confronting this project will likely be in persuading the owner to undertake such an effort. This site may be used as access to the mechanics of the incline and other not-so-apparent purposes. Also, as with other pilot projects described here, the use of compost may be perceived as difficult or experimental. However, this is one of the most accessible and amenable areas to work in and may also be one of the most controllable when it comes to piloting new techniques.

**Cost Parameters:** Capital costs of this project should be modest given its small size. Transportation of materials should also be a modest expense. Labor costs could be moderate, depending upon the arrangement that can be made with Pittsburgh Department of Public Works to accommodate volunteers. Overall, this should be a relatively inexpensive project.

**Cost Estimates:** A full estimated budget can be found in Appendix J.

## **Ramp-Up Project #2: Grandview Avenue Viewing Platform**

**Project Description:** The project will involve removal of existing trees and shrubs of mid- to tall-stature (native and non-native) and replacement with native shrubs and small trees that do not obscure views from Grandview Avenue viewing platforms and from houses and businesses along Grandview Avenue. Maximum normal growing height of vegetation for this project should be less than 20 feet. Simultaneously, there will be a concerted effort to properly prune any tall-growing trees that affect the views. This will be done deliberately and with related efforts to educate residents and the public on the benefits of pruning versus topping trees: to preserve tree health, provide attractive tree forms, particularly in winter months, and to reduce costs of frequent cuttings caused when trees are 'topped'.

The details of the project will require consultation with landscapers and arborists familiar with native plant and plantings as well as innovative treatments of steep slopes. In general, the process should be as selective as possible, focusing on the cutting and treatment of tall-growing woody vegetation while keeping low-growing, native woody plants intact. Painting of cut stumps with an herbicide will be necessary, especially when controlling species like tree-of-heaven that have a propensity to sprout and reestablish. Compost, biodegradable fabrics, and other slope stabilization measures should be used for erosion control. A native seed mix that includes perennial herbaceous plants and grasses should be used following cutting and treatment and can include quick-growing but minimally persistent cover like annual rye. Small tree and shrub species that can tolerate dry, compacted conditions include: red bud, serviceberry, chokeberry, fragrant sumac, ninebark, dogwoods, and viburnums. Big and little bluestem grasses and other native tall grasses will provide fall and winter color. Additional planting may be necessary to establish a good vegetation cover that will help to check erosion and further plantings should be carried out as soon as possible after previous plantings have failed. Invasive non-native plant species should be monitored and periodically removed.

**Timeline:** This project will require a great deal of coordination, but the initial phase of vegetation control and planting could be relatively fast. Beginning with an intense period of consultation with tree and landscaping experts, along with Public

Works representatives and the community, precise selections of planting materials will be agreed upon, with corresponding timetables for the work. An early season treatment and pruning (March – April) followed by plantings (April – May) and follow-up fall plantings (September – October) would substantially complete the project. The subsequent year would focus on the monitoring of plantings, further treatment of invasive woody vegetation, and further plantings, if necessary.

**Benefits:** This approach provides a management solution that reduces maintenance costs over the long term, uses native plant species, and improves aesthetics around viewing platforms

**Challenges:** In addition to the somewhat difficult working conditions and issues with erosion control, public perception would need to be carefully guided. An information/education effort would be an essential part of the project and need to take place before and during the execution. The Parks Director and staff would be used for this purpose, to supervise and coordinate release of stories, brochures, and other media efforts.

**Cost Parameters:** Although materials would be relatively inexpensive, labor could be costly and volunteers may not be suitable for the difficult terrain, use of herbicides and hard soils likely to be encountered. Overall, this would likely be a moderately costly project to implement.

**Funding Options:** MWDC is currently working with a Pittsburgh foundation to secure initial funding for the ramp-up year and to garner support from other Pittsburgh Foundations. While the funds may not necessarily go toward the ramp-up project, MWDC is also currently seeking funding from PennDOT and DCNR for infrastructure improvements to the overlooks and street-face improvements along Grandview Avenue.

Additional sources for funding will be sought to help subsidize the marketing, PR, and educational and capacity-building efforts that go hand-in-hand with the Ramp Up and Pilot Projects.

### **Park Staff and Stewardship Training**

Under the supervision of the MWDC Executive Director, the Parks Director will manage an assistant, the daily operations of Park stewardship, marketing and project consultants and fundraising activities. The Director and staff will work with Slippery Rock University's Department of Parks and Recreation/Environmental Education to create stewardship programs and protocols. Two six-month, part-time community stewardship training programs will be conducted during the ramp-up year to allow community members to learn how to actively manage Park resources. Slippery Rock will also provide up to four internship positions each semester to assist in the development of environmental education.

### **Office Space**

MWDC has outgrown its current office space at 301 Shiloh Street. With additional staff members and an expanded mission, the CDC will move its operations to a new location, such as the Mount View building on Grandview Avenue. This location will allow for more workspace, private meeting rooms, and closer proximity to the most used

portion of the Byway—Grandview Avenue. Office space sitting across the street from the Monongahela Incline, for example, would double as a temporary visitor/information center and a better meeting space for community meetings.

With more space and staff, additional furniture and workstations are required. These items should include:

- 3 Computer Work Stations (Desks, computers, and chairs)
- Conference table and chairs
- A “smart board”
- A couch

### **Initial Equipment Purchase**

In order to carry out stewardship activities, trail building, etc. the following items will be required in the ramp-up year:

- At least 1 new PC desktop computer and 1 MAC Computer
- New computer software, to include:
  - GIS Software
  - Upgraded operating systems
  - Adobe Photoshop, MS Office and MS Publisher, Final Cut Pro, QuickBooks
- Upgraded/additional memory and hard drives
- Portable mini-DV video camera with blank tapes
- Digital camera
- 2 Handheld GPS Systems
- 6 mobile communications units (Walkie talkies)
- A mulcher/chipper
- 20 sets of work gloves, and at least 10 cutters, shovels, vests, rakes, boxes of large trash bags and buckets
- Wheelbarrows, trash pickers, pick axes, gasoline pruners chainsaws
- 1 Portable Water Tank (Water Buffalo)
- 1 Irrigation system
- Deer repellent devices and aromatic repellent sprays
- Small van