

Audubon and Outward Bound Propose Leadership and Conservation Center in East Park

In compliance with the Open Space Protection ordinance, the Parks and Recreation Commission has received a formal "Alternatives Analysis" from Audubon/Outward Bound outlining plans to build a permanent leadership and conservation center in East Park. The Alternatives Analysis is available for public review.

The Commission invites the public to review and comment on the plan for the proposed East Park Leadership and Conservation Center. Members of the public can email comments to the Commission at parksandreccommiss@phila.gov.

A public hearing on Audubon/Outward Bound's proposal is scheduled for the February 27, 2013 meeting of the Commission to be held at 6:00 p.m. at Mander Recreation Center, 2140 N. 33rd Street.

**** The Alternatives Analysis is below. Please scroll down to view the document. ****



East Park Leadership and Conservation Center

A Collaboration of the National Audubon Society and Outward Bound® Philadelphia
Alternatives Analysis for the Commission on Parks & Recreation

17 January 2013, updated 20 February 2013



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Project Overview & Vision

Project Overview

The National Audubon Society and Outward Bound® Philadelphia are collaborating to preserve a virtually unknown and inaccessible lake in Philadelphia by creating an educational center for conservation and leadership development that will benefit thousands of Philadelphians every year. This project will provide the public with opportunities to interact with nature in the City and offer a wealth of resources to the greater Philadelphia region for generations to come.

The proposed location for the East Park Leadership and Conservation Center—the west basin of the East Park Reservoir and surrounding grounds next to the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood—encompasses a 37-acre man-made lake that was formerly part of the City's water supply system. The site is currently under the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Water Department and not open to the public. It is concealed from view by fencing, dense vegetation and a significant grade change from street level.

This hidden gem offers an unusual opportunity for young people and adults to experience nature in a highly urbanized environment. Located near the heart of the Fairmount Park Important Bird Area (over 200 species of birds occur in the park), the lake has become a prime stopover site for migratory birds, including several spectacular waterfowl species.

The National Audubon Society and Outward Bound Philadelphia are planning to build a state-of-the-art educational facility that will be the portal to the lake and offer exploration experiences for visitors of all ages. The center will be a window to the natural world of Fairmount Park that will be available to every member of the greater Philadelphia community.

The center will preserve a unique aquatic habitat that might otherwise be drained. It will allow managed public access to 50 acres of open space that has been fenced off from the surrounding park and neighborhoods for decades.

This project is site specific and there is no alternative location in Philadelphia.

The collaboration of two internationally renowned non-profit organizations to benefit the people of Philadelphia and preserve a natural treasure is a remarkable opportunity that can occur only on this site – and may not occur again.





The Vision for the Center at the East Park Reservoir

An extraordinary launching point for nationally recognized programs

Audubon and Outward Bound programs introduce young people to the wonders of nature, challenge them with outdoor adventures, and promote self-discovery, character and leadership development. This fosters a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship and service. The Center will be the keystone of Audubon education and conservation programs, as well as Outward Bound leadership and character development activities in the region.

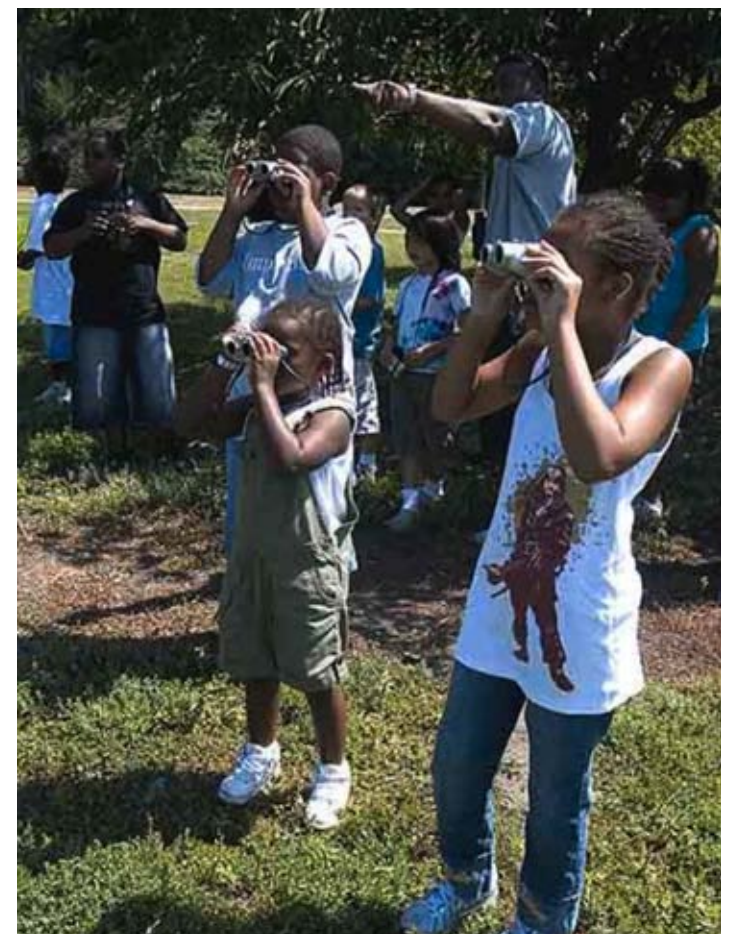
Outward Bound Philadelphia, a chartered affiliate of the nation's preeminent provider of active learning expeditions, will use this new facility as its headquarters. Outward Bound Philadelphia has long-established programs in over 40 schools in the Philadelphia region and serves more than 4,000 students annually. It has overgrown its current location and has chosen the East Park Reservoir as its primary base of operations because of the inspirational setting of the lake and exceptional outdoor opportunities offered by surrounding park lands.

Audubon will use the new facility as a hub for research and science-based conservation projects and programs in the Philadelphia region. Audubon will engage individuals and communities by offering the resources and tools necessary to analyze, preserve, and restore the natural environment we all share. Audubon education programs will challenge both young people and adults through hands-on exploration of the natural world in their own backyards and neighborhoods.

Students will visit the Center to discover their inner strengths and build character through Outward Bound's acclaimed experiential education programs. Students may complete a high ropes challenge course in the trees alongside the lake

Research shows that outdoor activities not only increase children's physical activity, but also help children deal with stress and reduce anxiety. Children who interact with nature have better cognitive and creative skills than their more housebound counterparts.

Audubon and Outward Bound programs use outdoor classrooms and experiential education strategies that can produce significant student academic gains in social studies, science, language arts and math. Hands-on projects offered through the Center will provide students with learning experiences in the meaningful, real-life context of nature that have practical applications for future careers.



or venture forth from the Center on a multi-day expedition in the region. The outdoor adventure education offered by Outward Bound is designed to engage young people in the natural world during their middle and high school years.

While each organization currently offers highly effective programs under their own brands, this collaboration will produce integrated programming made stronger and more effective through shared resources, educational experiences and opportunities to serve the greater Philadelphia community. By aligning programs at the Center, both organizations will offer a progression of powerful opportunities for young people to build on their personal strengths, talents and creativity. Young people may have multiple experiences at the Center that increase in depth and multiply connections with their communities and the natural world. These experiences will develop the skills young people need to succeed in an urban economy and sustain its natural resources well into the future.

The Center will also be a hub for the National Audubon Society’s international conservation initiatives and a major link in a regional network of birding and wildlife viewing destinations. It will be a green sanctuary for students, families and visitors and a vital source of information and inspiration for appreciating nature where we live—in our own backyards, school yards, Fairmount Park and the Philadelphia region.

As headquarters for Outward Bound Philadelphia, it will bring together multiple community and regional partners who will engage in Outward Bound’s world renowned leadership development programs at the Center in Fairmount Park and beyond the Center in natural settings across the Delaware Valley region.

The Center will link to and enhance existing community assets in East Fairmount Park, such as the Smith Memorial Playground, Sedgley Woods Disc Golf Course, the Boxers’ Trail and Mander Recreation Center. It will help create

a welcoming gateway between the park and Strawberry Mansion and north Philadelphia neighborhoods. It will offer the public access to the lake in alignment with public safety and protection of the site as a bird and wildlife sanctuary. There will be no entrance fees to public viewing areas for observing birds and wildlife on the lake. The National Audubon Society and Outward Bound Philadelphia will each be using the center as their base of operations in the Philadelphia region; fees associated with these specific programs and activities are expected, but have not yet been calculated or determined.





Proposed Building and Site Plans



Description of Proposed Building

The building will serve as a launching pad for orientation and education programs, a place for students and visitors to have shelter from inclement weather, and the base of operations for Audubon and Outward Bound staff. Program participants and the public will begin their encounters with nature through the building and continue their explorations on the lakeside and park side of the center. **Opportunities for addressing the critical environmental challenges of our time—water, air, land and energy—will be woven into the public’s experience of the center in its uniquely urban setting.**

Audubon and Outward Bound are committed to managing the center facility and programs on the site in ways that are not disruptive to birds and wildlife. The 37-acre lake and surrounding grounds within the outer fence line will be managed as a “zone of tranquility” and as a bird sanctuary. **Both organizations have agreed that the protection of birds and wildlife will result in the highest and best use of this site for people.** Site management strategies will be based on sound science and a shared commitment to restoring and improving habitat.

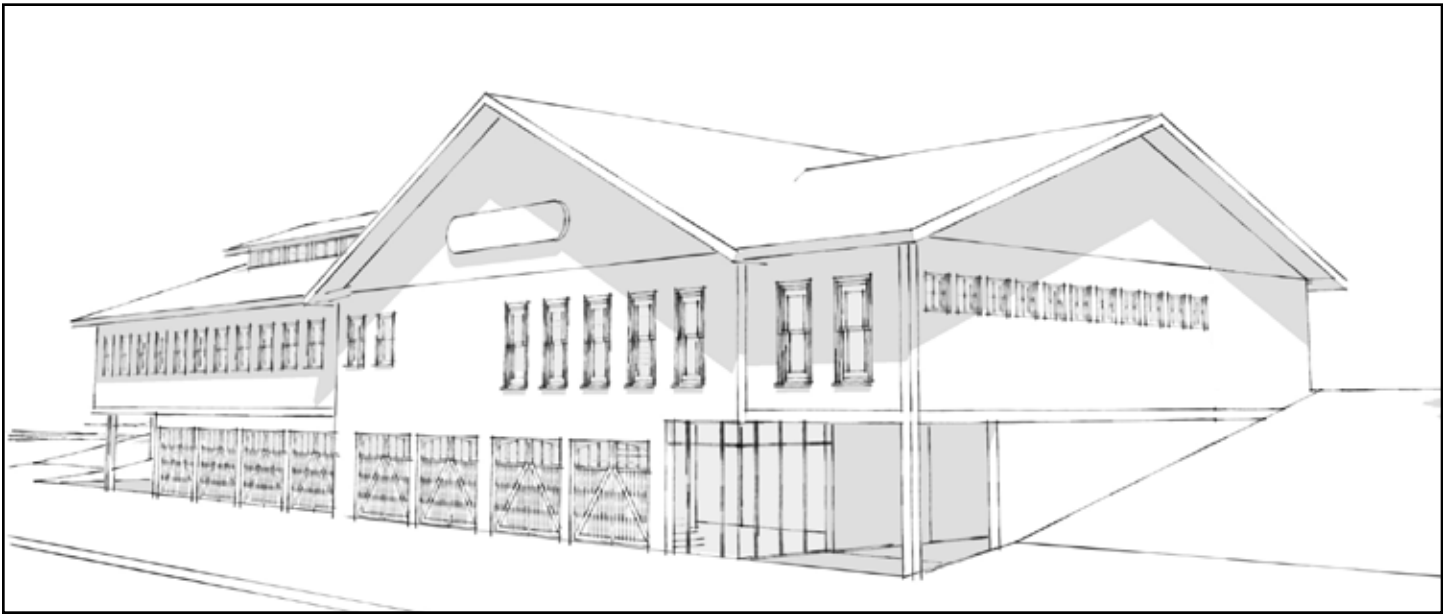
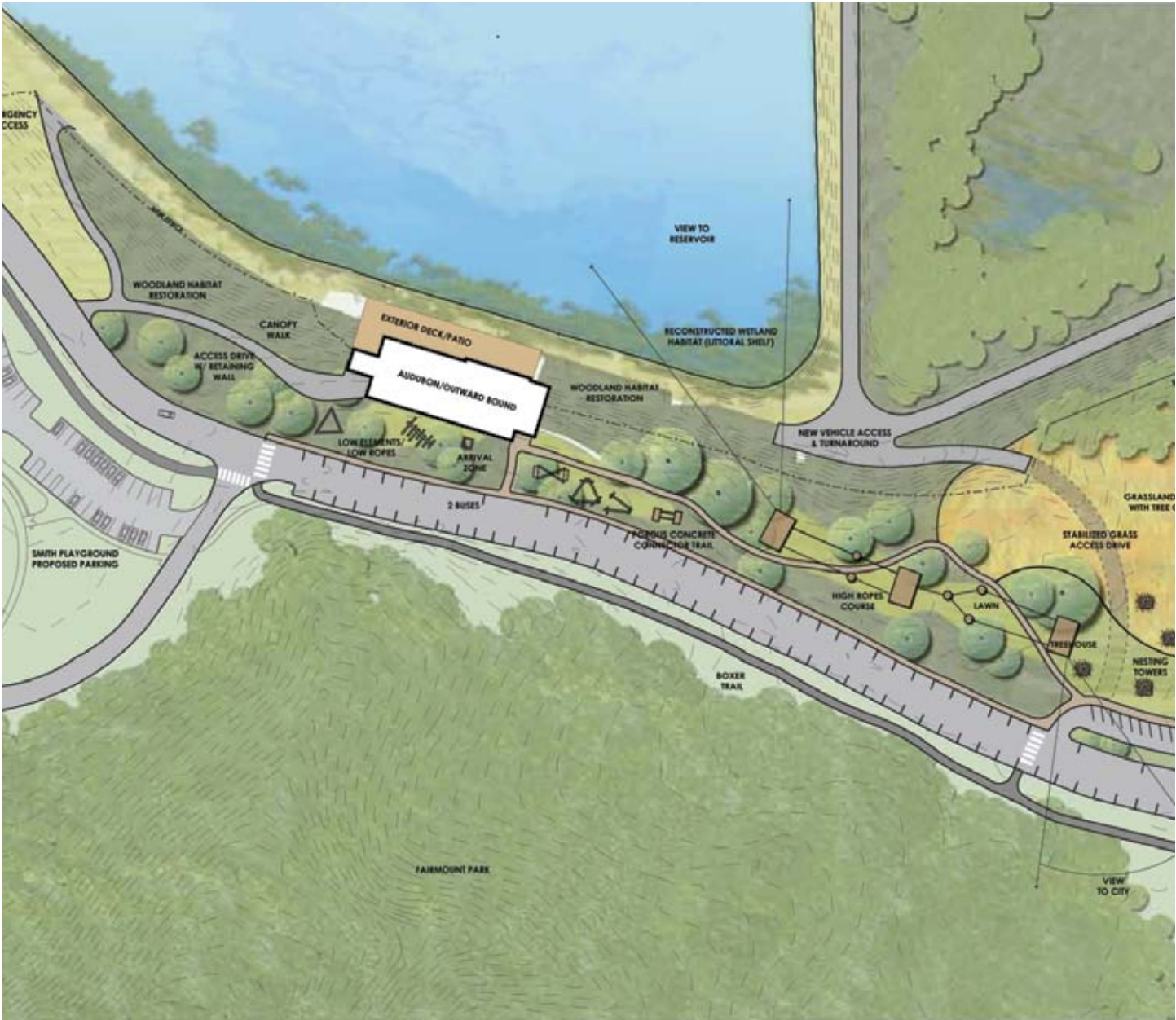
Several locations at the lake were investigated as possible sites for the building. The construction site at the water’s edge on the southern end of the lake was chosen for its accessibility and visibility from the street side lower level and the wonderful views of the lake afforded by the upper level at this location.

The Center will provide an orientation experience for visitors that encourages appreciation of nature on the lake and in the surrounding areas of Fairmount Park and Philadelphia. Trails along the lake will be carefully planned to offer visitors wonderful viewing opportunities without disturbing the birds and wildlife.

Conceptual design plans for the Center envision a two-story building (a total approximately 17,000 square feet) that is nestled into the berm at the lake’s edge to blend in with its natural setting. Only one story will face the lake front. The proposed size for the building was determined through a rigorous analysis by National Audubon and Outward Bound Philadelphia board and staff members and three teams of architectural consultants who carefully considered staff requirements, program needs and managed public access to the building and site.

The building will be a demonstration of highly efficient green building technologies and conservation strategies. National Audubon and Outward Bound Philadelphia are committed to developing the most environmentally responsible building possible and are pursuing a “zero carbon foot print” building plan.

The relationship between environmental health and human health will be a central theme of the building and site. Audubon’s ability to make Philadelphians aware of the connections between healthy people and a healthy environment will be enhanced by having young people experience the challenging physical activities offered through Outward Bound programs– for example, preliminary designs include an Outward Bound climbing wall and ropes course.



Site Management Plans

Conceptual plans for the building include:

- **Viewing areas/exhibit room(s):** Public areas for viewing birds and wildlife on the lake, including an observation platform adjacent to the building, and exhibits inspiring conservation and outdoor recreation activities.
- **Public Access:** Depending on weather conditions and staff scheduling, the Center will have public viewing areas open and accessible several days during the week (including some weekend days), with special open-to-the-public hours (e.g. early morning hours for bird watching and late afternoon hours for enjoying sunsets) throughout the year as are yet to be determined. There will be no entrance fees to the public viewing areas.
- **Multi-purpose room:** Space shared by Audubon and Outward Bound Philadelphia for programs, skills-training seminars, week-end family programs, community programs,

and events. This space will be offered for use by community groups from time to time in a manner consistent with the mission of the organizations, their programs, and management of the site as a wildlife sanctuary.

- **Classrooms:** Training space for Audubon educators and Outward Bound instructors and volunteers; meeting space for Audubon after-school clubs; science lab and technology classroom for program participants and interns.
- **Gear-up space for Outward Bound expeditions;**
- **Open flexible office space for Audubon and Outward Bound staff members as well as storage space for program and administrative materials.** Flexible space (equipped with phones, computer and internet hook-ups), will also provide a base for researchers and conservation volunteers working for a limited time and/or a special project in the Park.



Building and Site Security

Because the site is within the Philadelphia Water Department’s security perimeter and the steep walls of the lake pose public safety concerns, access to both the building and lake will be allowed at specified times and monitored by National Audubon and Outward Bound Philadelphia. Both organizations are working closely with the Philadelphia Water Department to make the lake accessible to the program participants and the public in ways that do not conflict with the security and safety of the active reservoir. This site is also an important symbol of water resource management in the City, and its history and legacy will be taken into account in the design of the Center facility.

A very small portion of the site outside the fenced perimeter of the basin will be affected by landscaping for Outward Bound’s physical challenge courses—this landscaping will not have a negative impact on adjoining portions of the park. This area, immediately outside the perimeter fence and adjacent to Reservoir Drive, will be designed to offer outdoor activities that are not disruptive to birds and wildlife. Site work as a part of the project will include a new parking lot at street level, an upgrade of the Water Department’s current entry road, an accessible path up to the building site, new planting in the vicinity of the building, and a trail along the west edge of the lake. This trail will include overlooks constructed for observation of birds and wildlife.



Note: The depictions of the building are conceptual designs. Plans are not finalized.



Community Outreach



Community Outreach

The vision for the center was developed by the National Audubon Society and Outward Bound Philadelphia through many meetings and multiple communications with various stakeholders over the last decade and particularly over the last three years, including:

- Strawberry Mansion community leaders and organizations, including the Strawberry Mansion Community Development Corporation and Neighborhood Action Committee, the East Park Revitalization Alliance, the Smith Memorial Playground, the Sedgley Woods Disc Golf Course and the Mander Recreation Center;
- Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Department representatives and Philadelphia Water Department representatives;
- Administrators, teachers and students from Philadelphia schools;
- Political representatives at the city and commonwealth levels;
- Representatives of partner nonprofit organizations, including the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Philadelphia Zoo, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, the Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center, the Delaware Valley Ornithological Society, and the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum;
- Foundation representatives and Philadelphia civic leaders.

Letters of support for the proposed project are attached.





Alternatives Analysis and Conclusions

Alternatives Analysis Summary

Description of the current outdoor park or recreation land proposed to be transferred or converted and the impact of the transfer or conversion on current outdoor park or recreational uses at the site:

A minimal amount of park land that is currently open to the public is proposed to be transferred under a lease between the project partners and the City. This land, approximately four and a half acres between Reservoir Drive and the outside fence surrounding the west Basin Lake, is open space that is accessible to the public, but not currently used for organized recreational activities. Less than two acres of this land will be used for parking and creating access to the Center; the remaining acreage will be used for other recreational purposes, including Outward Bound challenge courses, walking paths and gardens.

The proposed lease with the City will include 50 acres currently under PWD management and inaccessible to the public. These acres, including the approximately 37-acre lake and 13 acres inside the outer fence of the PWD managed land, will be opened to the public and program participants as described above.

A detailed description of conceptual building and site plans is provided in the attached report from CVM Construction Managers, Inc.

The impact of the transfer or conversion on current outdoor park or recreational uses at the site:

This project will offer enhanced recreational use of more than 4 acres with incidental restrictions on public access consistent with public safety and site management. It will result in a net gain of public access to approximately 50 acres that are now closed off to the public and offer recreational opportunities that are consistent with the conservation of wildlife and habitat on the site.



The environmental impact of the proposed transfer or conversion; and the effect of the proposed transfer or conversion on traffic and parking:

Please see the attached Environmental Analysis Report from CVM Construction Managers, Inc. and transportation narrative prepared by McMahon Transportation Engineers & Planners.

The proposed transfer or conversion is necessary for the public interest:

- Environmental: This project will preserve a hidden gem of Philadelphia’s landscape, one that could not be recreated once destroyed, and will allow public access to 50 acres of nature that have been closed off for decades. It will conserve critical habitat for the benefit of birds, wildlife and the people of Philadelphia for generations to come.
- Educational: The Center will be a sanctuary for the young people of nearby neighborhoods. It will be a destination for school and youth groups from across the city that provides a launching pad for exploration of the natural world and offers discovery opportunities for personal growth and achievement. It will also empower adults to learn more about the nature in the city and begin to engage with it in new and exciting ways.

- Civic: The collaboration of two international organizations in the development of this project will achieve national recognition and play a unique role in Philadelphia’s emerging green city status. It will stimulate the creation of new businesses and services in Strawberry Mansion and beyond. This is a legacy project that connects with the preservation mission of Fairmount Park.

The East Park Leadership and Conservation Center is designed to enhance the park lands in which it is situated. The National Audubon Society and Outward Bound Philadelphia are working closely with the City of Philadelphia to assure that all environmental reviews and requirements for preserving the natural habitat of the lake and surroundings are met.

There is no reasonable and practical alternative to the proposed transfer or conversion:

Due to the unique nature of the use of the site and proposed Center, there is functionally no alternative land available within the City of Philadelphia.





Conclusions

1. This project will result in the transfer or conversion of less than 4.5 acres of park land for purposes that are consistent and permissible for the outdoor recreational use of park land under Pennsylvania law. This acreage would be enhanced and improved by the project.
2. This project will result in allowing managed public access to approximately 50 acres of land for purposes that are consistent and permissible for the outdoor recreational use of park land under Pennsylvania law.
3. A slight portion of the building footprint (estimated at somewhere between .05 and .10 acre) may extend beyond the current fence line onto a small portion of park land. Use of this land as outdoor park land is still possible; however, given the existing marginal nature of the land, the public interest would be far better served by its use for a building that provides managed public access to the lake. It is understood that should the building footprint extend onto this small strip of park land, the substitute land requirement of the ordinance may be triggered. This requirement is addressed by opening almost 50 acres of land currently under the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Water Department to outdoor recreational uses that are consistent with management of the site as a wildlife sanctuary.

Note:

Thanks to Howard Eskin for the photos of birds.

Thanks to SMP Architects and CVM Construction Managers, Inc. for conceptual pictures of the building and site.

Thanks to Braithwaite Communications for graphic design.

A description and aerial imagery of the proposed acreage follows on the next pages

Proposed Acreage Description

Proposed boundaries for lease for the East Park Leadership and Conservation Center are delineated by **red lines** on the aerial view on the next page.

Yellow lines depict the outer fence line of the property currently under Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) management, including the west basin lake and its surrounding berms.

The **red line** between the lake and the combined areas of on the east side of the lake indicates the boundary between the proposed lease and what will continue to be PWD managed property, including the northwest basin (currently drained); the northeast basin (currently an active water supply to the City); and the south basin (currently an ephemeral drainage area that has become vegetated with trees and shrubs). These areas (to the east of the lake and continuing to the **yellow fence line** along 33rd Street – Route 13) will continue to be used as PWD determines.

The proposed lease includes:

- The area designated as **WEST BASIN outlined in light blue** – **37.65 acres of lake** – **currently not open to the public;**
- The vegetated and mowed areas around the perimeter of the lake designated **INSIDE FENCE** that are currently within the **yellow PWD fence line** (between the yellow fence line on the north, west and south sides of the lake and the **light blue outline of the lake**; and between the light blue line on the east side of the lake and the red line separating the lake from the area PWD will continue to manage) – a total of **12.35 acres inside the current PWD fence line** – **currently not open to the public;**
- A small strip of land along Reservoir Drive between the current **yellow fence line** and the **red line** along Reservoir Drive designated

OUTSIDE FENCE – a total of 4.47 acres currently open to the public, but not suitable for organized recreational activities (currently there are no structures, walking paths or trails on this acreage; there is a small, rough dirt/gravel parking lot on the south end of this strip);

Description of Gateway Areas not included in proposed Leased Acreage (delineated in purple lines):

Audubon and Outward Bound will be among the public and private partners working in collaboration with the Department of Parks & Recreation to enhance two areas along Reservoir Drive toward 33rd street to create an inviting natural gateway to East Fairmount Park through landscaping, signage and walking paths. These areas, including 0.82 acres of Fairmount Park open land (“Gateway #2”), and (b) 1.35 acres of Fairmount Park open land (“Gateway # 1”) will continue to be open to the public.

Gateway areas will remain under the jurisdiction of Parks & Recreation but subject to Parks & Recreation approved uses and improvements by Audubon and Outward Bound. It is anticipated that these areas will be landscaped to create an inviting public entrance to East Fairmount Park and the Strawberry Mansion community. Enhancements to these areas are in the early planning stages. Possibilities for Audubon and Outward Bound support for these improvements will be explored in collaboration with the Department of Parks & Recreation, the Fairmount Park Conservancy, and other organizations invested in East Fairmount Park and the Strawberry Mansion community.

A detailed description of proposed uses is presented in the Environmental Assessment from CVM Construction Managers, Inc.



	ACRES
INSIDE FENCE	12.35
OUTSIDE FENCE	4.47
WEST BASIN	37.65
GATEWAY 1	1.35
GATEWAY 2	0.82
TOTAL:	56.64
EXISTING PWD FENCE LINE	
PROPOSED AREA TO BE LEASED	
GATEWAY 1 & 2 (NOT TO BE LEASED)	



Letters of Support



Strawberry Mansion Neighborhood Action Center, Inc.
2829 W. Diamond Street
Philadelphia, PA 19121
Main: (215) 235-7505
Fax; (215) 235-3122

“REBUILDING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EMPOWERMENT”

Lenora Jackson-Evans
Executive Director

January 14, 2013

The Commission on Parks and Recreation
1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102-1587

Re: Audubon and Outward Bound Project at the East Park Reservoir

To whom it may concern:

The Strawberry Mansion Neighborhood Action Center, Inc. (SMNAC) was established in 2004 to rebuild the Strawberry Mansion community through the empowerment of its residents and to enhance the quality of life by providing services to low and moderate income families. We strongly support the development of an Audubon and Outward Bound leadership and conservation center at the East Park Reservoir.

The project will preserve a unique feature of Fairmount Park – a 37 acre lake at the East Park Reservoir- and restore access for Strawberry Mansion residents to a total of 50 acres of natural habitat for birds and wildlife that has been fenced off from the surrounding park lands and our neighborhood for decades.

This collaboration of two internationally recognized organizations will create an outstanding resource for the Strawberry Mansion community. Since 2007, Audubon and Outward Bound have met with community representatives to discuss plans for the project and provide updates on progress. They have participated in community events, including Strawberry Mansion Day and the Boxer Trail 5K Walk/Run.

This project will support SMNAC’s initiatives, including greening and beautification, community education, and energy conservation programs. We urge the Commission on Parks and Recreation to allow the leasing of city park land for this use.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lenora Jackson-Evans

Lenora Jackson-Evans

Executive Director

**STRAWBERRY MANSION
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

2829 West Diamond Street
Philadelphia, PA 19121

Phone: 215.235.7505
Fax: 215.235.3212

January 11, 2013

Ms. Nancy Goldenburg, Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission
1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1587

RE: Outward Bound and Audubon Project at East Park Reservoir

Dear Ms. Goldenburg:

The Strawberry Mansion Community Development Corporation is issuing this **Letter of Support** for the Outward Bound and Audubon Societys’ proposal to lease the East Park Reservoir with the intent to build and operate an environmental/education center. This proposed venture will not only provide us with a newly built environmental/education center in our neighborhood, but it will also provide programming that will educate our community about conservation and preservation while allowing us to participate in structured physical activities.

We commend these national organizations for their leadership in developing this environmental treasure that has become a sanctuary for various species of birds and aquatic life. Since 2006, the Audubon Society has engaged our community with focus groups, bird sighting tours and educational programming related to this phenomenon that has occurred in the East Park Reservoir. This positive interaction has allowed the community access to the reservoir, which has been closed off to the public for decades. As it partnered with Outward Bound, the community continued to benefit from the leadership and wellness programming aimed at strengthening the cognitive and physical skills of our youth.

We hope that you view this proposal favorably, as we are looking forward towards working with the Audubon Society and Outward Bound throughout all phases of this project. Thank you for considering our position.

Sincerely,

Tonnetta Graham

Tonnetta Graham, President
Strawberry Mansion CDC



East Fairmount Park
Philadelphia, PA 19121

(215) 765-4325
(215) 765-2604 (fax)

www.smithkidsplayplace.org
info@smithkidsplayplace.org

January 7, 2013

The Commission on Parks and Recreation
1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102-1587

Re: Outward Bound and Audubon Project at East Park Reservoir

To whom it may concern:

Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse, located in East Fairmount Park, has been a treasured destination for over 100 years. Smith strives to be Philadelphia's foremost resource for play by providing opportunities for unstructured creative play for children 10 and younger. Smith contributes to the development of healthy children, strong families, and safe communities by: 1) maintaining a proud tradition of free family admission; 2) partnering with community-based organizations to reach a diverse audience; and 3) advocating for the importance of play. In 2012, Smith welcomed an annual audience of over 180,000 children and adults from 200 zip code areas in the region. Smith also administered advocacy and outreach programs in order to educate adult caregivers about the importance of play in neighborhoods throughout the City, and through our Play for All program welcomed visits from over 1,000 children and adults living in crisis, including families served by nearby homeless shelters.

Smith's staff and board strongly support the development of an Audubon and Outward Bound leadership and conservation center at the East Park Reservoir, and we urge the Commission on Parks and Recreation to allow the leasing of city park land for this use. The project will preserve a unique feature of Fairmount Park – a 37 acre lake at the East Park Reservoir – and allow public access to a total of 40 acres that has been fenced off from the surrounding park lands and adjacent Strawberry Mansion neighborhood for decades. The new Center will be the home of Audubon's Philadelphia urban conservation and education programs and of Outward Bound's Philadelphia outdoor leadership programs.

At Smith, we are particularly excited to welcome a new organizational neighbor to East Fairmount Park, because it will further fuel fast growing interest in this area of the Park. Smith's audience, for example, has increased 73% in just three years, which suggests that residents and tourists are eager for family-friendly opportunities to learn and play together. Bringing additional enrichment and educational opportunities for families to East Park, as Audubon and Outward Bound will do with great success, will leverage the existing assets of East Park exponentially: improving the park experience, providing new educational services, and helping establish connections to the natural world for thousands of people of all ages.

Sincerely,

Meg Wise
Executive Director

EAST PARK REVITALIZATION ALLIANCE

January 9, 2013

The Commission on Parks and Recreation
1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102-1587

To Whom It May Concern:

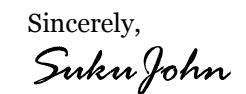
I am pleased to write this letter of support for the proposed Audubon and Outward Bound project at the East Park Reservoir.

Established in 2003 by neighborhood residents, the East Park Revitalization Alliance (EPRA) seeks to build a healthy community in the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood of North Philadelphia, by focusing on innovative approaches to environmental improvement and health promotion. We turn vacant land into community gardens; operate programming to connect neighborhood residents to the adjacent park; have planted over 850 trees in the community; and run the successful "Healthy Choices" Youth Program (in partnership with the Dept. of Parks and Recreation) - an after school and summer program for neighborhood youth ages 6-14 at our local recreation center that is based on giving youth the skills to make the healthy choices that will help them become healthy adults.

We strongly support the development of an Audubon and Outward Bound leadership and conservation center at the East Park Reservoir. We urge the Commission on Parks and Recreation to allow the leasing of city park land for this use. This project will preserve a unique feature of Fairmount Park - a 37 acre lake at the East Park Reservoir - and allow public access to a total of 40 acres that has been fenced off from the surrounding park lands and adjacent Strawberry Mansion neighborhood for decades. This collaboration of two internationally recognized organizations will create an outstanding resource for the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood as well as other communities across Philadelphia. The new Center will be the home of Audubon's Philadelphia urban conservation and education programs and of Outward Bound's Philadelphia outdoor leadership programs.

The type of programs and resources that this Center will bring is much needed for the children of Strawberry Mansion and we hope to be working closely with both Audubon and Outward Bound. It is a well documented fact that children exposed to natural areas, wildlife and outdoor activities are more likely to develop a lifelong awareness and appreciation for the natural world. They grow up to be the stewards of these natural areas ensuring that these resources will endure for future generations to use and enjoy.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any additional information. I can be reached at (610) 291-2481 or by e-mail at suku@epralliance.org

Sincerely,

Suku John, PhD
Executive Director



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PHONE: 215-869-4208 • WWW.EPRALLIANCE.ORG

THE ACADEMY
OF NATURAL SCIENCES
of DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Patrick Center for Environmental Research

January 11, 2013

The Commission on Parks and Recreation

1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor

Philadelphia PA 19102-1587

Re: Outward Bound and Audubon Project at East Park Reservoir

To whom it may concern:

I am a scientist within the Patrick Center for Environmental Research at the Academy of Natural Sciences and a professor in the Department of Biodiversity, Earth and Environmental Sciences (BEES) at Drexel University. I have extensive familiarity with East Park, through research I've done as part of master planning for Fairmount Park and from subsequent research on East Park Reservoir.

I strongly support the development of an Audubon and Outward Bound leadership and conservation center at the East Park Reservoir. I urge the Commission on Parks and Recreation to allow the leasing of city park land for this use. The project will preserve a unique feature of Fairmount Park - a 37 acre lake at the East Park Reservoir- and allow public access to a total of 40 acres that has been fenced off from the surrounding park lands and adjacent Strawberry Mansion neighborhood for decades.

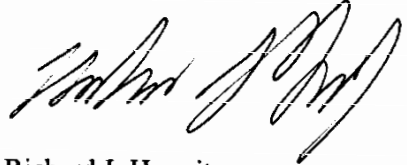
This collaboration of two internationally recognized organizations will create an outstanding resource for communities across Philadelphia. The new Center will be the home of Audubon's Philadelphia urban conservation and education programs and of Outward Bound's Philadelphia outdoor leadership programs.

The BEES Department is committed to using local field experience as part of undergraduate and graduate training and education. The new center could provide an excellent basis for education in lake ecology, ornithology and other fields. Furthermore, the nearly unique setting for the East

Park Reservoir makes it an excellent place to investigate biological and chemical aspects of ecology, because of the near isolation of the pond. Thus, while I cannot speak as representing

Academy or Drexel policy, I believe that the preservation of the pond, the increased access created by the alliance, and the resources of the new Audubon Center will be an educational and research resource for the Academy and Drexel University.

Sincerely yours,



Richard J. Horwitz

Fisheries Section, Patrick Center for Environmental
Research

Professor, BEES



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
CITY COUNCIL
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

DARRELL L. CLARKE
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ROOM 494, CITY HALL
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 686-2070
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COUNCILMAN - 5TH DISTRICT

January 10, 2013

Ms. Nancy Goldenberg, Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission
1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102-1587

Re: Outward Bound and Audubon Project at East Park Reservoir

Dear Ms. Goldenberg:

As the City Councilman for Philadelphia's 5th Council District, portions of which border Fairmount Park, I support the PA Audubon Society and Outward Bound's proposal to lease East Park Reservoir for the purposes of building and operating the East Park Leadership and Conservation Center.

Audubon and Outward Bound have shared the plans for the Leadership and Conservation Center with my office and local residents, participated in community events, and introduced a neighborhood of youth and adults to birding and other conservation issues. The Leadership and Conservation Center will house educational and leadership programs, while preserving a unique feature of Fairmount Park - a 37 acre lake at the East Park Reservoir. Moreover, the Leadership and Conservation Center will provide public access to a total of 40 acres that has been fenced off from the surrounding park lands and adjacent Strawberry Mansion neighborhood for decades.

It is my understanding that the Parks and Recreation Commission will review this proposal under the Open Lands Protection Ordinance, and I hope that the Commission will agree that the Leadership and Conservation Center will be a beneficial use of park land.

Sincerely,

Darrell L. Clarke

DLC/djb

Cc: Ms. Janet Starwood (Audubon)



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

WATER DEPARTMENT
ARAMARK Tower
1101 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-2994

HOWARD M. NEUKRUG, P.E.
Water Commissioner

January 16, 2013

The Commission on Parks and Recreation
One Parkway Building
1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102-1587

Re: National Audubon and Outward Bound Philadelphia Project at East Park Reservoir

To Whom It May Concern;

I am writing to express the Philadelphia Water Department's support and enthusiasm of the proposed East Park Leadership and Conservation Center as developed by the National Audubon Society and Outward Bound Philadelphia.

The proposed site – the west basin of the East Park Reservoir – encompasses a 37 acre manmade lake that was formerly a component of the department's treated drinking water supply. Over the years, this area has reverted to its more natural condition and has become an unparalleled bird habitat in the city – although currently not accessible to the general public and adjacent to high security drinking water supplies for the city.

The Water Department will be constructing new infrastructure for drinking water storage alongside this site and we look forward to collaborating with the East Park Leadership and Conservation Center during this construction and establishing a long-term relationship with nature and the community.

It is our hope that the site's location in East Fairmount Park and along the perimeter of the Strawberry Mansion community will ensure that this naturalized gem of a spot will become an incredible educational and natural amenity for this community and for the region at large.

PWD's Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center is positioned just "down the hill" from East Park Reservoir and we have already begun the conversation of leveraging and enriching our joint watershed educational programs through our anticipated partnership.

Sincerely,

Howard M. Neukrug, P.E., BCEE
Commissioner

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PHILADELPHIA**

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