

CHOUTEAU GREENWAY

INTERNATIONAL DESIGN COMPETITION

Stage II Jury Report

Prepared by the Competition Manager on behalf of the Jury

May 1, 2018

The Design Goals set out by the Partners at the beginning of the Competition process eloquently and thoroughly define the qualities that the greenway must embrace in its conception and execution in order to create the vibrant corridor envisioned.

In Stage II, the Design Teams were asked to create a design concept that addresses these Design Goals and results in a unique piece of urban infrastructure, dense with experiential opportunities, that leverages community, institutional, and private assets.

The Teams truly delivered on this request. The depth of analysis and design created in the short competition period is remarkable. All four Teams produced inspiring and thought-provoking concepts that showed their understanding of this complex transformational project.

Over the course of the three-day session, the Jury held robust discussions of the submittals and issues related to the project. The discourse included issues of equity and the social impact this project should have on neighborhoods in addition to necessary urban design and planning elements. The discussions focused the Jury's understanding of the project at this moment in time, providing context for their decision and recommendation.

- The Jury understands the complex balance and interdependence of economic development and equity required of this project and feels the focus of the Chouteau Greenway project should be the main east/west connection and strengthening the connections between existing assets and existing and burgeoning economic activity.
- Design of the framework and its components needs to identify ways to change the dynamic within the east/west corridor to create opportunities welcoming people from north and south city and the region. Rather than identifying specific north/south routes at this time, the design should focus on how design in the central corridor can change the conversation and character.
- Beyond the connections between institutions, openness of the institutions themselves needs to be considered. There needs to be cognitive and emotional connections as well as physical connections to truly address equal access and opportunity.
- The Jury also understands the need to knit the assets of the central corridor together in order to help drive job creation and development, which will benefit neighborhoods to the north and south.

With these understandings, the Jury evaluated the concepts against the Design and Community Goals. Each Team made an incredible contribution to our collective understanding of this place and what it will take to be successful. While no Team got it completely right, there are many excellent and innovative ideas that inform our knowledge of what the Chouteau Greenway can be.



Recommendations

The Jury unanimously recommends the concept by the Stoss Landscape Urbanism Team for the Chouteau Greenway. The Jury believes the Team and the concept meet or exceed the Design and Community Goals.

Their successful response to the goals is due to their strong Team, clear framework, and flexibility to work with the Project Partners on the design details.

- The Team has gusto—not just talent, but also passion for the project. The Team leadership of Chris Reed, Toni Griffin, Marlon Blackwell, and David Mason has the right skill set to work with Project Partners. This core design group has the talent and will to engage the philanthropic community, which is fundamental to success. The Team is also very well positioned to do not only community engagement, but also institutional engagement. They will enter into open, flexible conversations with institutions to create new dynamics aimed at equitable outcomes within the east/west corridor.
- The Team's proposed framework presents a clear diagram that not only focuses on strong east and west bookends, but also reveals the middle as a critical place to begin. With some placemaking, its emphasis can be more about connections and de-emphasizing the automobile.
- The connections are shown in a very conceptual and schematic way. The outcomes in their proposal are not solutions, but provide a starting point for dialog and design, recognizing that criteria needs to be created with the Project Partners and constituents and showing their flexibility to listen regarding the design of specific elements.

Recommendations for Refinement

As the project moves into the next phase with the Project Partners, the Jury recommends the following actions for concept refinement in addition to elements deemed necessary by the Design Oversight Committee.

- Clarify the framework diagram. While the framework diagram is quite clear, it is deceptive and is not a good representation of the level of detail presented in the east/west corridor versus the north/south corridor. The graphic depiction over represents the north/south elements in the plan and may create false expectations.
- Align with critical economic nodes. The routes and connections should focus on the energy at NGA/22nd Street, Sarah Street, and the triangle of the Foundry, Armory, Cortex, and Grand Center. 'Need some economic metrics'
- Make a realistic river connection. Find ways to make the connection without touching the MacArthur Bridge or river levees. Also, reaching south of the Arch grounds is laudable, but this location and particular solution is not a priority. When the time comes to study this opportunity, the design could develop around the principles presented.
- Improve the environmental strategy. Significant improvements should be made to the ecology and hydrology strategies. In agreement with the TAG, the Jury agrees that the sustainable aspects are lacking in this plan. This is not only an issue of environmental protection and sustainability, but is also an economic development and real estate issue. Incorporating stormwater management infrastructure into the framework can lessen development costs to encourage development.

Jury Commentary

The following is a summary of what the Jury saw as strengths and weaknesses of the proposed design concepts. It must be noted, however, that these comments are derived from four tremendously impressive efforts. All four Teams should be highly commended for producing such inspiring and thought-provoking concepts in such a short amount of time.

Stoss Landscape Urbanism Team

Strengths:

- The framework diagram is easy to understand and has a strong spine and east/west connections.
- The plan includes a thoughtful treatment of Market St. and Forest Park Ave.
- Good details are provided on the pathway itself making it easy to visualize.
- The north/south strategy for vacant lots is appropriate, proposing some commitments without large new infrastructure.
- The western edge of the Gateway Mall is thought provoking and might actually encourage people to the western edge. The choice to include a major art project representing the Mill Creek Valley community is inspiring.
- The Team has chemistry and a clear ability to listen and create dialog. Their commitment to flexibility is appreciated. They relayed a sense of confidence balanced with flexibility that showed their willingness to revisit their ideas and assumptions.
- The Team leadership on is strong on design talent and ability to deliver and is supported by a strong and talented local Team.
- There is a strong approach to programming and ability to articulate that crucial investment to make the greenway inviting. Their use of program and active invitation was notable and scalable. They discussed sustaining activity with common cultural experiences.
- This proposal had the clearest development strategy, understanding the necessity of the focus in the middle of the corridor and why one thing might be done over another.

Weaknesses:

- The concept diagram seems to over promise north/south actions, appearing skewed to promote the north/south axis.
- The north/south routes seem to be in the wrong location.
- There are concerns about the return on investment of the land bridge to Forest Park.
- The Team goes beyond what was asked on the riverfront, but it is an over reach and not a priority at this time.
- There is not a strong enough strategy for ecology and hydrology.
- The sandblasted concrete does not seem to be maintainable.

TLS Landscape Architecture/Object Territories/Derek Hoeflerlin Design Team

Strengths:

- This is a really diverse Team of committed people with strong local talent.
- The underpasses are a unique solution.
- Water and ecology played a great part in the concept with innovative landscape and hydrological ideas.
- The mapping of cultural assets is astute and the neighborhood advisory committee is a good idea.
- The use of secondary streets as main connections is a positive.
- The Team identified resources for just about everything.

Weaknesses:

- There was a lack of Team leadership. The Team does not lack resources and collaboration is obvious, but there is no sense of leadership.
- Many interesting ideas, but lacks priorities.

- The sunken Gateway Mall plaza shows a lack of understanding—as a depressed plaza was recently removed from the Mall.
- Overall approach is too theoretical and not grounded enough. Some of the Jurors felt the people of color on their Team did not seem to be truly integrated as part of the large Team.
- Overall seems to be too much and overreaching geographically without enough consideration of regional plans and efforts.

W Architecture and Landscape Architecture Team

Strengths:

- Hydrologic strategy is really inspired.
- The Team had a clear dialog and a clear and thorough presentation.
- Appreciated the clarity with which they address equity issues and what their interpretation of the issues.
- The simplicity of the plan was unique and the use of the grid and existing nodes of energy make it feasible economically. The ‘use what’s there’ strategy is practical.
- Like the use of local historical names, such as Turpin, to give a sense of place to items in the plan.
- This is the only Team to really talk about NGA.
- Appreciate the Community Hub in the middle showing they were thinking of that space.

Weaknesses:

- Did not seem to address economic development. Seed investment areas are interesting, but a really heavy lift. They did not provide any real studies of the areas so it is hard to see that as feasible. There is a lack of economic priorities.
- There is a heavy reliance on space beneath overpasses.
- Team’s concepts and materials lacked the detail of the others’ leading to lack of confidence in the Team.
- The Team seemed to have a more genuine inclusion of diverse teammates, but lacked a strong equity strategy.
- By far, has the most skillful landscape design, which is also its weakness as it didn’t seem they knew how to incorporate other ideas into their scheme.

James Corner Field Operations

Strengths:

- Direct and easy to understand framework.
- Economic benefit report was good.
- Strong Team and great relationship with locals.
- Good that transit is a part of the discussion—includes Metrolink in their framework.
- Like the Y bridge would be a possible landmark element.
- Their reference to history is good.
- Prospect Yards bridge could be a great element
- Attention to insertions of natural landscapes, like Railyard park, is good.
- Appreciate the seriousness with which they addressed the equity issue, but redirected it into economic development.

Weaknesses:

- The separation of the green and social lines appear to create more of a divide than a braid as the name suggests and risks overpromising on equity issues. The separation seems to reinforce a distinction between ecology and economy and limit their interaction where it seems they should be interdependent.
- There are some questionable urban design moves such as making Euclid a limited access, no parking street.
- The Team had a good chemistry and showed a hierarchy but did not reflect their Stage I submittal.
- Weakness is that they were pretty rigid and decided about what they want to do.
- Delmar is an interesting proposition, but a weak idea of where to start.
- The Team did not seem flexible in their proposals and seemed much less likely to be able to collaborate with the multitude of stakeholders.

The Partners envisions Chouteau Greenway as a unique civic asset through the heart of St. Louis—from Washington University and Forest Park all the way to Downtown and the Gateway Arch—following St. Louis' central corridor, which is home to the region's highest concentration of jobs, residents, and institutions, and providing alternative commuting options, connections to transit, and improved property values. With this strong Design Team and solid framework concept, this vision is quite achievable.

The Jury thanks the Partners for the opportunity to participate in this extraordinary project and look forward to watching the transformation of St. Louis' central core through the Chouteau Greenway.

Maurice Cox

Ed Hassinger, P.E.

Mark Johnson, FASLA

Gavin Kroeber

Deborah Patterson

Adèle Naudé Santos, FAIA

Allison Williams, FAIA

Don Roe