



**The Rail Park**

PO BOX 15737, PHILADELPHIA 19103

# PRESS RELEASE

## PHILADELPHIA'S FRIENDS OF THE RAIL PARK SELECTS KEVIN DOW AS FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

New organizational leadership to ensure park's long-term success with highly-anticipated opening of the first section on June 14.

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(PHILADELPHIA, May 10, 2018) Philadelphia nonprofit **Friends of the Rail Park** is pleased to announce the selection of **Kevin Dow** as its first Executive Director. In this new role, Dow will create and implement a community-focused comprehensive strategic plan to fulfill the organization's mission to bring Philadelphia's Rail Park to life.

**The Rail Park** is a vision for a three-mile linear park and recreational pathway connecting 10 distinct Philadelphia neighborhoods to Fairmount Park and Center City along the site of two abandoned historic Reading Railroad lines. The above and below grade site threads through several of Philadelphia's most important cultural institutions and offers an opportunity to create a world class public space driven by engaging communities from every corner of the city, through programming around arts and culture, health and wellness, education, and preservation of the built and natural environment.

Opening to the public on June 14, **Phase I of the Rail Park** is a multi-million dollar project funded and built by the Center City District. It is transforming a quarter-mile section of the former Reading Railroad—which reaches from Broad and Noble streets up onto the elevated Viaduct and ending above the 1100 block of Callowhill Street in Philadelphia. The new park will be a welcoming community greenspace, with pathways, low-maintenance perennial plantings, trees, ample seating, bench-style swings, local art, and elevated city views. The design preserves and restores much of the existing steel structure, while introducing materials of a similar industrial scale and character.

**The Philadelphia Rail Park site is unique among urban rail parks around the world.**

Inspired by the High Line in New York, but physically more closely resembling the Promenade Plantee in Paris (inaugurated in 1993), the Rail Park has three unique sections:



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The Viaduct, a half mile long elevated iron structure twice the width of the High Line; The Cut, a 50' wide section, 9 blocks long, 30' below street level and lined with century old stone walls; and The Tunnel, an extraordinary vaulted brick and stone tunnel, with intermittent light and air shafts, over 3000' long.

In partnership with Philadelphia's Center City District and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Friends of the Rail Park, now led by Dow, is part of a revitalization movement that is taking place in cities across the US and beyond. Following the success of New York City's High Line, the Rail Park is part of the **High Line Network**—a group of 19 infrastructure reuse projects that are redefining the next generation of public spaces across the country.

Friends of the Rail Park is also a collaborator and part of the **Reimagining the Civic Commons**, a multi-year, national initiative with projects, including the Rail Park, in five U.S. cities. This initiative is working towards revitalizing and connecting civic assets including parks, trails, libraries and recreation centers to serve as community connectors. Philadelphia was the pilot city for Reimagining the Civic Commons—supported by the Knight Foundation and William Penn Foundation and convened by the Fairmount Park Conservancy—and Friends of the Rail Park continues to participate in the **Civic Commons Learning Network**.

Supported by the Friends of the Rail Park Board, Dow will spearhead fundraising, community engagement, oversee park programming and stewardship, and work toward the completion of the organization's full three-mile vision for the Rail Park. Liz Maillie, Board Chair of the Friends of the Rail Park, states: "Following a national search, we are thrilled to welcome Kevin Dow as our new, and first, executive director. A lifelong Philadelphian, Kevin is passionate about our city and dedicated to improving the quality of life for its citizens. He will drive community engagement to realize our vision for a truly inclusive, connective public space in Philadelphia."

**Kevin Dow's** diverse background includes leadership positions in the private, nonprofit, and public sectors. Prior to joining Friends of the Rail Park, he served as Senior Vice President of Impact and Innovation at United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. At United Way, he was responsible for over 225 public and private partnerships, collaborating to reduce inter-generational poverty throughout the Philadelphia region.

Previously, Dow was appointed by Mayor Michael A. Nutter to a dual role as the Senior Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Commerce Department for the City of



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Philadelphia. There, Dow created outreach programs for immigrant businesses and for Philadelphia's increased minority and women participation rates. Before his experience in government, Dow worked in community affairs at Wachovia (now Wells Fargo), managing an annual philanthropic budget of \$13 million and implementing employee engagement strategies for a region reaching across seven states and Washington DC, impacting over 11,000 team members.

Dow holds an MBA from St. Joseph's University, a Bachelor's from Morehouse College and has served in various board leadership roles for nonprofits focused in the arts, community development, and education. He is also a founding member of the Philadelphia Black Giving Circle.

Dow shares: "It is rare to find one's professional skill set match up with one's personal passion, and even more exceptional to cross this distinctive intersection at the right time. I am excited to join the Friends of the Rail Park as its first Executive Director and all our partners to bring to life this three-mile park for generations of Philadelphians to enjoy."

Dow's hiring was made possible through a grant from the William Penn Foundation, invested in Friends of the Rail Park in partnership with the Fairmount Park Conservancy.

**Friends of the Rail Park's** earliest roots go back to a neighborhood organization formed in 2003 advocating for the Viaduct to become a public park. Those residents inspired and engaged Paul R. Levy, President and CEO of Center City District. Together, they began planning, design and fundraising of Phase I of the Rail Park in 2009.

Levy says: "With the completion of the first phase of construction of the Rail Park in mid-June this year, we enter an exciting new phase of operations and programming for the park. Kevin Dow brings a deep knowledge of Philadelphia, an understanding of how local government works and experience with fundraising that will help the Friends of the Rail Park play a major leadership role in creating a successful and inclusive new public space in the city."

By 2010, the three-mile vision, connecting multiple neighborhoods to Fairmount Park and Center City, was co-founded by current Board Chair Liz Maillie, and Friends of the Rail Park, a nonprofit organization, was subsequently established.



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With the hiring of Kevin Dow, and the planned hiring of additional staff, Friends of the Rail Park is positioned to expand beyond advocacy, and include community outreach and fundraising, towards seeing the organization's vision fulfilled.

The Rail Park project has support from the City of Philadelphia, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Center City District, Fairmount Park Conservancy, the William Penn Foundation, the Knight Foundation, Poor Richard's Charitable Trust, the McLean Foundation, the 1830 Family Foundation, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the PA Department of Community & Economic Development, the Tuttleman Family Foundation, and numerous corporations and individuals in Philadelphia and beyond.

### **PHASE I RIBBON CUTTING AND OPENING CEREMONY:**

June 14, 11am, 13th and Noble Streets, Philadelphia

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