

Scioto Mile Project Plan Executive Summary



Project: Scioto Mile		
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PROJECT GOAL: *To transform the downtown Scioto Riverfront, by the Columbus Bicentennial Celebration in 2012, from an aging, underutilized civic asset into a high quality, active green corridor for the benefit of the citizens of central Ohio and their guests, while fostering further investments in the revitalization of downtown.*

The Scioto Mile Project is one of the central components of the 2002 Strategic Business Plan for Downtown Columbus. It will be a new integrated system of parks, boulevards, bikeway and pedestrian paths stretching from the Arena District to Whittier Peninsula that reconnects the Downtown to the river.

The development of a series of interconnected, active public spaces around the riverfront is a critical element of the downtown development agenda. The park will play an essential role in the revitalization of Downtown – attracting and complementing residential development, boosting property values and stimulating commercial growth. It will be a key amenity for the planned housing at RiverSouth and in the Arena District, and will set the stage for future redevelopment activities. It will become a “green” backbone for the community, providing many recreational opportunities, both passive and active, for our citizens’ enjoyment.

Michael Van Valkenburgh, a Cambridge, MA-based landscape architect, has produced conceptual designs for the Scioto Mile. Key elements of the project include:

- The Promenade on the Scioto Mile - a gracious Promenade stretching along Civic Center Drive from Broad Street to Rich Street. The Promenade would serve as the green corridor connecting Battelle Park with Bicentennial Park. It will be 30 feet wide and lined with two rows of large deciduous shade trees. An abundance of landscaping, water and art features will add to the natural beauty of the river. There will be many places for people to sit. The Promenade will be constructed to facilitate the popular summer festivals, including water and electric service hook-ups. Civic Center Drive will be narrowed from four lanes to three and converted to two-way traffic flow to make the Promenade more accessible and pedestrian friendly. The cost for this phase of the Scioto Mile project is \$20.6 million.
- The Riverwalk on the Scioto Mile - a unique river-level park will be built beneath the Promenade. This component of the project will bring users to the water’s edge with a walking/jogging/bike path where users can enjoy wetlands flora and fauna. The ends of the Riverwalk Park will taper in long ramps to connect the upper level with the lower level and allow visitors to loop through the park without retracing their steps. The cost for this phase of the Scioto Mile project is \$17.4 million.

The total estimated cost for this part of the Scioto Mile project is \$38 million. The project schedule assumes completion of The Promenade by 2010 and the completion of the Riverwalk by 2012, to coincide with Columbus’ Bicentennial Celebration. The U.S. Department of Transportation provided \$2.2 million toward the project in fiscal year 2006 and the State of Ohio appropriated \$1 million for the project in late 2006. The City of Columbus and the American Electric Power Foundation have each committed \$10 million to the project. With this funding, the construction of the Promenade on the Scioto Mile can proceed on schedule, with a groundbreaking expected in early 2008. A fundraising strategy is in development for the Riverwalk phase. The objective is to secure 50% of the overall project funding from public sources (federal, state, county and city governments) and the other half from the private sector and foundations.

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Future project components are contemplated for the Scioto Mile, assuming the necessary funding is acquired. They include:

- The redesign of Battelle Park to showcase its role as a civic memorial. Plans call for terracing the lawn to make the River more visible from the street, creating lawn space for play and adding seating. The Santa Maria would be relocated to the more spacious and child-oriented Bicentennial Park.
- The renovation of Bicentennial Park to provide a venue for families. Among the contemplated amenities would be: a cafe and outdoor dining area, a carousel, two stage areas, a spray park with a series of pop-up fountains, a playground and family picnic spaces, a large lawn, and the relocated Santa Maria.
- A green connector to Whittier Peninsula, which is being redeveloped by the City of Columbus, Metro Parks and Audubon Ohio to create a park and an Audubon Nature Center, as well as residential housing.

The estimated cost for these components is \$25 million. A schedule will be prepared, and final cost estimate produced, once it is determined that adequate funding has been obtained to include these additional dimensions of the Scioto Mile Project.

The first phase of the Scioto Mile project was the creation of North Bank Park, completed in 2005 at a cost of \$12 million. North Bank Park includes pedestrian and bike paths that connect to existing paths to the north and south, boat ramps and dock, an interactive water fountain for kids, picnic facilities, and a glass-enclosed pavilion overlooking Downtown's skyline that can be rented for meetings, receptions and parties. The median between Spring and Long Streets near Neil Avenue is considered part of North Bank Park.

The City of Columbus has partnered with the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation to develop and execute a comprehensive project plan and funding strategy for the project. The project also enjoys strong support from The Columbus Partnership and the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. AEP, a member of all three organizations, is serving as the corporate leader of the project.