



A triumph for city planners

LHVA cuts ribbon on Riverwalk July 13

By Natalie Gelb Solfanelli

On a beautiful spring day last year, with the Lackawanna River shimmering in the background, local officials joined the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA) in a groundbreaking for the Downtown Scranton Riverwalk section of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail (LRHT).

It was exciting to put the shovels in the ground on a project that had been in the planning stages for more than five years, but had run into many roadblocks and detours along the way.

So it is with even more delight and anticipation that LHVA announces that the ribbon will be cut to mark the official opening of the Riverwalk on July 13 at 10 a.m.! Parking will be available at the trailhead at Olive Street, near Providence Road. We certainly hope for another sunny day, but the event will go forward rain or shine!

The Downtown Scranton Riverwalk is the gateway to the 40-mile LRHT that, when completed, will run parallel to the Lackawanna River from the Stillwater Dam in Susquehanna County to Duryea where the Lackawanna and Susquehanna meet. This paved section will be well lit and well used, with pet stations, benches, waste receptacles and other amenities. Numbers of people have been walking and riding bikes even before it is completely finished. Also, there is a spur trail, funded under PennDOT's Safe Routes to School program, that connects the Riverwalk to nearby Scranton High School. This spur enables students to walk or ride their bikes to school via the trail without the danger of traversing busy roadways from their homes.

The central location of the Riverwalk provides connections not only to the downtown, but also to neighborhoods in North, East, South and West Scranton. This convenience is a reminder of the days when Scranton was an industrial and commercial hub. Scranton's infrastructure, with a central business district at the hub of residential neighborhoods, was laid out in maps prepared by Joel Amsden.

Amsden's foresight in creating the maps for the well planned city that was designed to accommodate a burgeoning population exceeding 120,000, was remarkable.

Even before Scrantonian Jane Jacobs* attained international renown as the icon of city planning with publication of her book, "Death and Life of Great American Cities," Amsden and his ilk saw the value of a compact business district within easily defined boundaries i.e., Lackawanna Avenue, Vine Street (the

Cultural District), Jefferson Avenue and Mifflin Avenue to the south, north, east and west, and Vine Street to the north, with the magnificent Lackawanna County Courthouse at the heart of the downtown. Today that area is recognized as Scranton's Historic District.

As an industrial and commercial center of the late 19th and 20th century, Scranton was the home of thinkers and entrepreneurs who left a legacy that many take for granted today.

No doubt these early residents would be proud of today's county and municipal leaders who recognize the value of parks and recreational amenities in enhancing the quality of life in our communities. Surely they would be smiling at the development of the LRHT, a corridor that provides not only recreational opportunities, but also signage that will provide users with information about the important historic and cultural sites along the trail. As it ultimately connects communities up and down the Lackawanna River, the trail will be an linear interpretive park that can be used for education, alternative transportation and wellness opportunities.

Please join us at the Riverwalk on July 13 to celebrate and talk a stroll, a run, or a bike ride!

*Native daughter Jane Jacobs, the icon of city planning, an intellectual and activist, was a graduate of Scranton Central High School, the predecessor of Scranton High that stands in view of the Riverwalk. The feisty Jacobs gained stature as a visionary and internationally recognized intellectual who waged a successful public campaign to prevent developer Robert Moses from building a freeway through Manhattan.

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