



THE DISCOVERY CENTER
Discover yourself in nature



Imagine...

- ...preserving 40 acres of pristine water in the heart of Fairmount Park for future generations***
- ...creating a sanctuary for learning about the wonders of nature in an urban setting***
- ...challenging young people with outdoor adventures near their own neighborhoods***
- ...inspiring young people to protect the environment and conserve our natural resources***



Imagine these extraordinary possibilities for a beautiful lake in Fairmount Park - now hidden away in a landscape of concrete and asphalt and fenced off from the public for decades.

In a place where nature is often “somewhere else” and where the opportunities for green connections are rare, Audubon Pennsylvania and Outward Bound Philadelphia are collaborating to develop a regional center for conservation and leadership that will benefit more than 5,000 young Philadelphians every year and offer a wealth of resources to children, families, seniors, and all individuals in the greater Philadelphia region for years to come.

Creating the **Discovery Center** will preserve an exceptional feature of Fairmount Park. The East Park Reservoir, bounded by 33rd Street and Reservoir Drive, is adjacent to the city’s Strawberry Mansion neighborhood.

Maintained since the late 1800’s by the Philadelphia Water Department, the reservoir is generally inaccessible to the public and largely concealed from public view by dense vegetation and a significant grade change from street level.





The west basin of the East Park Reservoir—the site for the Center—is a 40 acre man-made lake (about seven to eight feet in depth) that has not been used as a reservoir for many years.

This hidden gem provides vital habitat for wildlife and has become a prime stopover site for migratory birds. The lake offers an unusual opportunity for Philadelphians of all ages to observe and interact with nature.

If the Center is not developed, the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) will be required to consider alternative management strategies, including the possibility of draining the site. PWD is a partner on this project and is willing to work closely with Audubon and Outward Bound to make the lake accessible to the public in a way that does not conflict with the security and safety of the city's water supply.

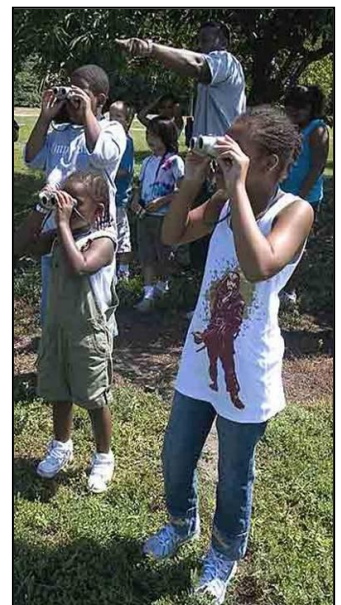


The center itself will become the public portal to the lake – providing controlled access, monitored entry, and supervised enjoyment by visitors. It will be a window to the natural world that extends from Fairmount Park to every part of Philadelphia and beyond through the international environmental connections made by migratory birds on the Atlantic Flyway. The center 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.

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 motivate youth leadership and environmental stewardship. The Center will be the keystone of Audubon environmental education programs and Outward Bound leadership and team building activities in the Philadelphia region.

Outward Bound, the nation's preeminent provider of active learning expeditions, will use this new facility as its Philadelphia base to inspire character development, leadership skill building and community service among people of all ages. 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 headquarters and has chosen the East Park Reservoir as its primary base of operations because of the exceptional outdoor opportunities offered by the lake and surrounding park lands.



Audubon engages young people in hands-on exploration of the natural world in their own backyards and neighborhoods. Audubon programs focus on birds to teach science and math through the study of urban ecosystems. Working with Audubon on habitat conservation projects, young people learn environmental ethics and stewardship. Audubon offers multiple programs in Philadelphia schools that provide 2,500 student contacts with environmental science experiences that are challenging and fun.



Audubon education experiences will complement Outward Bound's core values and help build an environmental ethic and culture of conservation in the community. Through experiences with Audubon and Outward Bound programs, young people will learn that nature is not just for recreation but also for appreciation and stewardship.

The combination of programs offered by Audubon and Outward Bound at the Center will build upon the legacy of Fairmount Park to nurture new conservation leaders from within Philadelphia who can advocate for such issues as environmental justice, better stewardship of the earth, and the embracing of the out-of-doors as a lifelong passion. Audubon focuses primarily on elementary and middle

school students. Outward Bound focuses primarily on middle and high school students. By collaborating at the Center, both organizations will provide a progression of powerful opportunities for young people to connect with nature and become the next generation of environmental advocates and stewards.

Audubon programs will orient elementary students to their environmental roles and responsibilities before they participate in Outward Bound expeditions. Students will study wildlife and habitats and then visit the Center to explore first hand how the science they have learned in their classrooms applies to ecosystems in Fairmount Park.



Middle and high school students will visit the Center to discover their inner strengths and build character through Outward Bound's acclaimed experiential education programs, either by completing a high ropes course challenge in the trees alongside the reservoir or by venturing forth on a multi-day expedition in the city or the region. The outdoor adventure education offered by Outward Bound will keep young people engaged in the natural world during their middle and high school years.

Audubon will be able to draw on this pool of youth leaders to nurture the next generation of environmental advocates and stewards. The combination of Audubon and Outward Bound programs at the Center will provide "cradle to college" opportunities for connection appreciation of the environment with service that demonstrates environmental responsibility.

Working collaboratively from the base of the Center, both organizations will be able to broaden their reach, increase the number and depth of student experiences, and achieve greater impact by offering an expanded array of programs to the public. This ground-breaking venture by two national organizations will become a national model for collaboration.



A long-term benefit to nearby neighborhoods and across the Philadelphia region



With the Center located in the “backyard” of Strawberry Mansion, area residents will be a focus of outreach and program activities. Strawberry Mansion struggles with a dilapidated housing stock, high unemployment, low educational achievement, and high truancy and school drop out rates.

Despite the community’s physical proximity to the Park, residents report that they seldom access its resources. School children live in an environment of bricks, asphalt, concrete and glass that is almost totally devoid of contacts with nature despite the proximity of a great urban park.

The presence of the Center will enhance the benefits of existing community assets such as the Smith Playground and Mander Recreation Center and help create a favorable environment for other educational, recreational, cultural, and commercial activity in the area. It will create a welcoming gateway to Fairmount Park for neighborhood residents.

Within Strawberry Mansion alone, there are 13 public schools, one charter school, and one parochial school. More than 7,300 students attend Strawberry Mansion schools. An additional 3,400 students attend other schools within two miles or less of the Center.

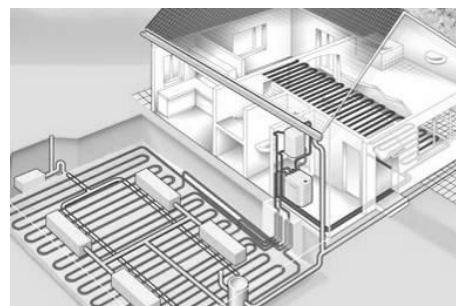
The Center will be a sanctuary for the young people of nearby neighborhoods and a destination point for school and youth groups from across the city. It will engage Philadelphia’s diverse communities in making strong connections between environmental awareness and conservation.



Conceptual Plans for 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 a uniquely urban setting. The two-story Center (total approximately 17,000 square feet), nestled into the berm at the lake’s edge to blend in with its natural setting, will be a demonstration of highly efficient green building technologies and conservation strategies.

Audubon and Outward Bound are committed to developing the most environmentally responsible building possible and are pursuing a “zero carbon foot print” building. Conceptual plans for the building include a geothermal well field that will result in an annual reduction of \$50,000 in operating costs.



The relationship between environmental health and human health will be a central theme of the center. Through programs and exhibits, Audubon will engage the public in monitoring bird populations and habitat quality as indicators of environmental health.



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. The Philadelphia Department of Parks & Recreation is a strong supporter of making these connections and is a key partner on the project.

Because waterfowl are great ambassadors to get people interested in birds and engaged in conservation action, the Center will create special places and spaces to encourage exploration, discovery, and public visits (estimated at 50,000+ visits every year). It is a peaceful and beautiful site - inspiring in itself - surrounded by the cacophony of the city. The lake will appeal to people of all ages and give them an immediate and direct experience of the beauty, meaning and peace of nature in an urban environment.

The Center will include exhibits on migratory flyways, urban oases, the urban tree canopy and the critical importance of habitat protection for wildlife and people. Through their experiences at the Center, people will learn that nature is not something other and away. They will realize that nature exists in the urban context, that they are part of nature in the city, and that people are responsible for the quality of our environment.



As a hub for Audubon's conservation work in the tri-state region, the Center will be a vital link in a regional network of birding and wildlife viewing destinations.

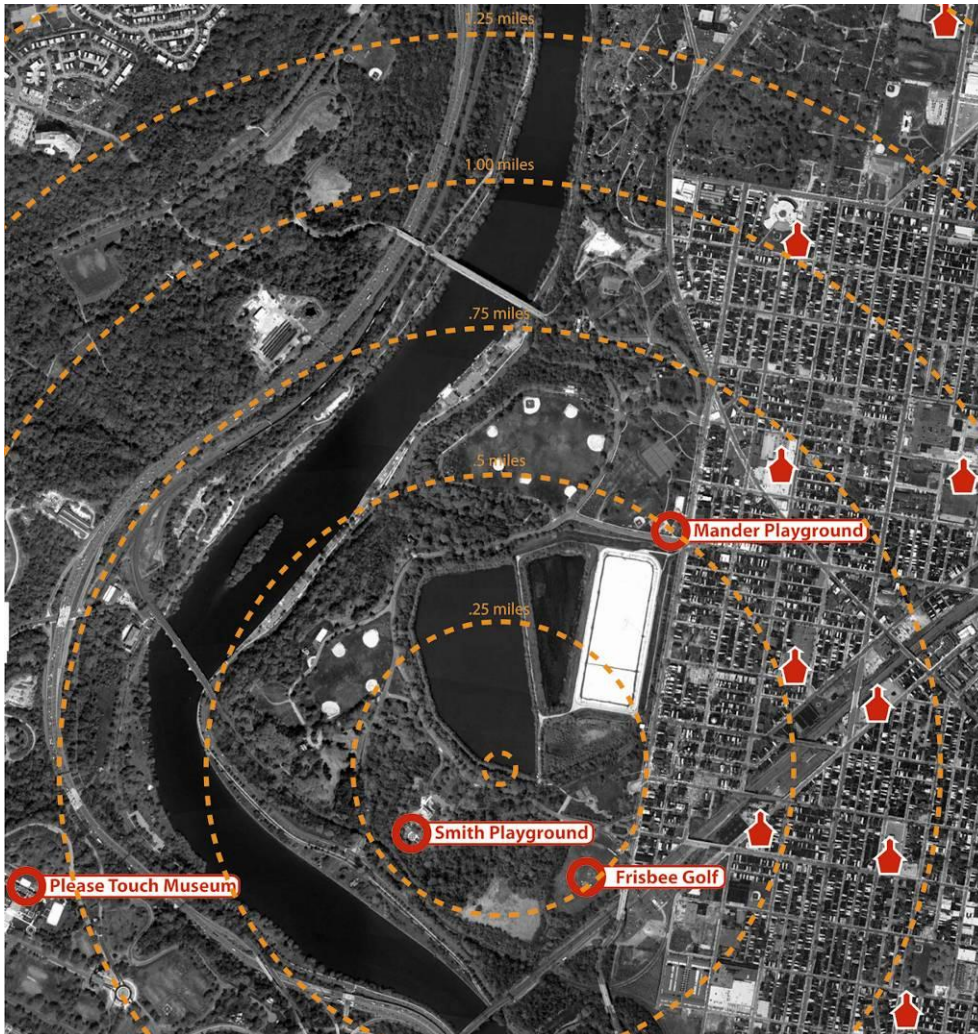
As headquarters for Outward Bound's presence in the greater Philadelphia metropolitan region, it will bring together multiple community and regional partners who will engage in Outward Bound's world renowned leadership development programs in the singular setting of the lake in Fairmount Park.

The center will be a beacon that attracts newcomers— and it will provide a physical base for long-term connections with the young people who take part in Audubon and Outward Bound programs. Ultimately our goal is to provide every young person in Philadelphia with the opportunity to visit the Center and connect with Audubon and Outward Bound programs.

A rare opportunity to have a powerful impact on future generations

This is a unique opportunity to have a long-term impact on the Philadelphia region. Preserving the lake will conserve vital habitat for future generations of wildlife. Creating the Center will connect future generations of people with the environment, motivate them to engage in healthy outdoor activities, and inspire them to value and protect the natural world.

Site View Prepared by CVM Engineers



A targeted view of the proposed site for the new Center depicts the adjacent Strawberry Mansion community, public attractions and nearby schools.

The site's proximity to regional resources in East Park and along the Schuylkill River, plus ease of access via Kelly Drive and public transit, offer the potential to draw visitors to the Center from Philadelphia and beyond.

Conceptual drawing by SMP Architects



The proposed building site at the water's edge 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.