



Riverwalk as a Social Gateway to the Urban Core

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Abstract.

The aim of my paper is to evaluate the social effects of having a physical gateway between Binghamton University and Downtown Binghamton via the Riverwalk, a public space. The physical gateway would serve as a means to better connect the University with the community and all of the resources Downtown Binghamton and Binghamton University have to offer. Awareness of the restaurants, parks, and other businesses already existing in the City and at the University would increase and be more accessible.

Keywords: Riverwalk, Sense of Place, Quality of Life, Social Interaction, Amenities, Urban Core, Public Space

Binghamton Keywords: Susquehanna Heritage Area Management

I. INTRODUCTION

A public space by definition is any place where anyone has the right to come without being excluded because of economic or social conditions. A public space cannot prohibit one from entering by enforcing fees, having an admission price, or anything else that would discourage the poor through economical means. A public space cannot exclude one based on their age, sexual orientation, religion, and race or by any other social means. However, public spaces can have restrictions if they do not

exclude any particular group. An example is that many public spaces restrict access at night. Examples of different types of public spaces include most streets, town squares, and parks. Public spaces are defined by their social nature. As the word “public” pertains to a group of people, naturally social interaction is well facilitated in many public spaces. A growing trend in public spaces over the past century has been in revitalizing local waterfronts. As people are recognizing the natural beauty and natural amenities of waterfront space, many communities are aiming toward converting them to public areas for recreation. Binghamton, New York is no exception. When describing the natural landscape of Binghamton, the primary focus is on its unique quality of the confluence of two rivers: The Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers. It only makes sense to capitalize on our area’s most recognizable features and use it in a responsible way to benefit all.

Riverwalks provide an array of benefits. Not only do they provide a healthy route of transportation and promote walking and biking, but they serve as a social outlet. Currently, many cities including Binghamton rely on large part to the automobile as a means of getting around. This not only is harmful to the environment, but it detracts from our health and our social well being. Our social well being is limited as automobiles, the primary means of getting around, does not allow for as much social interaction as other modes of transportation. As we look to bridge the gap between not only community members and Binghamton University students, but downtown Binghamton and Binghamton University, a proposed riverwalk would potentially unite all while creating a “sense of place” and raising quality of life. Riverwalks connect people and places to enhance the beauty of the area.

II. Riverwalks Provide Social Opportunities

Riverwalks allow for people to meet new people. They serve as an incentive to get people out of the house. With riverwalks, opportunities to become more involved in the community by means of cleanups and tree plantings are established. Riverwalks create tourism and awareness of existing buildings and businesses. They also provide recreational opportunities in the form of boat launches, fishing, festivals, parades, concerts, Farmer’s markets and allow for educational opportunities.

A physical gateway between the University and downtown Binghamton is becoming more important as student residence is increasing in the downtown area. Binghamton is currently in various phases of developing three major housing developments right in the heart of its downtown area. They include: the 20 Hawley Street luxury student housing, luxury housing at the former Midtown Mall location (Court St) which will consist of both student and non-student options for young professionals, and the Twin River Commons housing complex adjacent to the University Downtown Center and Confluence Park (Washington St.). Due to this upcoming influx of residents residing within downtown Binghamton an alternative means of transportation is necessary. The development of a riverwalk to campus would improve the quality of life for those in the area and attract more people to the city.

Drawing from the idea of Binghamton’s Design Your Own Park Competition, the riverwalk connecting Binghamton University and Downtown Binghamton can become a

source of pride in their community. It would also foster a sense of involvement and community. Creating a riverwalk between the University and the downtown would facilitate interaction between groups of people with common interests and principles. David Sloan Wilson and Peter Gray in “The Science Behind the Scenes of Binghamton’s Design Your Own Park Competition,” advocate for the importance of creating aesthetically pleasing public spaces in order to achieve a variety of benefits including social health stemming from social identity and a better quality of life. Sloan Wilson and Gray argue that,

[t]here is a tendency to regard aesthetics, or the appreciation of beauty, as more superficial and dispensable than bread-and-butter issues such as education, jobs, and crime” but that creating an “aesthetically pleasing park... is arguably the most cost-effective way to improve quality of life and can even address many bread-and-butter issues... (Sloan Wilson and Gray 4).

Figure one, (below) is a drawing submitted for Binghamton’s Design Your Own Park Competition. It is a culmination of ideas by the neighborhood for a park that adheres to all ages. The drawing below was drawn by Rusty Keeler, an Ithaca based artist and designer. This is a prime example of a park or public space that can facilitate social interaction among community members and help residents and students foster a greater understanding of one another.



Figure 1: Drawing for Binghamton’s first Design Your Own Park Competition. It will be called “Sunflower Park” and will be the first to be developed from the competition.

Riverwalks create open space for people of all ages to enjoy. It is important to have a variety of age groups in order to see the greatest benefit of social interaction. As riverwalks do cater to all age groups it is important to evaluate how they provide social benefits to people young and old. The beauty of riverwalks and other public spaces is that they allow for free play. People of all ages have the ability to indulge in the natural beauty and to develop their own means of enjoying the environment within the public space. Public spaces provide for areas where mixed aged groups can interact. We learn through our interaction with others. Sloan Wilson and Gray maintain that the behavior of children is reflective as well: "The younger kids want to be like older kids and older kids want to be adults". They also maintain: "Most learning takes place in the context of self-motivated practice and play" (Sloan Wilson and Gray 4; Gray, 2009; Hewlett & Lamb,2005). Children can learn through free play provided by public parks and places such as riverwalks, by acquiring "valuable cultural and social skills, including, especially, skills in getting along with one another, negotiating differences, abiding by agreed-upon rules, overcoming impulsiveness, and following through on self-generated plans" (Sloan Wilson and Gray 4). "Evidence... points to a causal link between the decline in free social play and the declines in the mental and physical health of young people" (Sloan Wilson and Gray 4). This can be addressed, "By providing a safe environment for unstructured play in mixed-age groups, neighborhood parks can become part of the solution for a bread-and-butter issue such as education" (Sloan Wilson and Gray 5). It is clear from this research that public spaces such as riverwalks are largely beneficial in not just providing pleasant recreation and enjoyment, but in facilitating social interaction among a diverse range of age groups, which is pivotal in learning social standards and social understanding. Riverwalks provide an outlet where young people can learn acceptable public behavior from older generations and older generations can enjoy satisfaction from instilling their knowledge and humility.

To regard leisure time as less significant than taking care of work is a mistake, just as it is an error to view beautiful surroundings as less significant than perceived serious issues. Sloan Wilson and Gray believe, "To the extent that a neighborhood park provides a place for adults to relax, reflect, and get together, it will enable them to "broaden and build" their personal qualities and relationships with each other in pursuit of long term goals." Social interaction is at the very root of a 'sense of place'. Drawing people together in environments where they are free to enjoy themselves in an unstructured manner, but also in a common area, helps to identify a community through establishing an identity. Riverwalks help identify an area as they serve as a main draw of recreation. As Binghamton is already recognized by the confluence of its two rivers, its riverwalk can work toward maintaining a 'sense of place'. In order to create a 'sense of place' people within the area need to interact as collective attitudes and perceptions of an area define it. While it does not have to pertain to a specific geographical location it most certainly can. What is important is that members of an area have similar perceptions and attitudes associated with a given entity. Often, a 'sense of place' is in relation to a unique attribute or to characteristics that hold a special attachment or belonging. Without interaction among the community it is difficult to establish similarly held perceptions that bring a 'sense of place'. Since, riverwalks

provide opportunities for positive social interaction; they can help establish a 'sense of place.'

In today's world we are seeing more and more people spending their time by playing video games, watching television, and surfing the internet. In "An Exploration of the Meaning of Parks in Oklahoma," from the Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, the authors evaluate what parks mean to individuals. They created an essay writing contest that asked participants to write original essays based on the theme of, "What a Park Means to Me." Over 250 people responded and they evaluated 75 responses from a diverse range of participants. The authors found that they could separate the responses into two broad themes: personal and social meanings. Personal meanings were expressed through concepts of beauty, escape, relaxations, learning, and pride and respect. Social meanings in the essays conformed around social togetherness. Social togetherness was evident in the essay through the antecedents such as, food, natural features, amenities, and activities. Both personal and social meanings were combined through the theme of memory making. Through personal and social experiences that people have with physical environments and social interactions, meaningful memories are often created and valued. However, these considerations are often underestimated and overlooked when determining land-use and value. Riverwalks, as parks, create feasible opportunities for individuals to develop meaningful memories and improve their quality of life.

III. Riverwalk as a Means to Increase Awareness

The riverwalk serves as a valuable means of increasing awareness of what activities and businesses are already located downtown. A major issue concerning student activity in the community is the lack of awareness of existing businesses, programs, amenities, and opportunities. Binghamton University's location in a suburban area away from much of the activity restricts students to campus. This is compounded by the fact that freshman students cannot have cars on campus. The combination of living on a suburban campus and having a limited means of transportation discourages students from exploring the surrounding community. A student's freshman year of college sets the stage for their remaining time in the area. With a limited exposure to the community, perceptions, often negative, infiltrate the incoming student body. The riverwalk would help mend these issues as it would be a known transportation route directly to the hub of activity in downtown Binghamton.

Multiple points of egress can be defined as numerous areas where one can go in or go out. Social function may be defined as a vaguely specified social event. Riverwalks with multiple points of egress allow for a greater social function. Allowing for a greater number of points of egress encourages more residents to use the riverwalk as it becomes easier to access it. If a riverwalk is limited in its access points it becomes much more difficult for people to gain admittance to the public space, and therefore discourages them into not using it. In relation to a riverwalk, this would permit several entry areas that would allow people onto the riverwalk. Having multiple points of egress for a riverwalk would serve a greater social function as they would act as common linkages to the trail. Having several access points to the riverwalk allows for a greater

flow on and off the trail and gives users more of an option as to where they want to enter and exit the riverwalk, which makes its use more appealing and inviting. It also entertains a greater connection between the riverwalk and the surrounding community as exit points would lead directly to the areas amenities and attractions. Having multiple points of egress makes access to additional resources and amenities easier and more engaging.

Having numerous access points allow for greater flow entering and exiting a riverwalk. However, aiming to increase public awareness of existing resources and amenities is important and directing flow to such attractions is essential. The journal article, "Multiple Case Studies of the Influence of Land-Use Type on the Distribution of Uses along Urban River Greenways" by Christopher Coutts, Ph.D., provides insight as to general distance trends that facilitate high usage of greenways. Coutts studied the influences of land-use types on the level of use of greenways for physical activity. The study reveals that greenway sections that have the heaviest usage are on segments that are adjacent to areas with distinct land-use characteristics. Coutts also finds that heavy usage is found on segments that intersect parks and on greenway segments in downtown localities that have a concentration of mixed land uses. Segments that connect parks or areas of interest with the downtown area also have significant usage as long as the two areas are relatively close. Coutts uses an example in his work where a greenway in Lansing, Michigan runs along the Red Cedar River. He breaks the greenway up into segments based on access points to evaluate which areas are used the most. The greenway segments connecting the downtown area of Lansing with a park area containing several amenities was found to have the most usage. This is of significance as it is determined that the areas are relatively close at a distance of 2.2 miles. An estimated distance of a potential riverwalk connecting Binghamton University with downtown Binghamton, from the south end of the Washington St Bridge (Pedestrian Bridge) to the pedestrian bridge near Murray Hill Road that crosses Fuller Hollow Creek is 2.8 miles. Therefore, the two areas of interest are within relatively close range of each other. This is important in that it can be expected that distance will most certainly not be much of a deterrent in limiting usage of the riverwalk expansion. Coutts emphasizes the importance of short distances between areas of interest in ensuring high use levels of a greenway. Having high usage levels of the greenway will inevitably lead to greater public awareness of existing resources that downtown Binghamton and Binghamton University have to offer.

A. Susquehanna Heritage Area Management Program

As a riverwalk is an example of a public space, the Susquehanna Heritage Area Management Program is a local example of where public space has increased awareness of existing resources and amenities and has encouraged interaction among different people. "The New York State Heritage Area Program, originally called the Urban Cultural Park Program, was created by state legislation in 1982 with the goal of advancing preservation, recreation, interpretation, and economic development." In coherence with the New York State Heritage Area Program, the Susquehanna Heritage Area Commission has set goals to "use the historic, cultural and natural resources of Broome and Tioga Counties to strengthen regional identity, enhance local

quality-of-life, support the local economy, and promote stewardship” (Bergmann). Specifically, the Susquehanna Heritage Area Commission’s goals and objectives include: creating “enhanced access, usage, and recreational opportunities along the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers” and continuing “improvements and enhancements to multi-use trails, promenades, plazas, parks, streetscapes, and other pedestrian-oriented spaces within the Heritage Area (Bergmann). It is clear that part of the Susquehanna Heritage Area Management Program aims to connect this area’s resources via roads and multi-modal trails. One such example is the Confluence Park & River Trail Projects in Binghamton which amounted to \$440,000 which was funded by grant funding through their Heritage Area designation.

B. Schuylkill River Valley

A great example of an area that has utilized linkages between heritage areas in improving quality of life is the Schuylkill River Valley. They have established the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Its aim is to revitalize the area which, similarly to Binghamton, has seen losses due to the exportation of manufacturing jobs out of the area. Their emphasis is in improving quality of life by connecting amenities that are prevalent throughout the valley. The guiding mission of the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area is “[to] conserve, interpret and develop the historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources related to the industrial and cultural heritage of the Schuylkill River Valley” (Adam 9). Specific goals and objectives established from the *Final Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (final Management Plan or Plan)* as produced by the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area include: “Advocate sustainable land use, open space and greenway planning and preservation related to the Schuylkill River Valley’s cultural and natural landscapes, connect heritage sites and resources through interpretive themes and products, complete development of the Schuylkill River trail system, including connection to tributary trails, and Develop physical and programmatic linkages between heritage area destinations to assist visitors in experiencing the Schuylkill River Valley’s diverse resources” (Adam 10). Rivers are important in order to revitalize and reconnect communities and are central to the success of many heritage areas. Another facet of physical linkages between hubs of resources such as riverwalks is the creation of a sense of stewardship, “[b]y linking the river valley’s story to the residents that live within it, the primary users of the valley will gain a deeper sense of ownership in its future” (Adam 29). Collective ownership as a source of pride among residents fosters social linkages and better interaction. It is important for those of a community to know what resources are in their immediate area, “[t]his helps to provide residents with a richer living experience as well as instill pride in the community in which they live” (Adam 50). Everyone has different factors and characteristics that they take into account when determining their own quality of life. However, it is apparent that when investigating what constitutes quality of life indicators a distinct theme arises: identity or sense of place. “Construction of the trail has significantly improved the quality of life of Heritage Area residents” (Adam 53).

These examples of successful heritage area management plans show that a riverwalk between Downtown Binghamton and Binghamton University would be full of

benefits. The Susquehanna Heritage Area Management Plan and the Final Management plan produced by the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area both outline the importance of linking resources and heritage areas together in order to improve quality of life and create a sense of place. Downtown Binghamton is a hub of resources containing restaurants, parks, a vibrant art scene, and other useful businesses. Likewise, Binghamton University contains entertainment in its division I athletics, conferences, and its many musical and art performances. Linking the two areas via a riverwalk would not only connect two prominent hubs of activity, but would also connect residents of the community with Binghamton University students.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

A multi-modal riverwalk connecting downtown Binghamton with Binghamton University would be a huge asset to this community. According to the **Downtown Binghamton Revitalization- Student Survey**, of the 329 people who responded to the survey question asking respondents to select up to three community assets that they would use if developed, the walking trail/ river trail made up 55.3% of the vote. The walking trail/ river trail made up the highest percentage of selections. It was 16.1% higher than the next highest: expanded parks/ greenspace (Downtown 10). However, in order for the riverwalk to be successful it is important to utilize as many assets as possible. Simply constructing a pathway between Binghamton University and downtown Binghamton is not going to provide for the most productive use of space. It is important to take into account a number of considerations when constructing a waterfront public space. As the aim of the riverwalk is to spur interaction between community members and Binghamton University students and to bring about awareness of the local resources and amenities that this area has to offer, it is important to not simply construct a riverwalk as a physical gateway but to facilitate usage of it by diversifying its appeal by bringing about various recreational and engaging activities and attractions. Across the country it has been shown that while public spaces and greenways have large benefits in a number of community facets, they vary in their success due to a number of different factors. Simply constructing any public trail will not necessarily achieve the benefits that a community wants to see realized. Figure 2, below, shows the area between Binghamton University and downtown Binghamton. The green line is where an approximate possibility of a riverwalk could be constructed. The riverwalk would be adjacent to route 434.

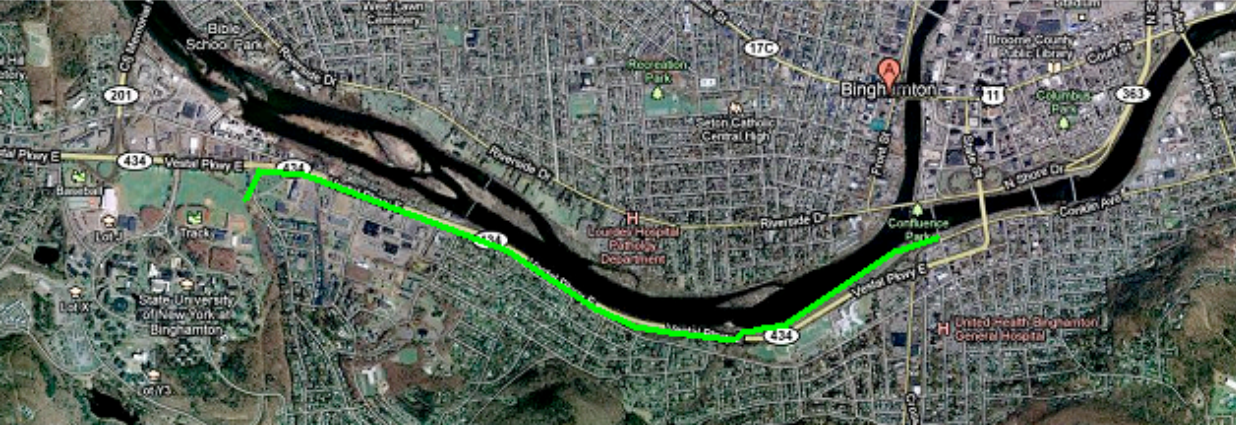


Figure 2: Aerial map showing the area between Binghamton University and downtown Binghamton. The green line shows an approximate possibility of where a riverwalk could be constructed. (Photo Credit: Google Maps)

The **Project For Public Spaces** identifies 10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination. The 10 qualities include:

1. Surrounding buildings enhance space,
2. Limits are placed on residential developments,
3. Activities go on round the clock throughout the year,
4. Flexible design fosters adaptability,
5. Creative amenities boost everyone's enjoyment,
6. Access made easy by boat, bike, and foot,
7. Local identity is showcased,
8. The water itself draws attention,
9. Iconic buildings serve a variety of functions,
10. Good management maintains community vision (10 Qualities).

Of these qualities it is understood that as it pertains specifically to a riverwalk connecting Binghamton University and downtown Binghamton it may be very difficult or unlikely to attribute all of them to the specific location. However, as these qualities apply to a waterfront as a whole, those that are not the most suitable to the area linking the two hubs may be focused elsewhere along the existing riverwalk or future developments. Taking these qualities in mind it is best to implement them as much and as best as possible in order to develop a more complete and fluid public space. The quality of developing a waterfront that has activities that goes on round the clock throughout the year is especially important. This is particularly crucial for a riverwalk connecting Binghamton University and downtown Binghamton as Binghamton University is home to thousands of on-campus students that are only in the area for part of the year. Unfortunately, these students' inhabitation also comes in large part when the weather is not the most conducive to outdoor activity as the spring semester lets out for summer break. Currently, many of the City of Binghamton's most sought after events take place during the summer when students are back in their respective towns such as: the Speidie Fest, the July Fest, and the Chris Thater Memorial Bike

Race, among several others. Since, thousands of students are located at one of the two hubs that would be connected through this riverwalk it is important to cater to their needs as well as the community residents whom are here year round. Therefore, different activities and events should be scheduled during the school year so that students can partake. Also, people enjoy hanging out by water at night. Therefore, it will be essential to create an environment with appropriate lighting and features in order to ensure an atmosphere that feels safe and welcoming at night. A great example of a special event that Binghamton could potentially emulate is Waterfire. Providence, Rhode Island's award winning event centers on approximately 100 bonfires that blaze just above the surface of three rivers that passes through the middle of downtown. Residents and visitors gather along the river, listening to live music and performances. The event has boat rides that stroll casually before the flames along with black-clad performers who tend the fires from sunset to midnight. Waterfires in Providence typically run twice a month on Saturday evenings from May until October (Waterfire). Figure 3 shows the success of Waterfire in Providence, Rhode Island, in attracting residents .



Figure 3: Providence, Rhode Island's Waterfire.

Another quality that is important to a riverwalk is having a flexible design that fosters adaptability. The riverwalk must be able to adapt to the changes that bring different users at different times. Again, as many Binghamton University students are in the area during only a portion of the year, the design of the riverwalk connecting Binghamton University and downtown Binghamton should be flexible enough to accommodate the inevitable fluctuation of population. It is important to be able to layer different uses of public land. Creating permanent fixtures could pose problems as they may be suitable for summer months and disrupt effective use in winter months. Also, having on-site storage for items such as movable chairs, umbrellas, tables, and games so that they can be used on a moment's whim would help add to the riverwalk's flexibility and enable and encourage mix usage (10 Qualities). Another crucial quality of successful waterfront public spaces is creative amenities that boost everyone's enjoyment. Simply adding elements that make a riverwalk more comfortable makes a world of difference. Placing a bench or waste receptacle in just the right locations makes quite a difference in how people choose to use a place (10 Qualities). Again lighting plays a big role in attracting people to places, activities, entranceways, and pathways. Amenities that should be implemented to Binghamton's riverwalk include public art displays, fishing ports, markets including farmer's markets or any other suitable kind, and any other amenity that would encourage social interaction or

enjoyment.

Another key quality to successful waterfronts is access to them made easy by boat, bike, and foot (10 Qualities). When people are dependent on an automobile to access riverwalks, it creates an overwhelming environment which detracts people from using it. As is mentioned earlier in this paper, it is important to have multiple points of egress in order to maximize accessibility and facilitate the most usage and social interaction. Another facet of maximizing accessibility of the riverwalk is to not only support pedestrian access and usage but to support other means of transportation such as bicycling, skateboarding, rollerblading, or other non obtrusive means. Not only should access to the riverwalk be conducive to these forms of transportation but the riverwalk itself should be as well. Having a multi-modal riverwalk is essential, as it allows for a broad range of interests which attract the most people. There are numerous ways to encourage different forms of transportation. Binghamton could implement a bike sharing or rental system. Capital Bike Share is increasingly popular in cities such as Washington D.C. Also, encouraging other businesses that cater to public spaces would also spur greater success. Segway rentals would be an exciting way to bring about a unique opportunity for the area. As segways are not the most commonplace, they would attract people who want to try something a bit different. There are many other means of transportation that Binghamton could incentivize people to use on the riverwalk. This would bring healthy and recreational activity that would encourage social interaction.

Another quality that Binghamton should definitely utilize is making sure local identity is showcased (10 Qualities). Binghamton has a unique and proud history that the area can rally around. However, not everyone is aware of just how influential and innovative this area has been. As Binghamton University students come to the area, many are unaware of Binghamton's rich history. Providing exhibits and showcases that educate those on the riverwalk would bring about a better understanding of the area and its people. This would stimulate more positive thoughts and beliefs about this area as a whole. This can be done in a number of ways. Expanding the current River Crawl and utilizing educational exhibits and presentations along the riverwalk would do much to add meaning to the riverwalk. In doing so Binghamton should not just reveal past history but aim to recognizing local identity by showcasing local art, music, theater, and other creative and unique avenues. As the proposal is for a riverwalk connecting Binghamton University and downtown Binghamton, it is essential that the river itself draws attention. Binghamton is somewhat unique in having two rivers converge. This creates for beautiful scenery that naturally attracts people toward it. It is only normal to make the most of such a beautiful attraction. As the river is the greatest asset, it should become the centerpiece of programming and activities (10 Qualities). Different water related activities are developing a fishing port, kayaking, boat launches, rock skipping, floating pools, among others. Not only do these activities attract people to the waterfront they create interest among onlookers. The river can lead to many activities as, "Embracing the natural uses of a waterfront leads to thematic programming such as boat festivals, fish markets, bait and tackle shops, and performances on floating stages" (10 Qualities). However, due to the limitations of the current infrastructure between downtown Binghamton and Binghamton University, it will be very difficult to maintain constant access to the riverfront. Therefore, Binghamton should look into

other water entertainment such as fountains, spray play areas, and swimming pools. Whatever is done to facilitate activity and usage of the riverwalk, it should develop a diverse and flexible range of activities, events, festivals, concerts and others. By diversifying the riverwalks appeal and usage, more people will be prone to using it. Different event and activity ideas for the riverwalk could include: fireworks displays, parades, holding festivals, and concerts. Looking at the land between downtown Binghamton and Binghamton University and the problems that route 434 poses, utilizing any space would be of a huge advantage. Specifically, implementing MacArthur Park into design ideas would be beneficial. As MacArthur Park opens public space up, it would be a great location to hold concerts, festivals, and other spontaneous celebrations and high-energy gatherings. Combining this space with quick and easy access to the riverwalk would encourage activity in both spaces. The riverwalk could connect to MacArthur Park with either a tunnel or bridge over the Vestal Parkway. However, the more access to the riverwalk from MacArthur Park the better.

In order to have a successful riverwalk work must start somewhere. It may be unrealistic to expect instantaneous and dramatic results. Starting small in the form of tree and flower plantings are a great way to start. Starting small with projects such as these, are great ways to spread awareness, and to bring people together in a productive manner. Creating an interest early in the process helps to build momentum for bigger and more creative solutions as it gives people the confidence that change is happening and that their ideas hold weight in the community.

An attribute of public space that has struck me as quite interesting, I learned while at an Asian garden in Vancouver, Canada. The woman leading our tour pointed out that all of the pathways were curved, so as to never be a straight shot from destination to destination. She explained the bends in the pathway were intentional because this subtle technique forces those walking on it to slow down and to take in the surrounding. As one has to pay attention to where they are walking they cannot speed through it and miss the scenic surroundings. Recently, when I was in Tampa, Florida I paid a visit to its developing riverwalk and noticed that throughout pretty much the entire section I was on, it was a winding walkway. This forced me to slow down and to take in my surroundings. Therefore, when constructing the riverwalk between downtown Binghamton and Binghamton University I think it would be a wise idea to construct it using subtle techniques to slow people down without inhibiting their ability to move. This could be done by winding the walkway or by cutting its path around various attractions.

It is important to recognize that the riverwalk is a major attraction in the community. Its popularity would only grow with smart implementation measures and creative programming. Not only do riverwalks facilitate more healthy lifestyles and are more environmentally sensitive, they serve as important locations for social interaction and health while inducing greater awareness of existing resources of an area. It is crucial for Binghamton to take advantage of its concentrated downtown, large student population, and its natural beauty. Creating safe, mutually beneficial public spaces can work to not only create a sense of place and a better quality of life by bringing the community together for enjoyment and recreation, but also by facilitating an environment that can help solve pressing bread-and-butter issues. By recognizing the riverwalks full potential we can see its importance stretches further than leisure and

amusement and that it can help drive the way for making Binghamton the thriving place we know it can be.

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