

A patch of The Park is unveiled in King of Prussia

By [Gary Puleo](#), The Times Herald

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This stretch of sidewalks and grass that is much longer than it is wide is billed as a one-of-a kind recreational amenity for King of Prussia workers that transforms private commercial lawns into a close-knit playground of sorts for walking, running or just hanging out on a crisp fall afternoon.

A finished first-phase, 450-foot patch of The Park, which is officially defined as a linear park, was showcased on Wednesday to a small crowd that included King of Prussia District (KOP-BID) Executive Director Eric Goldstein; Valerie Arkoosh, chairwoman of the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners; Bill Jenaway, chairman of the Upper Merion Township Board of Supervisors; Aliyah Furman Stanger, southeast regional director, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and Jeff DeVuono, executive vice president and senior managing director, Brandywine Realty Trust.

Although the Park, a collaboration between the nonprofit business advocacy group KOP-BID, Upper Merion Township, PennDOT and many private property owners, will take years to complete, Goldstein was not only looking down the road on Wednesday, but thinking back to how this whole concept about putting unused space to work started.

“The idea started back in 2013 when we were working with the township in rezoning the business park,” recalled Goldstein, standing in front of 650 Park Avenue, in the heart of the King of Prussia Business Park, where the small “demonstration” that hinted of the larger outcome was taking place.

“It occurred to us that the first 50 feet of space between the roadway and the building was a required setback. When we were looking at that 50 feet of space we noticed that some property owners didn’t have any sidewalks, just a lot just had grass. One of our board of directors said, ‘Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we were able to link all of these property owners together with a multiuse recreational trail that would connect every property in that 50 feet that developers can’t use anyway?’ So that was the beginning of the idea.”

As guests enjoyed live music by Swift Technique and culinary specialties from b.good and del Valle food trucks, Goldstein explained that The Park, which will include multiuse sidewalks, lush landscaping, pedestrian lighting, active workstations, recreational games, benches and trash receptacles, would make the business park more pedestrian friendly and enliven the space.

“It will give us the ability of having people out here using tables and chairs and having entertainment and doing things instead of just being in their offices all day long. Today we’re showing a very small section of what will eventually be a linear park that will connect every property owner on First Avenue, from North Gulph Road to Allendale Road. I also refer to it as a multiuse recreational trail,” he added, “because the funding we received is from the state and we’re building the path in such a way that it’s not just a sidewalk but is actually conducive for bicycles, joggers and pedestrians.”

Phase one consisted of the sidewalks and lawns that begin at Valley Forge Casino and stretch down to American Avenue for more than a mile on both sides of the road, Goldstein noted.

“We won’t even start construction on the rest of the park until next spring. Right now we’re in the final design stage. It will probably take a year to finish the first phase and then we still have a couple of million dollars we need to raise to get us out to Allendale Road,” Goldstein said. “We have a long way to go.”

The project had been problematic for a number of reasons, he allowed.

“This is a difficult thing we’re trying to do here because we’re attempting to build a public park on private property, that’s the difficulty of the entire linear park,” Goldstein said. “And we’re doing it through active easement agreements, through the generosity of all of these property owners, 29 on First Avenue alone. We need to get them all to voluntarily work with us to build this thing and allow the public to use this space. It’s a lot of lawyers.”

The Park’s demonstration project was funded partly by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Commonwealth Financing Authority, provided through Upper Merion Township and managed by KOP-BID, along with matching funds from Brandywine Realty Trust and KOP-BID.

“The Park is the perfect example of a public/private partnership working together to create and fund attractive and vibrant amenities for the entire community to enjoy,” Jenaway said.

Arkoosh, a former physician, noted that the park embraced her philosophy promoting health and wellness.

“How easy it will be to walk out of any of these buildings at lunchtime or on a quick break and take a short walk, make some new friends. Everything about it makes it easy to make a healthy choice. We couldn’t be more excited about this very innovative and forward-looking use of space.”

Standard business lawns notwithstanding, the park will make being outdoors even better, she suggested.

“Grass is great, we like that, but how much better to have it be a place where people are actively running, biking or just sitting and talking,” Arkoosh said.