



HIGH LINE HISTORY + FHL MILESTONES

1847 : The City of New York authorizes street-level railroad tracks down Manhattan's West Side.

1851 – 1929 : So many accidents occur between freight trains and street-level traffic that 10th Avenue becomes known as Death Avenue. For safety, men on horses, called the West Side Cowboys, ride in front of trains waving red flags.

1929 : After years of public debate about the hazard, the City and State of New York and the New York Central Railroad agree on the West Side Improvement Project, which includes the High Line. The entire project is 13 miles long, eliminates 105 street-level railroad crossings, and adds 32 acres to Riverside Park. It costs over \$150 million in 1930 dollars—more than \$2 billion today.

1934 : The High Line opens to trains. It runs from 35th Street to St. John's Park Terminal, at Spring Street. It is designed to go through the center of blocks, rather than over the avenue, to avoid creating the negative conditions associated with elevated subways. It connects directly to factories and warehouses, allowing trains to roll right inside buildings. Milk, meat, produce, and raw and manufactured goods come and go without causing street-level traffic.

1950s : Growth of interstate trucking leads to a drop in rail traffic, nationally and on the High Line.

1960s : The southernmost section of the High Line is demolished.

1980 : The last train runs on the High Line pulling three carloads of frozen turkeys.

Mid-1980s : A group of property owners lobby for demolition of the entire structure. Members of this group own land under the High Line that was purchased at prices reflecting the High Line's easement. Peter Oblatz, a Chelsea resident, activist, and railroad enthusiast, challenges demolition efforts in court and tries to reestablish rail service on the Line.

1999 : Friends of the High Line (FHL) is founded by Joshua David and Robert Hammond to advocate for the High Line's preservation and reuse as public open space.

March 2002 : FHL wins lawsuit challenging the City's participation in demolition proposal.

October 2002 : An FHL study finds that the High Line project is economically rational: New tax revenues created by the public space will be greater than the costs of construction.

December 2002: The City files with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) for railbanking, making it City policy to preserve and reuse the High Line.

January – July 2003: Designing the High Line competition solicits proposals for the High Line's reuse. 720 teams from 36 countries enter. Hundreds are displayed at Grand Central Terminal, and viewed by over 100,000 people. To view all 720 online: www.thehighline.org/competition

July 2003: FHL and the City jointly testify with the City before the Surface Transportation Board (STB) in support of High Line reuse.

March – September 2004: FHL and the City of New York conduct a process to select a design team for the High Line. The selected team is led by Field Operations, a landscape architecture firm, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, an architecture firm, and experts in horticulture, engineering, security, maintenance, public art, and other disciplines.

September 2004: The State of New York, CSX Transportation, Inc. (the railroad), and the City of New York jointly file with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to rail-bank the High Line.

April 2005: An exhibition showcasing preliminary design images from Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro opens at the Museum of Modern art. The designs, also featured on a new interactive Web site, (www.thehighline.org/design) receive widespread critical acclaim.

June 2005: The Surface Transportation Board issues a Certificate of Interim Trail Use for the High Line, authorizing the City and railroad to conclude railbanking negotiations.

November 2005: The City takes ownership of the High Line from CSX Transportation (which donated the structure), and the City and CSX sign a Trail Use Agreement. Taken together, these two actions effectively railbank the High Line south of 30th Street.

April 2006: Groundbreaking is celebrated on the High Line with the lifting of a rail track.

April 2006: Construction begins on Section 1 (Gansevoort – 20th Street). Tracks, ballast, and debris are removed, and the tracks are mapped, tagged, and stored (some will be reinstalled in the park landscape). This is followed sandblasting of steel, repairs to concrete and drainage systems, and installation of pigeon deterrents underneath the Line.

For further information please visit www.thehighline.org