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11th Street Bridge Park Unveils Plans for “Mussel Beach” Play Area

OLIN landscape architects and Studio Ludo play consultants tie play area design to ecological restoration efforts in the Anacostia River

Washington, D.C. – Today, [the 11th Street Bridge Park](#) – a partnership between the local non-profit Building Bridges Across the River (Building Bridges) and the District government – unveiled plans for the [interactive “Mussel Beach” play area](#) by landscape architects OLIN and play consultants from Studio Ludo. Given the proximity of the play area to the park’s Environmental Education Center and the Anacostia Watershed Society’s work to repopulate thousands of mussels within the Anacostia River improving river water quality, the play area will feature sculptural mussels, sea grass climbers, water sounds, and slides.

“Our team is thrilled to design an interactive play area as part of the park’s overall plan in response to the community’s desire for places where families can gather and enjoy the outdoors,” said Hallie Boyce, Partner at OLIN. “Celebrating the mussel restoration program we felt was a meaningful way to teach children about river ecology and its connection to community health, while encouraging the next generation of river stewards for the Anacostia.”

In 2014, the Anacostia Watershed Society conducted a pilot project to re-install native mussels into the river to pull out toxins and enhance the removal of nitrogen – a primary nutrient fouling the river. An adult freshwater mussel can filter 10-20 gallons of water a day. At 10 gallons a day, that is the equivalent of filtering 50 Olympic-sized swimming pools in a year.

“It’s an honor to bring to life this thoughtful space for learning and play that ties in elements key to the history and future of the Anacostia River,” Meghan Talarowski, Founder and Executive Director at Studio Ludo said. “The play area will encourage children and their caregivers to connect with the Anacostia River and residents of both sides of the river.”

Adjacent to the future Environmental Education Center, the play area will round out DC schoolchildren’s visit touring the center, rowing on the river and learning about the importance of native plants along the river banks for generations to come.

“With its nationally-recognized approach to equitable and inclusive development, the 11th Street Bridge Park will be a new venue for environmental education and the arts,” said Scott Kratz, Senior Vice President at Building Bridges Across the River. “Mussel Beach will create an inter-generational play area that represents the Bridge Park’s core mission: to connect long-divided neighborhoods and provide a new venue for healthy recreation.”

Design for the 11th Street Bridge Park began in October 2014 after a seven-month competition to create the vision for the project, from which the design team of OMA+OLIN was selected. The Bridge Park also drew on an extensive community outreach and a consultative process, anchored by more than 1,000 stakeholder meetings for design, development and impact. Pre-construction began in 2016 and the Park is expected to open by early 2025.

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About the 11th Street Bridge Park

11th Street Bridge Park, a partnership between the District Department of Transportation and the Ward 8 non-profit Building Bridges Across the River, will be Washington, D.C.'s first elevated public park. Located on the piers of the old 11th Street Bridge, this venue will be a space for healthy recreation, environmental education, and the arts and has been implementing community-driven equitable development strategies since 2016. The project works with community and local partners to invest in the residents and neighborhoods surrounding the Park with various initiatives and support programs. To learn more about 11th Street Bridge Park and receive updates on its design, please visit [here](#).