Aspinwall Riverfront Park, situated along the Allegheny River, is operated by Aspinwall Riverfront Park Inc. Aspinwall Riverfront Park was transformed from a brownfield site and marina. The location of the park was originally sold for commercial development, but was saved for public open space by over 2,500 people and several foundations and businesses. The park was the recipient of the 2017 ULI Pittsburgh Placemaking Healthy Place Award and the 2017 APA Great Place Award.

Project Overview

The park is designed into 3 distinctive spaces: East Park, Middle Park, and West Park. Their park theme is “Rain Drops to River” and it encompasses the how water shapes everyday lives and has become a philosophical foundation that drives park programming and operations. The park is in memory of Charles R. Burke, a devoted citizen of Pittsburgh and to the Aspinwall Community.

Sustainable Practices

**Water** – The main theme of Aspinwall Riverfront Park is water. Wetlands were created to capture run-off and rain gardens, bio-swales, and porous asphalt were all used to infiltrate storm water in areas outside of the wetland area. There is also public access to the river via the park and the riverbank was replanted which helps with erosion and water quality of the river.

**Natural Landscaping** – The 10-acre park was originally covered in invasive species with little natural landscaping. One of the main goals for the park was to improve the site’s biodiversity and habitat. Grasslands, glades, and groves were created and has attracted many different fauna species. The landscape mimics natural succession with the grasses, perennials, shrubs, and small trees. These areas are maintained through local garden clubs and other organizations.

**Materials Selection and Construction** – The materials used for the park reflect the area’s industrial character and highlights the relationship to the waterfront. Since the site was mostly privately funded, there was a limited budget. Sandstone from an adjacent scrapyard was sources to use as a barrier to the river’s edge. Galvanized metal, limestone trails, and sandstone were used to stand up to heavy public use. Recycled concrete was used in the construction of the trail and the amphitheater hill. River rock for gabions were locally sourced from the Allegheny Valley.

**Connect People to Nature** – Aspinwall Riverfront Park offers a local open space and leisure destination for community members as well as a regional draw. The park is a safe place for biking and walking. The park was designed to help teach visitors about the cycle of water throughout the landscape. The welcome center hosts many classes and events.

**Operations and Maintenance** – Site materials and landscaping were carefully chosen to meet the capacity for maintenance now and in the future. Materials were selected to be resilient and require extremely low maintenance. The use of native plants that are adapted to the environment also requires low maintenance and is handled through volunteer groups.

**Environmental Stewardship Messaging** – The park’s environmental messaging is built into the park design ‘Raindrops to River’. Local schools use the park and amphitheater area as an outdoor learning area. The new welcome center also holds classes and events for the public.

Information provided by: Andrew Schwartz, Environmental Planning & Design and Susan Crookston, Executive Director

For more information:
http://www.aspinwallriverfrontpark.org