

Rivergate Park

Our Vision

The Cleveland Rowing Foundations (CRF) is a 501(c)3 that oversees the only boathouse in Northeast Ohio currently serving 850 athletes, eight college and high school rowing programs and a spirited contingent of dragon boat racers. In light of the passage of Issue #3, CRF will be leaving its current leased location (which is in the footprint of a potential casino).

CRF, in partnership with the Trust for Public Land (TPL), has secured an option on a significant parcel of land in the Flats on a peninsula that sits between Ohio City and the Warehouse District – it is within easy walking distance of Public Square and very close to the RTA Waterfront line. The cost of the property is \$3.2 million. Time is of the essence – the option expires March 31, 2010.

The purpose of the requested grant is to support acquisition of this site by CRF, ensuring that the public will still have recreational access to the Cuyahoga River and to provide a regional venue for rowing, canoeing, kayaking and dragon boat racing.

Tentatively named Rivergate Park, the project presents a rare opportunity for the city and its inhabitants. It will create a recreational gem on the Cuyahoga River, promoting healthy lifestyles, vibrant youth programming and economic rejuvenation. This facility could emerge as one of the most important symbols of the rebirth of the river and downtown.



Rivergate Park Concept Sketch

The seven acre site will become the permanent home for high school and collegiate rowing programs across Northeast Ohio, as well as the Ohio City Bicycle Co-op, and would be linked by bike trails to the towpath trail, Wendy Park, and Canal Basin Park. Regattas and other events already bring thousands of urban dwellers and visitors to the current CRF boathouse. Rivergate's increased capacity will accommodate even larger crowds.

Long used for commercial purposes, the site is currently paved with concrete; however, CRF intends to collaborate with ParkWorks to restore large sections to parkland and natural habitat, making it an urban haven for migratory birds.

CRF plans to offer rowing programs for inner city youth. In other cities, these programs have been highly successful both in terms of building self-confidence and personal discipline and also in providing great college access. CRF is committed to bringing rowing to many segments of our community, and also plans to offer rowing for the visually impaired and the physically challenged.

Not surprisingly, Rivergate enjoys the support of a number of key area stakeholders including Mayor Jackson, Cleveland City Councilman Joe Cimperman, Cuyahoga County Planning Office, the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission, the Plain Dealer and the popular local website, *Cool Cleveland*.

Ultimately the potential of Rivergate to influence Cleveland's future is not in the membership it attracts or the many school crew programs it supports. Rather, its capacity to spur economic growth is best seen in what occurred in places like Philadelphia and Oklahoma City when those cities began to view the Schuylkill and Oklahoma rivers, respectively, and the boating organizations on them, as complementary assets whose value to the city transcended rowing. These cities provide eye-opening models for the transformative power of a river-based recreational amenity like Rivergate, where river centers have had a catalytic effect, spurring residential and retail development and helping recreate the city's core as a place to live, work and play.

CRF, in conjunction with Trust for Public Land, has developed a fundraising plan to secure the proposed Rivergate site which relies on support from current CRF members (who have already pledged nearly \$500,000), corporate supporters and the philanthropic community. Your is an important piece of that plan and will send a message to the rest of the philanthropic community that this is an important project for our city.