



The most unlikely of dreams

The High Line Symposium
Garden Museum, London
5–8 October 2012

**GARDEN
MUSEUM**



THE HIGH LINE SYMPOSIUM AT THE GARDEN MUSEUM

The first time I walked the High Line I wanted it to last for ever. This month the High Line will reach London: the Garden Museum is proud to host co-founders Joshua David and Robert Hammond, joined by Melissa Fisher, Chief Operating Officer, for their first talk about the project in Europe.

The High Line is a story of heroic conservation: the rescue of the structure of an elevated iron freight railway built in 1929 to 1934, and closed in 1980. In their book, 'High Line: The Inside Story of New York City's Park in the Sky' – a dialogue as candid and gripping as a two-hander stage play – Josh and Rob describe a first community meeting at which residents nodded at the proposed demolition of the structure: flaking with rust, and nested with pigeons, it was perceived as ugly, obstructive, and dangerous. The two men – who had never met, but happened to sit side by side that sweltering August night – resolved to have a go at its rescue. Ten years later the High Line is the most successful new urban experience in the world, comparable in its novelty, popularity and zest to Tate Modern in London or the Guggenheim in Bilbao.

But the High Line is not a Museum or a cultural centre. It's a park, and everyone who cares about urban space, public horticulture, and green infrastructure should make their pilgrimage. 'Park' does not do justice to the unprecedented nature of the experience. It is a park in which you don't stay put in one place; it's a boulevard which is a destination in itself; the atmosphere combines the fleshy carelessness of a beach with the camera-snapping self-awareness of a catwalk. Like Tate Modern, it has changed how we see the connectivity of cities.

The winning design for its refurbishment was by architects Diller Scofidio + Renfrew and landscape architects James Corner Field Operations, with Piet Oudolf as planting designer. When you look at the rejected entries you realise the subtlety of their approach – and the cleverness of the choice by a combined client of the City of New York and Friends of the High Line. 'Our job is to save the High Line from architecture', declared Ric Scofidio, and the team set out to preserve its ruinous, illicit character, re-instating the rails and framing glimpses of blank walls, blind alleys, and rusting water tanks.

It was also the only team to headline a specialist in planting design. The derelict track had become a mile and a half of wildflowers; beautifully photographed by Joel Sternfeld, this urban meadow had become the High Line for many people. Oudolf's genius – and his planting design is genius, the masterpiece of a lifetime of understanding of the character and interaction of plants synthesized with an artist's eye for composing scenes – was to translate the quality of ephemeral wildness into horticulture. Meadows flower for a short season and return to mud and brambles; Oudolf's succession planting changes hour by hour, season to season. His favourite month is October, and early in the morning – alone but for the joggers – we watch sparrows and finches fatten themselves on purple and red berries. And, you realise, he has selected plants to respond to the setting: ruddy-coloured, tough, vigorous in their shallow soil.

'Some people think of parks as being an escape from the city' reflects Hammond. 'But the High Line works because it never takes you away from New York. You are not in a botanical garden. You hear car horns honking'. The High Line is a celebration of a modern city in all its moods and metallic brashness. As my American colleague Meredith Gunderson – who has jointly curated this Symposium with me – puts it: the High Line makes you fall in love with New York again.

The competition for ideas for a new London landscape, sponsored by The Mayor of London and The Landscape Institute, is intended to show the possibilities of our city; for the Museum it is the continuation of a programme which explores how past visions for greener cities can lift the imaginative horizon and contribute to contemporary debate. The short-listed proposals could only have been conceived in London, but share the preoccupation with connectivity and style, and a recognition that however worthy 'Green Infrastructure' might be as a concept the movement needs clever, witty design if it is to capture the public imagination.

The High Line's boldness and optimism is a challenge at a time when park maintenance budgets have been slashed deeper than those of libraries and Museums, and horticultural maintenance is sub-contracted to waste disposal and cleaning companies. The Friends of the High Line generate 90% of the funds of maintenance: a reflection of their fund-raising ability but, also, of a culture in which green space is perceived as a civic cause for donors and volunteers.

It is, at bottom, a challenge to the value we place on green space in the city. In the last twenty years Britain has enjoyed the greatest investment of money – and of design talent – in private gardens since the Edwardian age. Oudolf enjoyed a triumphant decade making country house gardens in Britain but has always been puzzled by the widening gap between private gardens and the horticulture in public space in cities – where, after all, the majority of us live. To a Dutchman, he explains, making beautiful public space is the apex of a designer's ambition.

In the 19th century British parks inspired cities across the world – most famously, Central Park in New York. In the 21st century an American masterpiece of imagination and design is an inspiration to London. We are very grateful to The Friends of the High Line for making this trip and for so generously sharing the lessons of their experience.

Finally, my sincere thanks to our partners who made this symposium possible and have been valuable collaborators: The American Embassy, National Trust, English Heritage, Landscape Institute and the Mayor of London and to FutureCity for their support of this publication.

Christopher Woodward, Director of the Garden Museum

The Museum is committed to acting as a hub for discourse about green infrastructure. The High Line symposium is part of this ongoing programme.

left:

Falcone Flyover, an elevated pathway passes between historic warehouse buildings, between West 25th and West 27th Streets, looking North.

© Iwan Baan, 2011

cover:

Wildflower Field, a straight pathway runs alongside wildflowers and the original railroad tracks, between West 27th and West 29th Streets, looking North.

© Iwan Baan, 2011

FOREWORD FROM UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN LONDON

Whenever we visit with our children and grandchildren in New York, my wife Marjorie and I never fail to be uplifted by the inviting sight of the High Line – the beautiful green river that snakes its way calmly through Manhattan’s lower west side. We well remember how the crumbling, abandoned railroad blighted that part of the city before its transformation into one of the world’s most striking urban parks. As lovers of contemporary art, we especially appreciate High Line’s imaginative and original design, and value its contribution to New York’s already impressive list of cultural icons.

Today, High Line stands as a powerful example of how effective green design can enhance both our cityscapes and the quality of daily life for those who live and work there. But it’s not just the fact that the disused track has been brought so magnificently back to life that inspires Marjorie and I. It is also the way it was reborn through the ingenuity, cooperation and perseverance of the local community.

During my time as Ambassador, I have found a similarly dynamic, collective spirit in Britain. So it is somewhat inevitable that as London explores ways of converting its neglected public spaces into more attractive settings it should draw on the experience and expertise of the High Line project. Indeed, it is precisely this vibrant exchange of ideas and knowledge between individuals and institutions that helps keep the U.S.-UK relationship special – and we are delighted to support the Garden Museum as the hub for this interaction.

HE Louis B. Susman, Ambassador



THE HIGH LINE IN BRIEF

The High Line is a public park built on an historic freight rail line elevated above the streets on Manhattan’s West Side. It is owned by the City of New York, and maintained and operated by Friends of the High Line. Founded in 1999 by community residents, Friends of the High Line fought for the High Line’s preservation and transformation at a time when the historic structure was under the threat of demolition. It is now the non-profit conservancy working with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to make sure the High Line is maintained as an extraordinary public space for all visitors to enjoy. In addition to overseeing maintenance, operations, and public programming for the park, Friends of the High Line works to raise the essential private funds to support more than 90 percent of the park’s annual operating budget, and to advocate for the preservation and transformation of the High Line at the Rail Yards, the third and final section of the historic structure, which runs between West 30th and West 34th Streets.

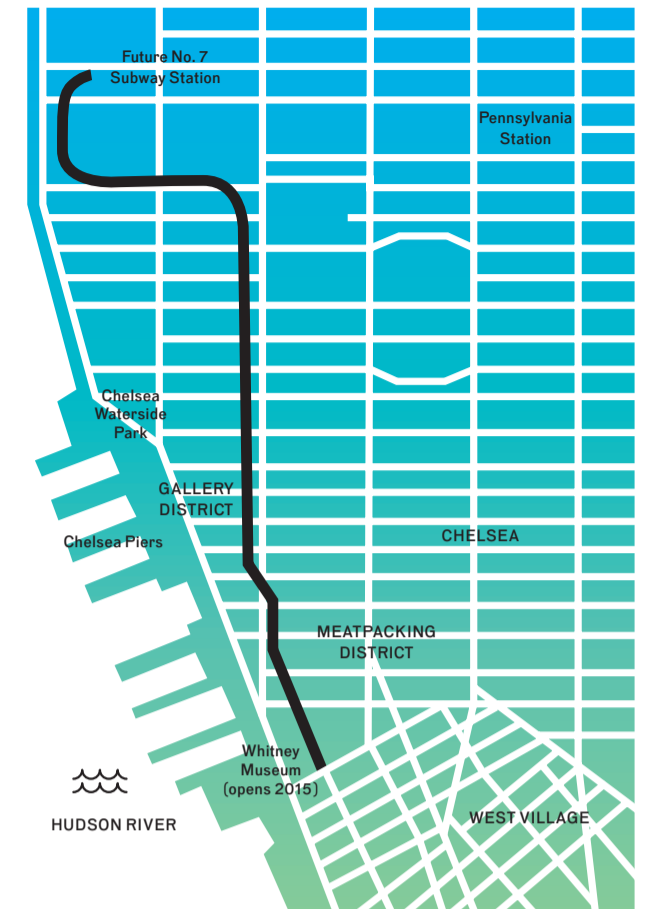
Over 3.7 million people visited the High Line in 2011.



Joshua David and Robert Hammond, founders of Friends of the High Line

Photography: Jeffrey Donenfeld

Courtesy: Friends of the High Line



The High Line is located on Manhattan’s West Side. It runs from Gansevoort Street in the Meatpacking District to West 34th Street, between 10th & 11th Avenues.

Chelsea Grasslands, between West 19th Street and West 20th Street, looking North

© Iwan Baan, 2009



**A HIGH LINE FOR LONDON:
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IDEAS COMPETITION**

A High Line for London Green Infrastructure Ideas Competition is the most popular competition the Landscape Institute has ever run. Launched in partnership with the Mayor of London and Garden Museum in July it has generated over 150 entries from countries including China, USA, Brazil and India. The challenge? To create a public design project that goes beyond the commonly accepted role of urban parks and engages communities with the benefits of green infrastructure. New York's High Line has undoubtedly re-drawn the boundaries of what a public park can be. The transformation of this industrial relic was the inspiration for the competition. Would we find schemes with the same energy and ingenuity for imaginative green space in the capital? Well, the judges were hugely impressed by the energy and passion demonstrated by the entrants. Project ideas ranged from massive city-wide schemes to small-scale community-led projects. Some were iconic in their ambition and others small but designed to be replicable throughout the city. The shortlist included ideas to transform London's vast transport infrastructure into living walls, connecting the city's lost waterways, creating floating parks on the river and providing a do-it-yourself GI toolkit box for Londoners.

Perhaps more than anything the impressive breadth and scope of the entries speak volumes about a new generation of design talent ready to engage with green urbanism to create beautiful places designed to

provide benefits like flood management, urban cooling, green transport links and ecological connectivity. Entries were submitted from across the design professions including landscape architecture and architecture, and all of the project ideas hint at a new and exciting way in which we might live in the capital. The transformation of East London for the Olympics demonstrated what can be achieved when a bigger vision for green infrastructure is fundamentally embraced. It is hoped that this competition will unlock the potential of what more can be done.

A shortlist of 20 entries is on view at the Garden Museum during the symposium and until the end of October. The winner of the competition will be announced Monday 8 October 11.30am at the Garden Museum.

Shortlisting judges were: Ian Houlston CMLI, LDA Design LLP; Robin Buckle, Transport for London; Jamie Dean, Design for London and Meredith Gunderson, independent curator.

Final judges are Joshua David and Robert Hammond, founders of the High Line, Kim Wilkie, landscape architect; Dr. Penelope Curtis, director of Tate Britain; Johanna Gibbons, landscape architect; Matthew Pencharz, environment advisor to the Mayor of London.

Sarah Harrison

Sarah Harrison is an independent PR consultant working for the Landscape Institute



'The Lido Line' YN Studio
Courtesy: YN Studio



'Pop Down' Fletcher Priest
Courtesy: Fletcher Priest

LONDON'S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

As Mayor of London I am committed to ensuring London is the greatest green city in the world. I am implementing a suite of environment related programmes, which not only aim to help attract inward investment, create jobs and growth but also improve the quality of life for all Londoners.

The city's parks and open spaces and its trees and gardens (increasingly on the roofs of buildings) do much to gladden the soul and we need to protect and conserve them for just that reason. Given the scale and range of benefits that parks and green spaces give our city, it is vital we see them also as 'green infrastructure'; as integral to the capital's metabolism as its roads, rail lines or water pipes. Green infrastructure can help absorb flood water, cool the urban environment and clean the air; it can be used for local food production, to promote sport and leisure and ensure space for London's fauna and flora. As a network it can provide links and connections between places, encouraging walking and cycling, highlighting landscape and heritage and support the local economy. By providing informal places for people to visit and interact, it can bring Londoners together. It is increasingly seen as among the most important factors making for civilized life in London and maintaining it a desirable place to live, work and do business.

I am delighted that we are sharing knowledge and experiences with our friends and colleagues from New York. The High Line and the wonderful new Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, that will re-open in 2014, demonstrate that parks, re-envisioned as green infrastructure, continue to be essential to the fabric of modern cities.

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green Infrastructure is defined as 'the network of green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. In urban areas this can include domestic gardens, street trees, sports pitches, civic spaces, green roofs and walls.

The Landscape Institute (LI) is the royal chartered body for landscape architects. Download Landscape Institute publications on Green Infrastructure and watch a short animation: www.landscapeinstitute.org/gi

The Mayor's All London Green Grid will create fantastic, multi-purpose network of places and spaces for existing and new residents across London. Learn more here: www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/greening-london/parks-green-spaces/green-grid

© Jason Orton



CULTURAL PLANNING

If the confident, multi cultural, sharing society we saw portrayed in the recent Olympics represents a 21st century Britain, then our approach to regeneration, planning and the design of our urban centres must endeavour to reflect these values in our society. The phenomenal success of the High Line has provided us with a toolkit, one that experiments with a 'culture and commerce' approach that is absolutely relevant to cultural projects around the world.

The High Line is an example of the 'poetic and the pragmatic', with a decision to reclassify the land along the High Line for commercial development, which attracted the investment of billions of dollars of new development into the area. It is ironic that the original purpose of the High Line was to deliver goods to and from the warehouses of the Hudson and 70 years later millions of visitors will walk along the line into a redeveloped Hudson Yards creative district.

In the UK the High Line would almost certainly have come out of a Regional Development Agency/Arts Council initiative, cultural-professional down rather than community-up. In New York the High Line has become the commercial driver for Hudson Yards and a catalyst for a new creative district for New York.

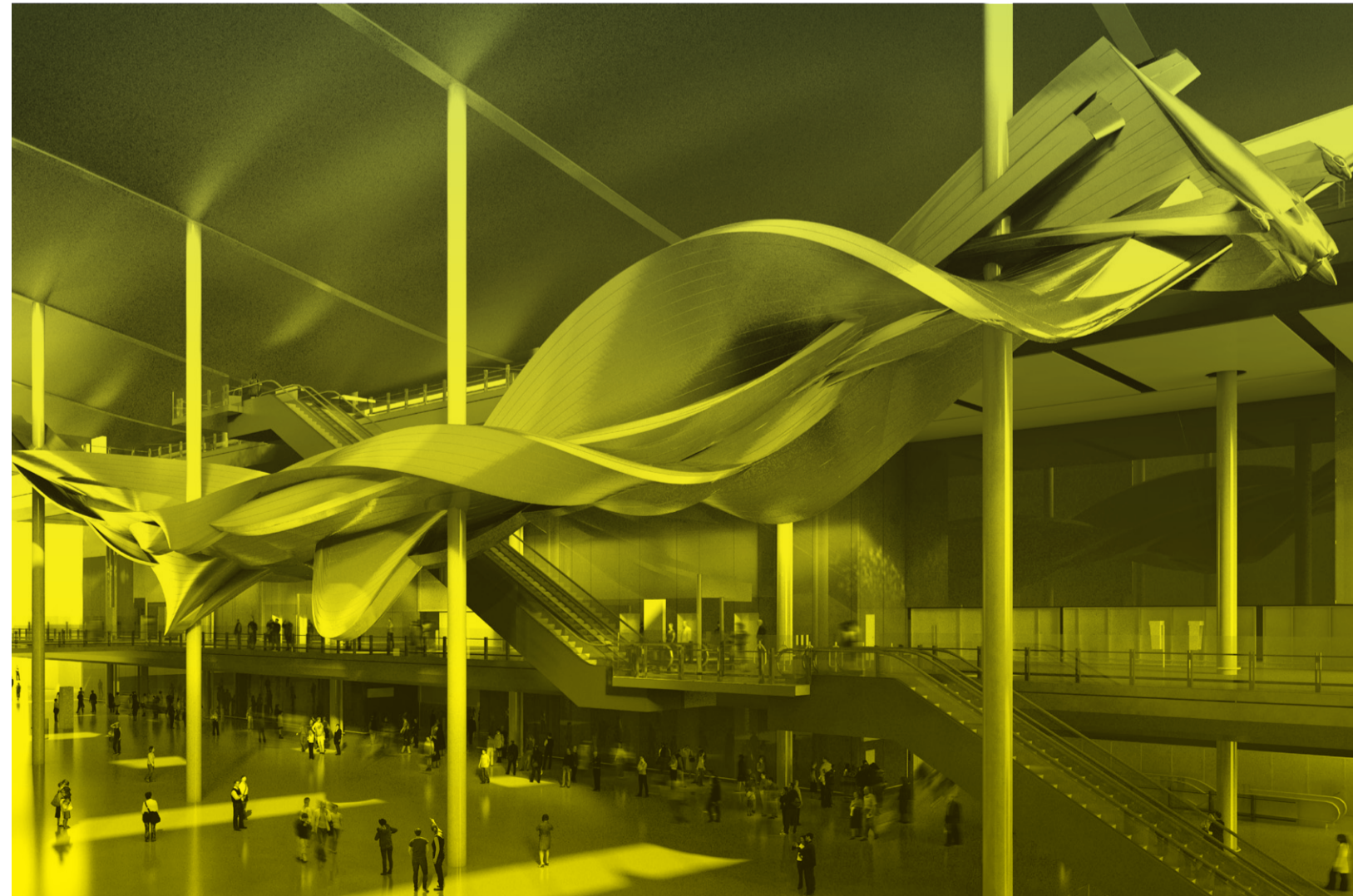
In London as we see the emergence of our own new creative districts such as Southbank and Nine Elms, it is time for a new approach to planning that provides the creative 'glue' of people and ideas that binds successful urban places together. High Line lessons include achieving community-support from the outset, using creative people, photographers and film makers, curators and designers and adopt a business focused vocabulary designed to attract the champions needed to secure the funding and political support. We need to re-examine the 'hardware' approach to cultural planning alongside the 'software' i.e. the theatre and ownership of new places here in the UK.

Mark Davy, Founder and Director of Futurecity

Futurecity is a culture and placemaking consultancy working in an urban context creating cultural strategies, brokering cultural partnerships and delivering major art projects from inception to completion.

Slipstream sculpture proposal by Richard Wilson for Heathrow Terminal 2.

Courtesy: Futurecity



Children and Adults leaning over the bridge at Morden Hall Park to look at the wildlife in the water.

Courtesy: NTP/L/Jennie Woodcock

CREATING A REGIONAL PARK

The National Trust supports new and imaginative approaches to managing urban green spaces believing access to nature and the outdoors to be vital to people of all ages, particularly children. A summary document produced by the National Trust, 'Reconnecting Children with Nature; Findings of the Natural Childhood Inquiry', gives overwhelming evidence of the dramatic decline in children's relationship with the outdoors and the need for urgent action.

The National Trust is a founding member of the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust, an exceptional network of green spaces running along the River Wandle stretching from Croydon and Sutton through to Merton and Wandsworth to the Thames. The vision for this new park is to create an 'innovative, sustainable and high quality Regional Park in the Wandle Valley that is easily accessible, with a rich and thriving biodiversity, offering recreational, landscape, heritage, cultural and resource management benefits in which local people and businesses can take pride and ownership'.

The National Trust is one of the most important nature conservation organisations in Europe with over 1,000 sites covering 250,000 hectares, including coastal sites, woodland and upland areas; many of which are rich in wildlife. In London alone, the National Trust looks after 458 hectares of land and 110 hectares of countryside.

OUR PARKS AS LIVING HERITAGE

Our towns and cities have a fabulous legacy of designed green spaces – public parks, cemeteries, gardens and streets. Parks were created for relaxation and enjoyment; to improve health and well-being, air quality and sanitation; and to create attractive places. The Victorians aims were very similar to today's Green Infrastructure agenda. Like the 2012 Olympic Park, local parks were symbols of civic pride and the great Park Movement was admired and exported around the globe.

There are some 27,000 parks in the UK and 2,500 plus of local heritage interest. The most important of these parks and other designed landscapes are designated as nationally important. Over the last 15 years, the Lottery has transformed many historic parks and green spaces and restored their Green Infrastructure functionality. There is still much to do; and many restored parks now face enormous challenges as local authority budgets are cut and skilled staff lost at a juncture when we need to push strategic planning and delivery of the network.

There is a growing call for to retrofit many towns and cities and there is undoubtedly scope to enhance some historic environments. An understanding of historic significance and character will help inform design of new Green Infrastructure whether street trees, green walls and roofs, or new green spaces The conservation priority must be to safeguard our historic parks and green spaces and to ensure their full contribution to the Green Infrastructure.

Everywhere we look, history surrounds us. English Heritage champions our historic places and advises the Government and others to help today's generation get the best out of our heritage and ensure that it is protected for the future.



An early postcard of Victoria Park showing the fountain given by the wealthy philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts to provide fresh clean drinking water for the local community to help combat cholera and alcoholism. A £12m regeneration scheme of Victoria Park was completed in May 2012 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Courtesy: English Heritage Nigel Temple Postcard Collection



Wildflower Field, a straight pathway runs alongside wildflowers and the original railroad tracks, between West 27th and West 29th Streets, looking North.
© Iwan Baan, 2011

Gansevoort End, Plaza, and Stairs, Gansevoort and Washington Streets
© Iwan Baan, 2009



NOTES

GARDEN MUSEUM

Produced by the Garden Museum with independent curator, Meredith Gunderson

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www.europaeuropa.co.uk

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OUR GENEROUS PARTNERS



MAYOR OF LONDON



PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 5 OCTOBER

- 11am **Welcome by US Ambassador Louis B. Susman**
The Uncut Story of the High Line
with founders Joshua David and Robert Hammond
- 1pm **Picnic lunch**
- 2pm **How to Raise \$100 million for the most unlikely of dreams**
with founders Joshua David and Robert Hammond,
chaired by economist and journalist, Evan Davis
- 4pm **Drinks with High Line team and speakers**
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SATURDAY 6 OCTOBER

- 11am **Self-seeding: High Line Planting Design**
Piet Oudolf, High Line planting designer
- 1pm **Picnic lunch**
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MONDAY 8 OCTOBER

- 10.30am **Introduction**
Christopher Woodward, Director, Garden Museum
- 10.35am **High Line Highlights**
with founders Joshua David and Robert Hammond
- 11.30am **Winner Announcement for A High Line for London: Green Infrastructure Ideas Competition**
- Green Infrastructure – the Case for Investment**
- 11.50am **The Mayor of London's commitment to Green Infrastructure: The All London Green Grid**
Matthew Pencharz, Mayor of London
Environmental Advisor
- 12.00 noon **The private sector and Business Improvement Districts**
Nigel Hughes, Director of Planning and Environment, Grosvenor
- 12.10pm **Economic Evidence for Investing in the Environment**
Tom Butterworth, Senior Advisor - Local Government and Green Infrastructure, Natural England
- 12.25pm **The local authority case for investment in green infrastructure**
Kate Pinnock and Ross Ingham, Directors, Ingham Pinnock
- 12.40pm **Questions**
- 1pm **Lunch**
- Inspiring a Generation – the Role of the Olympic Venues**
- 2pm **Lessons from the Olympic Park**
David Thompson, Landscape Architect, LDA Design
- 2.15pm **The Green Infrastructure Legacy from the Olympic Park**
Phil Askew, Project Sponsor Parklands & Public Realm, London Legacy Development Corporation
- 2.30pm **The Green Infrastructure Legacy and Weymouth Bay**
Jacqui Stearn, Principle Advisor, Natural England
- Major New Developments in the Capital**
- 2.45pm **The US Embassy in Nine Elms**
Richard L. Maimon, Principal at KieranTimberlake
- 3pm **Nine Elms**
Helen Fischer, Programme Director, Nine Elms
- 3.15pm **The Wandle Valley**
Nic Durston, Chair of the Wandle Valley Regional Park, National Trust
- 3.30pm **Green Infrastructure: Preview of a new publication from the Landscape Institute**
- 3.40pm **Ends with tea**
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