



## “The real legacy now is in the public realm”

– James Corner

LNWM's annual *Thought Forum* aims to activate new thinking on timely topics. That certainly happened at the 2015 *Thought Forum*, held on October 7 and titled “Innovative Public Spaces.” Our speakers were two visionaries on this topic — Robert Hammond and James Corner — who talked at length to an audience of LNWM clients and guests, including LNWM's community partners.

The insights and realpolitik of Hammond and Corner are especially relevant now because the Alaskan Way Viaduct is coming down, making way for a dramatically different Seattle Waterfront that will run for 26 city blocks, from Pioneer Square through Belltown.

“The new Seattle Waterfront is a once-in-a-century opportunity to redefine how we live, work and play in Seattle,” said LNWM CEO Bob Moser as he opened the 2015 *Thought Forum*. “This will be one of the biggest legacies we leave for future generations.”

### BEING THERE

“New types of public spaces are about being in the city,” said Robert Hammond. And they tend to be hybrids – a park, an urban public space, and a cultural hub. Hammond has experienced first-hand how a well-planned public space can revitalize the community around it.

Outgoing and ready with a joke, Hammond is Co-founder and Executive Director of [Friends of the NYC High Line](#), an elevated train track that was converted into a park/public space. Since opening in 2009, the High Line has become one of Manhattan's most successful public spaces, attracting some 7 million visitors a year.

Why? Because the High Line “juxtaposes man-made and natural, hard and soft,” said Hammond, inviting people to sit, talk, eat, exercise, dance, or whatever. This creates positive tension and a heightened sense of place that attracts a mix of people — both locals and visitors — throughout the year and makes it possible for them to interact in new ways.

“Good projects don’t follow a specific formula,” Hammond pointed out. What they all have in common is that they remain true to their place and time.



Right to Left: Robert Hammond, James Corner and Moderator Paul Suzman

## A NEW “FRONT PORCH” FOR SEATTLE

What kind of design is true to Seattle? [James Corner](#) — more serious and analytical — is the landscape architect for the NYC High Line and now the new Seattle Waterfront.

His answer is this: Seattle is down-to-earth and has a dramatic natural setting. Therefore, Corner's design for the Waterfront is open, simple, minimal, allowing nature to take center stage. Think of the Waterfront as a “new front porch for Seattle,” Corner said.

“Done well, project design can bring about a fresh, liberating sense of public life,” Corner believes. Seattle is ready for this.

People will have a chance to rest, take long walks, bicycle, shop. Picnic at Pioneer Square beach and a dance class at the new Pike Market activities center? Why not. All sorts of possibilities are likely to open up.

## NO LOOKING BACK

**It doesn't make sense to turn the Alaskan Way Viaduct into a Seattle version of the NYC High Line**, said Corner. In addition to being structurally unsound, the Viaduct is too high — 50 to 60 feet above street level vs. 30 feet for the High Line. So a completely new structure would have to be built at great expense, and it would not be true to Seattle and its history.

## ACTIVATING PUBLIC LIFE

Just because a public space is designed well doesn't mean it will be well-used by the community. There have to be events that get people out and keep them coming back. The High Line, for example, sponsors some 450 different programs a year. The more used a public space is, the safer it is, noted Hammond.

## GETTING INVOLVED

**Another key to successful public spaces is funding.** “These are all pretty pictures,” said Corner of the Seattle Waterfront plans. But they are hard to pull off, and you can't take execution for granted.

“We need to talk about finding resources to maintain what is built.”

“**The real legacy now is in the public realm,**” Corner added. Historically, philanthropists have focused on supporting museums, orchestras, and other cultural icons. But we are now seeing people also wanting to be connected with what is changing in their city. And often the change is happening through new types of public spaces.

## THE BOLD NEW VISION FOR SEATTLE'S WATERFRONT

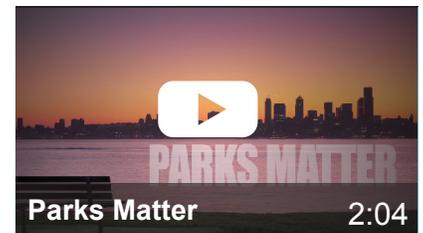
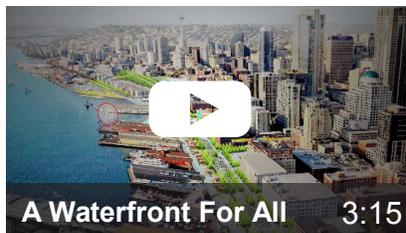
- A beach at Pioneer Square
- Pier 62/63 connected seamlessly with Pike Market
- An elevated section with magnificent views of the Sound
- Buildings that face the waterfront instead of the street
- An eco-friendly seawall, allowing for salmon run and purification of runoff
- Bike lanes running all along the promenade
- Vendor kiosks on the promenade
- 500 new trees and many other types of plantings

People assume there's government funding for parks and public spaces, Corner said. But that's often not the case. Both he and Hammond urged everyone in the audience – and in the Seattle area — to get involved now by contributing time, money or both to the new Seattle Waterfront.

## WHAT LNWM IS DOING

LNWM has deep roots in the Pacific Northwest, and we understand the importance of strengthening our local community. For us, this means committing time and funding, as well as directly participating in initiatives that have a positive impact on the Seattle area: *Pianos in the Parks*, the King County Parks Foundation and now the new Seattle Waterfront. ■

## LNWM VIDEO CONTENT



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## ABOUT FRIENDS OF WATERFRONT SEATTLE

Waterfront Seattle is a momentous civic project that will transform the 2-mile stretch from Pioneer Square to Belltown into a 20-acre vibrant park. It is a not-for-profit organization working with the City of Seattle to ensure the project's long-term success as a beautiful, safe, and lively public destination.

Want to learn more about Seattle's new Waterfront and how you can help? Sign up at [www.friendsofwaterfrontseattle.org](http://www.friendsofwaterfrontseattle.org). Or contact Emily Tanner-McLean at [emily@friendsofwaterfrontseattle.org](mailto:emily@friendsofwaterfrontseattle.org). You can also visit Waterfront Space, the project showroom for the future park, located at 1400 Western Avenue. Public hours are Wednesday - Sunday, 12:00 - 5:00 p.m.

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