

ENVIRONMENT

NATURE'S WAY

Freight trains rumbled above the streets of Manhattan, in New York City, for nearly 50 years. When the tracks were abandoned, nature took over. Now, the High Line is about to become a public park.

To some people, the abandoned elevated railway was ugly. But to Robert Hammond, the High Line was a structure worth saving. "I assumed someone was working to preserve it," Hammond told TFK. Joshua David thought the same thing. They were wrong.

Hammond and David met at a neighborhood meeting about the city's plan to tear down the structure. They quickly discovered that if someone didn't take charge, the tracks would be lost. They started a group called Friends of the High Line.

A SECRET GARDEN

"I went up to the tracks and saw a mile and a half of wildflower fields," Hammond says. Grasses and shrubs grew in the gravel next to the tracks. Vines climbed the steel railing. Trees had taken root. The High Line was a secret garden above the city streets.

Hammond and David decided the space would make a unique public park. Others agreed. They joined the effort to help save the High Line.

WORKING ON THE RAILROAD

After 10 years of fund-raising, planning and planting, the first



FIELDS OF DREAMS
This rusty old rail line is being transformed into a brand-new park.

JUST IMAGINE This is what the elevated park will look like.



section of the park is set to open in June. It will include meadows, woodlands and a wading pool. A sundeck overlooks the Hudson River. When complete, the open space will stretch for 22 blocks.

"I hope that when kids visit the High Line they realize that just two regular guys started this," Hammond says. "The most important thing we did was raise the flag. That's what got things started and allowed other people to come along and get it done."

—By Jaime Joyce

JOSHUA DAVID (left) and **ROBERT HAMMOND** cofounded Friends of the High Line.



News Words

assume (uh-soom) **verb**: to believe without proof

preserve (preh-zerv) **verb**: to protect or save

unique (yoo-neek) **adjective**: one of a kind

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