

Easton museum concept plan includes planetarium, VR theater, boardwalk



This walkway is part of the concept plan for the Nurture Nature Science and Creativity Center at the site of the former Easton iron and Metal business. Courtesy Nurture Nature Center

A nonprofit Easton nature center and museum has proposed a bold expansion along the Bushkill Creek that could include a planetarium, a virtual reality theater and outdoor eco-friendly components.

The Nurture Nature Science and Creativity Center concept plan is included in a [request for proposals](#) by the City of Easton to develop the former Easton Iron and Metal site. The site on Bushkill Drive is immediately east of the \$100 million Simon Silk Mill redevelopment.

“I think the land naturally lends itself to greenspace, outdoor opportunities, a connection to the Kart Stirner Arts Trail,” said [Nurture](#)

[Nature Center](#) Executive Director Rachel Hogan. “Any use that goes there should be environmentally sensitive to the nearby creek and trail.”

Hogan said the concept plan was developed in February 2020 by [ConsultEcon](#) of Cambridge, Massachusetts, for the Nurture Nature Center.

There’s no funding in place, no cost estimate or timetable for development of the science and creativity center. When Hogan learned the Easton Iron and Metal property was up for development she initiated the study to see how the center might take advantage of that spot.

The concept plan envisions a planetarium that could show the latest discoveries in outer space. It includes a theater or “walk-through immersive experience” with augmented or virtual reality “to plunge visitors into new environments, from the deepest reaches of the oceans, to the microscopic worlds of bugs and faraway habitats.”



Science on a Sphere is at the Nurture Nature Center at 518 Northampton St. in Easton.Courtesy Nurture Nature Center

The plan mentions the “Science on a Sphere” globe already in use at the Nurture Nature Center at 518 Northampton St. in Easton. The globe allows viewers to see global phenomena such as weather patterns and the potential impact of global warming.

The plan includes an observatory with telescopes, a citizen science lab, a classroom, artistic programming, a canopy walk, a boardwalk along the creek and an eco-friendly outdoor play park.



This eco-friendly play park is proposed as part of the Nurture Nature Science and Creativity Center.Courtesy Nurture Nature Center

“We love the plan,” said Easton Mayor Sal Panto Jr. He echoed Hogan that the area should be developed to take advantage of its natural beauty and link to art. A railroad trestle will be rehabilitated to make it a pedestrian bridge over the creek connecting to the Karl Stirner Arts Trail.

The arts trail is involved with the museum planning, as is the city and Lafayette College.

The city's call for development in that area doesn't necessarily have to include the science and creativity center, but Panto said the center makes sense there. Any development submitted ought to take into consideration the environment and the nearby arts trail, he said.

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