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Helena van Vliet Architect, LLC  
Restorative Biophilic Design

**May, 2015**

## **BioPhilly**

### **Launch of the Biophilic Cities Project in Philadelphia**

From the roof terrace and gardens atop the Philadelphia Free Library, one has a breathtaking view over Logan circle below, the splendor of its fountain, trees, axial avenues, the art museum, city hall and the Philadelphia skyline beyond. The terrace so perfectly satisfies all aspects of the biophilic pattern of 'Prospect': an elevated overlook over an interesting, lively and promising scenery.

Ideally 'Prospect' is combined with another biophilic pattern: 'refuge,' here represented by the Skyline Room itself. A safe and interesting overlook: indeed a natural habitat for homo sapiens!

Thanks to Fredda Lippes of the Mayor's Office of Sustainability, this was the place we were able to choose for April's launch of the **Biophilic Cities Project** in Philadelphia: "BioPhilly, Growing beyond Green." The Skyline Room and Terrace were a place immediately and instinctively experienced by all attendees as thrillingly comfortable & comfortably thrilling.

*Photo above: View from conference terrace; Helena van Vliet photo.*



*Helena van Vliet opens BioPhilly Conference.*



## For the Love of Life: A Shift from 'Me' to 'We'

A few hours before the event I unloaded a van of large Moravia bushes in earthen pots at the Free Library.

Jasmine-scented and blooming in creamy yellow, they were headed for the distant Skyline Room. A moving island of traveling plants. I became dwarfed by lush greenery. Doors too narrow for branches, strangers jumped to help, catching a scent, smiling.

Delicate fragrance leading the way.

Elevator doors held open. Careful hands reaching out, protecting tender branches. Precious cargo. Strangers became a team united in the instinctive cause to shepherd our little living jungle of fragrant greenery. Instant camaraderie. Smiles. Banter. Laughter.

**Our** little jungle. A simple cart of beautiful plants had affected a shift in complete strangers from a “me” prospective to a sense of shared purpose: a “we” perspective. We now know and can prove scientifically, that exposure to nature will do this: apparently even in small quantities, nature will increase empathy and social cohesion through the experience of joy and connection. For the love of nature. For the love of life.

An auspiciously biophilic beginning to a biophilic night.



*Keynote speaker, Prof. Tim Beatley.*



*Keynote speaker, Bill Browning.*

## **BioPhilly**

In the Skyline Room, over one hundred attendees came together to network and listen to keynote speakers **Bill Browning** and **Tim Beatley**.

They spoke about Biophilia as a physiologically restorative adaptation, about the necessity of redefining our cities as places of wild and restorative nature, from rooftops to roadways to river fronts. About the city as a place for biodiversity, as a place to experience connection to nature's seasonal cycles, a place to grow fresh food, to grow local community around fresh food, to live in close communion with nature from gardens in the city, to the city in and as a garden. From vertical greening to forest bathing. From Philadelphia to San Francisco to Singapore. From Green Urbanism to Blue Urbanism. From stress reduction to physiological resilience. From biomimicry to the nature pyramid.

For further information, [please see the video](#) from the evening by keynote speaker Tim Beatley.



*Skyline Terrace, photo courtesy of Fredda Lippes.*



*Helena van Vliet photo.*

## Nature in the News

How To Use Plantain For Bee Stings.

What Do We Really Know About Roundup Weed Killer?

Passage of Landscape House soaks up light, winds and sounds of Japanese rice fields.



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