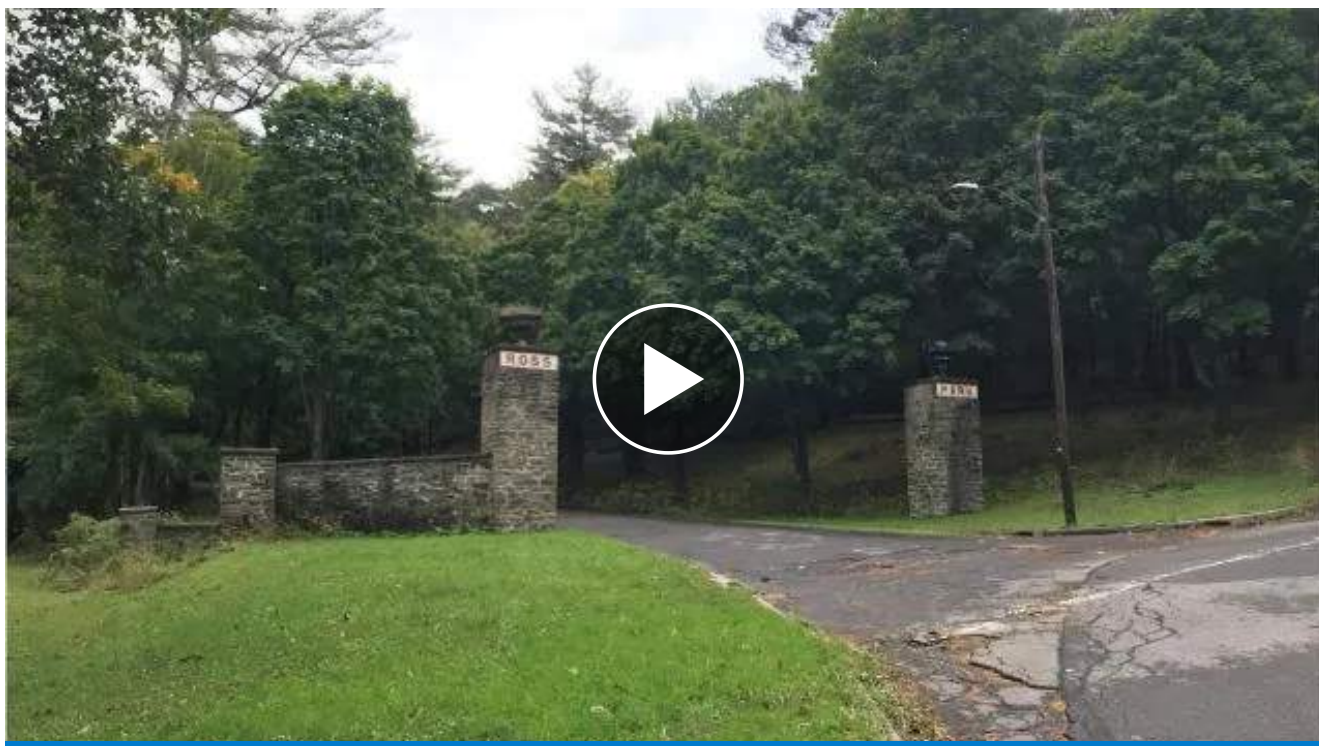


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## Cornell program to redesign original Ross Park entryway to zoo, Discovery Center

[NATASHA VAUGHN](#) | [pressconnects.com](#)



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A splash pad, hiking trail, lookout post, nature area, sports fields and a pedestrian-friendly entrance are a few of the suggestions visitors to Binghamton's Ross Park have for a redeveloped entryway planned for the historic park.

Cornell University's Design Connect program held its first community design forum at the park Saturday. Community members were invited to meet with some of the project coordinators and suggest possible ideas for reuse of the historic entryway.

and feel pride in a place."



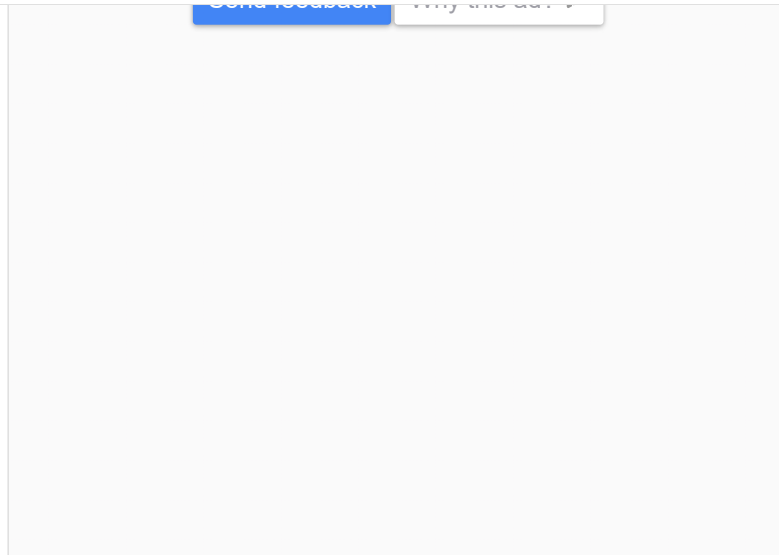
Historic Ross Park entryway on Park Avenue in Binghamton.

NATASHA VAUGHN/ STAFF PHOTO

In April, the City of Binghamton submitted a proposal to Cornell University's Design Connect program to redevelop the historic entrance and pathway into Ross Park, which now includes the Binghamton Zoo and Discovery Center.

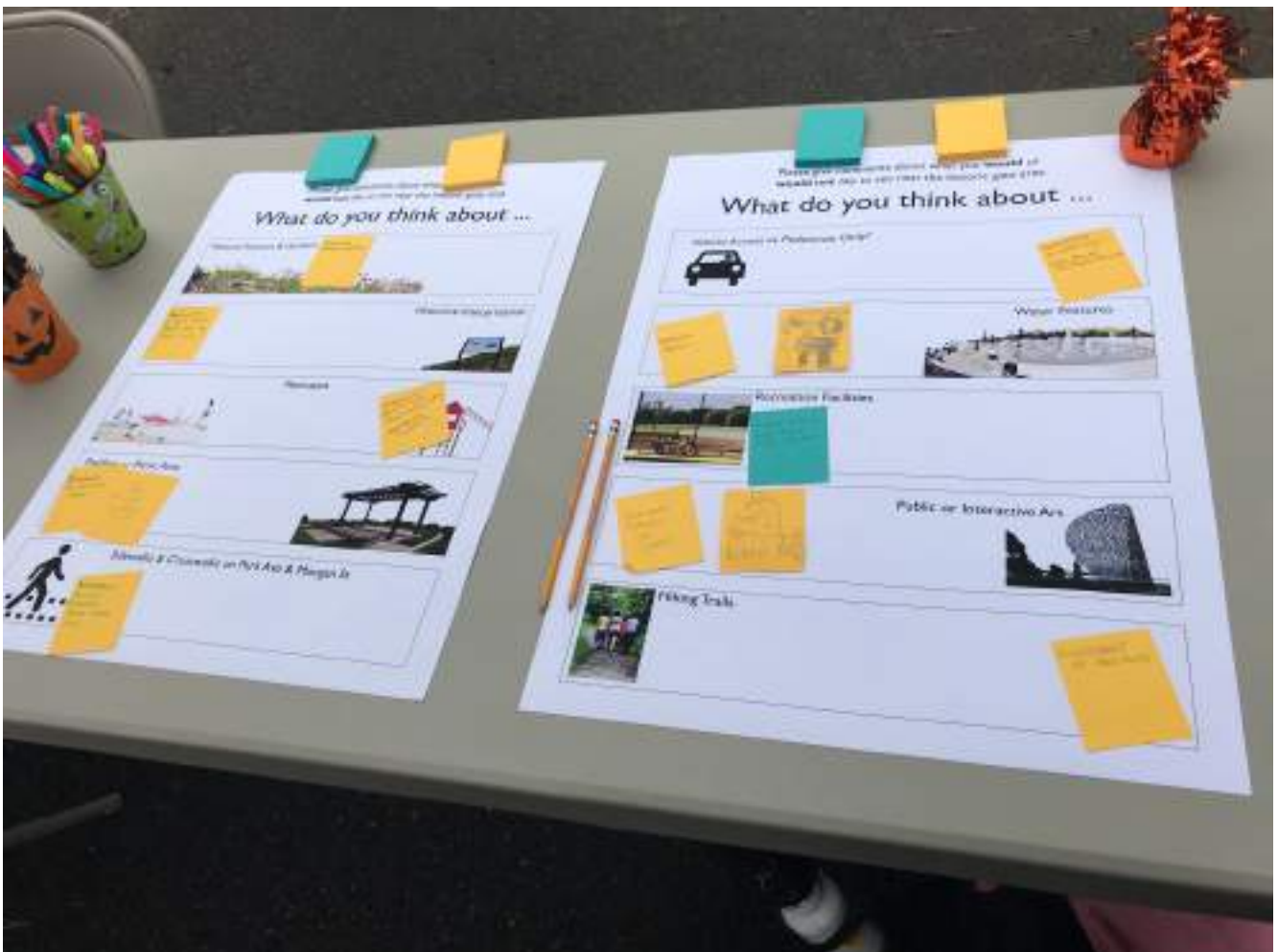
The university's student-run program charges \$500 to cover travel costs and materials for students who work to design and create planning services for municipalities and non-profit organizations. Since the program's launch in 2008, more than two dozen design projects have been worked on by the students.

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Binghamton mayor Rich David announced in September that the city would be partnering with Cornell's Design Connect program to develop a plan for the future of the old entrance. The project team from will continue to collect ideas and information, and develop a design for the park's former gateway area.

Once a design plan is complete the city will seek funding opportunities to be able to bring the recommended plan to fruition.



Ross Park first opened in 1875. A wealthy businessman named Erastus Ross donated 90 acres of land to the city under the condition that it would be used for a park. The park had a roller coaster, swings, walking trails, animals and a bandstand.

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Today it is home to the Ross Park Discovery Center and Binghamton Zoo. It is the fifth oldest zoo in the country said Rachel Davenport, the zoo's public relations coordinator.

"We finally have a group that is ready to put the time and effort into it," said Davemport. "I'm so happy that they have a table here. That gives the community an opportunity to voice their opinions. There might be an idea out there that we don't know about that might be a great fit, super excited to have them here."

Around 50,000 visitors come to the Binghamton Zoo at Ross Park each year to see the more than 100 species of animals that live there. New use of the former entryway has the potential to bring in more visitors, Davenport said.



Kimberly and Jared Bosket look at ideas for the park's entryway project with their daughters Ellie age 7 and Emma age 5.

NATASHA VAUGHN/ STAFF PHOTO

In 1896 a stone-pillared gateway was constructed at the park's previous entryway, located on Park Avenue. Visitors would arrive to the park via carriages and the city's first electric trolley by way of the old Washington Bridge.

The park's entrance was moved to nearby Morgan Road when it became necessary for an entrance that could accommodate for more visitors coming to the park by automobiles.

Today, two large pillars and a short walking path which loops from Park Avenue and back out onto Morgan Road a short distance from the current entryway are all that is left of the original entryway.

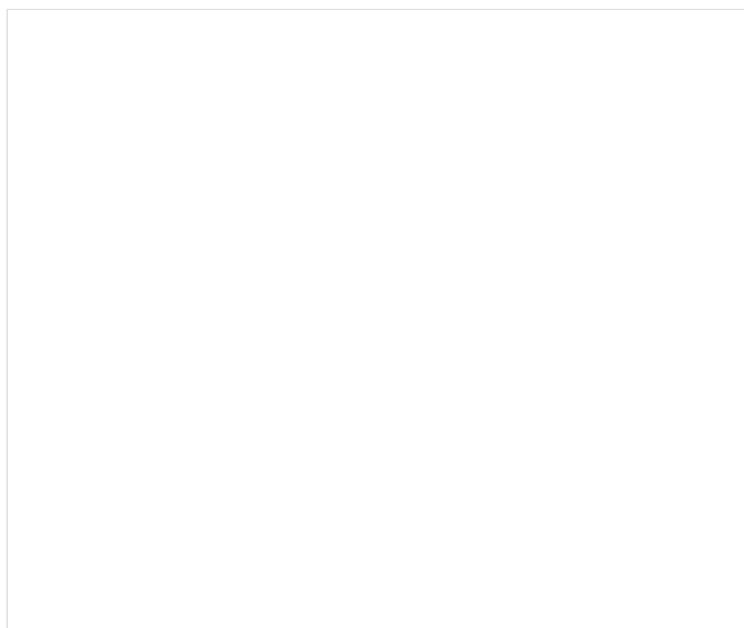


The current Ross Park entryway on Morgan Road.

NATASHA VAUGHN/ STAFF PHOTO

"I was interested in applying what I study in the real world," said Yaniv Korman, a Cornell student who joined the Design Connect team in late August. "I'm excited to see what the community wants, and then see how we can help them make that happen."

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Some of the other projects the Design Connect program has worked on include a redesign of Hanover Square in Horseheads, an incubator farm expansion in Ithaca, a community center in Utica and a redesign of Ernie Davis Park in Elmira.