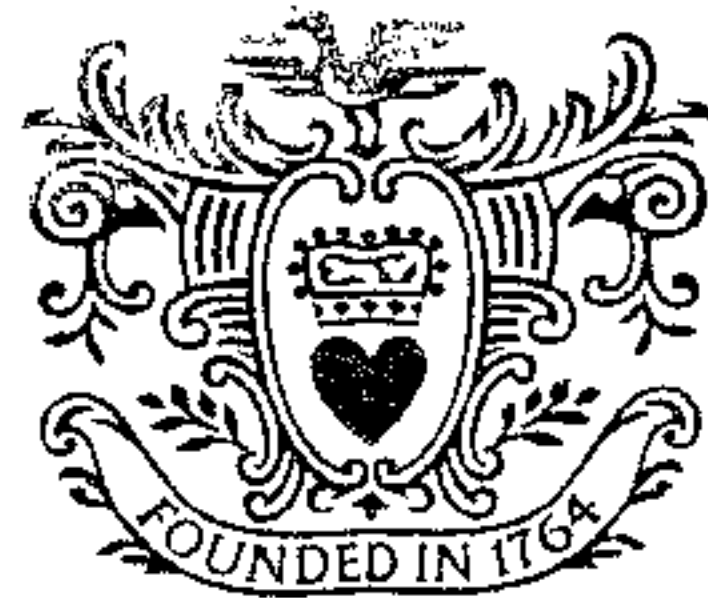


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EDITORIALS

A Bridge No Longer Too Far

You'll like the view from beneath the bridge — the Bulkeley Bridge between Hartford and East Hartford. The stone span is a lot more peaceful from its underside than from the busy road above. Riverwalk Downtown, a three-acre park and walkway dedicated Thursday, offers a fresh look at this hidden asset.

Far beneath the century-old bridge, chirping birds and the rushing waters of the Connecticut River drown out the rumble of traffic. For the first time in decades, maybe longer, the music of companionable conversations echoes under its graceful arches. Markers on the abutment, until now seen only by intrepid urban hikers, reveal the water level reached in three historic floods. One is shockingly close to the roadbed, a hint at Hartford's vulnerability before a flood wall was built to protect downtown.

Unfortunately, that wall and the highway that hugs it cut the people off from the water. Riverwalk Downtown will bring them back.

Artful reclamation of this lost green space between the Founders and Bulkeley bridges is the latest effort of Riverfront Recapture, another link in a sylvan chain of public parks on both sides of the river.

Mature cottonwood trees laze along the west bank, wisely spared in a monumental effort to clear rubble and tangled vines from this urban wilderness. It's nice to see people enjoying the ambience created by the 1,000-foot stretch of asphalt walkway, enhanced by plantings, lamp-posts and stone benches. Soon, the riverside path will be extended 1,200 feet north to Riverside Park and the boathouse,

then south to Charter Oak Landing. This vital pedestrian link will invigorate Hartford. But it is a regional asset to be enjoyed by everyone.

At the dedication, Gov. John G. Rowland referred to the river as the greatest hidden gem in Connecticut. It is hidden no longer. As the sun peeked between the clouds, the river had the good sense to sparkle on cue.

OUR TOWNS



GREATER HARTFORD