

Planning for the Transformation of the Reedy River Corridor :

*Partnerships in Politics, Participation, Planning &
Design by a Local University*

SC APA Spring Conference
Travelers Rest, SC
April 28, 2023

Barry Nocks, PhD, FAICP
Clemson University

What is Planning?

- Leading positive physical, economic, social & environmental change to a desired future
- Working in partnership **with** people, organizations & institutions
- Communicating—both listening and sharing to generate new ideas, programs & plans
- Dealing with complex (wicked) problems in context
- Focused on the future—what could be

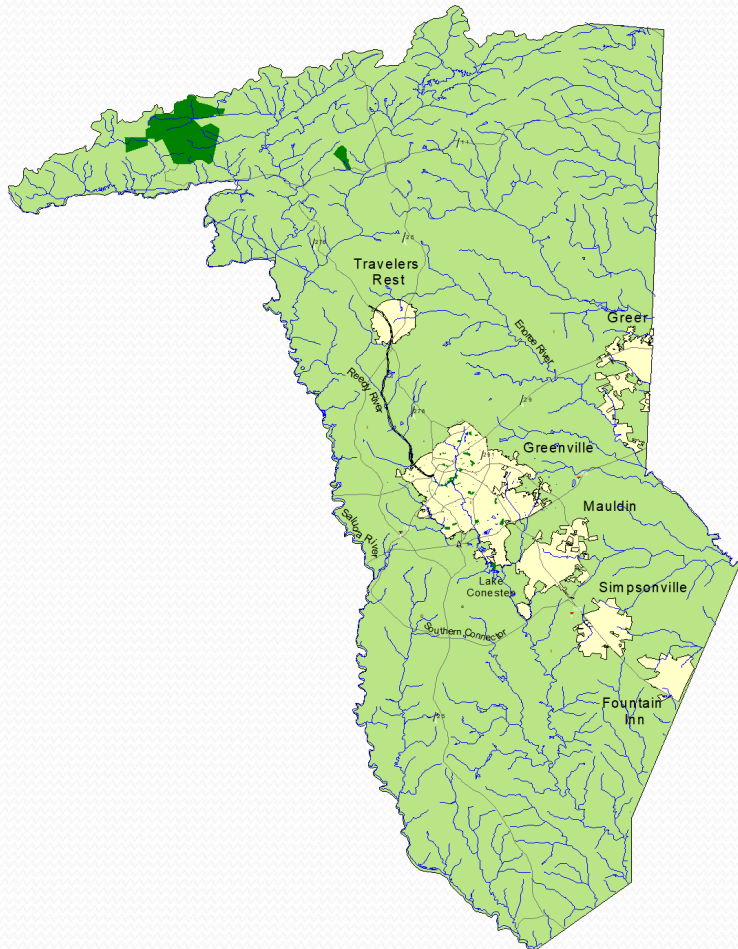
Planning is the linkage between knowledge & action

John Friedman

Presentation Overview

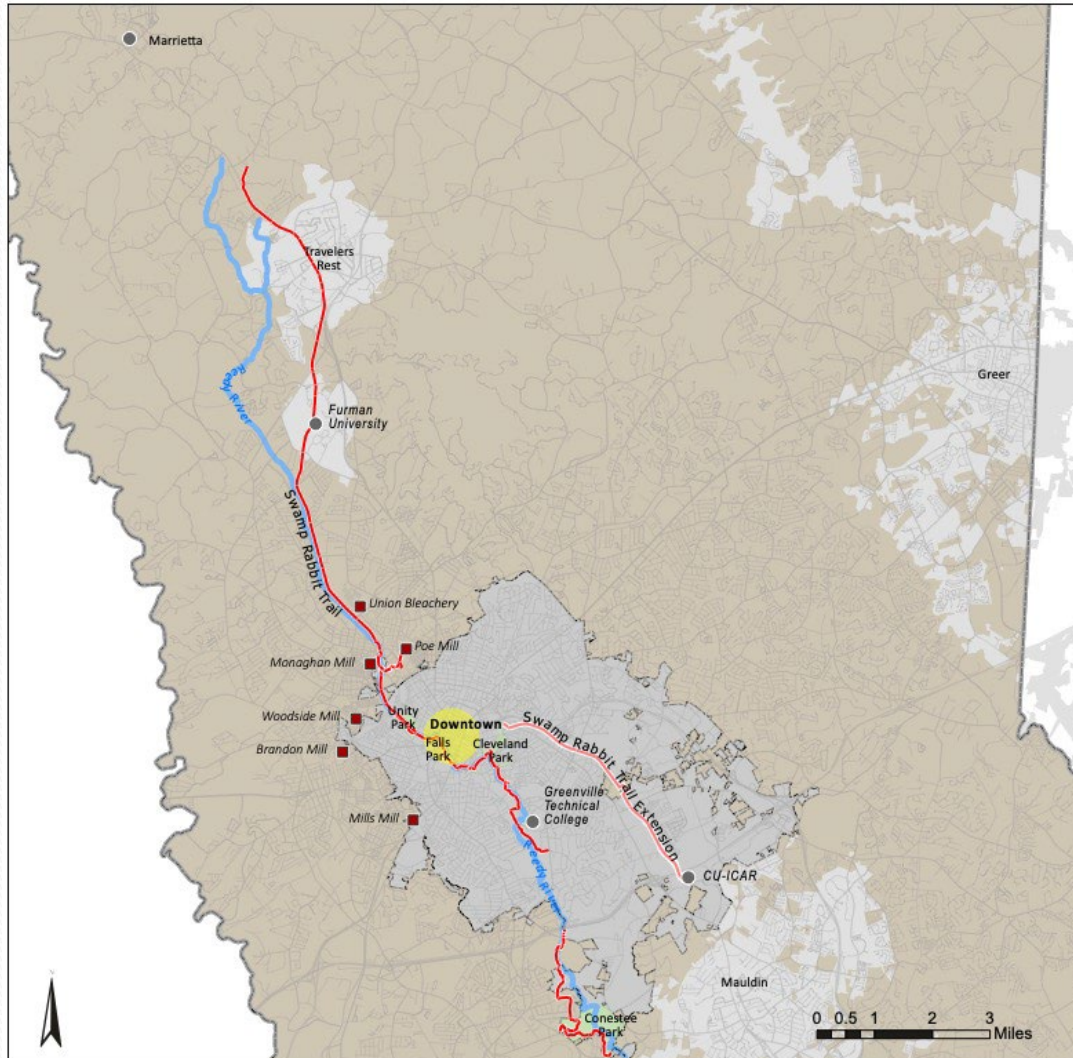
1. Background & defining the issues
2. Initiating and defining the project
3. Designing and implementing a public process
4. Design process and roles
5. Plan adoption & acceptance
6. Implementation of the trail
7. Lessons learned—revisiting the experience

Reedy River Context



- Reedy runs through the center of the County
- Historical center of Greenville & textiles
- Textile Crescent decline with loss of production
- Uncover development possibilities

Reedy River Corridor



Map provided by City of Greenville

Falls Park



Pedestrian Bridge at Falls Park



Cleveland Park



Flooding Concerns



Mayberry/Meadowbrook Park



Baseball Stadium near Conestee



Conestee Mill & Dam



Lake Conestee--2000



Rail line north of Greenville



Reedy River near its origin



Initiating the Planning Process

- City-County distrust & differences—DAGG
 - Failed development process & legal actions
 - “failure to communicate”—different cultures
- Clemson as neutral experts—”cloak of respectability”
- 2001: 4-month process for city & county agreement
- February press conference to set marker
- Steering Committee: proxy for communication and cooperation—surprising support & field trip!
- Staff level networks and collaboration-data access
- Journaling the journey

Clemson may plan Reedy development

University project will take six months

By Bob Montgomery
Environmental Warfare
bmont@greenville.com

Travelers Rest to Lake Conasauga, including the West side of Greenville where redevelopment is planned.

Greenville Mayor Koon White said Clemson planners and architects would lead the river development's conceptual design and then the city would search nationwide for developers of recommended projects.

White said Clemson's reputation will add credibility to a project that became wrapped in the controversy surrounding the Development Association of Greater Greenville.

"We're looking for planning expertise, credibility, a planning process we'd all be proud of," White said. "We believe Clemson would fit the bill."

Turning to Clemson's planners and architects would follow the City Council's withdrawal from DAGG, which considered a \$115 million proposal from Southern Infrastructure for a baseball stadium, theater, zoo, restaurant, hotel and parks on a 100-acre tract. DAGG had the power to award the contract. The case is pending.

Barry Nicks, Clemson planning coordinator chairman, said the university's study, to begin in mid-January and is, end in six months, could recommend anything from parks to a baseball stadium. Likely, it will be a combination of housing, entertainment and commercial use, he said.

"Good planning says it's Wednesday and he is willing to accept the city of Greenville's proposal to turn over planning the development of the Reedy River corridor to Clemson University."

Brooks said the county, which has been at odds with the city for months over the river's future, is willing to have Clemson planners and architects lead the river development's conceptual design and then search nationwide for developers of recommended projects.

"We've said the city we're glad to work with them," Brooks said.

The county council gave the city a resolution authorizing an agreement, he said.

Mayor Koon White said Tuesday the city close to an agreement with Clemson, which would draw from previous Reedy River studies for its plan for development along the river.

Barry Nicks, a Clemson planner, has said the possibility range from parks and trails to a zoo or baseball stadium, as has been proposed by Southern Infrastructure, a Greenville development company.

"The main stick, is to take a broad look at the river beginning as early as mid-January. Recommendations and design work could be completed by summer."

White's disclosure of the city's interest in Clemson led to abrupt negotiations with Southern Infrastructure, which has proposed a \$115 million development project on a 100-acre tract along the river and an international search for a designer.

Southern Infrastructure has used the city, saying the Development Association of Greater Greenville awarded a contract to develop the 102-acre tract and the city requested to pressure loans outside developers to block the company's project.

The city has denied the allegations that DAGG had the power to award the contract.

See REEDY on page 4A

REEDY

FROM PAGE 1A

government's responsibility to protect the environment and the river, and to make sure it serves the city and county," Nicks said. "It doesn't mean it all needs to be open space. It's incumbent to make sure the right things are done."

He said students will work alongside Clemson faculty members. "It's part of a learning process for students as well as development for the faculty," he said.

The cost to the city is still being discussed, but City Councilman Gerry Coulter said it basically will cover Clemson's expenses.

Nicks said Clemson would draw from previous city studies that have examined various parts of the Reedy River. Some of those studies' recommendations, such as rerouting traffic to one-way streets and creating more green spaces, are being implemented, Coulter said.

This will be the first time city and county officials will have a comprehensive study of the Reedy corridor from Travelers Rest to Lake Conasauga, Coulter said.

White said city and county planners will continue to work together during the process. "It would be an open process that places emphasis on community participation," White said. "Informally, there's been a positive reaction (from the county)."

County Council Chairman Dexter Brooks could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Tim Brett, Southern Infrastructure's chairman, declined to comment.

"We've always indicated from day one that we would be cooperative, so there's no need to comment," said Gerald Seals, president of Southern Infrastructure.

Also, Clemson President James Barber could not be reached.

with Clemson, which has done previous projects for the city. "Everybody thinks about it for a minute, then say, 'This is really great,'" Coulter said.

"If we can balance all these competitive interests, I think we've got a wonderful future," Coulter added. "It's not going to be easy and quick. It's going to take time and effort, much like the downtown. Each thing will be a stepping stone."

■ Bob Montgomery can be reached at 798-4295.

County vows to work with city, Clemson on Reedy plans

Study could begin in mid-January

By Bob Montgomery
Environmental Warfare
bmont@greenville.com

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The case is pending.

Tim Brett, Southern Infrastructure's chairman, has declined comment on the Clemson proposal. Gerald Seals, the company's president, has said Southern Infrastructure would cooperate with the city and county.

City Councilman Gerry Coulter said the cost of a Clemson study isn't being determined, but it basically will cover the university's expenses.

Coulter said the city has spent approximately \$100,000 on two

studies, but that the Clemson study will be the first comprehensive study on the entire basin and one that takes into account redevelopment.

"Whatever plan we do, the West End of Greenville will have a lot of attention paid to them," Coulter said. "There will be recreational facilities built — period — as well as commercial development, which will provide jobs."

Coulter said the city has spent \$3 million to match \$23 million in federal bonding money to tear apart roadways lanes and build affordable housing for low-income families.

"The idea we're forgetting or not paying attention is not true," he said.

Meanwhile, Brooks said he's waiting to see how much Clemson's river study river will cost before he recommends how much the county should contribute.

"The idea we're forgetting or not paying attention is not true," he said.

County Councilwoman Leticia Gibson said she thinks enough river studies have been done.

"I don't think we need another study," Gibson said. "It does not make common sense to the taxpayer. We've got too many hungry, homeless people either on alcohol or drugs who need some guidance and rehabilitation for us to be wasting this money on another study."

For now, it remains unclear what role, if any, DAGG would play in the planning process. Brooks said the partially dissolved group does not intend to work with Clemson.

"DAGG is just hanging in there as far as I know," said Brooks, referring to the association that was formed by the city and county to seek proposals for redevelopment.

The city has pulled its five members from DAGG. Six county appointees remain, but the group has been inactive, officials said.

"This has nothing to do with DAGG," Brooks said.

Brooks and state Sen. Mike Fair, R-Greenville, DAGG's chairman, said the association has been inactive since the city pulled its members.

"Under the Imbo status, it is inappropriate for me to make any comment," Fair said. "There's no

new news. We're going to have to wait and take our direction from local government and city council."

For their part, city and county officials said they've excited the prospect of being reconnected and looked forward to working together.

"It takes to get everybody to the table with very professional staff and an objective party involved," said City Councilwoman Cheriak Dickard. "Clemson has one of the best intentions."

City Councilwoman Deb Seifeld called the arrangement with Clemson "a win-win situation" for both the city and county.

"Leticia Gibson is right," Seifeld said. "A lot of money has been spent. But this is the opportunity to do it the right way. County council needs to come to the table."

County Councilman Stephen Seibay said, "Any help we can get toward moving the along and Clemson's willing to do it. It's gotta hard to turn an offer like that down. This is the biggest project Greenville has taken part in, in a long time."

Press Conference Announced!



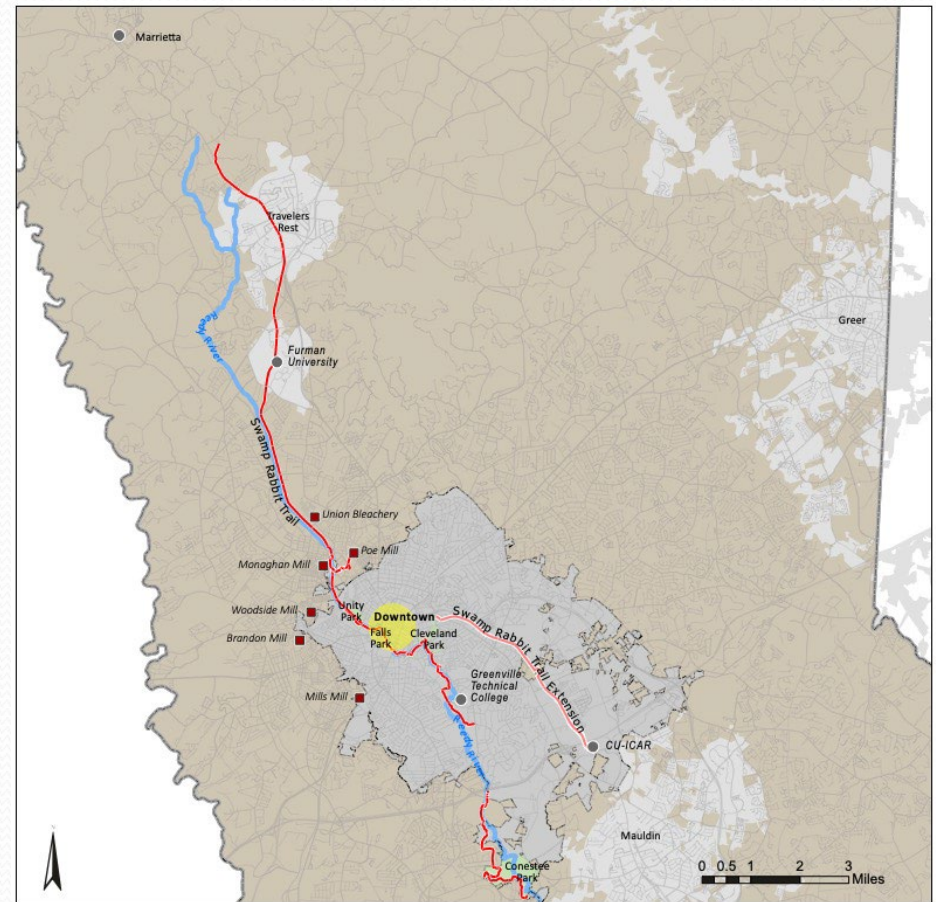
Purpose of the Study

- Develop a master plan for the Reedy River Corridor, running from Travelers Rest to Lake Conestee that would:
 - Define areas for future land use
 - Encourage desirable future development on the river
 - Promote large scale projects, such as major trails, parks, and activity centers in context

Corridor Sectors

Based on our analysis, divided 16-mile corridor into five sectors:

1. Northern sector—TR, Furman
2. Textile Crescent
3. Downtown Greenville, Cleveland Park
4. Greenville Tech to I-85
5. I-85 to Conestee area



Map provided by City of Greenville

Defining the Corridor

- Length determined politically
- Width a question—what criteria to use?
 - Riparian areas
 - Related economic/land uses
 - Lack of controls/limited capacities
 - Potential for overlay district

Corridor Analysis

- Physical characteristics: topography, soils
- Infrastructure
- Neighborhood character
- Watersheds, Floodplains & Water quality
- Comprehensive planning element studies
- Current land use/vacant land
- Review of existing plans (>two dozen)
- Visual analysis
- Stakeholder interviews
- Case Studies

Designing a public process



- Open, public process vital to our success
- Working with the press and public relations: a new world
 - Press conference: the media are interested
 - Public relations expertise: simple but real
- People want public cooperation & open processes

Public relations for planning— *representing Clemson & the project*

- Work with the media--Seek them out and explain the project
 - Meet with reporters & editors—personal relationships
 - Be honest, open & consistent
- Figure out your message & make it clear (KISS)
- Set expectations clearly and consistently
- Keep doing it—you can never stop
- At least one person's full-time job
- Practice makes better

Kick-off Meeting Experience

- Initial public meeting to get attention (June 2001)
- Press and TV interest
- Long lead time:
 - 10 weeks for President's schedule
 - 8 weeks of announcements and meetings
- Logistics are important
- Brochures, web page, etc.

Public meetings



- Create awareness of meetings
- Set agenda/framework carefully
- Use mix of facilitators: city & county, plus students
- Logistics are challenging and important—pizza!
- Wonderful attendance & media coverage

July Meeting Results— Common Themes

- Greenville cares about the Reedy River corridor
- Greenville cares about its quality of life
- Access to the river is important
- River quality must be improved & protected
- Flood control is important
- Redevelopment needed in parts of the corridor

Design Team & student staff

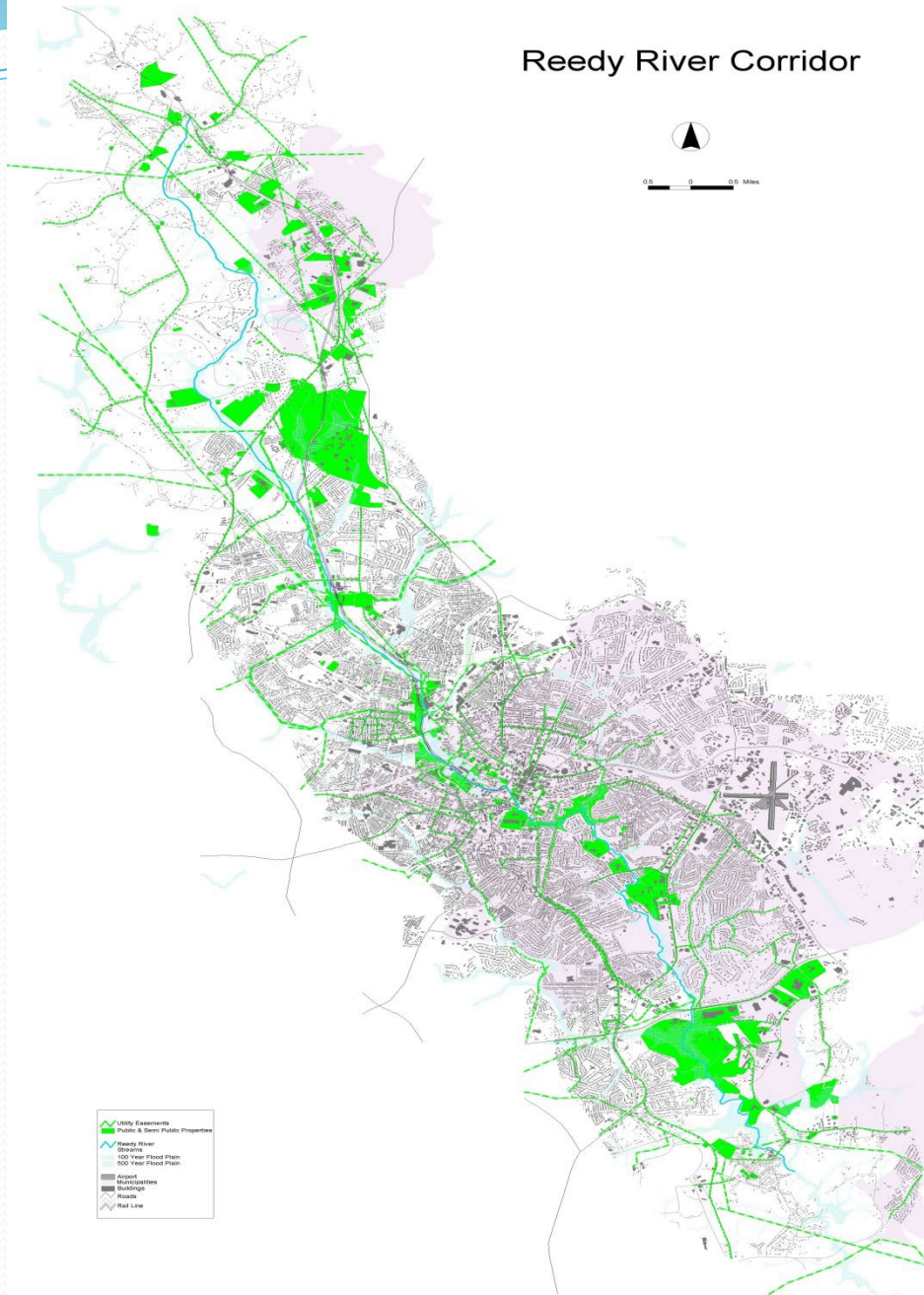


- Umit Yilmaz, PhD
- Harry Harritos, AIA
- Georgia Harrison, ASLA
- 4 graduate assistants for 2 semesters & the summer

Reedy River Corridor



0 0.5 1 Miles



- Utility Easements
- Public & Semi Public Properties
- Reedy River
- Streams
- 100 Year Flood Plain
- 500 Year Flood Plain
- Water
- Municipalities
- Buildings
- Roads
- Rail Line

Interdisciplinary Studios



- Graduate planning studio
- 2 Graduate architecture studios
- Undergraduate landscape studio
- Undergraduate architecture studio

Design Process

- We listened to stakeholders.
- We involved local professionals.
- We were methodical.
- We explained our ideas to local media.
- We consistently informed steering committee.
- We utilized our academic resources-Clemson & Furman.
- We reached out to expert networks.
- We reached out to interested communities.

Strategy: Public Input/Design Response



- Access to Water
- Water quality
- Respect for Private Property Rights
- Neighborhood redevelopment
- Economic Development
- Overarching theme:
CONNECTIVITY

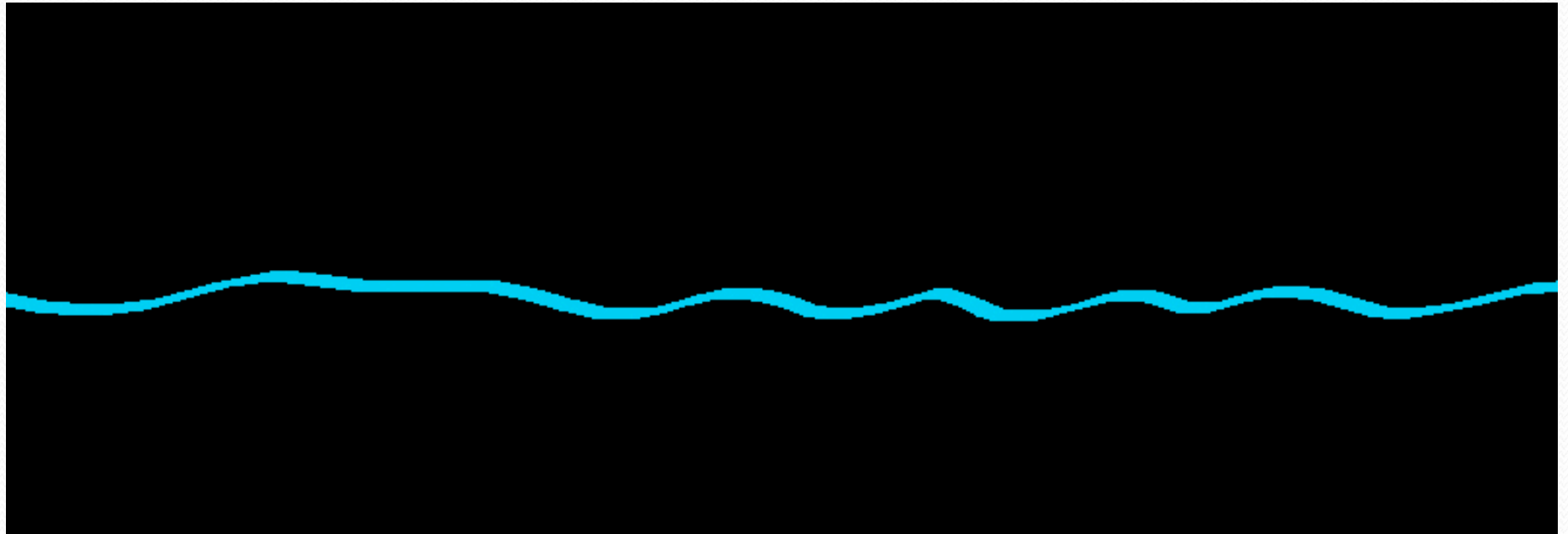
Toward a design concept & strategy for 16 miles and 5+ sectors

- Large, varied areas involved; we must work from an overall concept and strategy that:
 - Includes both vision and feasibility
 - Creates a foundation for desired development in the Reedy River area
 - Suggests opportunities for development

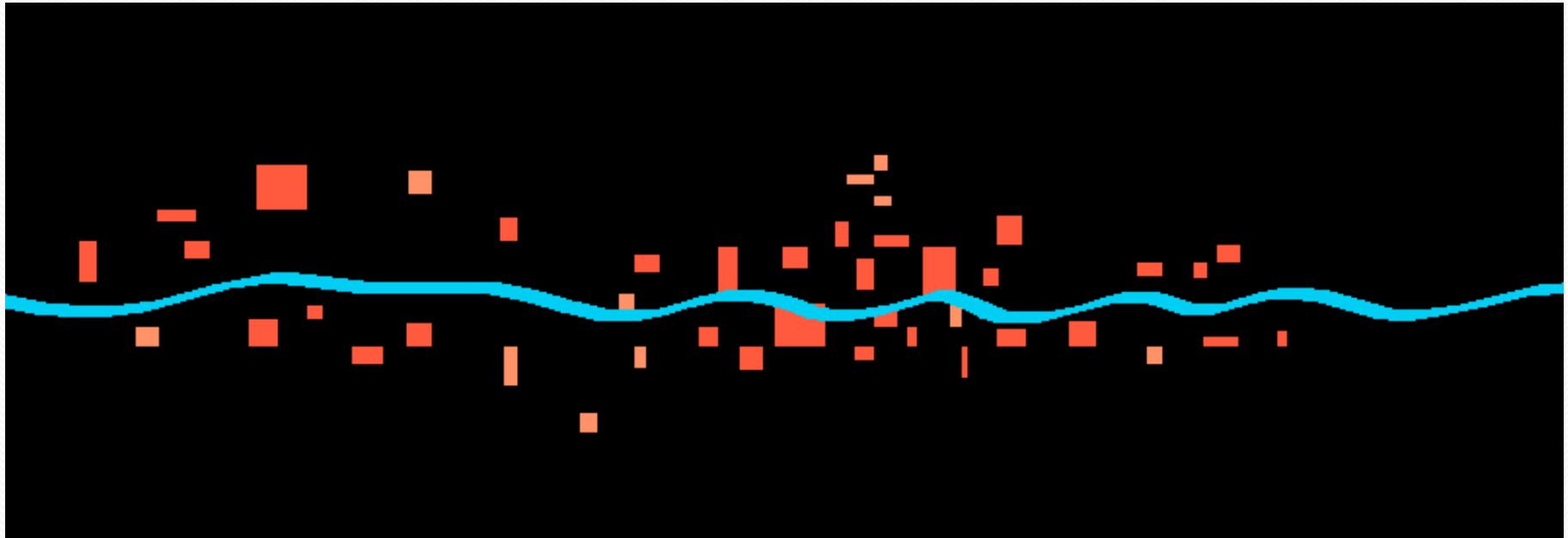
Core Concept/strategy

- **Create pathways** to and along the Reedy
 - Use public land, existing easements, etc. to the extent possible
 - Identify future pathways along the river
- **Identify special and other use possibilities** in the Reedy River area
- **Recognize watershed issues** re. runoff, flooding and water quality

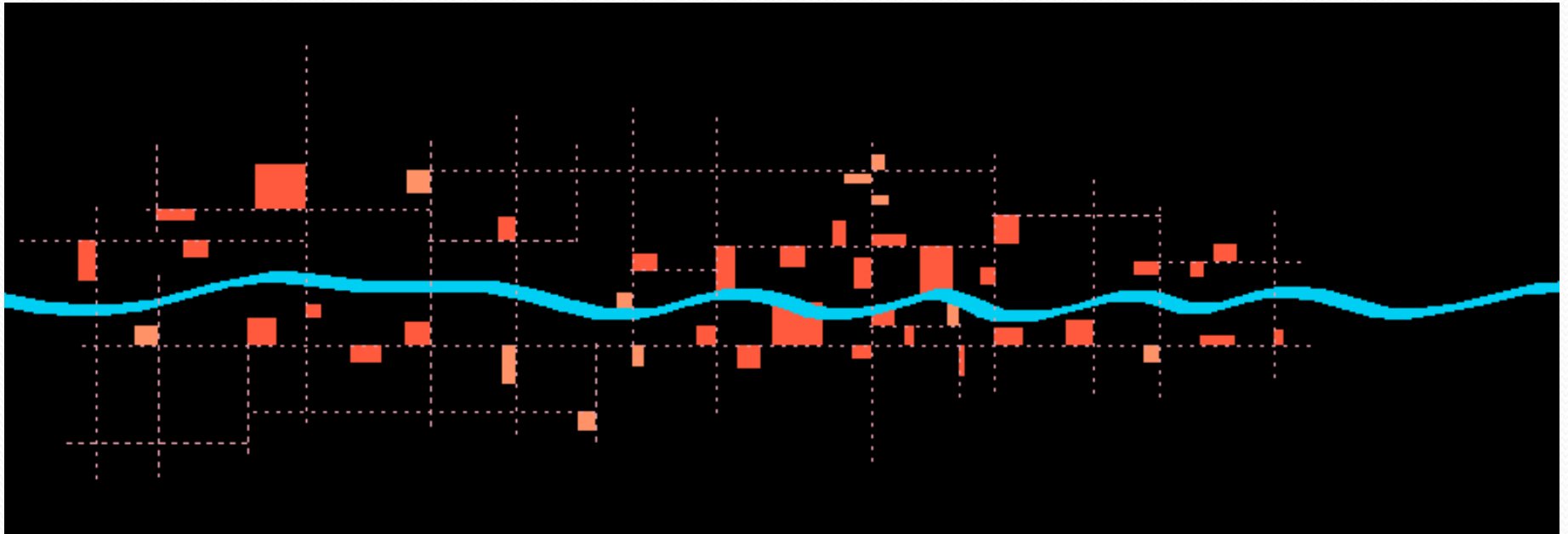
The River



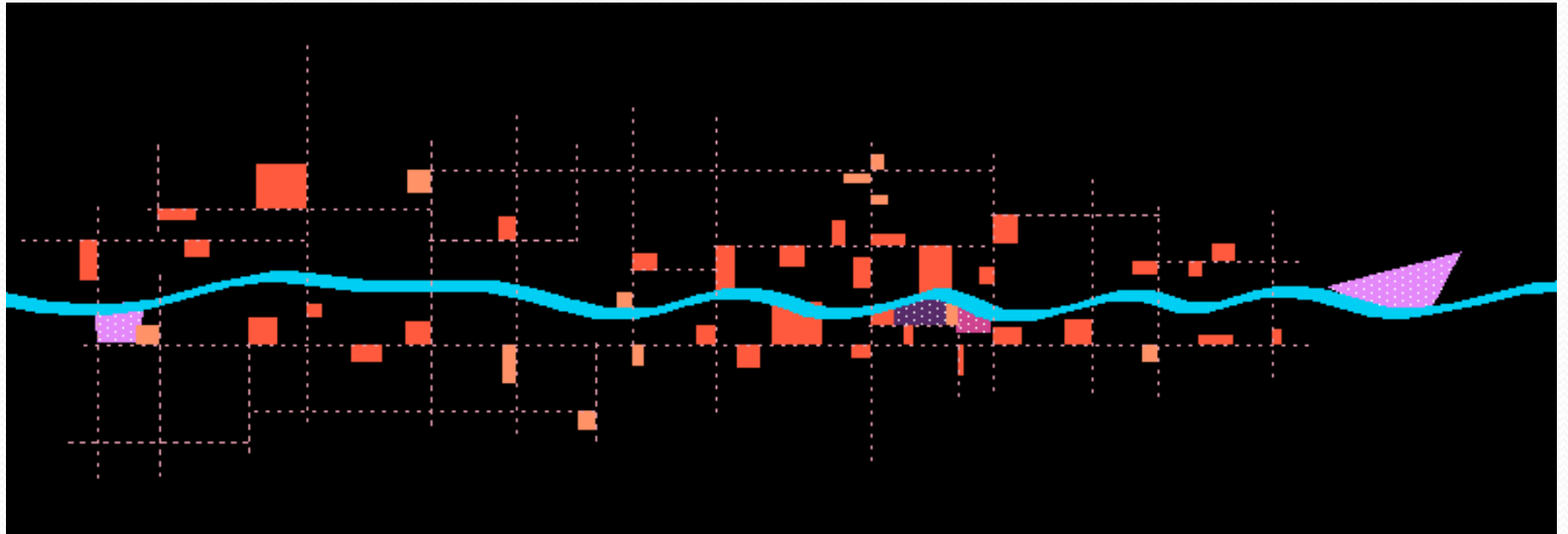
River with local sites



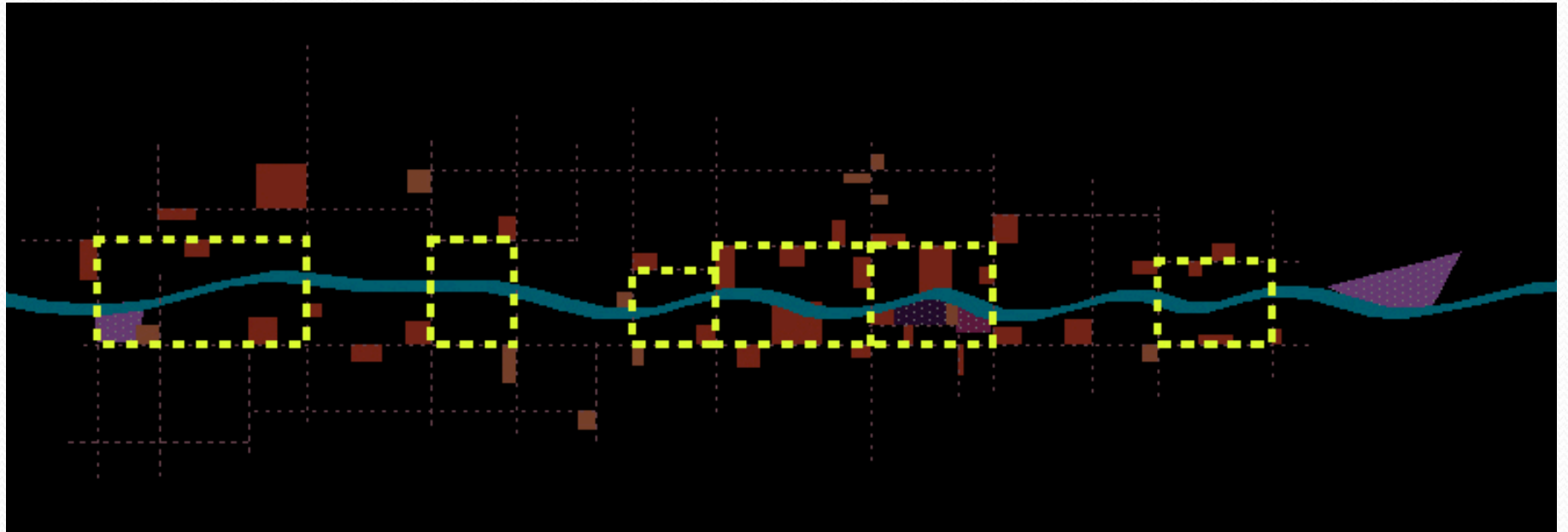
River, sites & existing links



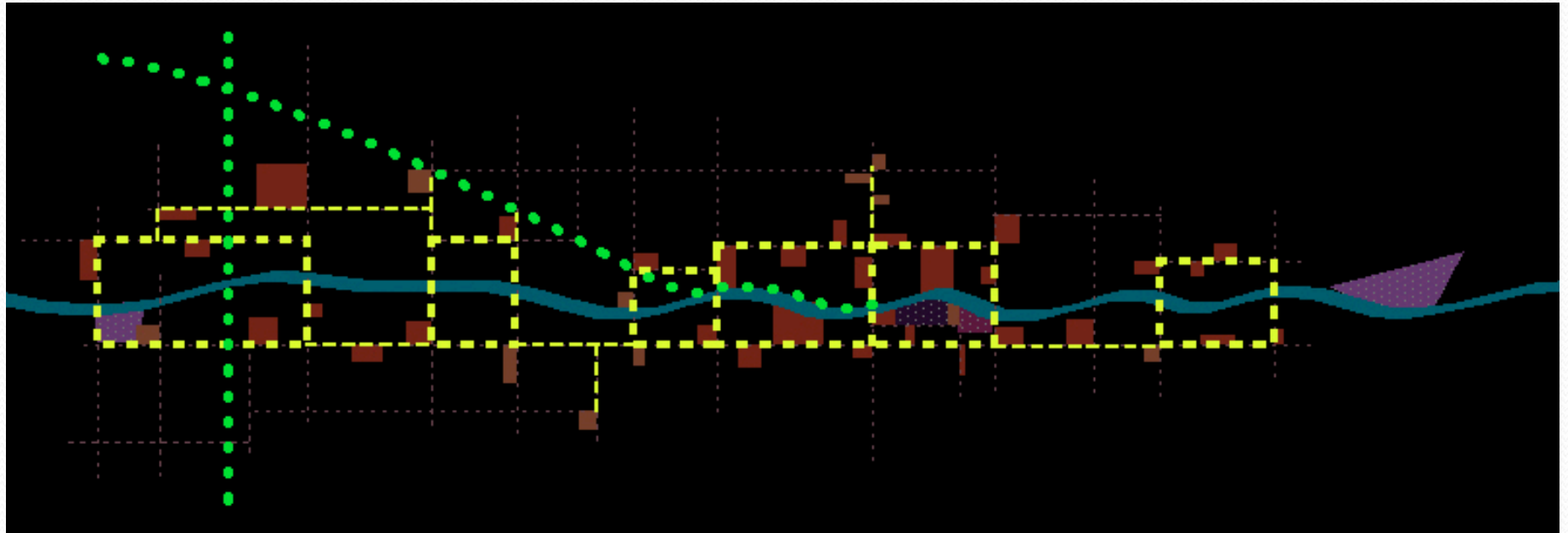
Add river attractions



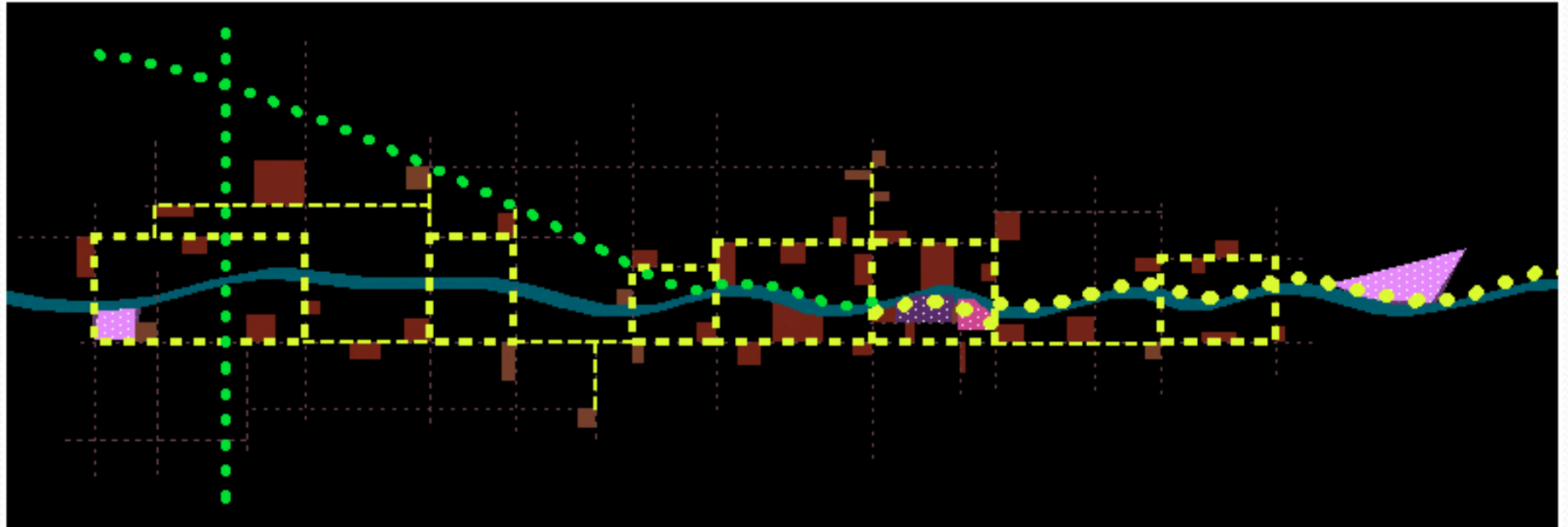
Create local pathways



Add greenways & more pathways

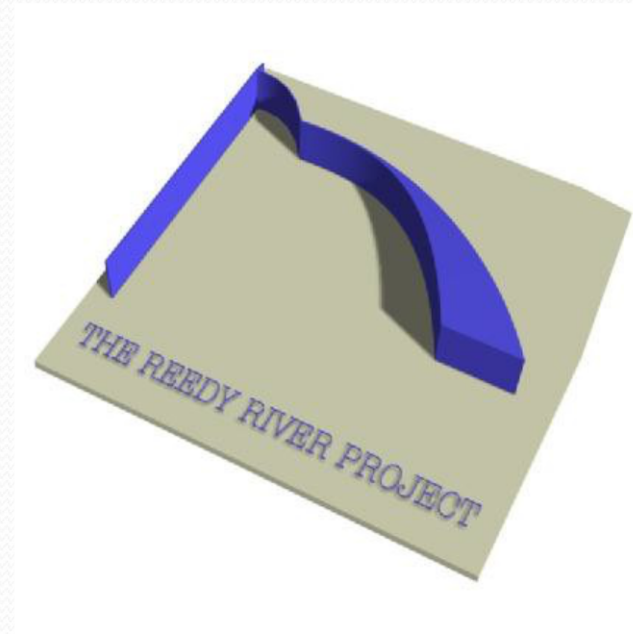


Overall: Add pathways along river,
highlight sites



September Public Meetings

- Review current status of project
- Get your suggestions of
 - potential pathways & access points
 - General land uses in the Public Access Way
 - Potential uses and sites for development
- Your views must inform our plans & designs
- *Plan presented to public meetings in December*
- *Adopted/Accepted by City & County, 2002*



The Reedy River Master Plan

Presented by
The Center for Community Growth and Change
Clemson University
May 2002

Mayberry/Meadowbrook Park Plan



Rebranded UNITY PARK





Unity Park under construction



Commons in Unity Park



Swamp Rabbit Trail at the Commons in Unity Park

Source: City of Greenville



Unity Park play area



Sector Two Plan



The Reedy River Master Plan

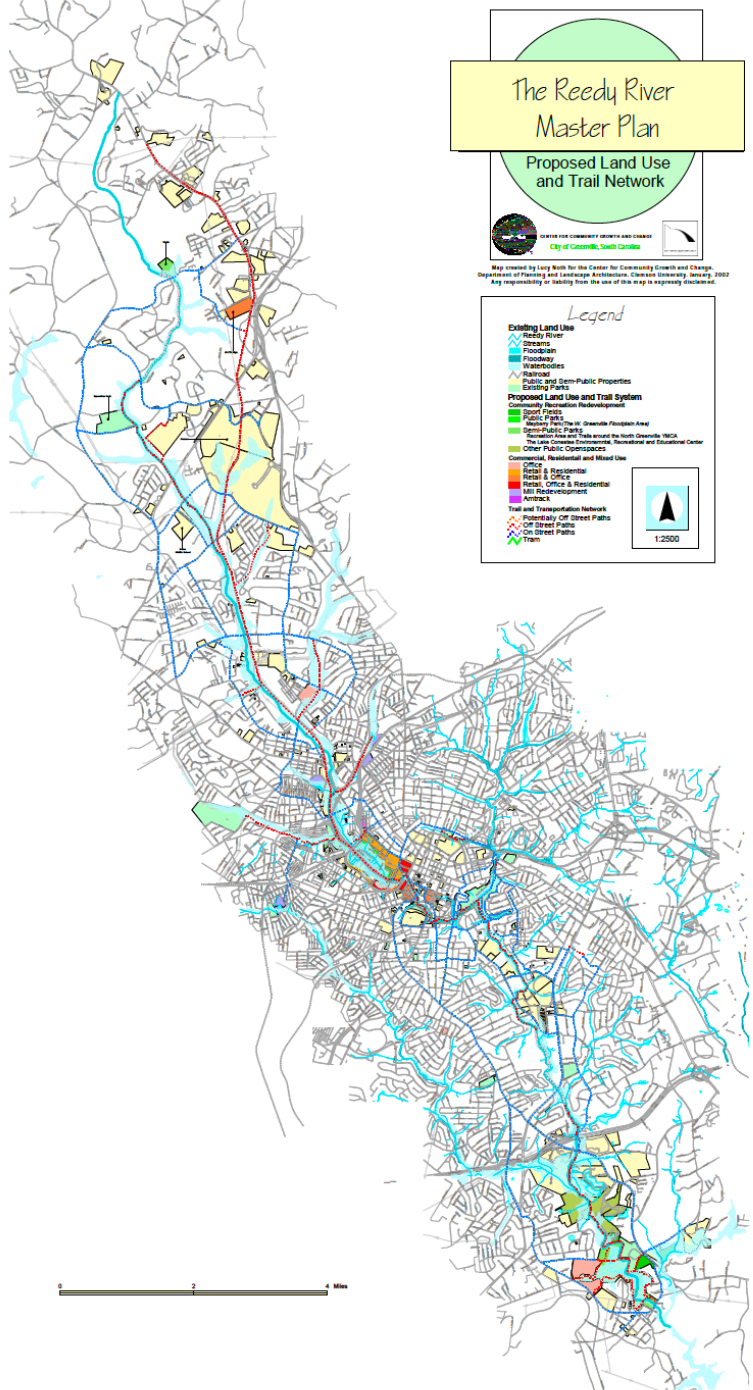
Proposed Land Use and Trail Network



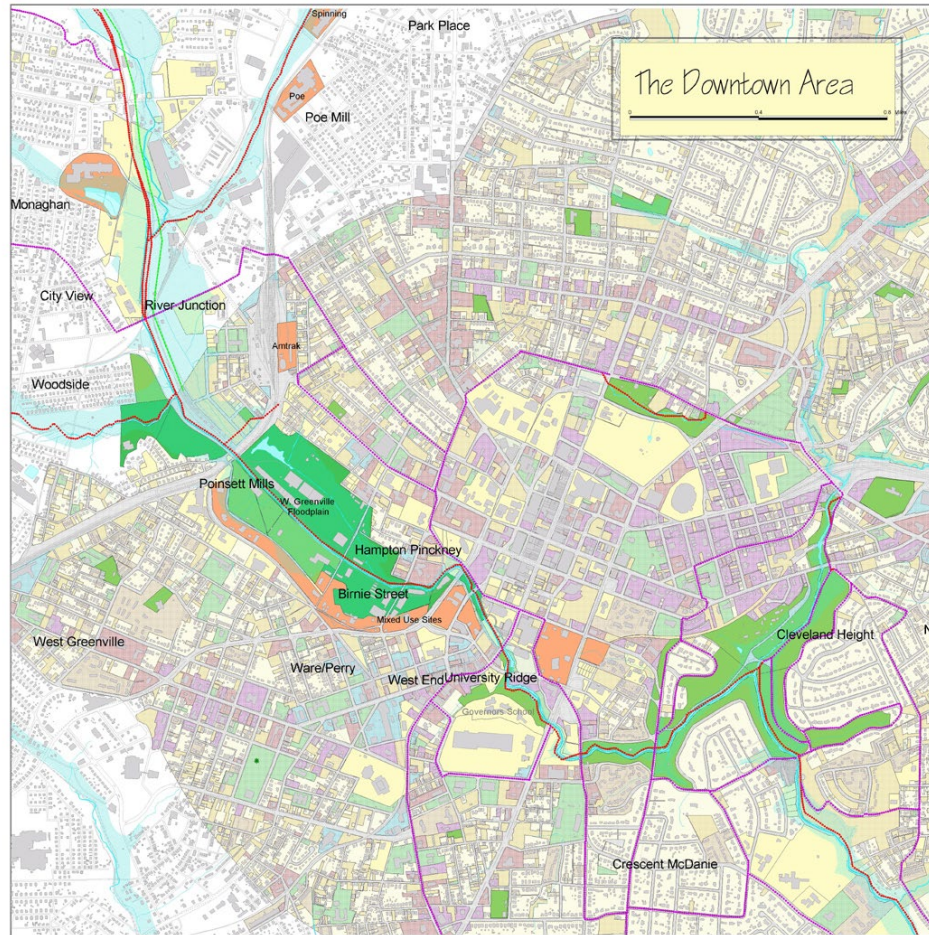
Map created by Larry Nash for the Center for Community Growth and Change, Department of Planning and Landmarks Administration, Charlotte, University January, 2002. Any responsibility for liability from the use of this map is expressly disclaimed.

Legend

- Existing Land Use**
 - Reedy River
 - Streams
 - Floodplain
 - Floodway
 - Waterbodies
 - Railroad
 - Public and Semi-Public Properties
- Proposed Land Use and Trail System**
 - Community Rejuvenation Redevelopment
 - Sport Fields
 - Recreation (The St. Grenville Floodplain Area)
 - Open Public Paths
 - Open Public Paths (The Lake Norman MDC)
 - The Lake Norman Environmental, Recreational and Educational Center
 - Other Public OpenSpace
- Commercial, Residential and Mixed Use**
 - Office
 - Retail & Residential
 - Hotel, Office & Residential
 - MHI Redevelopment
 - Artwork
- Trail and Transportation Network**
 - Potentially Off Street Paths
 - Off Street Paths
 - On Street Paths
 - Trail



Downtown Loop



Falls Park Bridge and Falls

Source: City of Greenville





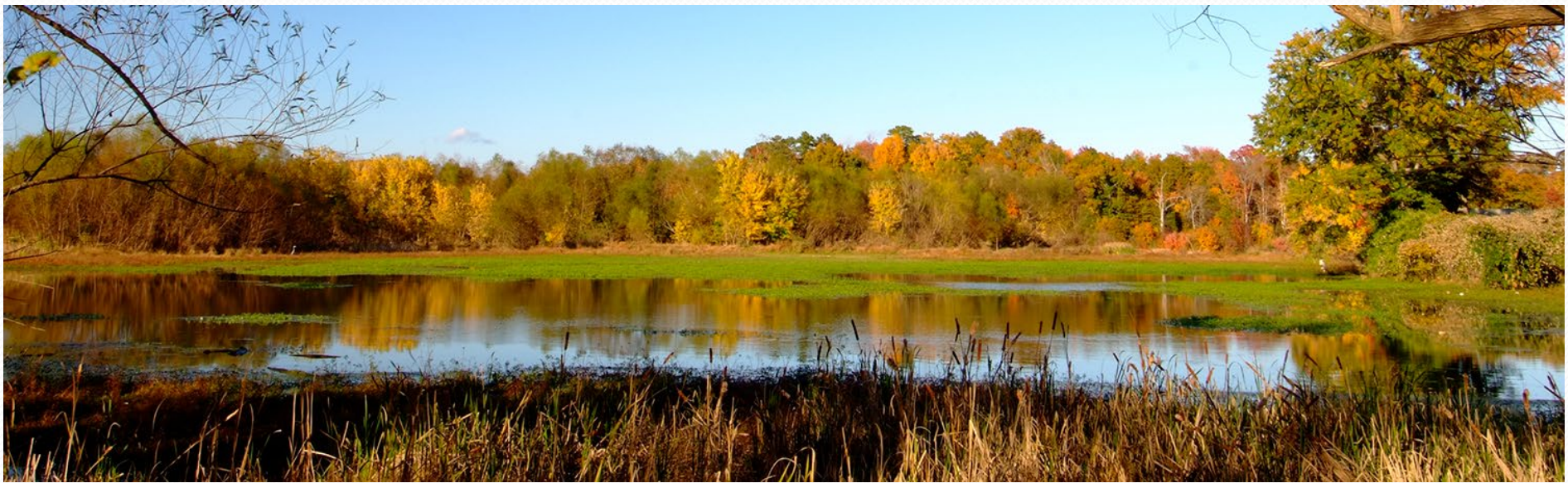


Sector Four Plan--Conestee





Lake Conestee



Implementation issues—

while the plan has been implemented with significant impact, not simple instant Nirvana on the Reedy

The plan and its support just set the table for action

- Completed the Master Plan, Spring 2002
- Accepted by the Steering Committee, City & County Councils, Adopted as policy by City Council
- City policy & entitlements followed the Reedy River Plan

Early years of trail development

- SRT acquisition and construction took 10 years
 - County approval of ending rail use
 - GCEDC action
 - Volunteer trail pilot
 - Gaining federal approval (US Surface Trans. Board)
 - Removing/selling rail and paving
 - 10 years of implementation, growth & evolution
- City connected trails to Falls Park, Cleveland Park and downtown
- Riverplace development begins

Riverplace & the \$6 million stairs



Water feature at Riverplace



Weekend Festival at Riverplace







Trail Impacts--1

- Created new access pathway--Opens land for development
 - Every storage shed a brew pub!
 - Former mills become chic areas
 - Former industrial areas opened for mixed use
- Major recreation resource
- Visitors and tourist \$



Trail Impacts--2

- Downtown development—River Place, Park, Bridge, **West End**, Flour Field, M-F & hotel explosion.
- Swamp Rabbit trail—D-T to TR; D-T to Gr. Tech + continued trail development; tie to further trail planning—high use & interest in trails
- Unity Park
- Falls Park
- Downtown Greenville development
- Kroc Center/Wittenburg Academy/Tennis Center
- Redevelopment of Lake Conestee/County Park/Mill
- TR shops, food and other trail related redevelopment
- Overall success and impact.

<http://greenvillerec.com/swamprabbit>

Clemson-Greenville Partnerships



- ICAR
- USC Medical School/PRISMA-GHS/Clemson research
- Downtown Business & Real Estate Programs
- Conestee Park
- Other collaborations

Takeaways/Lessons Learned

- Set expectations early & often
 - Use public relations techniques
- Participate the public—welcome it
- Participation involves listening and educating
- Basic desires are not surprising—be open to and follow them; *show how they are being met*
- Politics—don't be surprised by criticism, but be professional (*there is life under the bus*)
- Keep elected officials fully informed—most are decent
- *Develop a process, communicate and stick with it*

Takeaways/Lessons Learned-2

- Recognize the roles of related professions, making sure that each has appropriate inputs, clear expectations and recognition
 - Planning: process, participation, data analysis, policy
 - LA: design, interconnections, site characteristics, materials and environmental design, graphics
 - Arch: specific building designs within sites, graphics
- Education creates ideas and options; consensus follows; all are informed by public opinion
- It is about the results for everyone, especially politicians & not yourself

Takeaways/Lessons Learned -3

- Collaborative relationships/**partnerships** are necessary for large scale projects—use networks
- Successful plans are based on public engagement
- Communication is vital, early and often
- There are many good folks who want positive change, along with some complainers
- Student work is a vehicle for trial balloons
- Successful projects build credibility for the future
- Planning sets up action
- Implementation is a whole “other” process

Looking back on it:

- Exciting process
- Spotlight can be fun & dangerous
- Attract best students
- Meet fine folks in the community
- Recognize positive in the world
- All individuals must be treated with respect
- People want livable public spaces
- Common goals lead to collaboration
- Planning can be fun and fulfilling

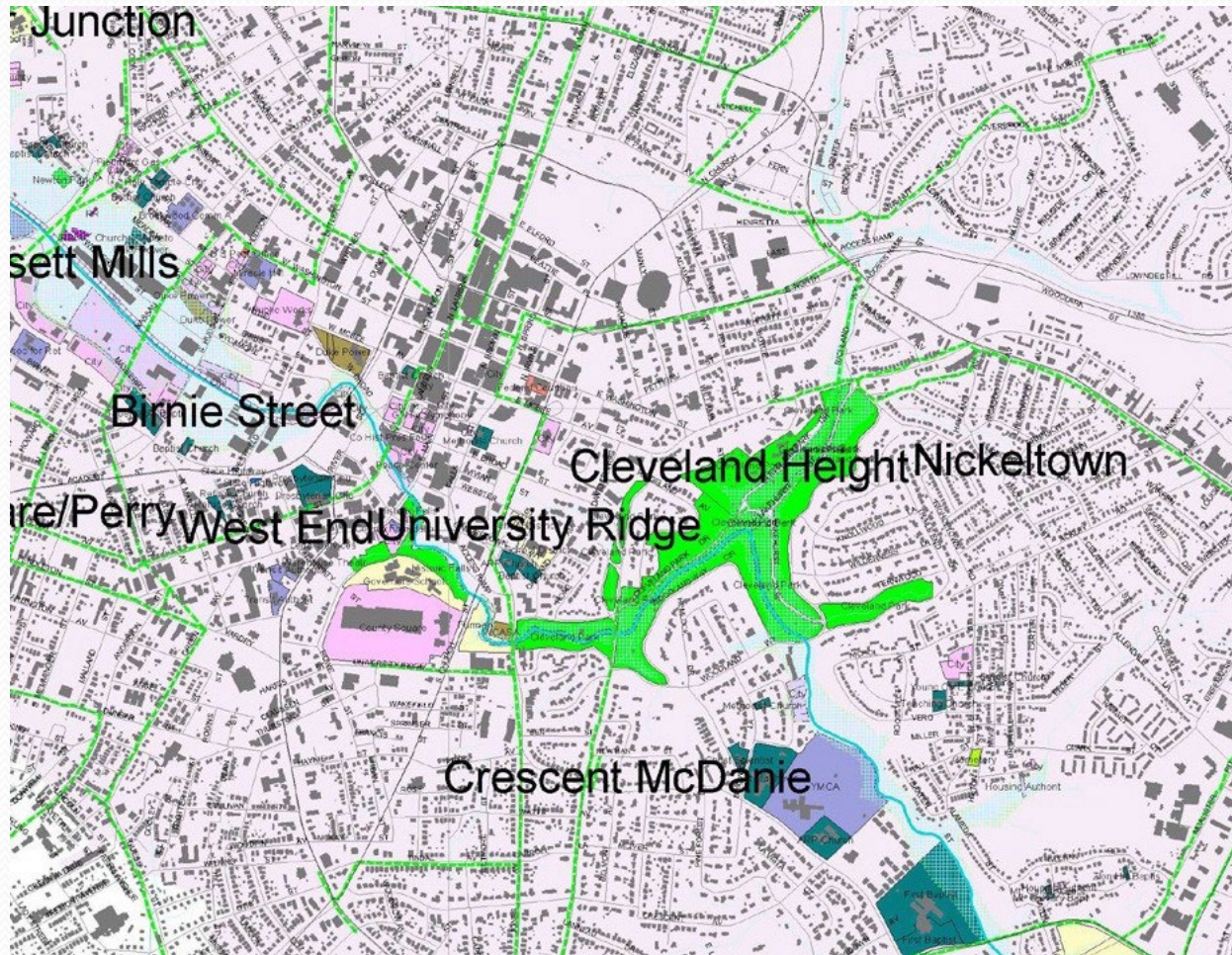




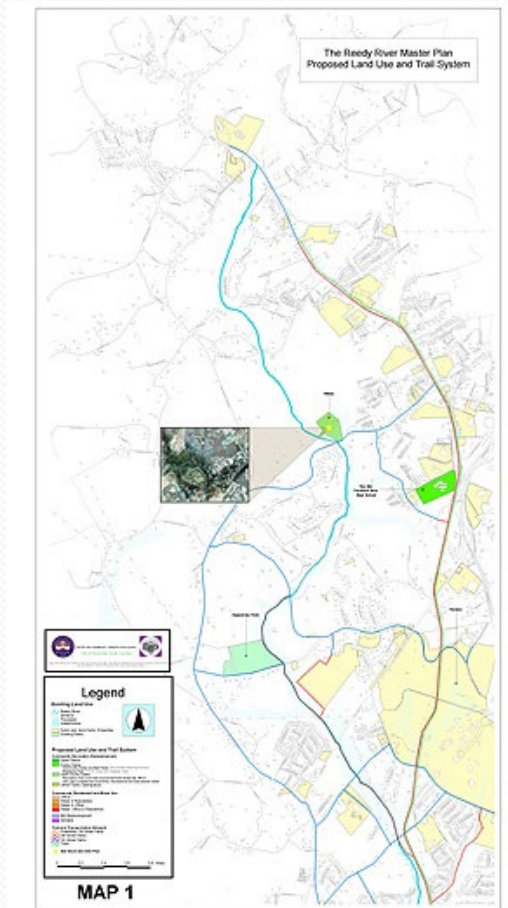
Questions?







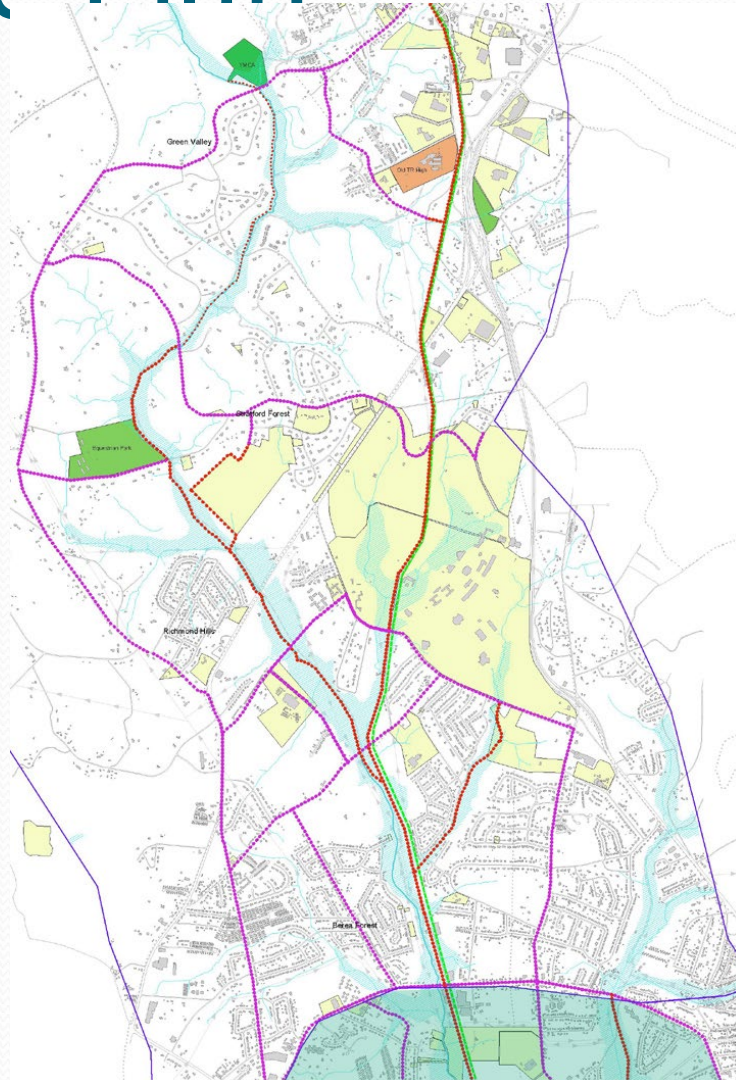
Study Area - 1



Study Area - 3



Sector One Plan



Peace Center



Student Work - YMCA



Sectors Two and Three A



Sector Two



- Displacement Concern
- More Affordable Housing
- Economic Development

Public meeting questions using the Concept/Strategy Map

- Access points, sites, and views around the river that are:
 - most useful and visible
 - Paths to get to them
 - Points that should NOT be included or connected
- Land uses desired around the river

Student Work



Student Work



Sector Three B



- Reluctance to Trail Easements
- Fear of Crime Increase
- Golf Course Barrier

Sector Three B Plan





Public Meeting

