



Advisory Services
Program



Charlotte

Asheville: A Legacy in Progress

Asheville, NC
August 1st, 2025

Credit: Elin Oom Photography

THE MISSION OF THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

Shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide

MISSION COMMITMENTS

CONNECT active, passionate, diverse members through the foremost global network of interdisciplinary professionals

INSPIRE best practices for equitable and sustainable land use through content, education, convening, mentoring, and knowledge sharing

LEAD in solving community and real estate challenges through applied collective global experience and philanthropic engagement





The Advisory Services Program has provided strategic, impactful recommendations to communities for over 75 years.

We engage experts in a diverse array of real estate development and land use fields, including transportation and transit-oriented development; neighborhood and regional planning; infrastructure; retail and commercial corridors; academic and medical institutions; disaster response and sustainability; and housing.

ASPs are made possible with support from the ULI Foundation.



LISTENING/LEARNING

- Sponsor briefing
- Site tour
- Meet & Greet
- Stakeholder interviews

DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Guided panelist deliberation
- Deliverable production

OFFERING EXPERT SOLUTIONS

- Presentation of recommendations
- Final report/work product

Urban Resilience at ULI

- Help communities, institutions and systems prepare for, absorb, recover from, and adapt to adverse events
- Reduce vulnerability, while harnessing co-benefits to strengthen cities overall
- Research, convenings, technical assistance in partnership with ULI members and local ULI District Council network



Resilience-Focused Technical Assistance

- Anchorage, Alaska
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Brooklyn, New York
- Cape Coral, Florida
- Chicago, Illinois
- Dallas, Texas
- Duluth, Minnesota
- El Paso, Texas
- Everett, Washington
- Evergreen, Colorado
- Fort Lauderdale, Florida
- Houston, Texas
- Jersey Shore, New Jersey
- Lafayette, Louisiana
- Los Angeles, California
- Miami-Dade County, Florida
- Nashville-Davidson County, Tennessee

- New Orleans, Louisiana
- New York, New York
- Norfolk, Virginia
- Northern Colorado, Colorado
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Portland, Maine
- San Diego, California
- Seattle, Washington
- St. Petersburg, Florida
- St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana
- Superior and Louisville, Colorado
- Tampa Bay, Florida
- Toa Baja, Puerto Rico



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS



THANK YOU, STAKEHOLDERS

Asheville Mayor Esther Manheimer • Vice Mayor Antanette Mosley • Adam Charnack • Adam Stein • Alex Cole • Alex Smith • Amy Allison • Amy Deyton • Amy Kelly • Andrea Batt • Andrea Golden • Anne E Keller • Anthony Thomas • Ben Woody • Beth Silverman • Betsy del Monte • Bill Hart • Bo Hess • Bobbette Mays • Bradley Spiegel • Brian Walker • Bridget Herring • Bryan Moffitt • Charlie Savage • Chris Corl • Chris Day • Chris Joyell • Christian Chambers • Christine Laucher • Clark Duncan • Corey Adkins • D. Tyrell McGirt • Dan Ford • Dave Nutter • David Cosslett • Debra Campbell • Derek Allen • Dr. Ellis Matheson • Dr. John Gossett • Dr. Maggie Fehrman • Eddie Dewey • Ellie Grosse • Emma Nguyen • Ernesto Arellano-Perez • Evie Thomas • Geoffrey Barton • Glenn Walters • Hannah Chen • Hannah Martin • Deputy Chief Jackie Stepp • Jeff Brigman • Jeffrey Burroughs • Jen Hampton • Jennifer Bennett • Jennifer Stanton • Jeremy Knighton • Jessica Morriss • Jessie Lindl • Joe Balcken • John Dawson • John Delaloye • John Pierce • Joseph Minicozzi • Judith Long • Justin Raybuck • Karissa Norrington • Karli Stepheson • Kate Pett • Katie Cornell • Katie Noun • Kevan Frazier • Kiera Bulan • Kieth Aiken • Kim Roney • Kimberly van Noort • Kit Cramer • Kyle Parks • Kyle R Highberg • Lindsay Spangler • Lisa Raleigh • Liz Whalen Tallent • Lucy Crown • Mark Matheny • Martin Lewis • Mary Spivey • Matt Allen • Megan Owens • Meghan Rogers • Mia Strauss • Mike Cayse • Mike Lamb • Mike Sule • Neal Reed • Nikki Reid • Nikki Stewart • Patrich Pierce • Rev. Phillip Cooper • Promise Boseman • Rachel Brown • Rachel Taylor • Rebecca Brothers • Sabrina Rockoff • Sage Turner • Sala Menyay Merii • Sarah Hereford • Sharon Decker • Shawn Boone • Sheldon Clark • Sheneika Smith • Stacy Ripley • Starr Metcalf • Stephanie Dahl • Stephanie Swepson Twitty • Steve Navarro • Stuart Proffitt • Taylor Schneker • Tim Rosebrock • Tristan Winkler • Vic Isley • Walter Ear • Yajaira Hernandez • Zoe Hoyle Paul Handsman Kayla Aimesbury

ULI Project Team

Selected for their subject matter expertise to provide **objective, volunteer** recommendations



Jim Heid
Panel Chair
CRAFT DnA
Healdsburg, CA



Samia Byrd
Arlington County
Government
Arlington, VA



Jim MacRae
Design Workshop
Denver, CO



**Clare
De Briere**
C+C Ventures
Los Angeles, CA



Roni Deitz
Arcadis
Sugar Mountain,
NC



**David
Mazzuca**
Columbia
University
Brooklyn, NY



**Andre
Brumfield**
Gensler
Chicago, IL



Richard Green
University of
Southern California
Los Angeles, CA



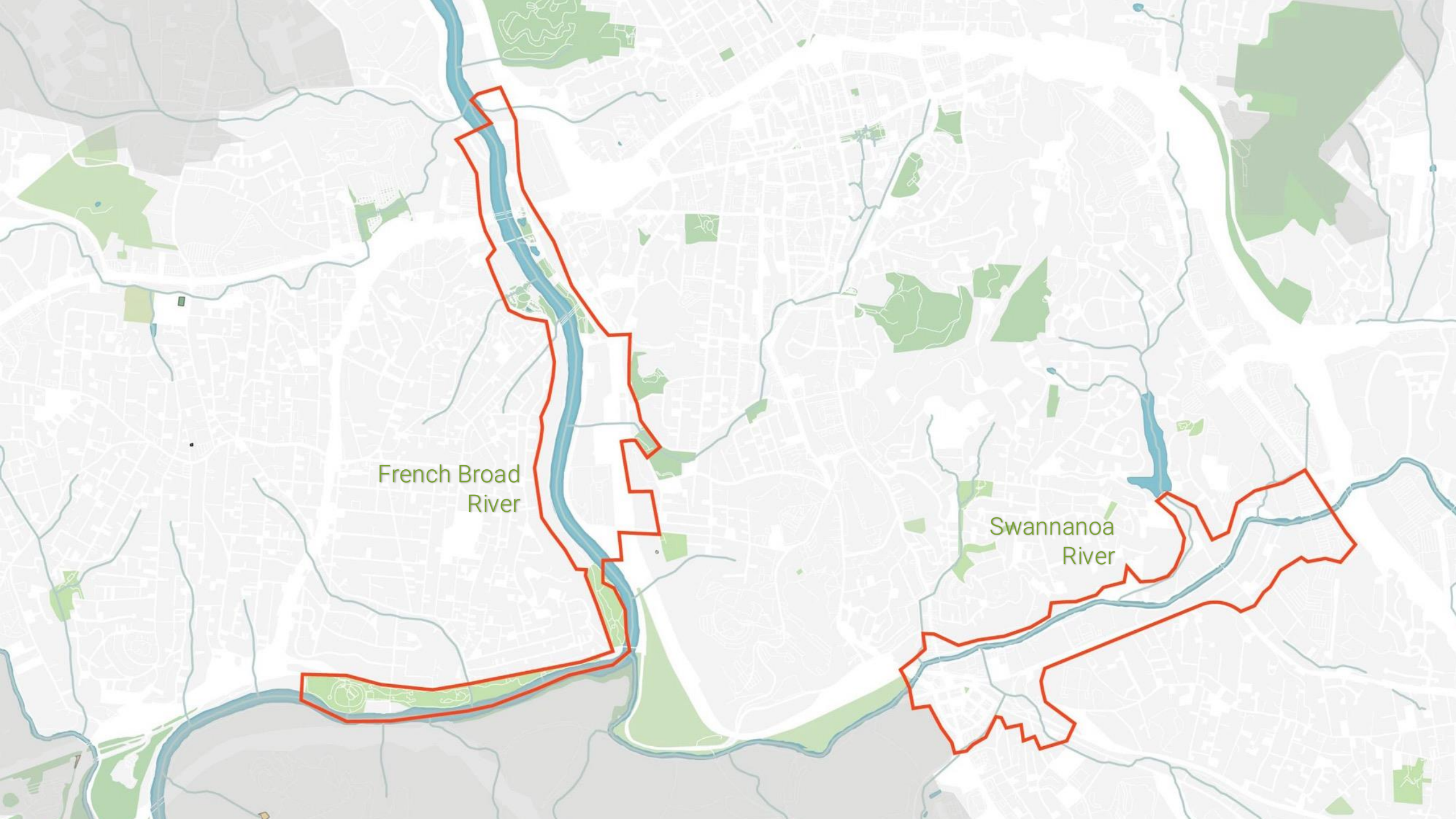
**John
Macomber**
Harvard Business
School
Cambridge, MA

Urban Land Institute:
Victoria Oestreich
(project manager)
Director, Advisory
Services

Barbra Gustis
Senior Director, Council
Operations

ULI Charlotte:
Theresa Burnett
Executive Director

ULI Atlanta:
Lance Morsell
Strategic Initiatives Lead



French Broad
River

Swannanoa
River

Panel Inquiries

Economy:
Industry
Resilience &
Diversification

Workforce:
Economic
Mobility

Real Estate
Development

Public
Investment,
Infrastructure

What We Found

- A place of unique beauty and character
- A vibrant culture of bootstrapping and accomplished artists
- A long standing – but sometimes fraught – history
- Abounding recreational opportunities
- Engaged conversations about how to grow, adapt, and evolve – without losing your soul

Challenges We Heard



- The same tensions we see in other destination communities, including affordable housing shortages, limited transportation options, and economic stratification.
- The recurrence of local flooding impacts and the need for regional solutions.
- An aging population and declining younger workforce due to high cost of living and low career employment opportunities
- Processes and governance that have stalled MANY well-intentioned, high-quality plans...often resulting in just more plans

Seizing the Moment....

- Addressing the realities that Helene illuminated
- Continuing the successes and accomplishments of a workstyle created under duress into a new more permanent ethos
- Optimizing the use of disaster relief funds to help you build back stronger and more resilient

REBUILDING
TODAY
FOR A
RESILIENT
TOMORROW
POST-HELENE 9.27.2024

PS

Will the legacy of Helene be a memory of trauma, loss and duress?



Or a legacy of renewal, rebuilding and resilience?



Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

ECONOMIC

ORGANIZATIONAL



Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

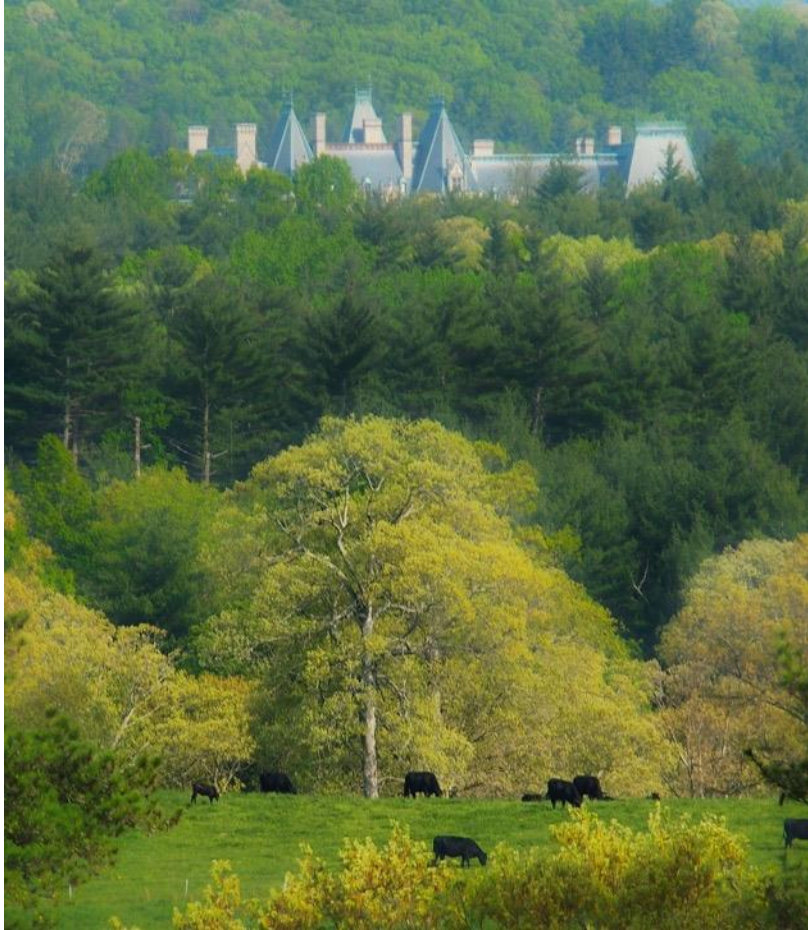
ECONOMIC

ORGANIZATIONAL

Parks



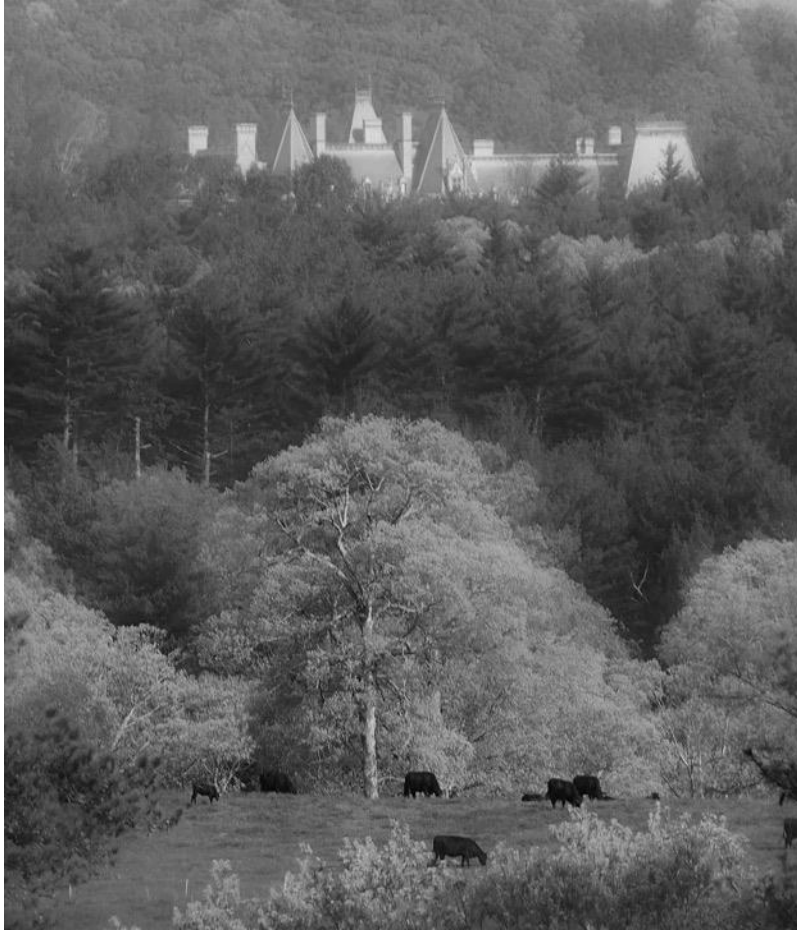
A History of Legacy Parks in WNC



Biltmore Estate

1895

A History of Legacy Parks in WNC

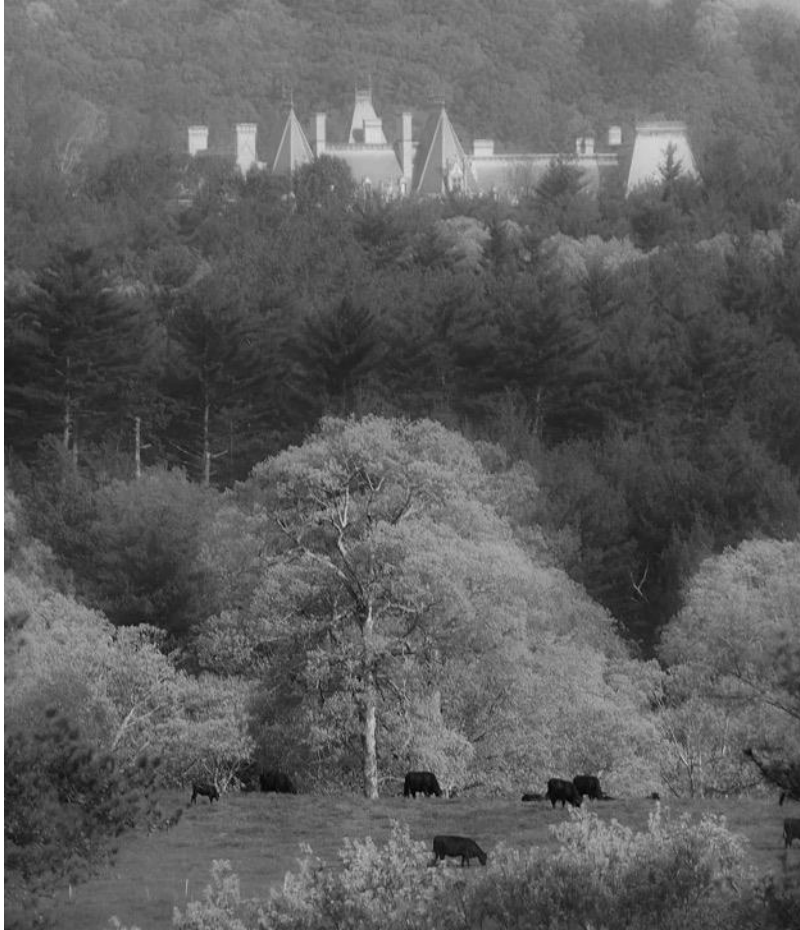


Biltmore Estate
1895



Great Smoky Mountains National Park
1940

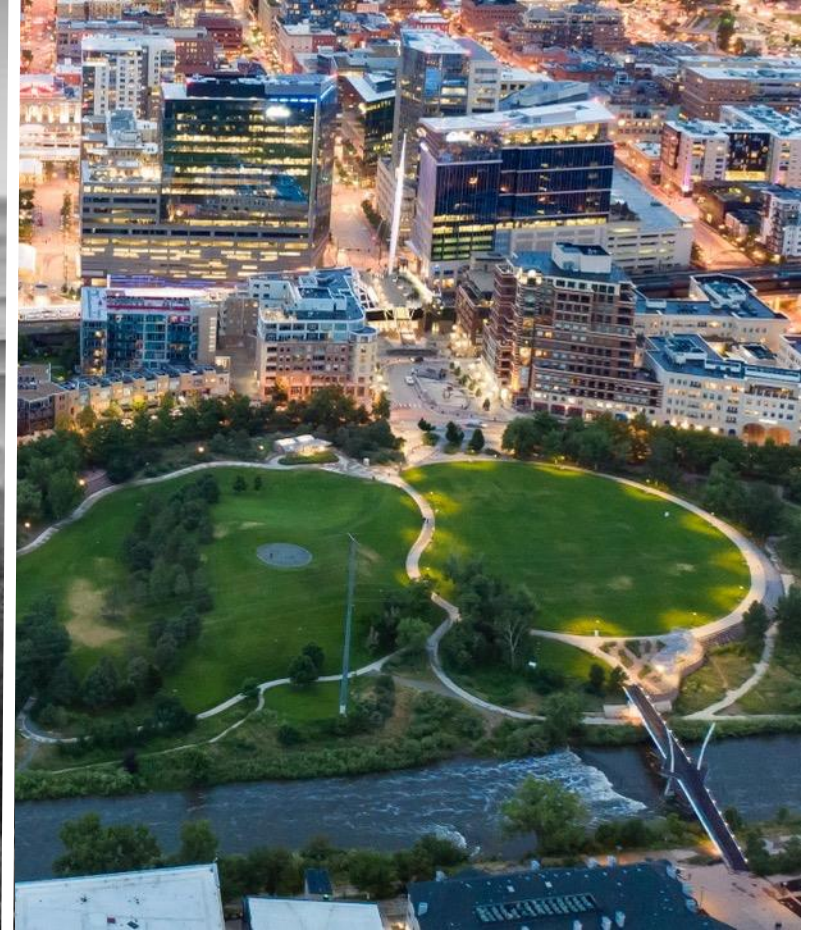
A History of Legacy Parks in WNC



Biltmore Estate
1895



Great Smoky Mountains National Park
1940

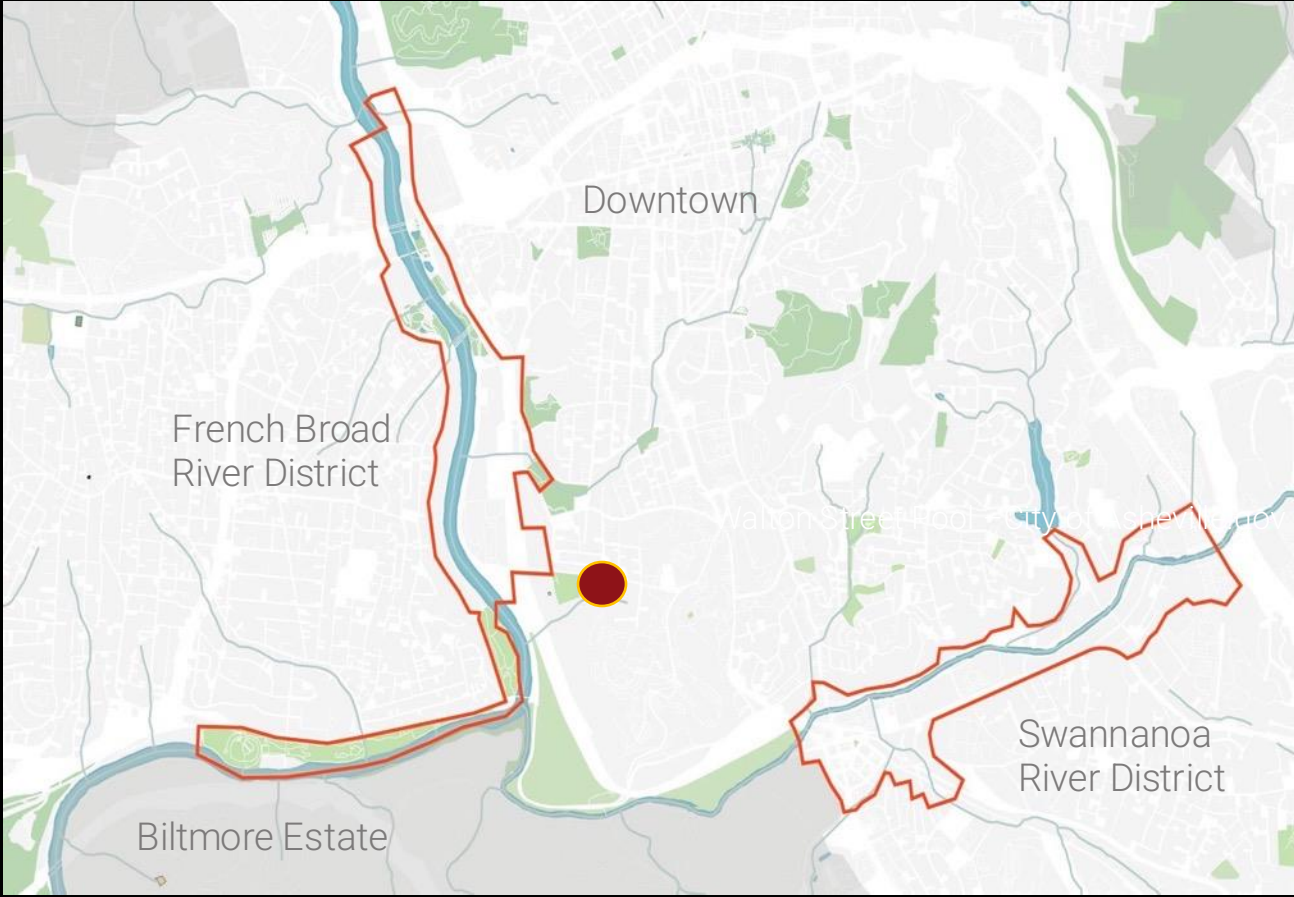


Asheville's Future Legacy
20??

Legacy Parks at the River Districts



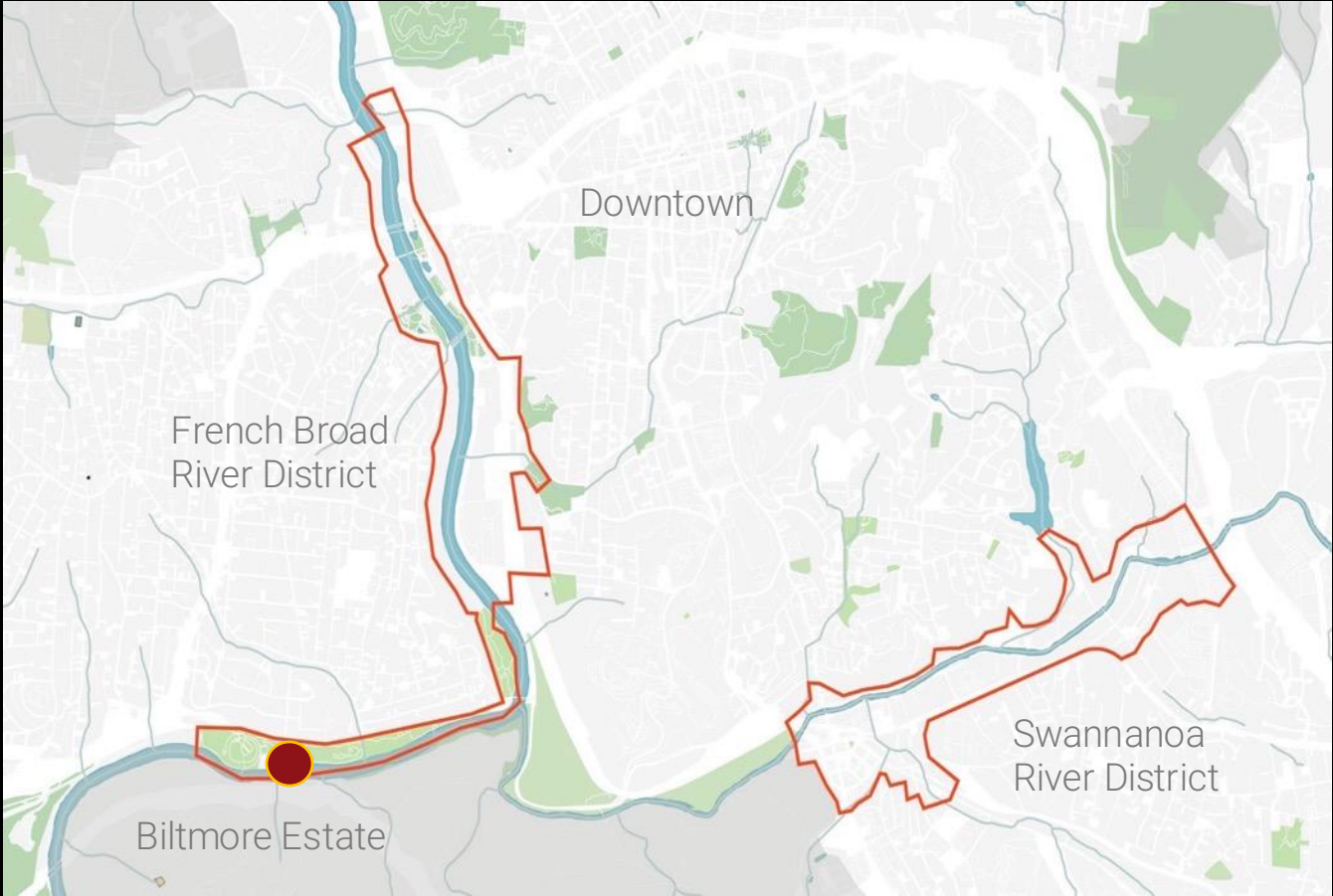
Legacy in Progress



The Past (1930's)

Walton Street Pool –City of Asheville.gov

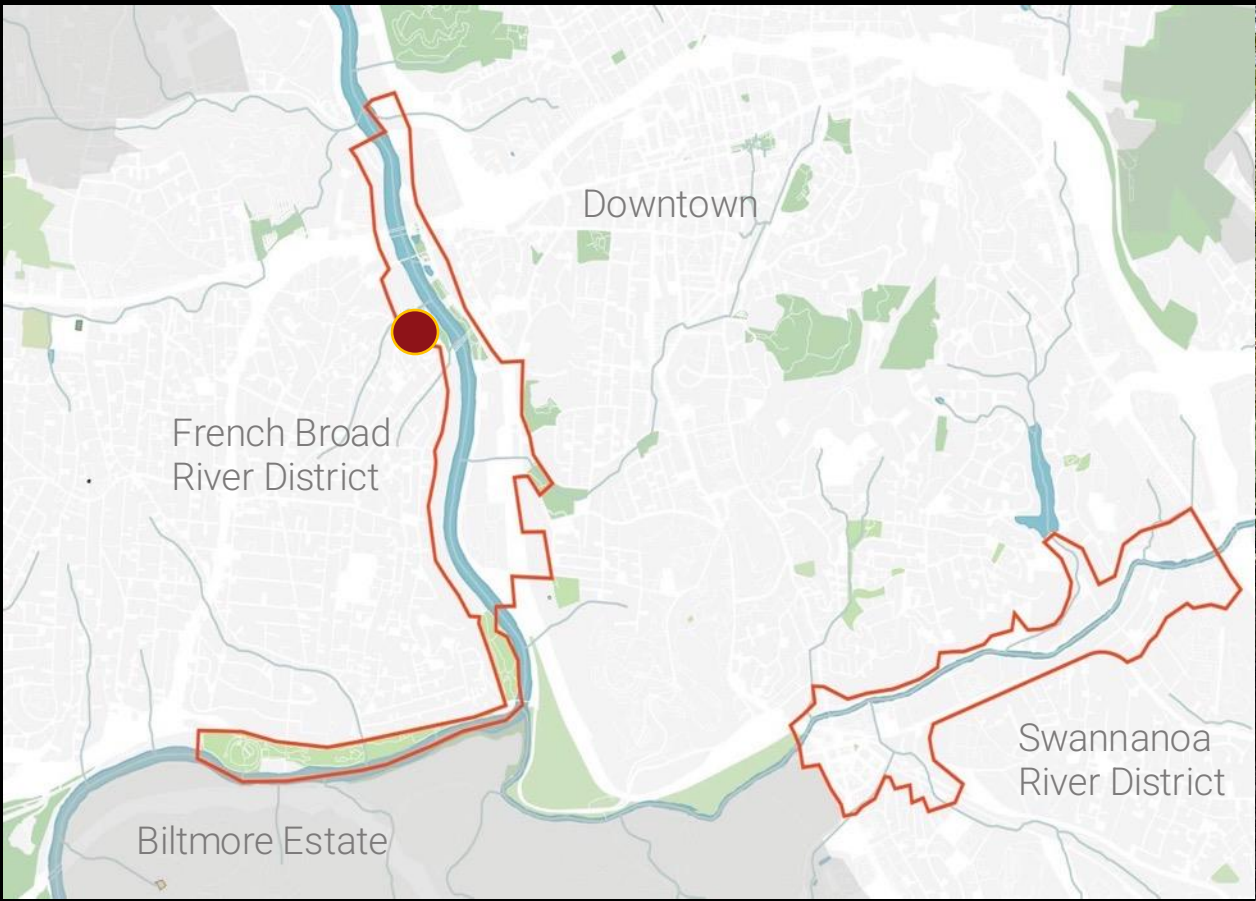
Legacy in Progress



The Past (1990's)

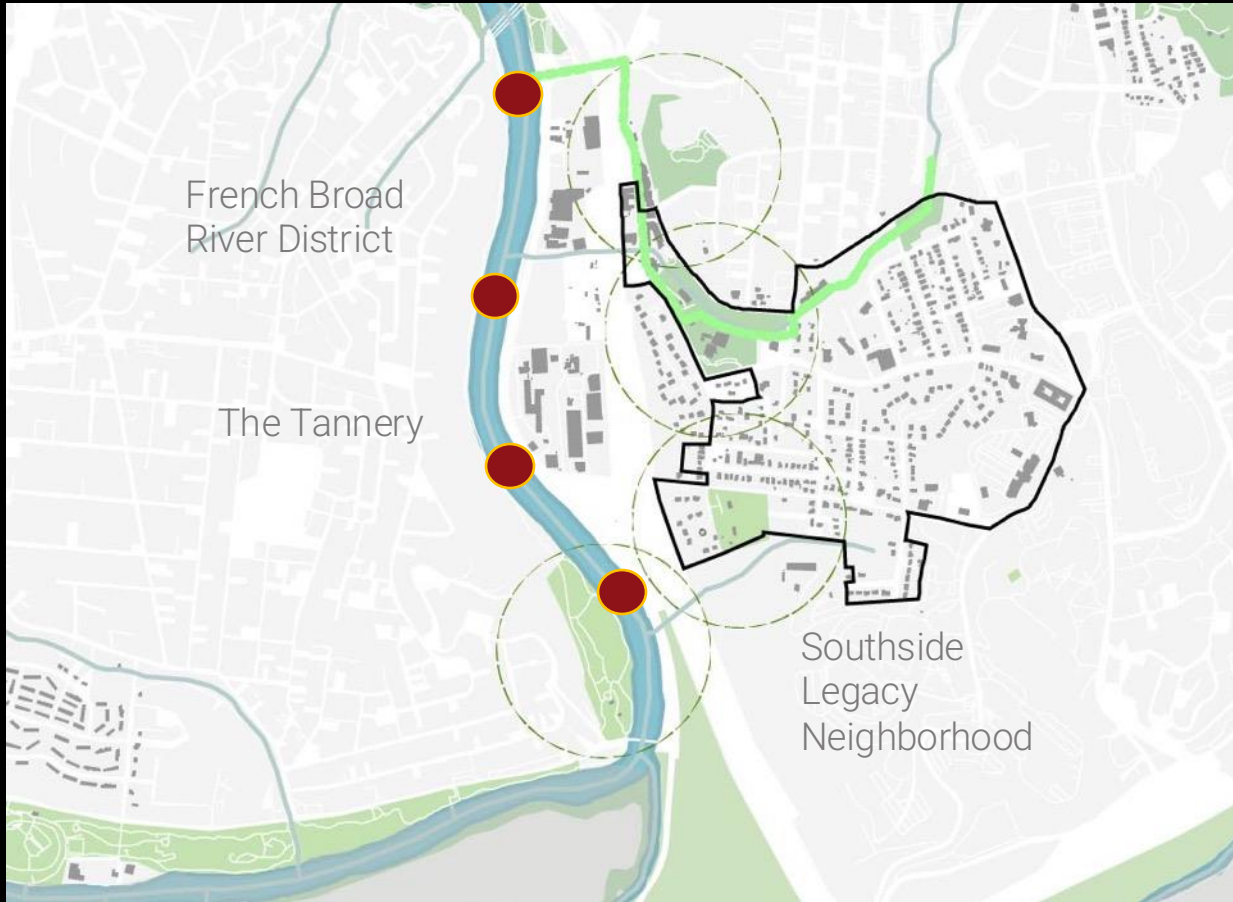
Carrier Park Playground – City of Asheville.gov

Legacy in Progress



Recent Past (2016)

Legacy Fulfilled



Possible Future

Hayden Homes Amphitheater

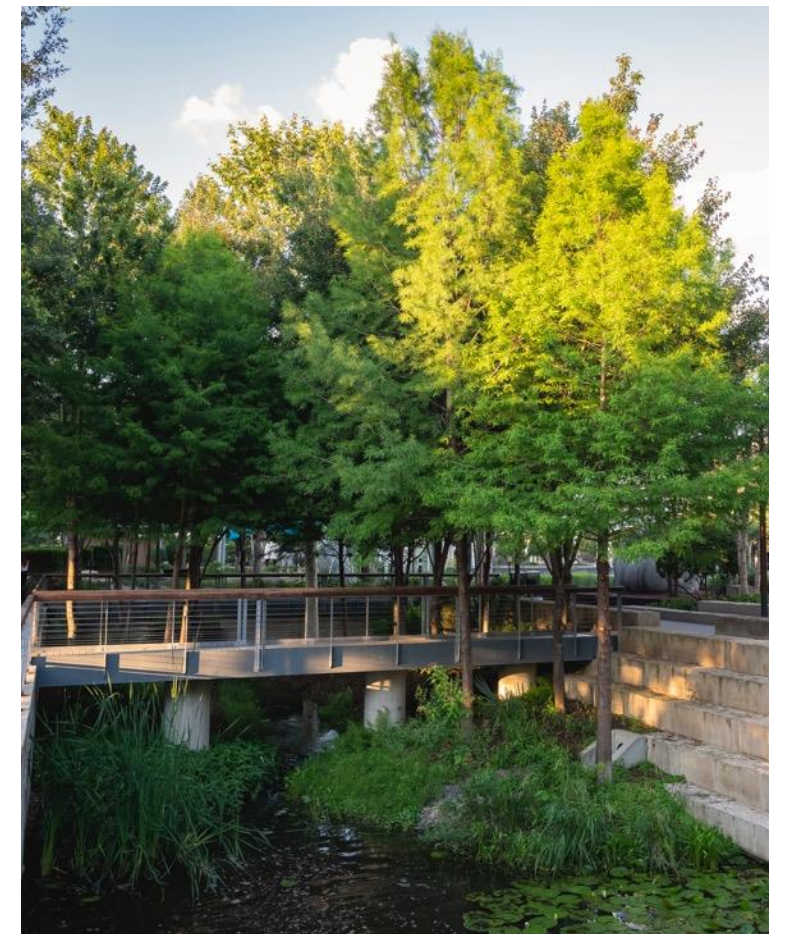
Legacy Parks: The Benefits of Resilience



Clean Water



Biodiversity



Urban Forest

Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

Parks

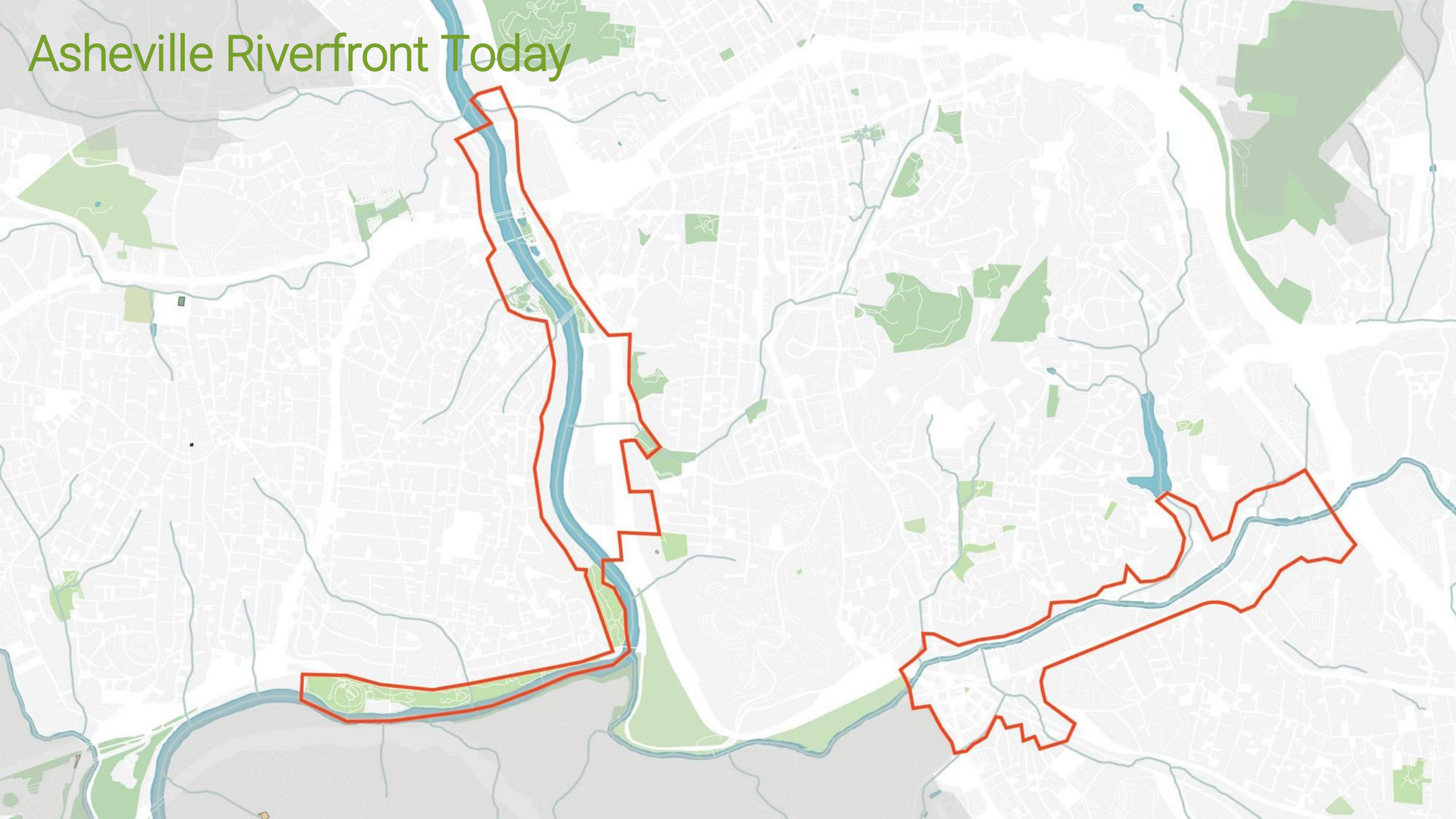
Community

ECONOMIC

ORGANIZATIONAL

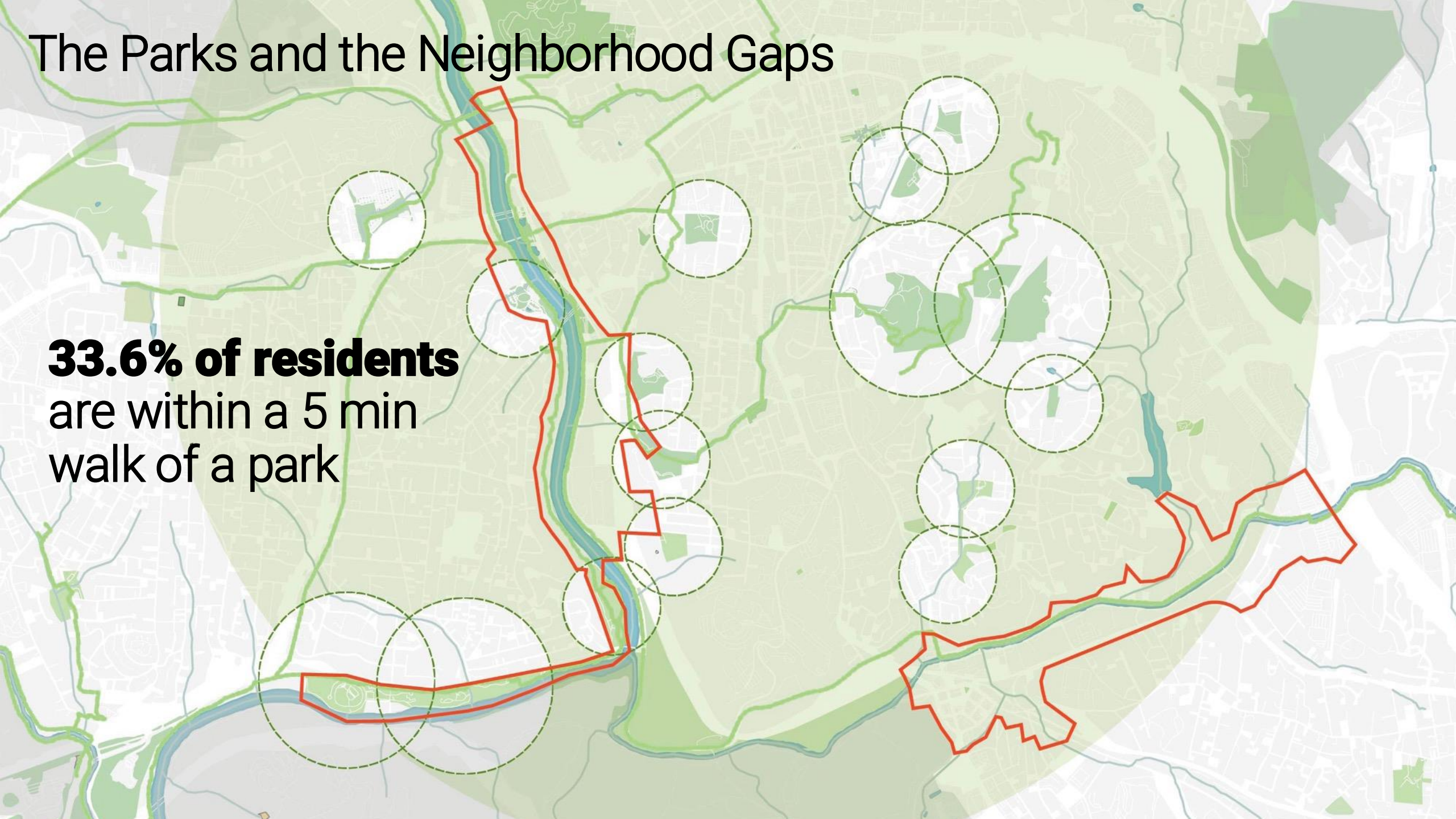


Asheville Riverfront Today



The Parks and the Neighborhood Gaps

33.6% of residents
are within a 5 min
walk of a park



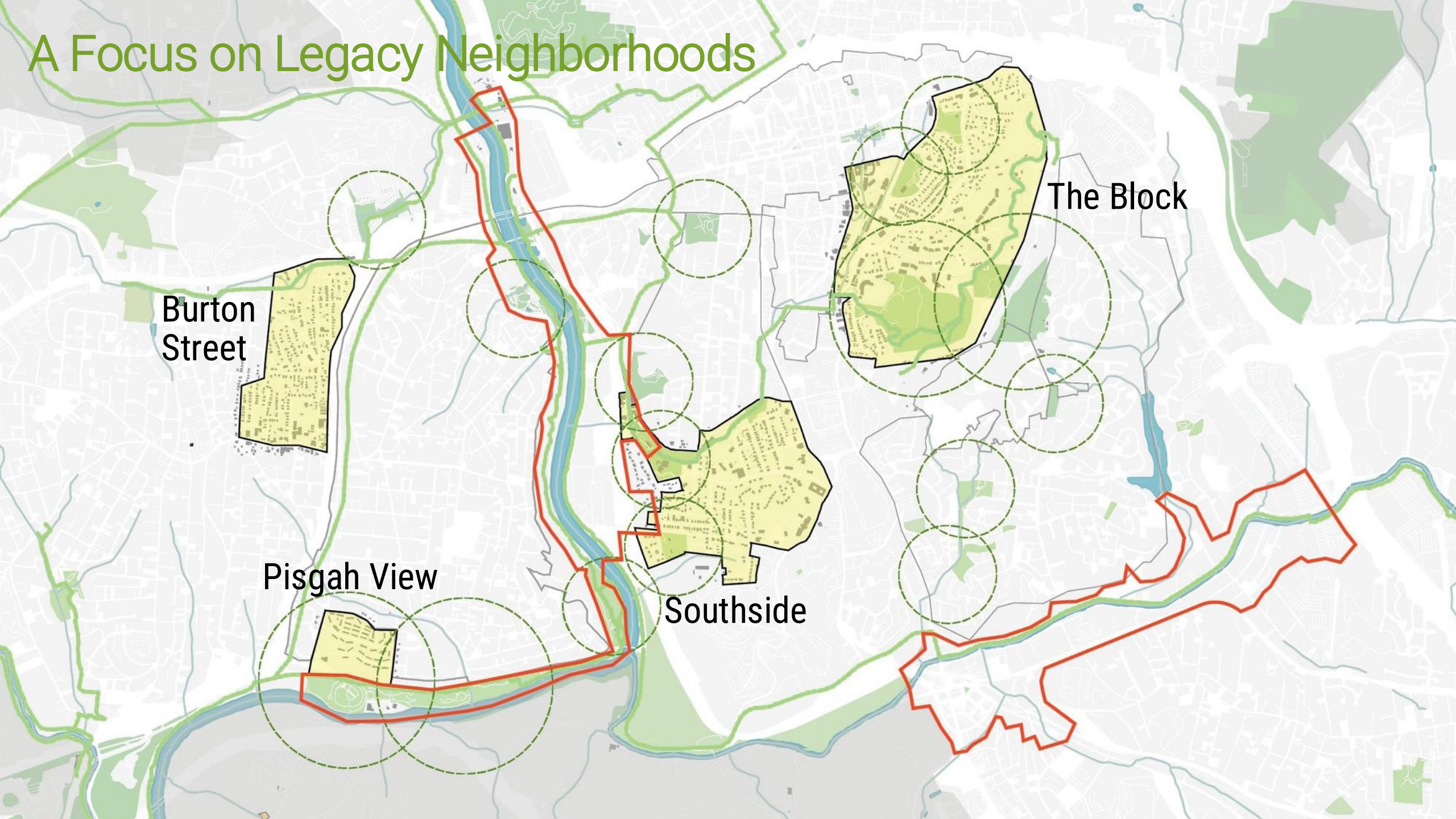
A Focus on Legacy Neighborhoods

Burton Street

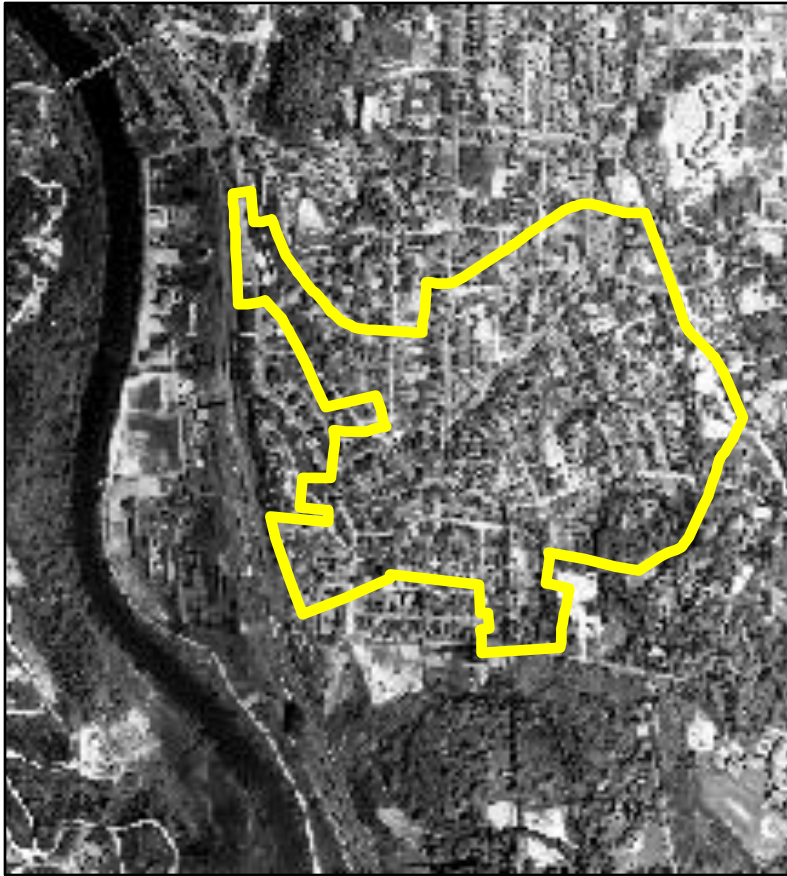
The Block

Pisgah View

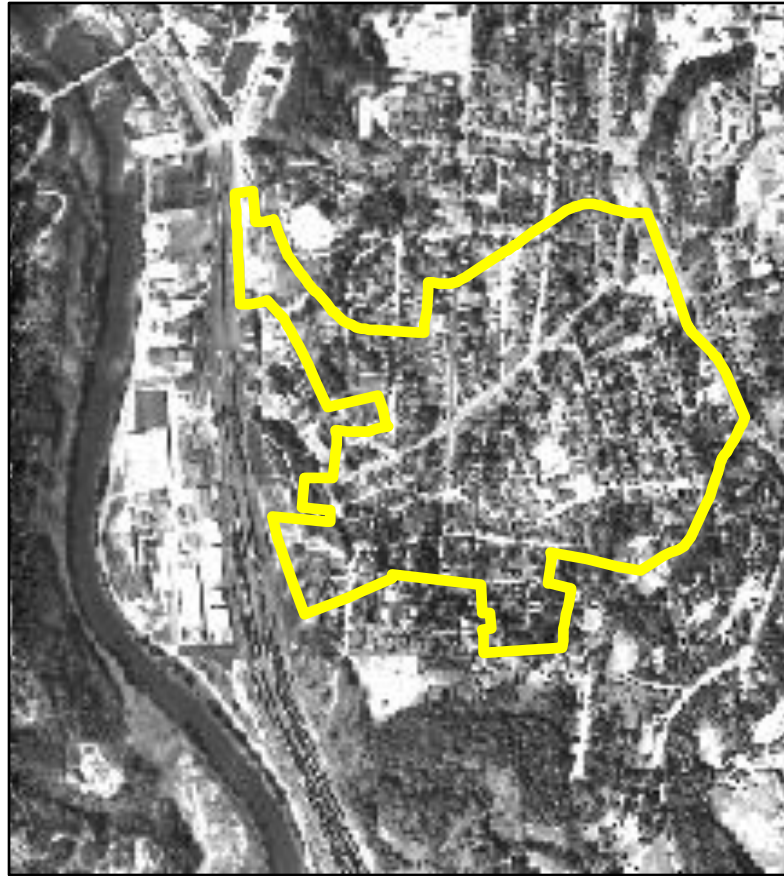
Southside



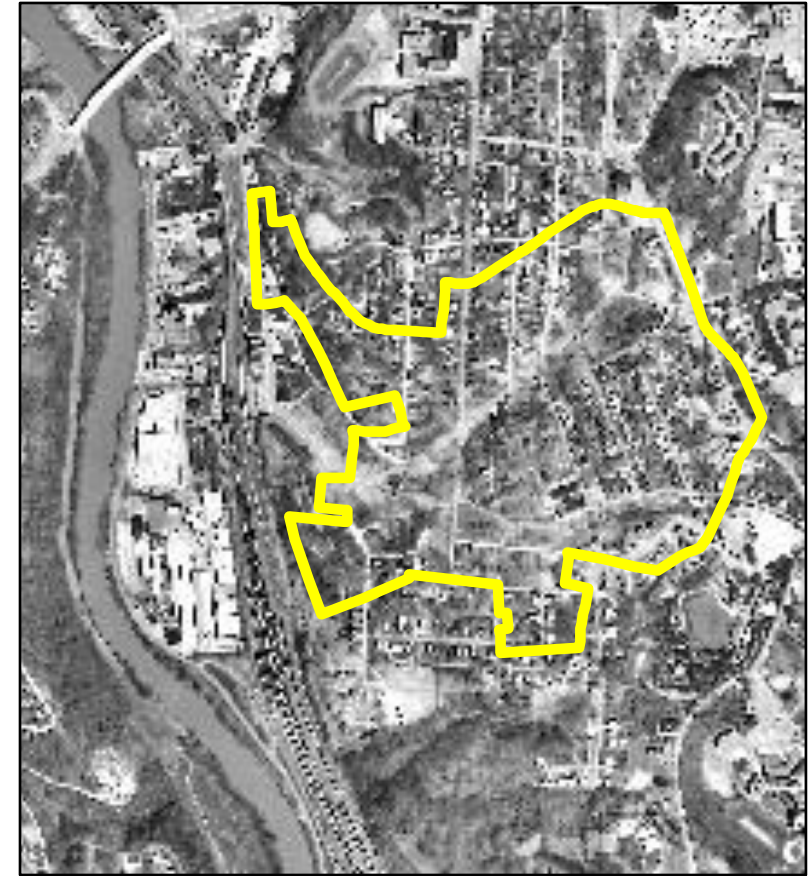
The Evolution of the Legacy Neighborhoods



1951



1963



1975

Strengthen Legacy Neighborhoods



- Build on the history of the neighborhoods
- Expand the Black Cultural Heritage Trail



Strengthen Legacy Neighborhoods



- Build on the history of the neighborhoods
- Expand the Black Cultural Heritage Trail
- Strategies to retain and grow Asheville's Black population

Strengthen Legacy Neighborhoods



- Build on the history of the neighborhoods
- Expand the Black Cultural Heritage Trail
- Strategies to retain and grow Asheville's Black population
- An implementable residential strategy
 - Affordable housing
 - Avenues for housing choice
 - Advance Black homeownership

Strengthen Legacy Neighborhoods

- Build on the history of the neighborhoods
- Expand the Black Cultural Heritage Trail
- Strategies to retain and grow Asheville's Black population
- An implementable residential strategy
 - Affordable housing
 - Avenues for housing choice
 - Advance Black homeownership
- Promote Black entrepreneurship



Strengthen Legacy Neighborhoods

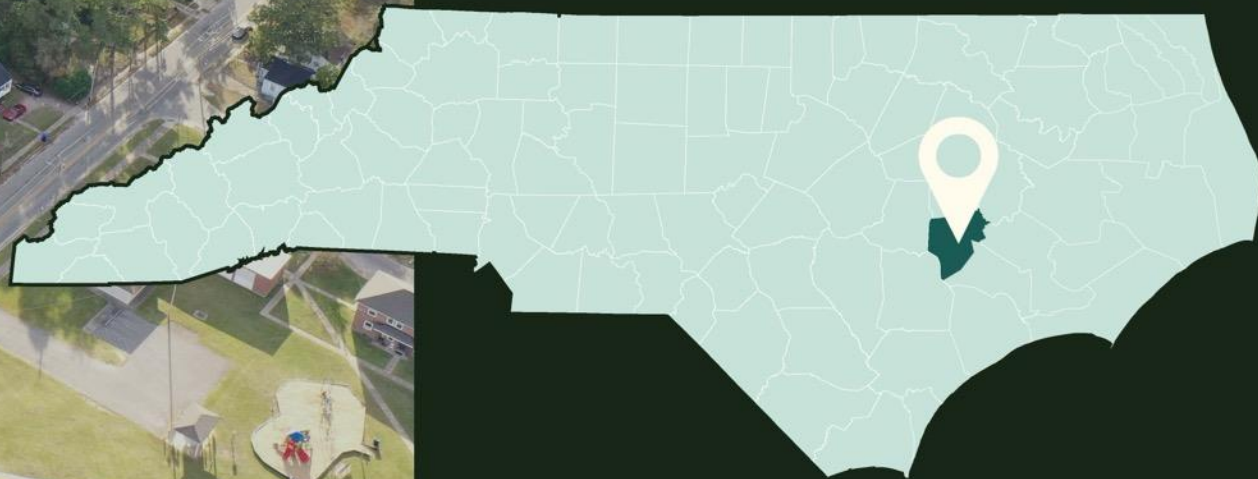
- Build on the history of the neighborhoods
- Expand the Black Cultural Heritage Trail
- Strategies to retain and grow Asheville's Black population
- An implementable residential strategy
 - Affordable housing
 - Avenues for housing choice
 - Advance Black homeownership
- Promote Black entrepreneurship
- Build community hubs



Where Hope Takes Root

East Kinston

Neighborhood Hub: A
Community-Led Resiliency
Framework





Pillars of Empowerment



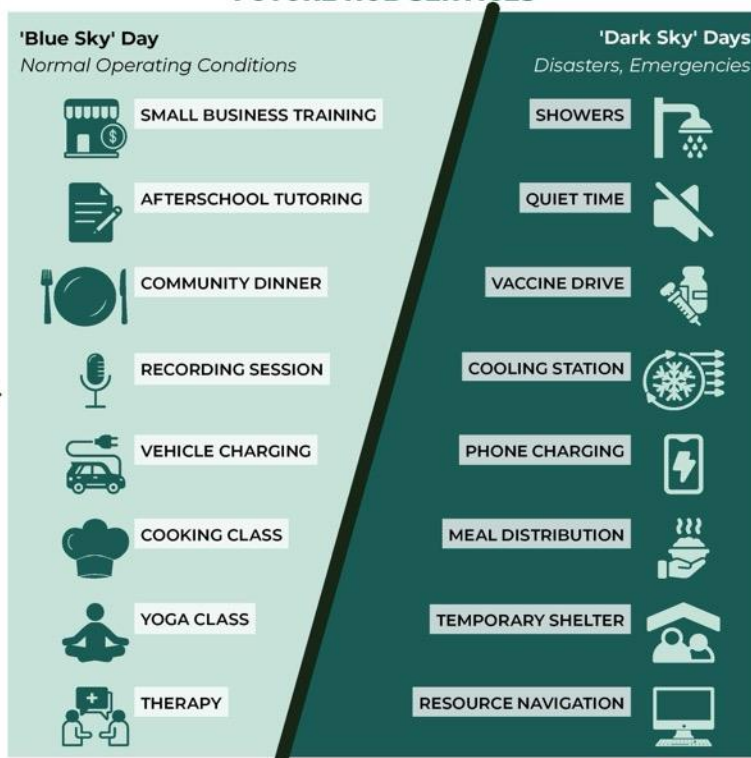
EXISTING HUB



FUTURE HUB SERVICES



TRANSLATING SERVICES TO FACILITIES



KINSTON TEENS

ESTABLISHED 2014

EAST KINSTON BLOCK PARTY PORTRAITS



Hope Begets Action



To Be Heard is to Begin to Heal

ISSUE: Trauma from socioeconomic decline, violence, and environmental crises while residents seek collective healing and envision a resilient future built on community connection and local economic revitalization.



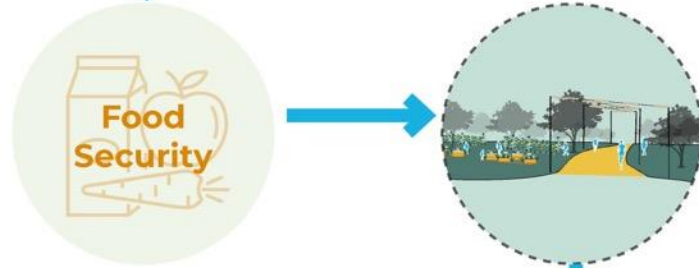
STRATEGY: A healing-focused architecture hub, mental health and wellness programs, and celebration of local history and art to foster community recovery and cultural pride.

ISSUE: Significant transit limitations and mobility barriers restrict access to essential destinations, with safer transportation being critical for vulnerable populations who overwhelmingly prefer alternatives to driving such as public transit, walking, and biking.



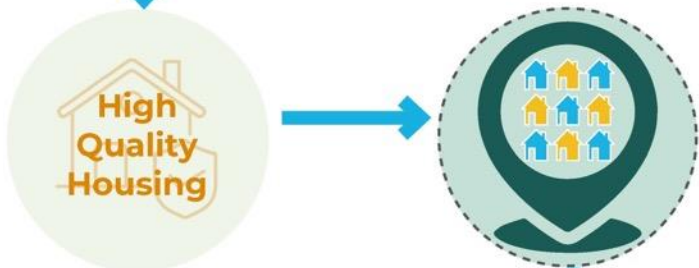
STRATEGY: A comprehensive mobility strategy combining a community-based transportation program with road diet implementations to improve accessibility and safety for East Kinston residents.

ISSUE: East Kinston is a food desert where residents rely on food pantries for fresh produce. Community interests lean toward healthy cooking classes, suggesting a community farm could improve both food access and employment opportunities.



STRATEGY: Improve food security through coordinated efforts including a Working Group, seasonal food forests along a cultural trail, centralizing fresh food access at the Neighborhood Hub, and developing community agriculture on vacant lots.

ISSUE: There is a shortage of affordable quality homes, persistent blight from absentee landlords and title issues. Residents desire diverse housing options, code enforcement, and homeownership programs.



STRATEGY: Create an East Kinston Land Bank while partnering with the Kinston Housing Authority to address local housing challenges.

ISSUE: East Kinston's economy has declined due to disinvestment and small business loss, but shows potential for growth through coordinated investments. Despite limited retail options, there is entrepreneurial interest among residents.



STRATEGY: Foster economic development through a Black entrepreneurship task force, walkable retail spaces, and green business initiatives.

ISSUE: Climate change is exacerbating East Kinston's environmental issues. The community is embracing a "bouncing forward" approach emphasizing inclusive participation in the green economy, regenerative growth, and building resilience.



STRATEGY: Enhance resilience through Hub design, establish an Extreme Heat mitigation program, and achieve green building certified infrastructure.

A Viable Vision

Community-Centric
Resilient
Multi-Functional
Future-Ready
Accessible



Food Forest and Nature Play



Play and Exploration

Gardening and Foraging

Family Cookout

Covered Basketball Game

Community Cooking Class

Saturdays at the Play Pavilion

East Kinston Mural

Pop-Up Market

Splash Play and Cooling

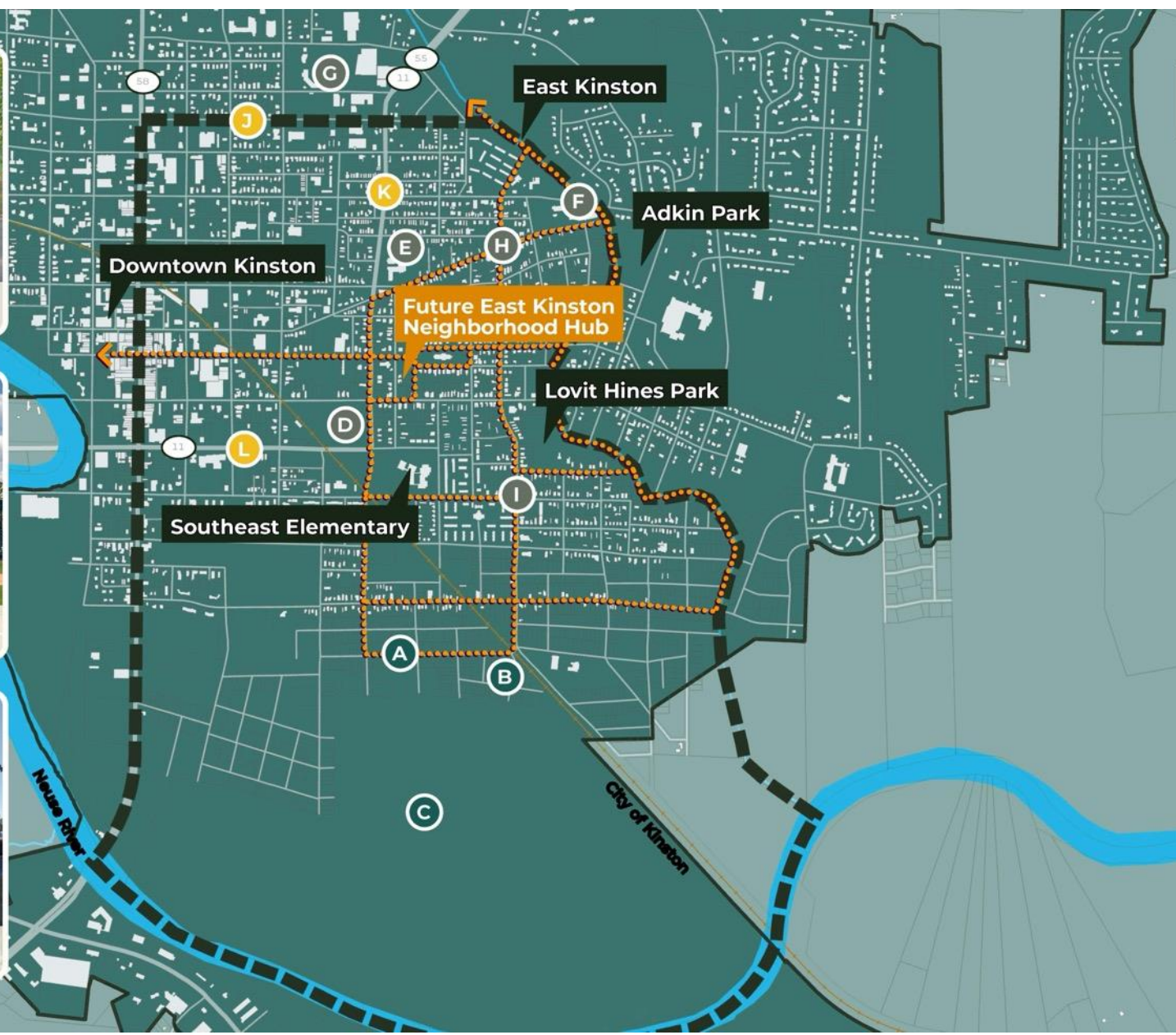
Full-Day Organizing Workshop in the Hub's Indoor-Outdoor Spaces

Hanging Out on the Lawn

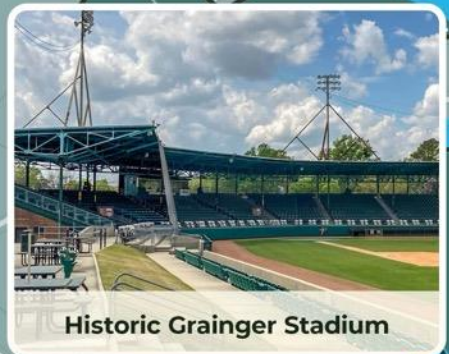
Ensuring Equity

East Kinston Equitable Development Plan Anchor Projects

- New Community Parks**
- A** East Kinston Music, Food, and History Trail
 - B** Lincoln City Reunion Park
 - C** Lincoln City Restoration Lands
- Community and Economic Development**
- D** Future Kinston Community Health Center
 - E** J.H. Sampson School Reuse Project
 - F** Adkin Alumni Center Reuse Project
 - G** Historic Grainger Stadium
 - H** Adkin @ Tower Hill Commercial Corner Project
 - I** Adkin @ Bright Commercial Corner Project
- 'Road Diets' for Safer Streets**
- J** E. Vernon Avenue
 - K** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
 - L** E. King Street



East Kinston History Trail



Historic Grainger Stadium



Lincoln City Restoration Lands







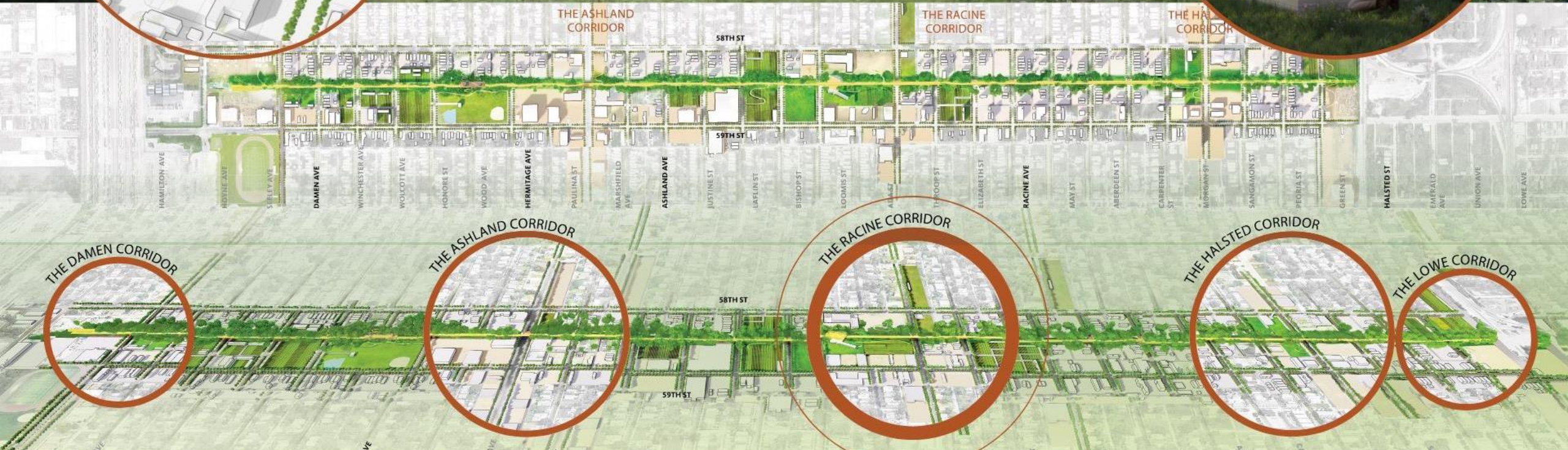


LOCAL PRODUCTION

ADAPTIVE REUSE

URBAN AGRICULTURE

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES



THE DAMEN CORRIDOR

THE ASHLAND CORRIDOR

THE RACINE CORRIDOR

THE HALSTED CORRIDOR

THE LOWE CORRIDOR



Urban Land Institute

Englewood Agro-Eco District | Chicago, IL



Investment Towards Implementation

\$2.5M

CITY FUNDING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION FOR TWO LARGE SITES

\$8.5M

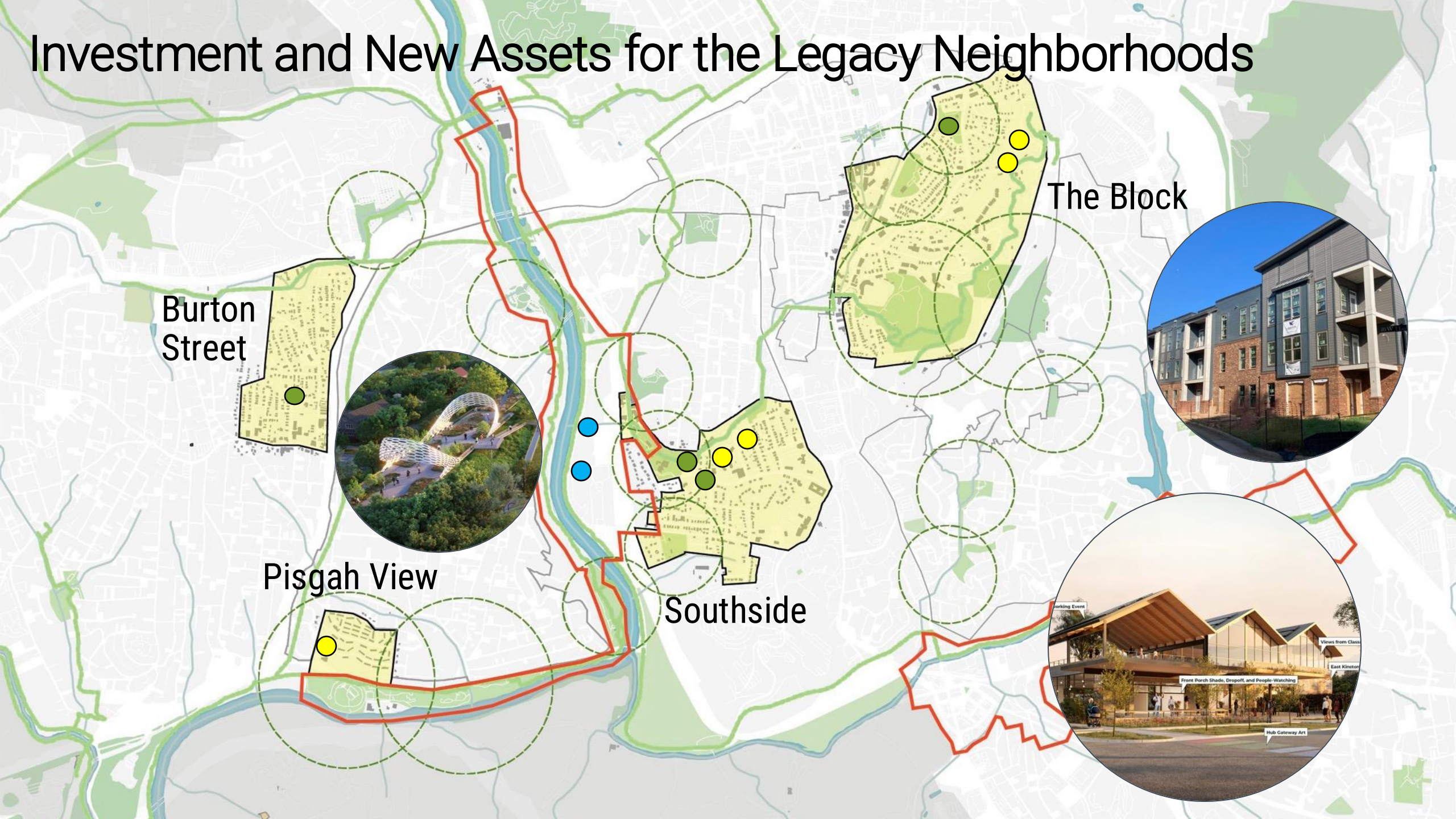
CITY FUNDING FOR FENCING AND SIGNAGE

\$82M

CITY, STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS FOR CONSTRUCTION



Investment and New Assets for the Legacy Neighborhoods



Burton Street



Pisgah View

Southside

The Block



Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

Parks

Community

Water

ECONOMIC

ORGANIZATIONAL



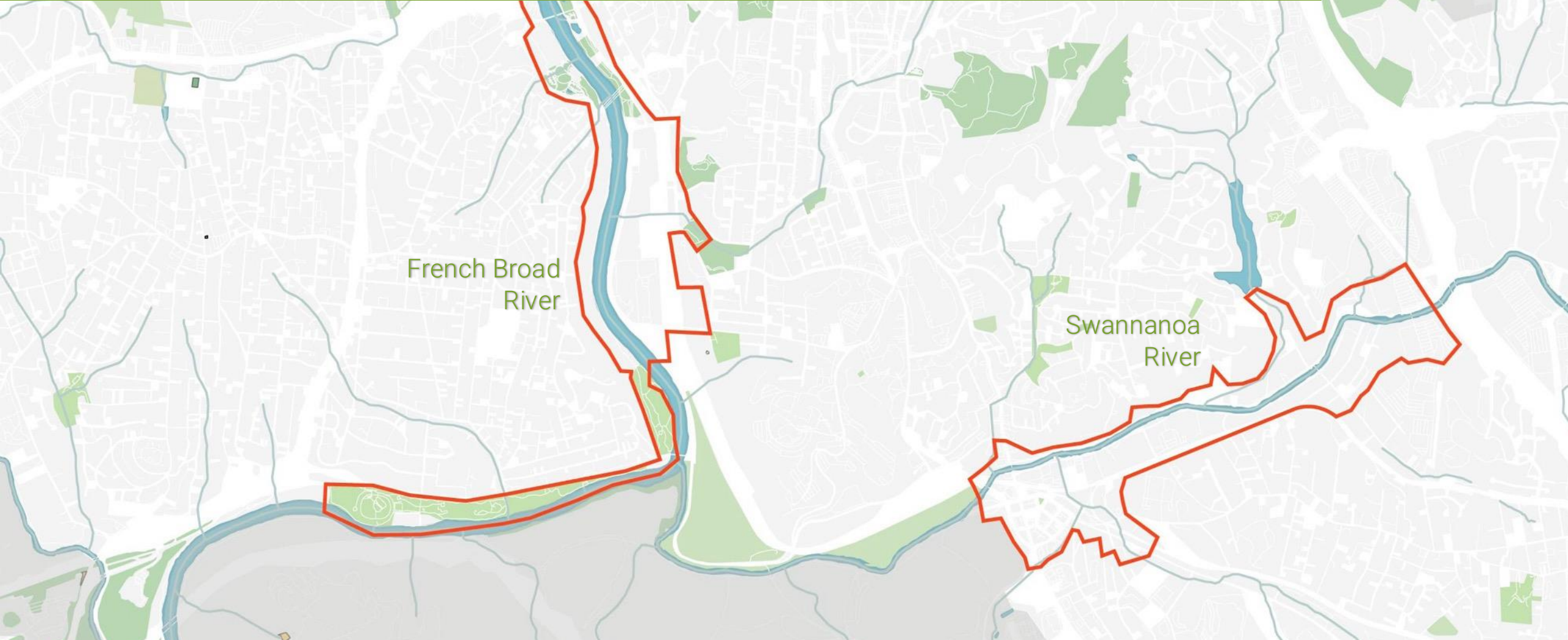
One Water, Our Future, This Opportunity

This is Asheville's once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild smarter, stronger, and together, making investments today that will propel Asheville's water resources resilience for decades to come.

What Does it Mean to Live with **One Water**?

Managing all water – drinking, wastewater, stormwater, and rivers – as one connected resource to ensure a sustainable water future.

Asheville's history is shaped by water, and the city is no stranger to floods.



A map showing the French Broad River and its floodplain. The river is depicted as a blue channel winding through a city grid. A red outline delineates the floodplain area, which includes various green spaces and urban areas. A green callout box on the left contains text about the river's characteristics.

French Broad River

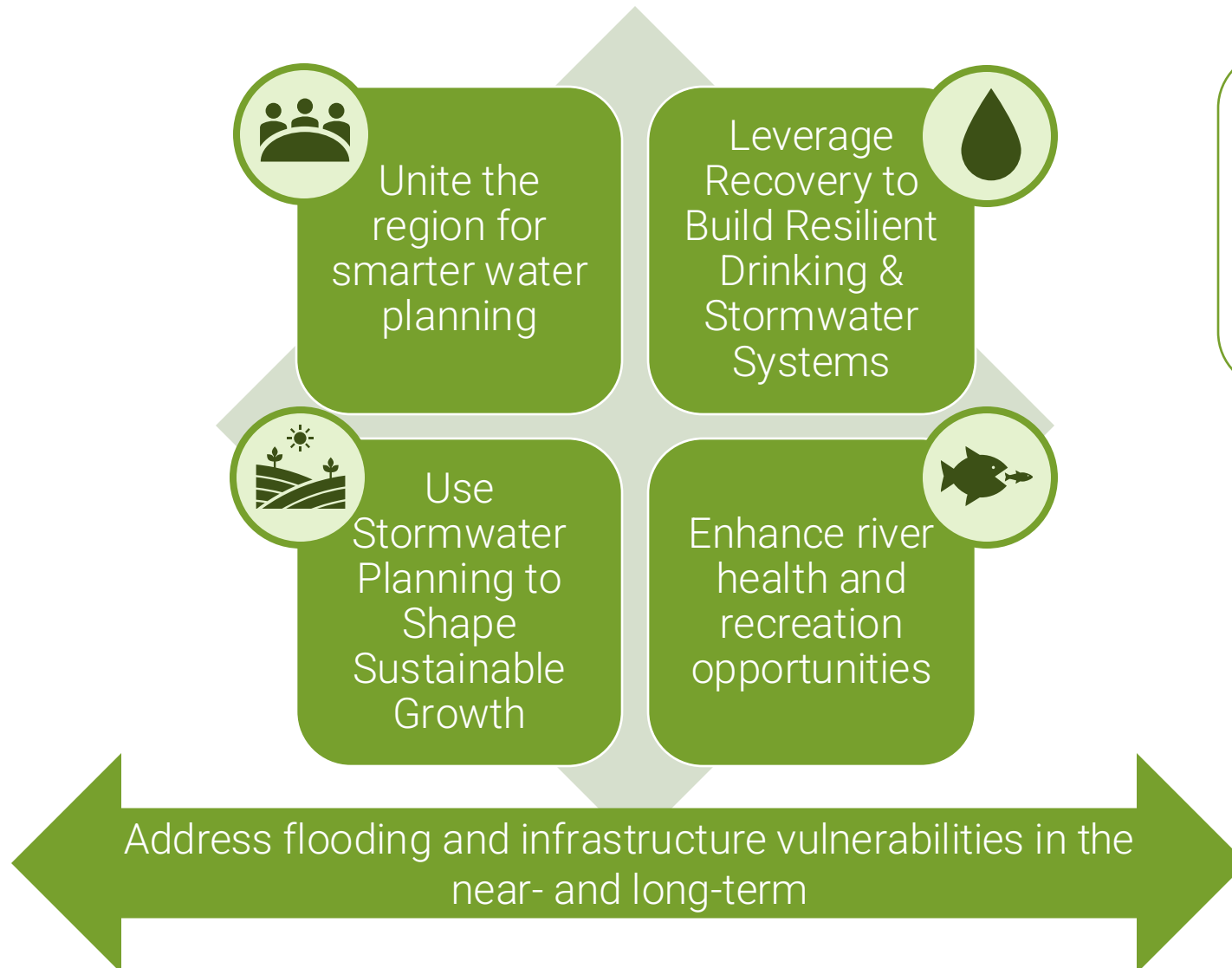
- Major regional river with a wide, high-capacity channel
- Lower gradient leads to slower-moving water
- Floodwaters recede slowly once the basin is saturated

A map showing the Swannanoa River watershed. The river is highlighted in blue, and its watershed boundary is outlined in red. The map includes a grid of streets and various green areas representing parks or undeveloped land. A green callout box is positioned in the center-right of the map, containing text about the river's characteristics.

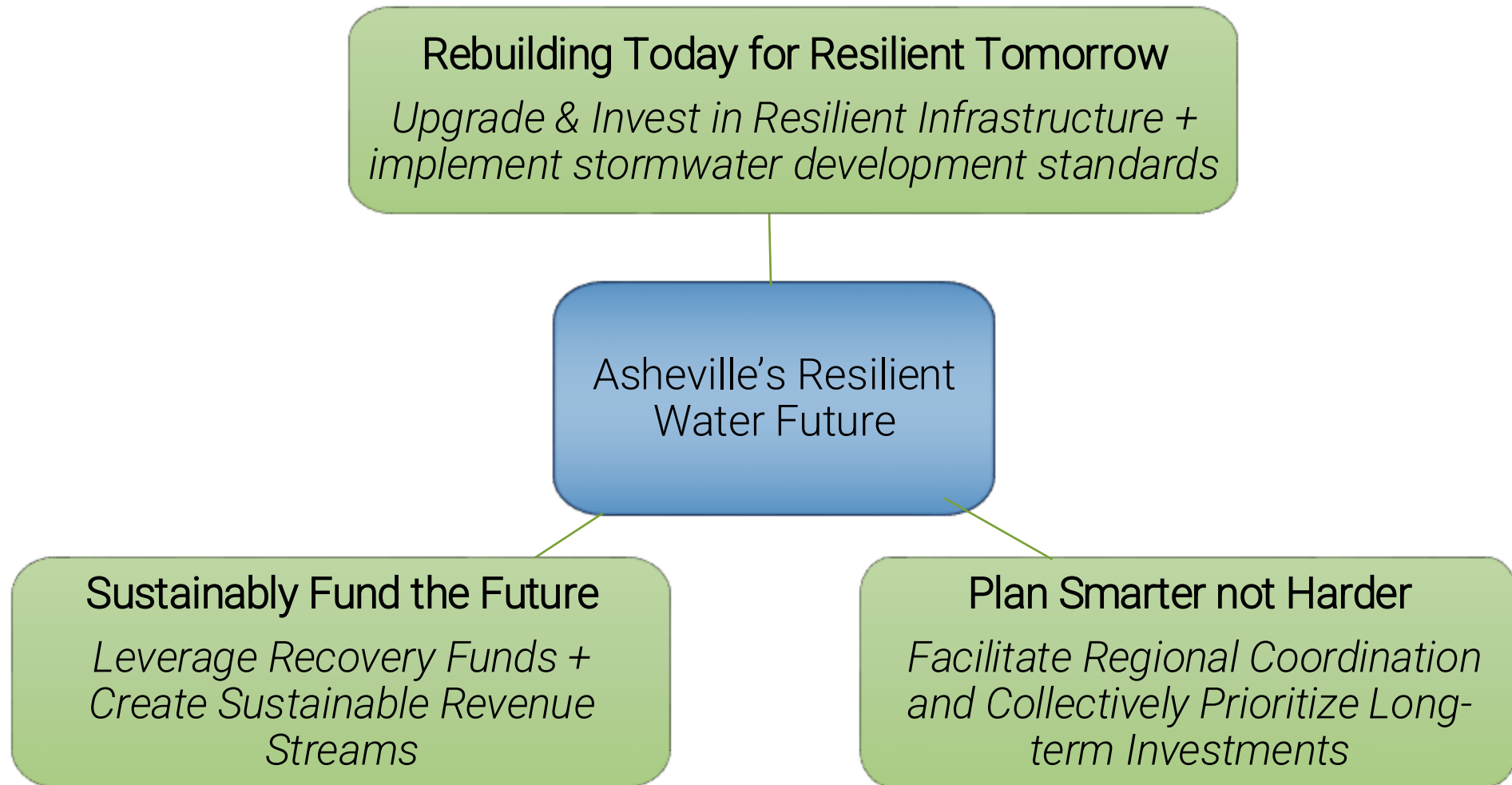
Swannanoa River

- Smaller, steep-gradient tributary
- Narrow, flashy river system
- Limited floodplain storage makes it more prone to flash flooding and debris during intense rain events

Now is Asheville's Moment to Rethink its Approach to Water



The Path Forward: How Do We Secure Asheville's Water Future?



Plan Smarter, Not Harder



Regional Collaboration



Stormwater Mgmt.



Resilient Infrastructure

Key Actions	Why?
Establish a “One Water Council” (align City, County, MSD, utilities, and neighbors) to tackle water quality and stormwater management challenges at scale	Opportunity to align smarter, more coordinated investments across CIPs, as well as data sharing on water quality and real-time flood response
Launch a Countywide Stormwater Master Plan with watershed-scale solutions.	Watershed-scale planning reduces flooding downstream, opportunity to introduce more green spaces, and prioritizes projects for maximum impact
Invest now in long-term infrastructure - flood storage and drinking water infrastructure	Climate change and population growth are increasing risks; proactive investments will build capacity and resilience

Rebuilding Today for a Resilient Tomorrow



Key Actions	Why?
Upgrade drinking water systems (treatment plants, redundant lines, backup wells) and plan long-term for a 4th water treatment plant	Builds redundancy and capacity to handle growth, extreme weather, and emergencies
Repair and expand stormwater conveyance networks to alleviate “pinch points”	Reduces localized flooding and improves equity by prioritizing vulnerable neighborhoods
On-site stormwater detention standards: Require 1–1.5” on-site retention; make low-impact development the default; develop a stormwater improvements bank for in-lieu payments	Limits runoff at the source, reduces downstream flooding, and creates a fund for improvements higher in the watershed
Restore riparian buffers and floodplains using the tree canopy fund and volunteer programs	Improves water quality, absorbs floodwaters naturally, and enhances habitat and community spaces

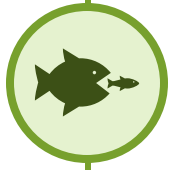
Sustainably Fund the Future



Resilient Infrastructure



Stormwater Mgmt.



Ecological Health

Key Actions	Why?
<p>Explore energy recovery fees to offset high operations and maintenance (O&M) costs for drinking water</p>	<p>Creates a reliable, sustainable revenue stream to maintain and upgrade drinking water infrastructure</p>
<p>Create a stormwater improvement bank for developers unable to meet on-site standards</p>	<p>Provides flexible funding to complete watershed-scale stormwater improvements</p>
<p>Aggregate river improvement funds to improve water quality investments along the river</p>	<p>Increases impact by combining small investments into larger pots to improve water quality, recreation, and education</p>
<p>Collaborate with & incentivize private landowners for septic to sewer conversions.</p>	<p>Improves water quality and reduces non-point source pollution from private properties</p>

Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

Parks

Community

Water

Built Form

ECONOMIC

ORGANIZATIONAL



Rebuilding Today for a Resilient Tomorrow

*Don't just build back **same** - build back **for economic recovery and resilience***

- Helene and FEMA grants are BOTH once in a **generation** and BOTH are **NOW**
- Helene's damages allow (or force) a **new start** in the study area
- Flooding has happened before **and will happen again**. How can we build back together?



Source: Asheville Buncombe Flood Damage Reduction Task Force

Three Big Takeaways

1. Arts and culture are too valuable to return to harm's way
2. Asheville is stronger when property owners and communities work together, *combining resources toward a common plan*
3. FEMA buyout funds are limited—let's use them wisely and strategically



Source: NOAA

Adapt to the Four Key Areas: Resilience is Different!

- **River Arts District:**
 - Artists arrived when rents were low, but they can't afford "new build" rents
 - We heard that many don't want to revisit the trauma
 - South Side residents had been displaced
 - Let the river lead
- **Swannanoa Corridor:** Historic floodplain—will it proceed with chaos—or follow a route that helps everyone?
- **Biltmore Village:** Will flood again, but it has resources to decide its own future.
- **French Broad Recreation Area:** Should stay focused on recreation—with safer, flexible design.



Think In Terms of Risk X Readiness X Resources

One size does NOT fit all!

RISK

How much is my property (or portfolio, or group) exposed to natural catastrophe perils like flood, wildfire, hail, seismic?

READINESS

How ready is my property to withstand the peril (or for occupants to escape the peril)?

RESOURCES

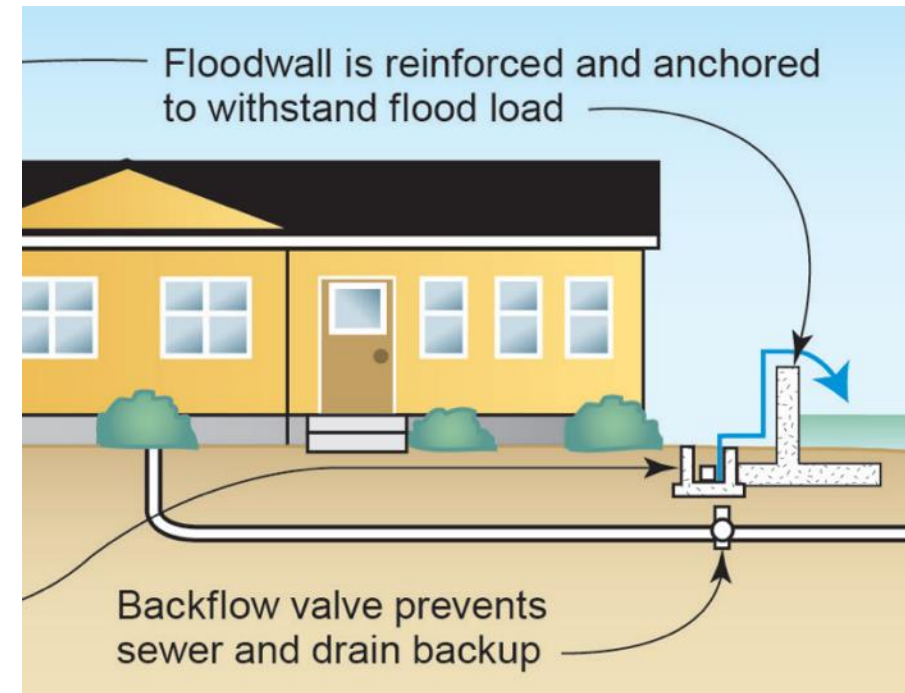
How much money can I get to reduce my risk or increase my readiness?

The answers indicate one of five paths...



Analyze Your Individual Paths on the Five Rs: The Main Choices for Investing in Resilience and Adaptation

1. **Reinforce:** For strong, industrial uses or for those with lots of resources
2. **Rebound:** Light, mobile uses like food trucks (good for those with lower resources)
3. **Relocate:** Move people and uses out of danger
4. **Restrict:** limit what can be built where
5. (Plan to) **Rebuild** (What would you do if it were YOUR money?)



Some ways to reinforce a home
Source: FEMA

Collaborate for Greater Value

- Combining land = bigger, better, safer development.
- Avoid “stilt villages” and scattered lots—swap and consolidate.
- Tools like land swaps and Transferable Development Rights (TDRs) help create value.
- The City owns key parcels—it can lead by example.



No Stilt Villages!

Source: Chat GPT

Use Best Practices for a Resilient Rebuild

- “Every person for themselves” rebuilding goes slowly and *does not add value*. **Combining forces** with resources and capital creates more value for everyone – and that value can be captured and shared
- Use the “**lowest cost of loss**” approach in thinking about uses in the flood plain—what can be exposed and what should not be exposed?



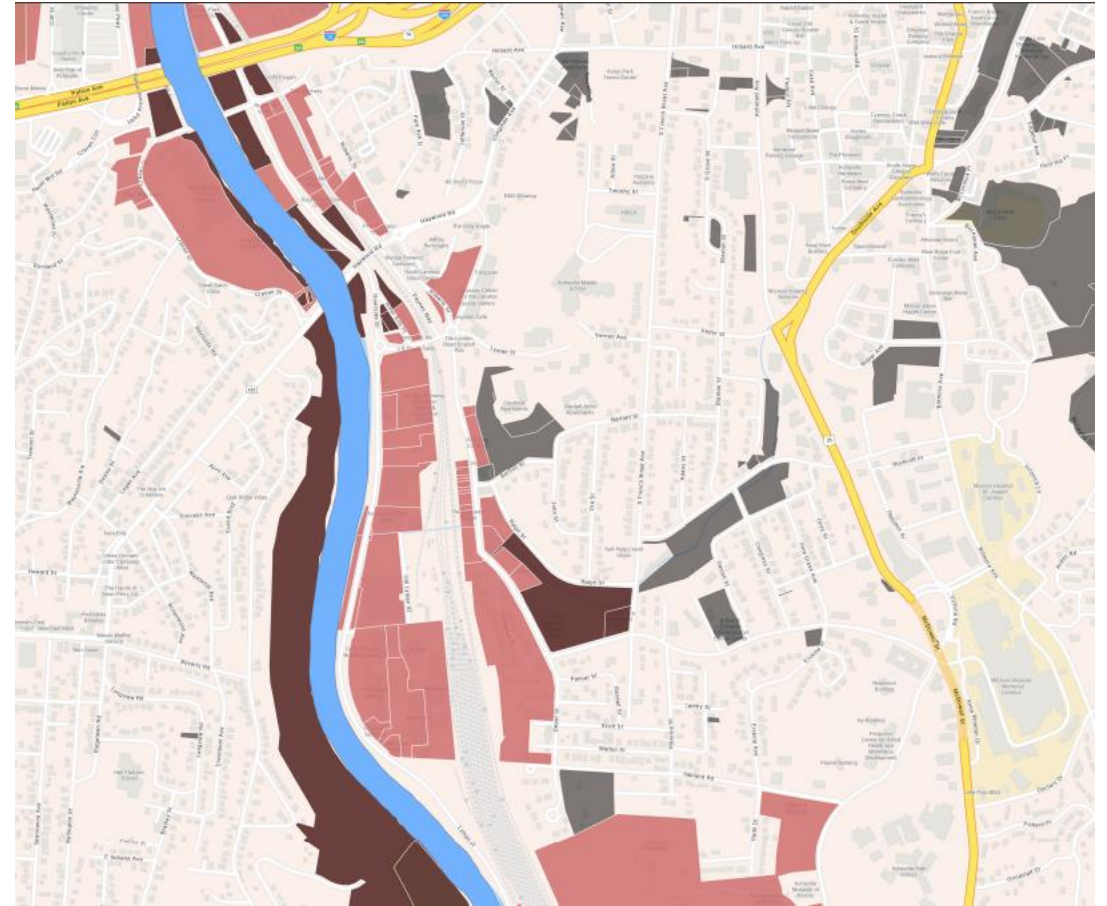
Top: **Combining forces**. Land parcels assembled on Mississippi Reiver in New Orleans to create a flood resistant restaurant district. Source: [Axios](#)

Bottom: **Low cost of loss, high civic value** activities on pop up sites at riverbank with industrial uses beyond. Generated by Chat GPT



Do the Buyouts Right

- FEMA buyouts are available now — but won't last.
- Today's offers don't consider future value or community needs. "Missing Teeth?"
- Asheville can steer buyouts toward conservation and public benefit.
- Land trusts and fair reimbursement can turn small plots into lasting community assets.



Even the city has parcels to maybe swap.
Source: City of Asheville

Act in THIS MOMENT: A Legacy of Resilience Starts Now

- Mother Nature has spoken: Floodplains are not suitable for all uses!
- Hundreds of millions in funding are flowing—for now.
- Asheville's future depends on smart choices: combining land, sharing risk, long-term planning.
- Let's not build back the same—we can build forward better, together.

Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

Parks

Community

Water

Built Form

ECONOMIC

Economic Reset

ORGANIZATIONAL



Asheville's Economic Reset

Post-Helene recovery is a generational opportunity

- Rebuild the economy through resilience, not replication
- Align investments with long-term community values and identity
- Leverage CDBG-DR and community partnerships to spur equitable recovery
- Focus on both quality of life and quality of opportunity, especially for low- to moderate-income (LMI) residents

TOURISM

RECREATION

WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

ARTS

Reframe Tourism's Role

Treat tourism as an asset

- Recognize tourism as a reflection of Asheville's unique identity
- In 2023, 13.9 million visitors generated nearly \$3 billion in spending in Buncombe County
- Pursue a "Destination Stewardship" approach
 - Include resident input in managing tourism
 - Move past resistance to visitor traffic and focus on shared value



Shared Spaces, Shared Value

Design places where residents and visitors connect

- Prioritize spaces that support organic resident–visitor interaction
- Protect Asheville’s authenticity without themed packaging
- Build “membranes” where civic life and tourism intersect
 - Examples like Riverfront District in Chattanooga and Granville Island in Vancouver
 - Ensure that public spaces serve the community first



Recreation as Economic Strategy

Build a place-based recreation economy along the riverfront

- Redesign the riverfront as both an economic and civic space
- Link trails, parks, and rivers to economic revitalization goals
 - Offer seasonal events and art installations to drive year-round activity
 - Encourage outdoor amenities that connect communities, serve residents, and attract visitors
- Design spaces that celebrate culture, ecology, and recreation



Invest in Creative Entrepreneurs

Use CDBG-DR funds to support Asheville's creative economy

- Use the \$17 million Small Business Support Program (CDBG-DR) to build a creative incubator
- Nurture creative industries that reflect regional identity
- Partner with educational institutions and local nonprofits to develop business support services
- Provide technical assistance and marketing support for small businesses



Build a Future-Ready Workforce

Prepare residents for careers in sustainable construction and clean energy

- Use the \$5 million Workforce Development Program (CDBG-DR) to launch training in green construction
- Prioritize enrollment from low- to moderate-income (LMI) communities
- Partner with educational institutions like AB Tech and private sector to develop programs
- Build local capacity for energy retrofits, green infrastructure, and climate resilience



RAD 2.0

Relocate and reimagine Asheville's creative hub

- Use the \$30 million Revitalization of Commercial Districts Program (CDBG-DR) to fund RAD 2.0
- Secure a new facility with affordable rents and strong infrastructure
- Establish public programming to support community-driven activities
- Retain Asheville's creative energy in a safer, long-term home



Equip Asheville's Artists for Long-Term Success

Develop support for creative careers

- Launch rotating seminars on business, finance, and grant writing with local nonprofits like Mountain BizWorks
- Provide shared tools, equipment, and co-working options
- Mentor artists to grow sustainable creative careers
- Prioritize affordable commercial leases to stabilize the sector

Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

Parks

Community

Water

Built Form

ECONOMIC

Economic Reset

Community Development

ORGANIZATIONAL



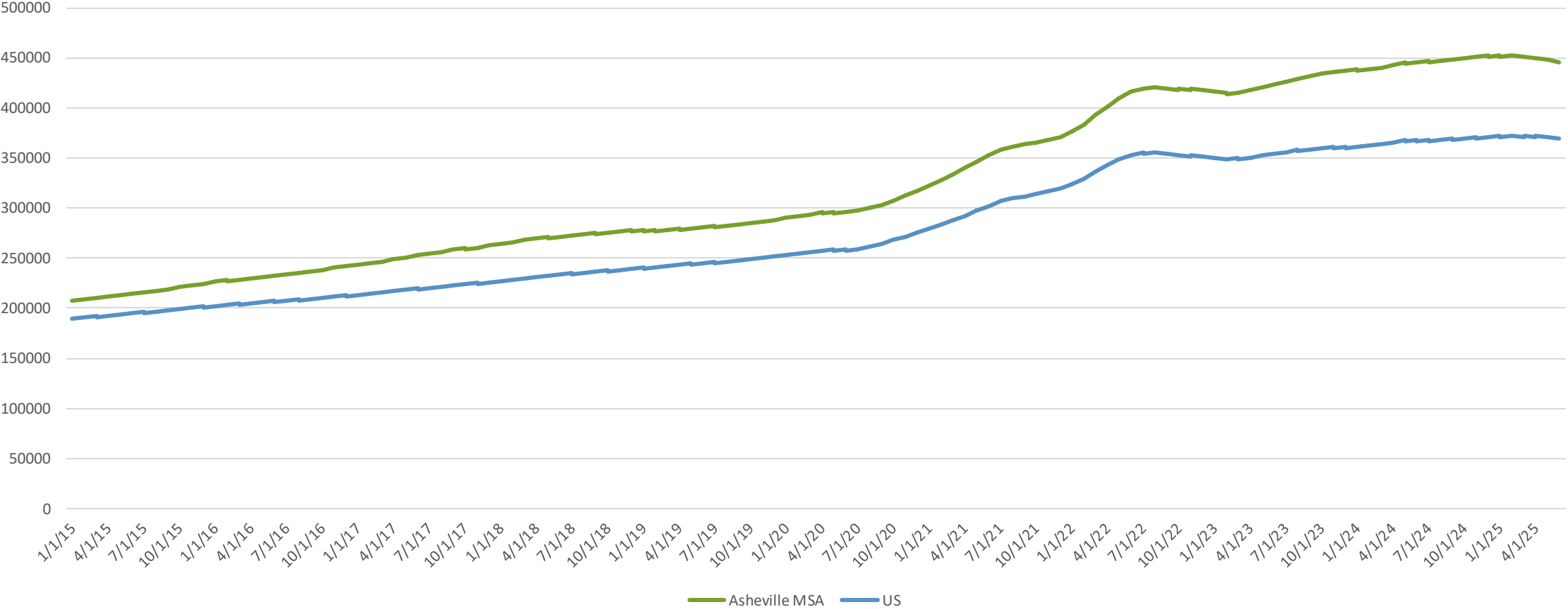
Housing is an Essential Component of Economic Resilience

- It's hard to do things without an address
- Stakeholders told us housing is something Ashevilleians worry about
- Context matters



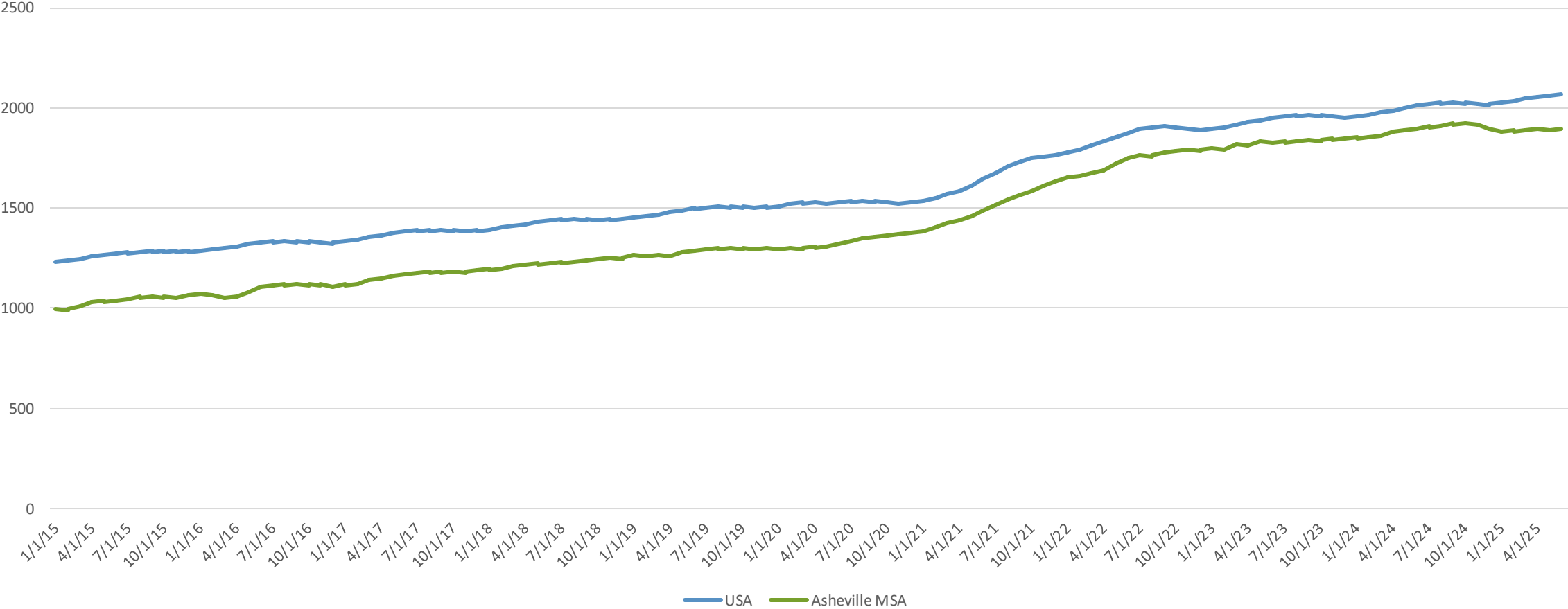
Asheville is Expensive: Zillow Constant Quality House Prices

Asheville MSA and US, 2015-2025



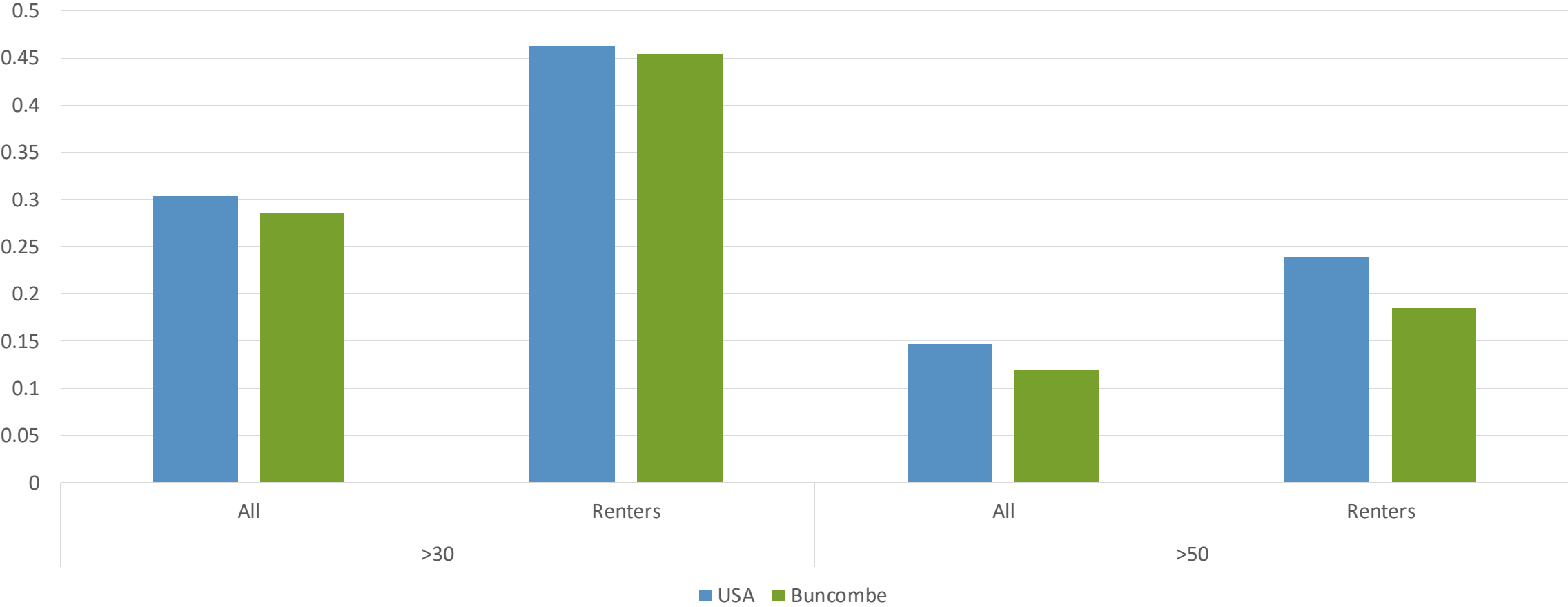
Asheville is Not So Expensive: Zillow Rents

Asheville MSA and USA, 2015-2025



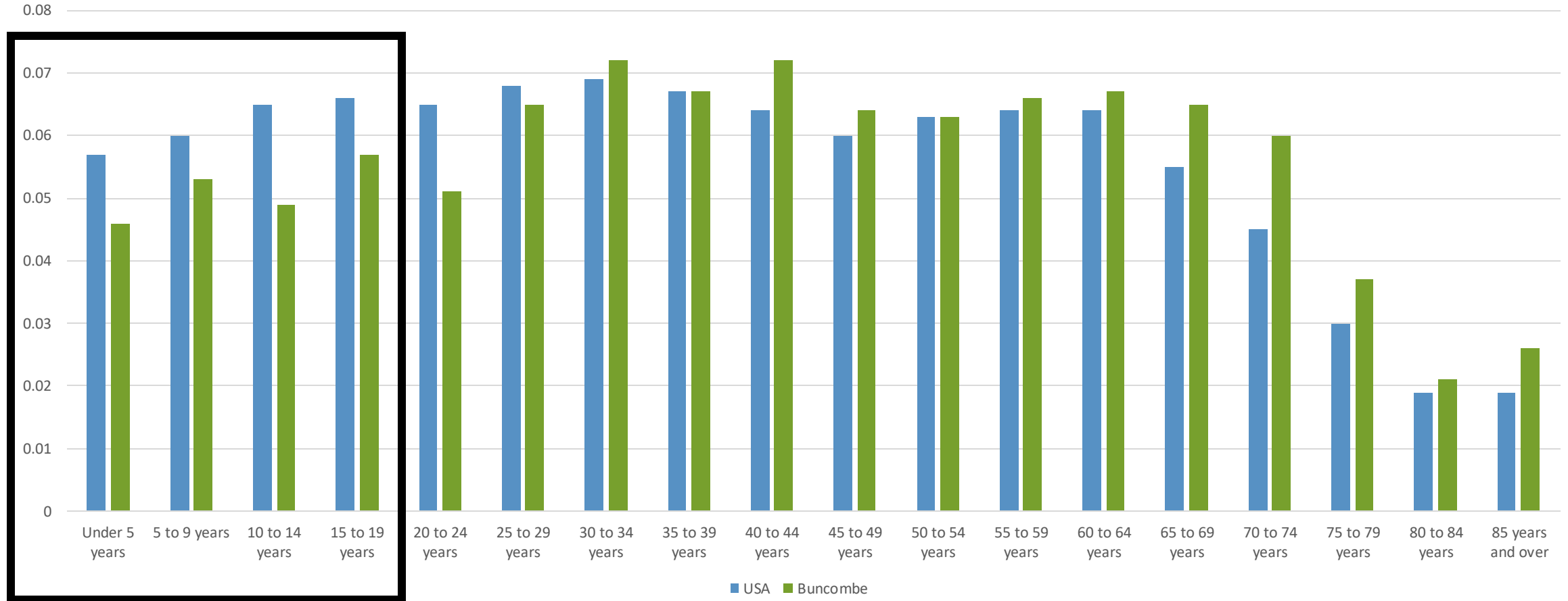
Cost Burdened Households: US and Buncombe County

US is Slightly More Cost Burdened



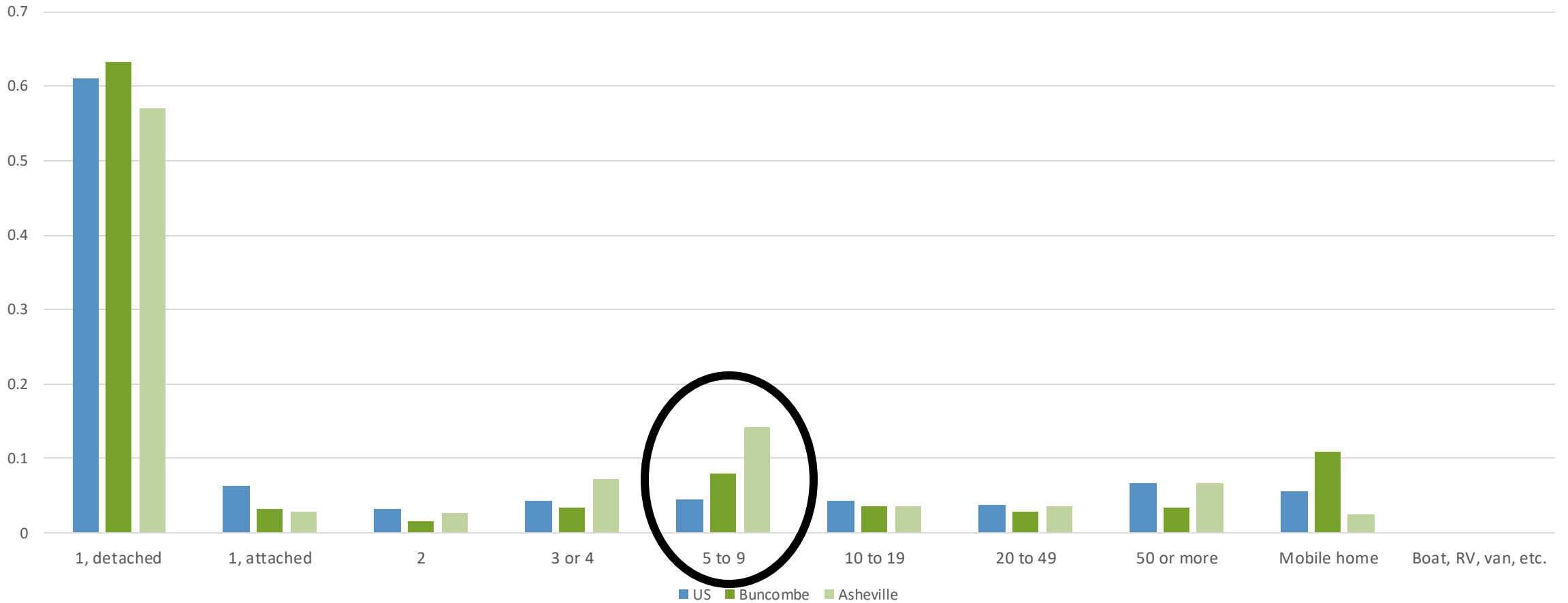
Buncombe County Has Relatively Few Children

Age Distribution USA and Buncombe County (One-Year American Community Survey 2023)



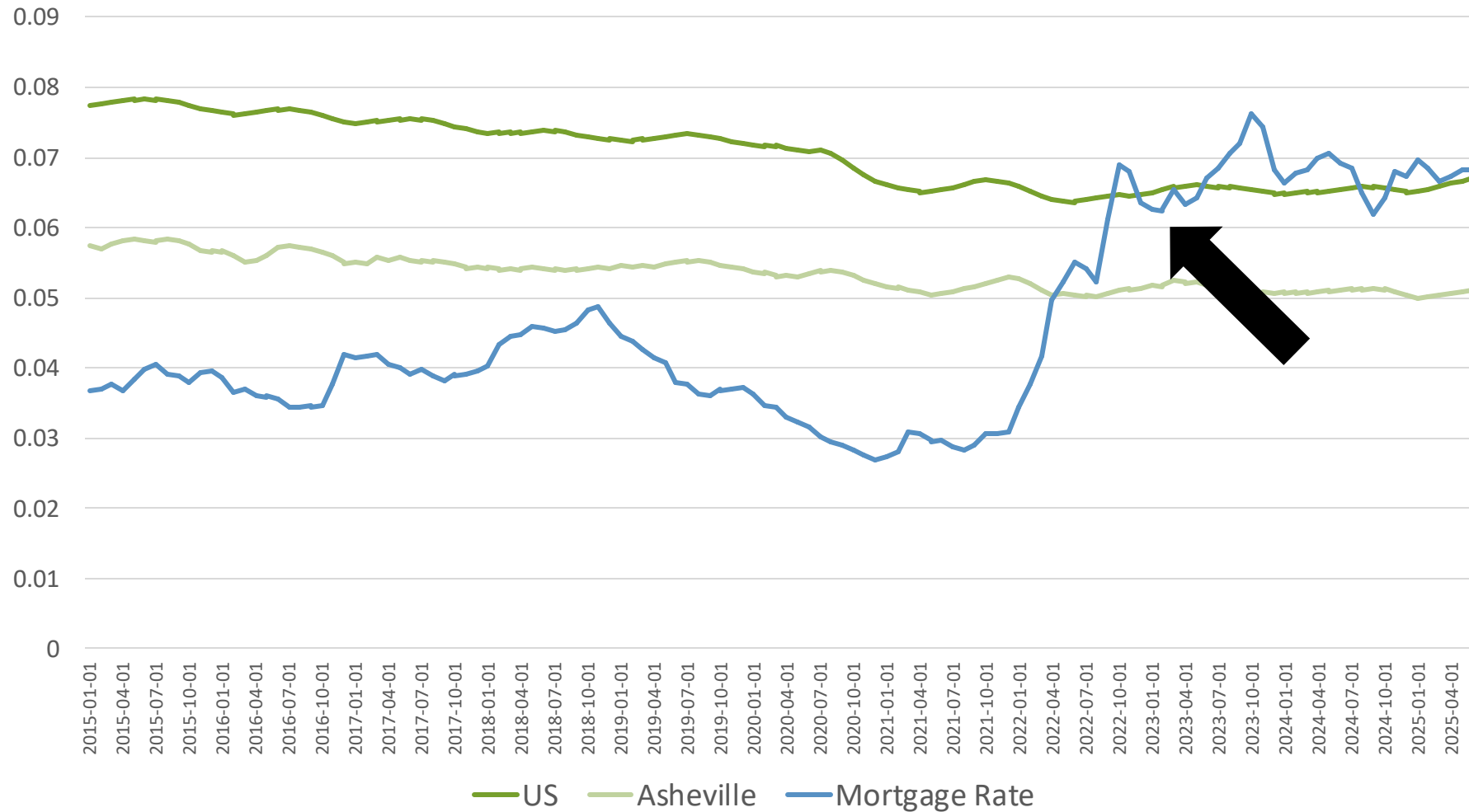
Housing by Building Size: Asheville Has More 5 to 9s

US, Buncombe County, and Asheville. 2023 American Community Survey



Gross Returns to Owner Housing

(Annual Rent/House Value and Freddie Mac Mortgage Rates)



Returns To Building A Single Unit Under Current Conditions

Sources: Zillow, ACS, Brokers, Contractors

■ Institutional (Zillow Rent)

- Cost \$255,000
- Gross Rent \$1900
- Operating Expense Ratio .33
- Stabilized Vacancy .06
- NOI \$14,360
- Mortgage Payment @1.25 DCF \$11,487
- Mortgage Amount (7% over 40 years) \$154,400
- Equity Needed \$100,600
- Cash Flow \$2873
- **Current ROE .028**

■ Individual (ACS Rent)

- Cost \$255,000
- Gross Rent \$1300
- Operating Expense Ratio .2
- Stabilized Vacancy .06
- NOI \$11,731
- Mortgage Payment @1.25 DCF \$9384
- Mortgage Amount (7% over 40 years) \$125,838
- Equity Needed \$129,162
- Cash Flow \$2347
- **Current ROE .018**

Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

Parks

Community

Water

Built Form

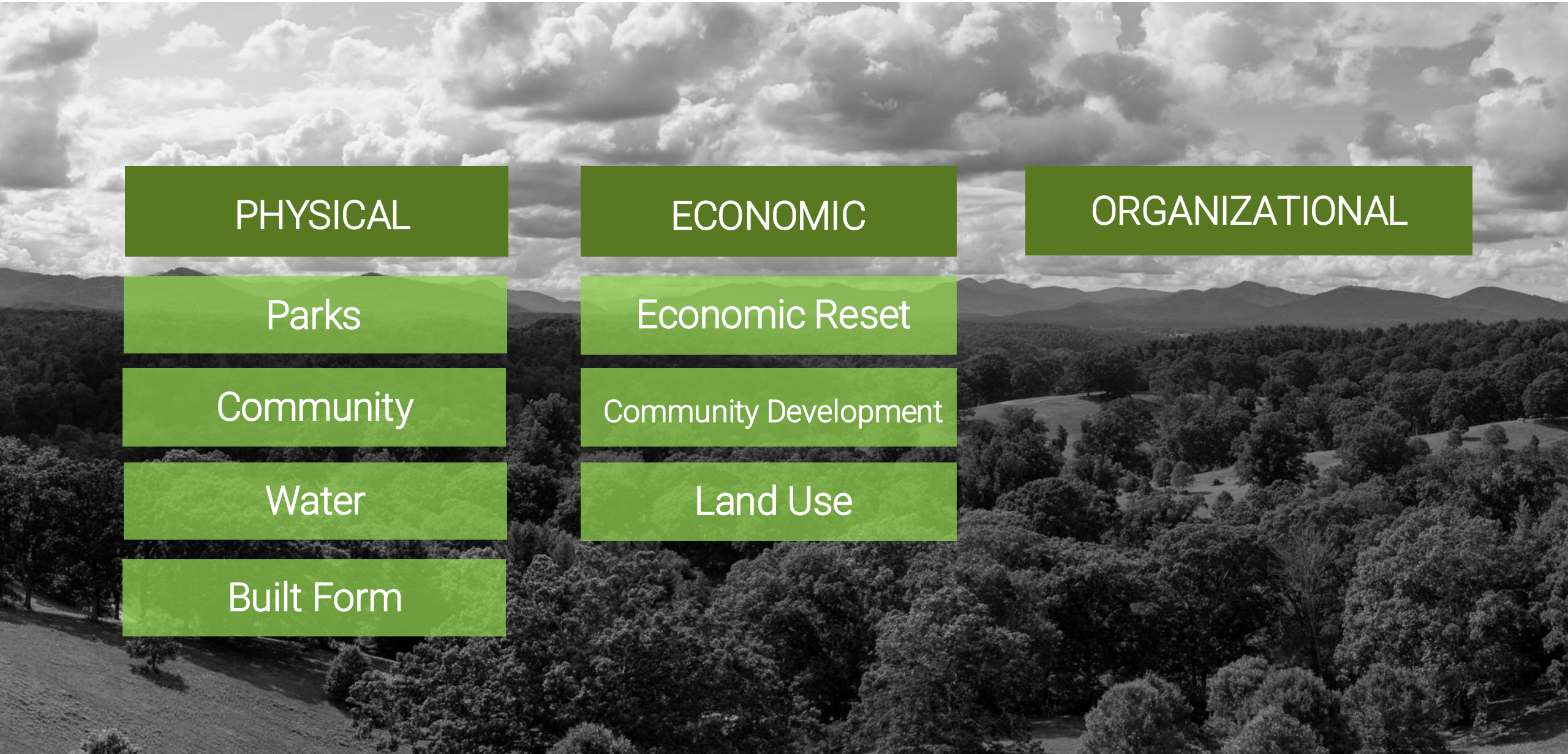
ECONOMIC

Economic Reset

Community Development

Land Use

ORGANIZATIONAL



Land Use

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

■ The Study Area

- Swannanoa River Corridor (288 parcels) + French Broad Corridor (199 parcels) = 487 parcels
- Median size - 0.37 acres (16,117 square feet)

■ Zoning

- 52 unique land use zones!
- Biggest categories: commercial, government, and utilities
- Other allowable uses: gasoline sales, auto repairs, and industrial uses (like a concrete plant, steel foundry, propane gas facility, and paper recycling processing plant)
- Most allow for housing

■ The Challenge

- Lots of permitted uses are not conducive to promoting or conserving the river and its environs
- Some existing uses can significantly pollute both the soil and water with extremely hazardous materials

Land Use

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

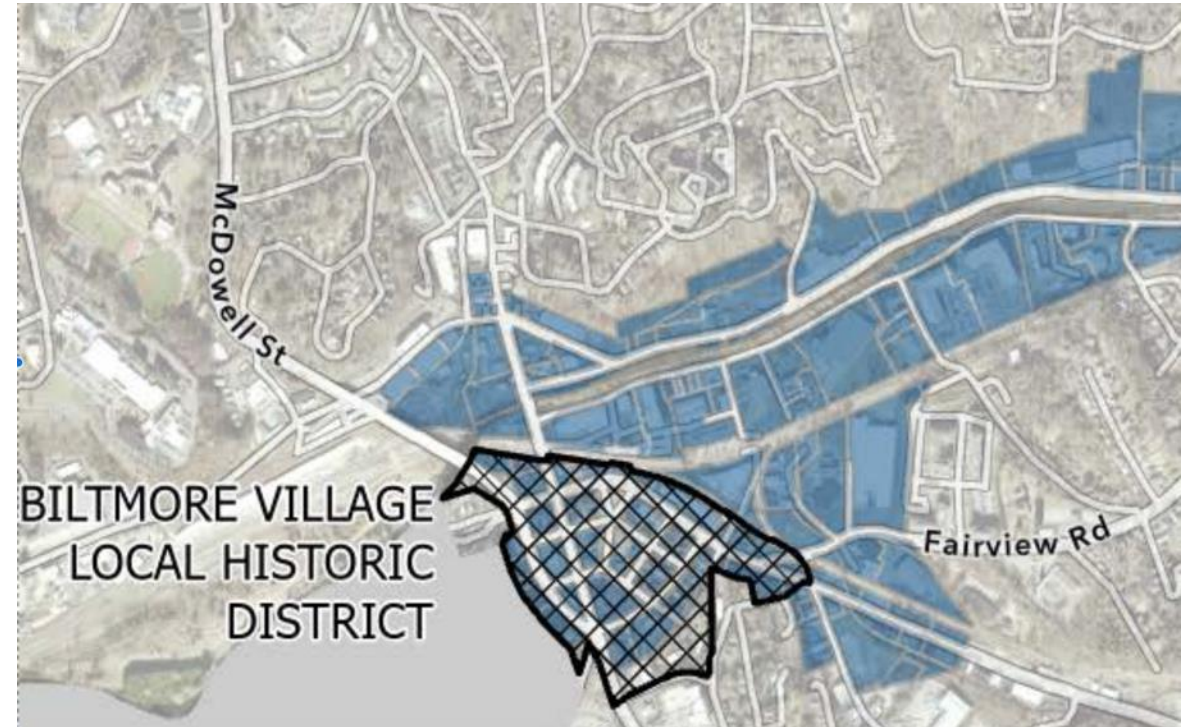
- The Floodplain
 - Historic properties are exempt from the City's and FEMA's requirements for building in the floodplain
 - So, it's much easier and much less costly to simply renovate historic buildings in the flood zone than to build new ones that do have to comply with the flood standards
- The Result?
 - The properties in these two historic zones will continue to flood resulting in loss of property – and loss of valuable community assets



Land Use

Tools to bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

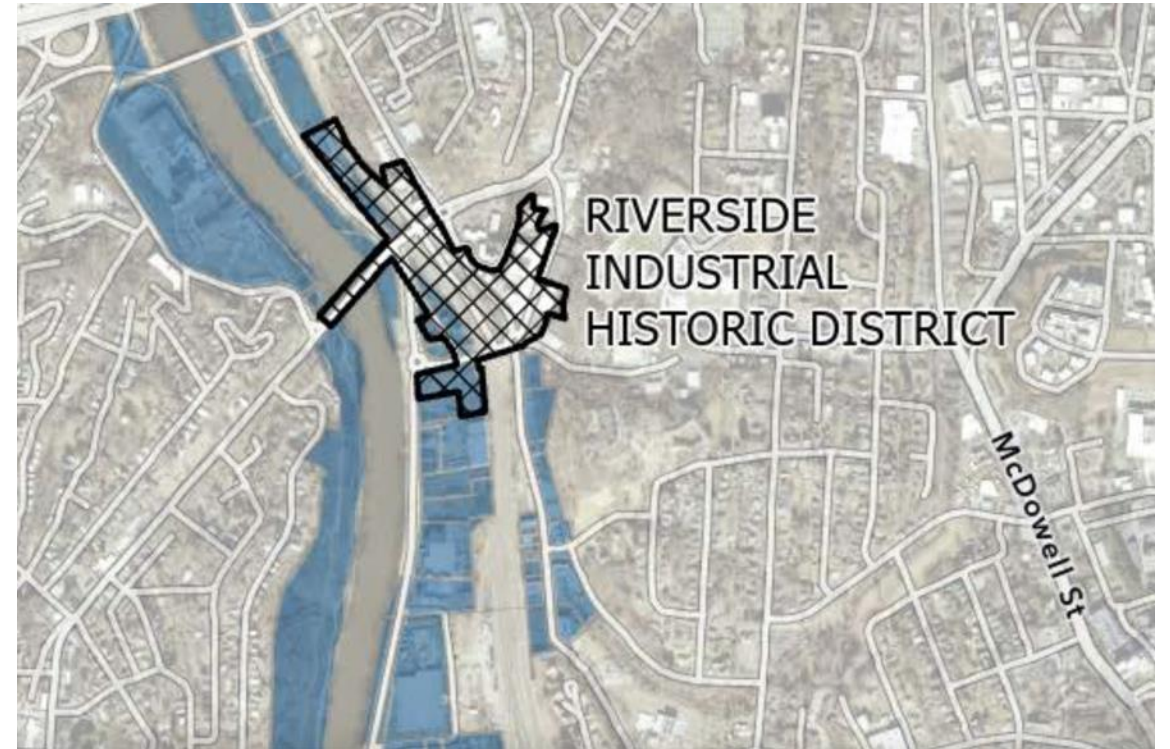
- Biltmore Village Local Historic District
 - Situated just upstream of the confluence of the Swannanoa River and French Broad River
 - Much of the district sits below base flood elevation
 - Since September 2024, Asheville's Board of Adjustment has granted seven flood variances allowing substantially damaged historic structures to rebuild without meeting base flood elevations or implementing any required "armoring" of their sites that would be required of new development



Land Use

Tools to bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

- Riverside Industrial Historic District
 - National historic district that falls within the French Broad river floodplain
 - Much of the district also sits below base flood elevation
 - No flood variances have been issued for this district, and as of the summer 2025 the number of structures in this district scheduled to be demolished has not been finalized.



Land Use

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

- Housing
 - Housing is an essential component of economic resilience
 - Attracting new industries to Asheville is made incredibly difficult because of the lack of employee housing options
 - On the positive side, over the last year, Buncombe County has issued permits for more multi-family units than single family homes.



Land Use

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

THE BIG QUESTION...

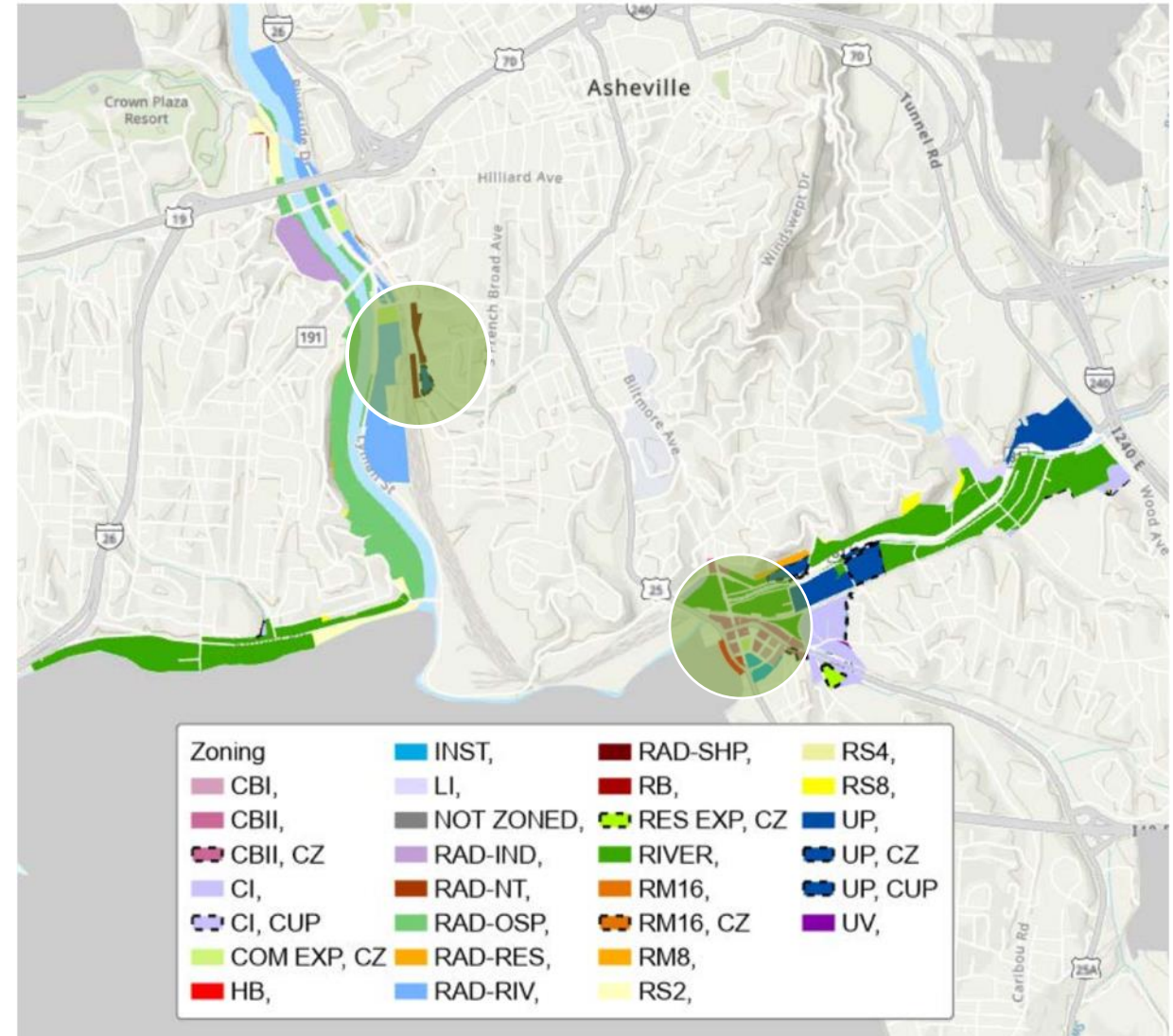
How can we simplify zoning in the Study Area to support environmentally and economically resilient development and comprehensive, meaningful access to the River Districts?

Land Use

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt a new River Districts Floodplain Zone (“RDFZ”)
- Adopt a new River Districts Mixed Use Zone (“RDMUZ”)
- Establish an infrastructure grant program
- Establish a “Soft Second” mortgage assistance program
- Create a new “Development Liaison” staff position at the City



River District Floodplain Zone

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

This proposed zone change may be challenging to implement but is important for ensuring the long-term health of the rivers and the land.

It will:

- Expressly prohibit uses that pollute the land or the water (disallowing some current uses)
- Require on site or centralized solutions for storm water (features like porous asphalt or concrete, porous pavers, native planting, installation of swales, and underground storage cells etc.)
- Not allow variances to be given to property owners rebuilding non-historic buildings
- Require even the historic neighborhoods comply with the storm water requirements
- Encourage current, non-conforming users to participate in the HMGP buy-out program, with a commitment for relocation assistance outside of the River District

River District Mixed Use Zone

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

The RDMUZ is a pilot program to encourage the development of multifamily housing connected both to the River District and the history-rich legacy neighborhoods

It will:

- Set Objective Design Standards for Multifamily housing
- Remove discretionary review for projects that meet that criteria
- Ensure that projects provide for permeability – with emphasis on views and physical connections to the river and ground floor activation facing the public realm
- Not allow single family homes
- Reduce parking requirements and remove minimum lot size requirements
- Add landscaping and low impact green infrastructure requirements
- Offer density bonuses to encourage the addition of deed restricted affordable units
- Allow for the utilization of the 1% Arts Fee to subsidize the construction or rental of artists' studio spaces and or affordable housing for creatives

Infrastructure Grant Program

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

- The requirement for the implementation of low impact infrastructure will be a burden to property owners
- Without this requirement, even the “nuisance” flooding will continue to cause physical/economic damage and to leach potentially hazardous materials into the river.
- Taking advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have federal funds assist with infrastructure improvements, the City will oversee the implementation of a grant to cover the costs of the low impact site development strategies required under the RDFZ up to a maximum amount per square foot of total lot size.
- Payment of the grant will be made upon the final inspection of the completed work.

Soft Second Mortgage Assistance Program

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

- This program will provide financing to bridge the gap between what a builder is able to finance with traditional financing and the actual cost of the project – acting like additional equity
- These loans, funded by CDBG-DR and augmented by City or other funds, will not accrue interest and are repaid only upon refinancing or sale of the property
- One of the benefits of this program is that when the loans are repaid the money is recycled back into the fund to help finance new projects



Development Liaison

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

- This is a new position at the City!
- The Development Liaison will be responsible for:
 - Being the single point of contact at the City for builders developing within the River Districts
 - Helping to navigate the various City departments
 - Assisting with the drafting and implementation of the proposed new zones, ensuring that (s)he understands intent
 - Providing constructive advice and guidance to both staff and developers on how to mutually achieve the City's goals
 - Acting as a champion facilitating projects that are consistent with the new zoning with the elected officials, the community members and with the City staff
 - For maximum efficiency, the Development Liaison should report directly to the City Manager

Implementation

Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

The implementation of these five recommendations should be able to occur over the next six months.

Together, they will bring to reality the vision of an economically and environmentally resilient community that reengages the legacy neighborhoods with the River District.

These tools will ensure a healthy and viable recreation area for generations to come, that pays homage to the rich history of the arts in the whole of the River District, and that protects its historic resources.

Finally, they will ensure economic resilience by providing all levels of employee housing.



Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

Parks

Community

Water

Built Form

ECONOMIC

Economic Reset

Community Development

Land Use

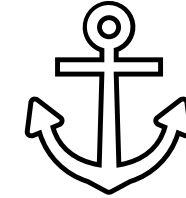
ORGANIZATIONAL

Talk Less, Do More

Governing for Physical & Economic Resilience

Organizational Structure and Capacity

Anchor economic development and sustainability in three principles:



1. **Connection** – Take a systems approach
2. **Strategic Alignment** – Focus on shared priorities
3. **Relationships** – Work with partners essential to your success

Vision for Asheville's Future & Identity

The Defining Moment



- Move from crisis response and analysis to strategic *doer-ship*
- End planning for planning's sake
- Act with intention—align today's steps with tomorrow's needs
- Take risks—view failure as progress
- Advance through iteration—innovate, adapt, measure, and repeat
- Reclaim Asheville's core identity – a city rooted in nature, arts, and community
- *A legacy built on connection, capacity, and courage*

Planning For Leadership *In Action*

Reimagining how planning is done



- Align existing efforts into one clear, prioritized vision
- Strategically deploy current and future resources for maximum impact
- Break down silos – connect people, plans, and actions
- Integrate fragmented efforts in a single, adaptive roadmap
- Ground execution in data, evidence, and trauma-informed insights
- *Move with haste towards implementation*

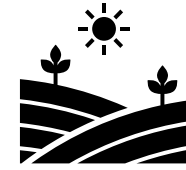
Center Asheville's Culture and Identity in its Rebuild

For Long Term Resilience



- Embrace the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers as the focal point of resilience
- Recalibrate civic identity – nature leads, people live with nature
- Elevate local history, artisanship, and accessibility
- Reinforce Asheville's true roots over external reputation
- Sustainable development must work *with* the environment, not against it
- Include nature in every step – design, culture, lifestyle, tourism
- Focus on greenspace, adaptive flood preparedness, and resilient infrastructure
- Acknowledge and integrate the River Districts' relationship with surrounding neighborhoods

Physical and Civic Infrastructure for the Future



Strategically Align Resources

- Reclaim the two rivers as the City's economic, cultural, and environmental anchors; a place for residents and visitors
- Establish the "One Water" regional Council for smarter water quality and integrated planning
- Develop green infrastructure along the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers
- Prepare FEMA buyouts strategy to aggregate parcels with future land use plans
- Build back Biltmore Village with green infrastructure
- Align funds (CIP, FEMA PA, CDBG-DR, etc.) for maximum impact

Economic Diversification and Culture as Catalyst



River District Renaissance

- Diversify the economy to enhance livability for residents
- Promote housing, education, and employment through inclusive economic planning
- Recognize the arts, culture and nature-based tourism as essential but not singular drivers
- Evolve River Arts District into a broader River District encompassing the study area
- Launch RAD 2.0 with \$30M Revitalization of Commercial Districts Program: resilient facility for creatives
- Program district for arts, entertainment, and recreation
- Incubate creative sector using \$17M Small Business Support Program
- Mandate green-building workforce development via CDBG-DR

Land Use & Planning

Tools to Accelerate Resilience and Build Back Swiftly

- Develop county-wide Stormwater Master Plan under "One Water"
- Use existing plans: Wilma Dykeman RiverWay, Riverfront Plan, RADTIP, HellBender Trail and findings from Thrive Asheville's, *Lessons for Recovery Report*, Summer 2025
- Use tools such as land swaps, transfer of development rights (TDRs)
- Simplify permitting and zoning in floodplain areas
 - Adopt River District Floodplain Zone and River District Mixed-Use Zone
 - Establish infrastructure grant program
 - Establish "Soft Second" mortgage assistance program
 - Establish development liaison position at the city, reporting to the City Manager

Strength Through Partnerships & Collaboration



From informal efforts to structured impact

- Continue to invest in public-private partnerships (ex. New Belgium Brewing)
- Bring together housing, economic, environmental, cultural groups under umbrella consortia
- Continue to collaborate with Buncombe County neighboring municipalities, business leaders, and universities
- Connect philanthropy (foundations) around shared themes (housing, economic development, environment and sustainability, etc.)
- Maximize scarce resources through grantmaking that incentivizes nonprofit collaboration and partnerships
- Invest in marginalized, under- and unserved organizations and cohesive community-building

Metrics & Accountability



- Use existing data sets to establish benchmarks for:
 - Housing accessibility
 - Health and wellness indicators
 - Economic development outcomes
 - Environmental resilience measures
- Develop timeline matrix for implementation
 - Short (1-3 years)
 - Mid (3-5 years)
 - Long (5+ years)
- Track impact of investment in people, nature, community
- What will be done, by who and when; Who/what will be better off and by how much

Call To Action



Asheville Rises

- Stop waiting for perfection – act boldly, act swiftly
- Lead from connection, alignment, relationships
- This is the moment to move forward together
- A resilient Asheville isn't just imagined – it's built
- Asheville is not just surviving floods and challenges – it's reclaiming its rivers, culture, and communities with bold intention. This moment defines not what the city has been, but what it will become.

A LEGACY OF RESILIENCE

What to do on Monday

Getting it done

- Create a development liaison
- Make sure the ideas in this presentation align with the CDBG-DR Action Plan
- Identify parcels for connecting parklands in the study area
- Bring nonprofits together and facilitate their collaboration
- Start the process of creating the One Water Council
- Identify sites for the new RAD