



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

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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

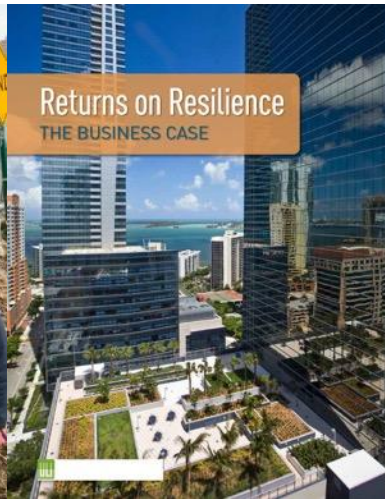
#### OFFERING EXPERT SOLUTIONS

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





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# THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS





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# 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

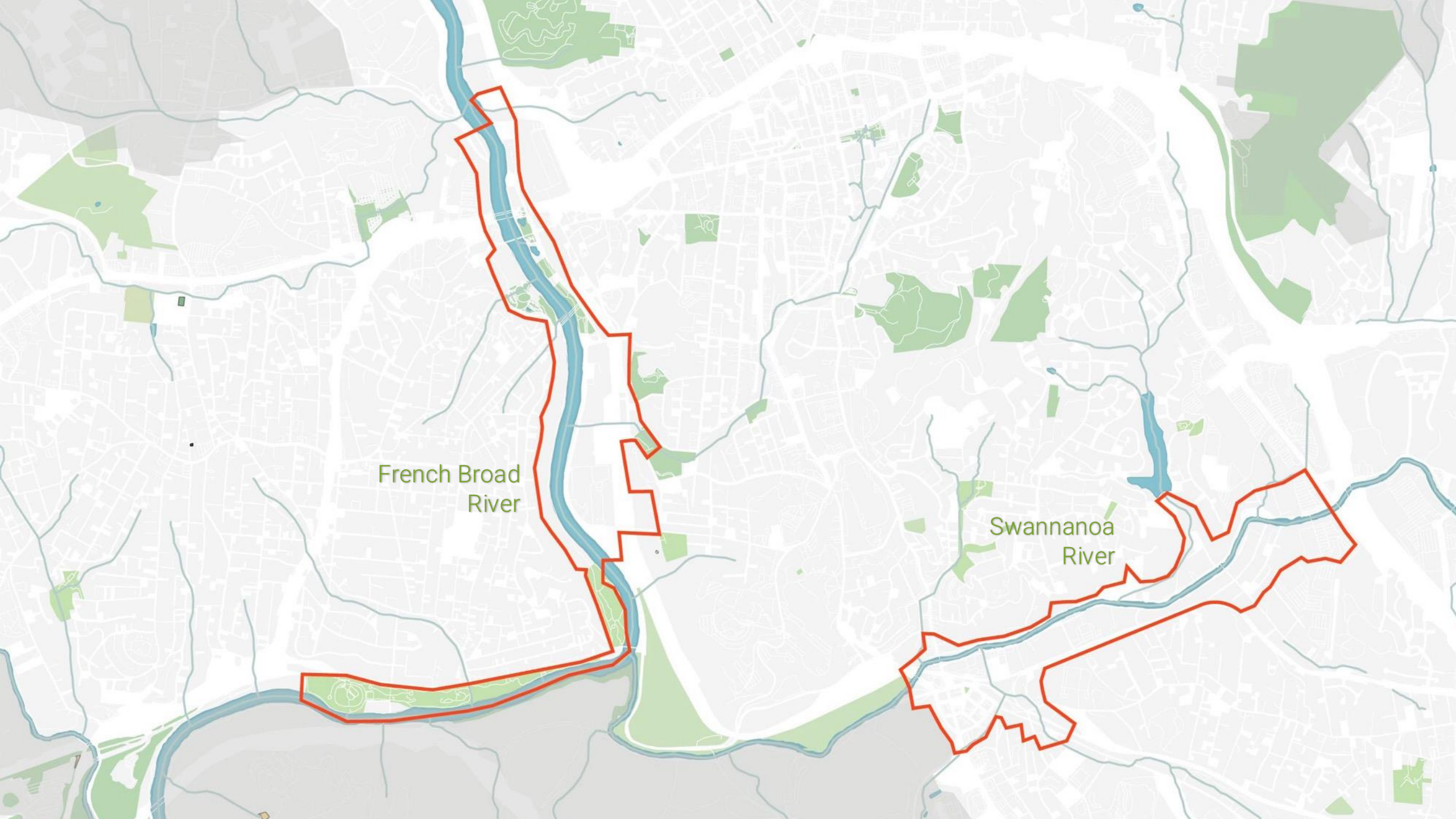
**Urban Land Institute:**  
**Victoria Oestreich**  
*(project manager)*  
Director, Advisory  
Services

**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

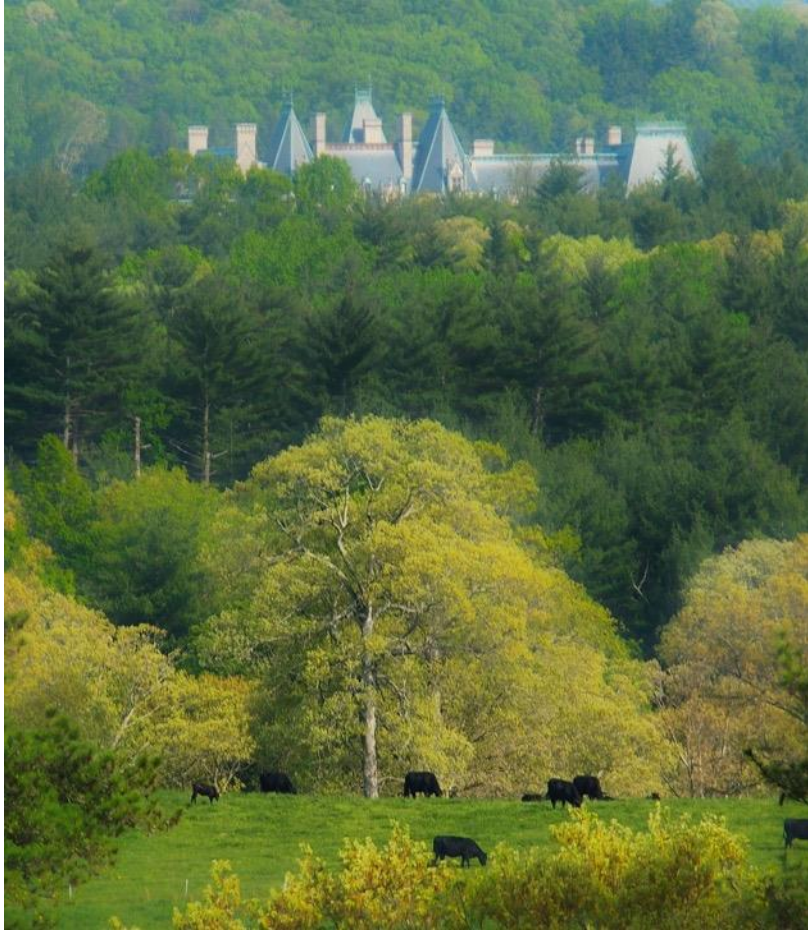
ORGANIZATIONAL

Parks





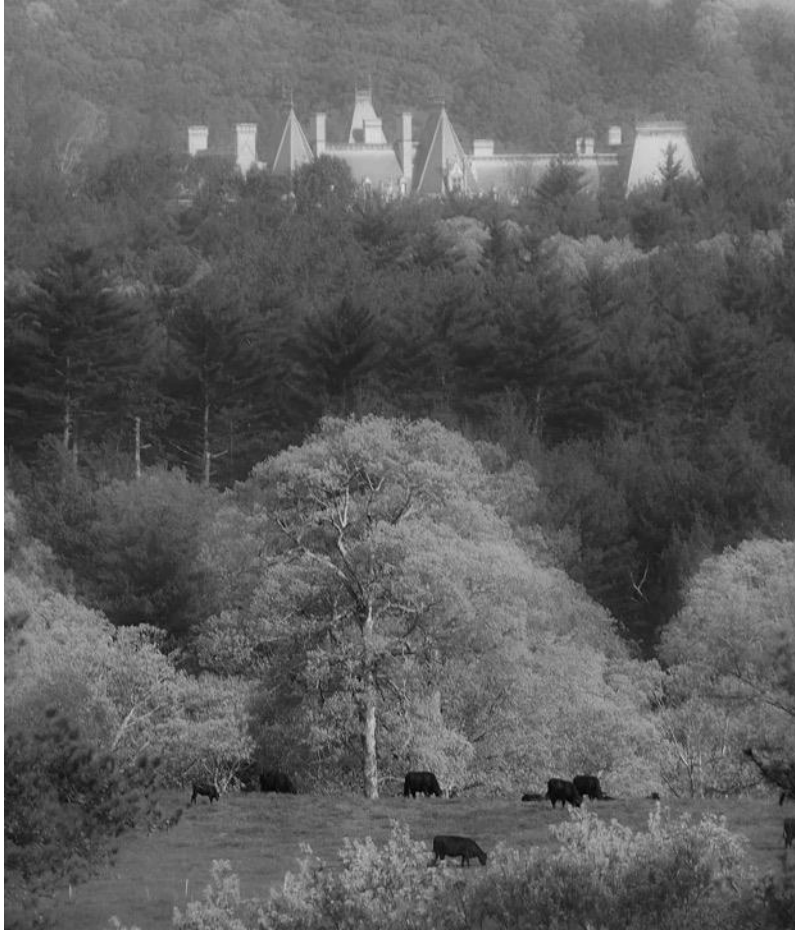
# A History of Legacy Parks In WNC



Biltmore Estate

1895

# A History of Legacy Parks In WNC



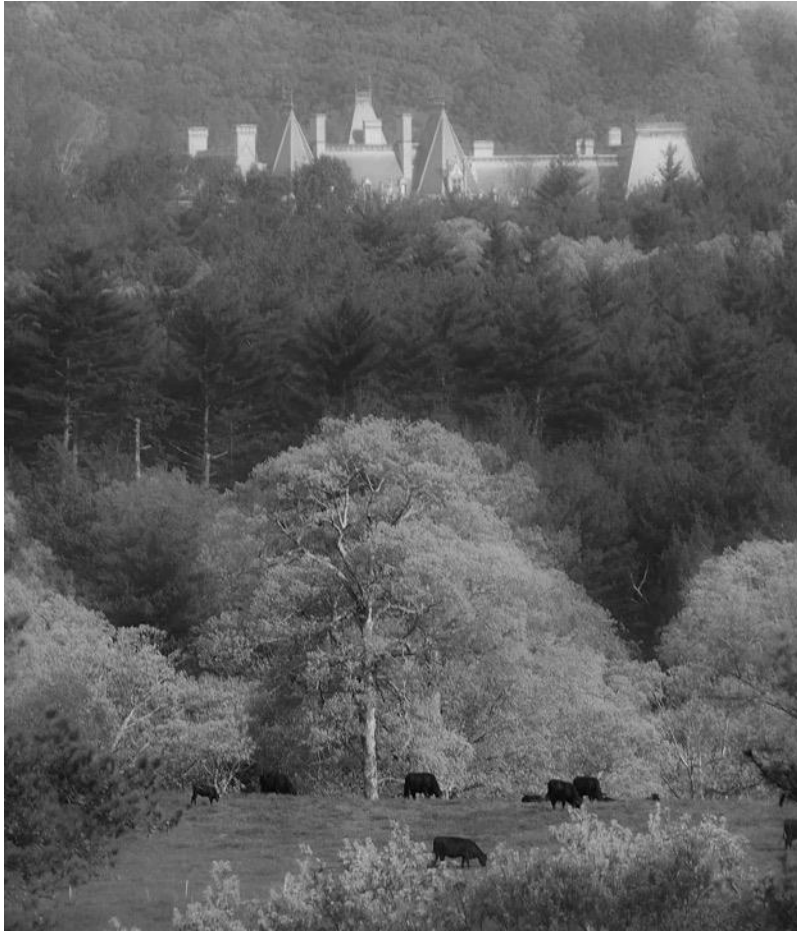
Biltmore Estate  
1895



Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
1940



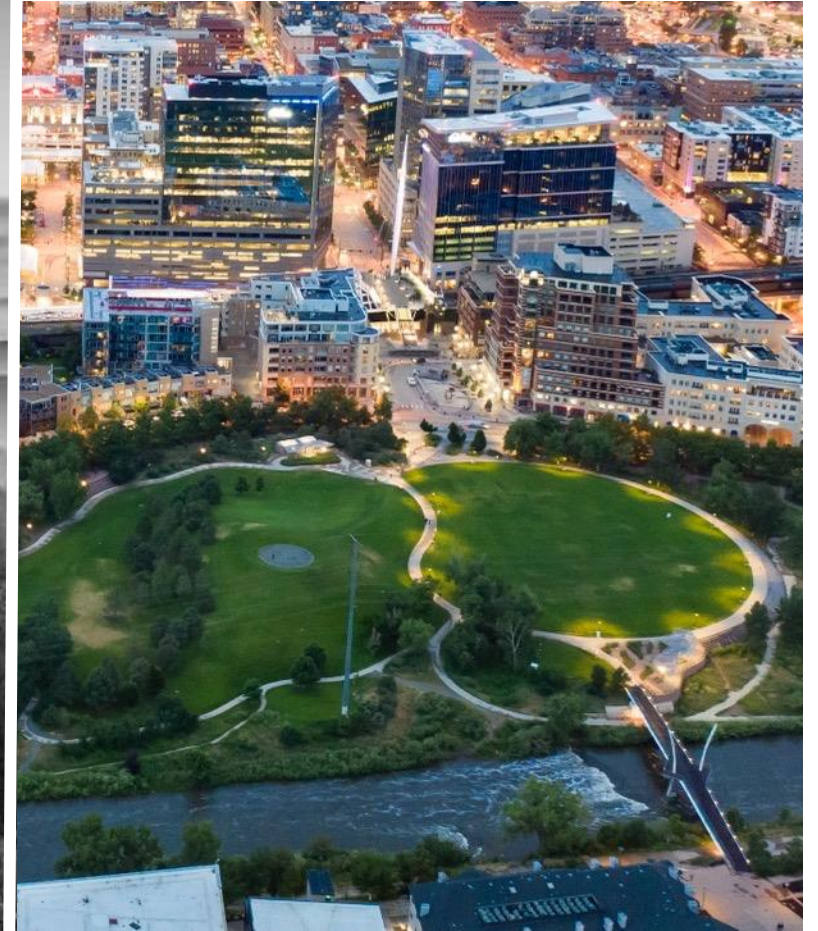
# A History of Legacy Parks in WNC



Biltmore Estate  
1895



Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
1940



Asheville's Future Legacy  
20??

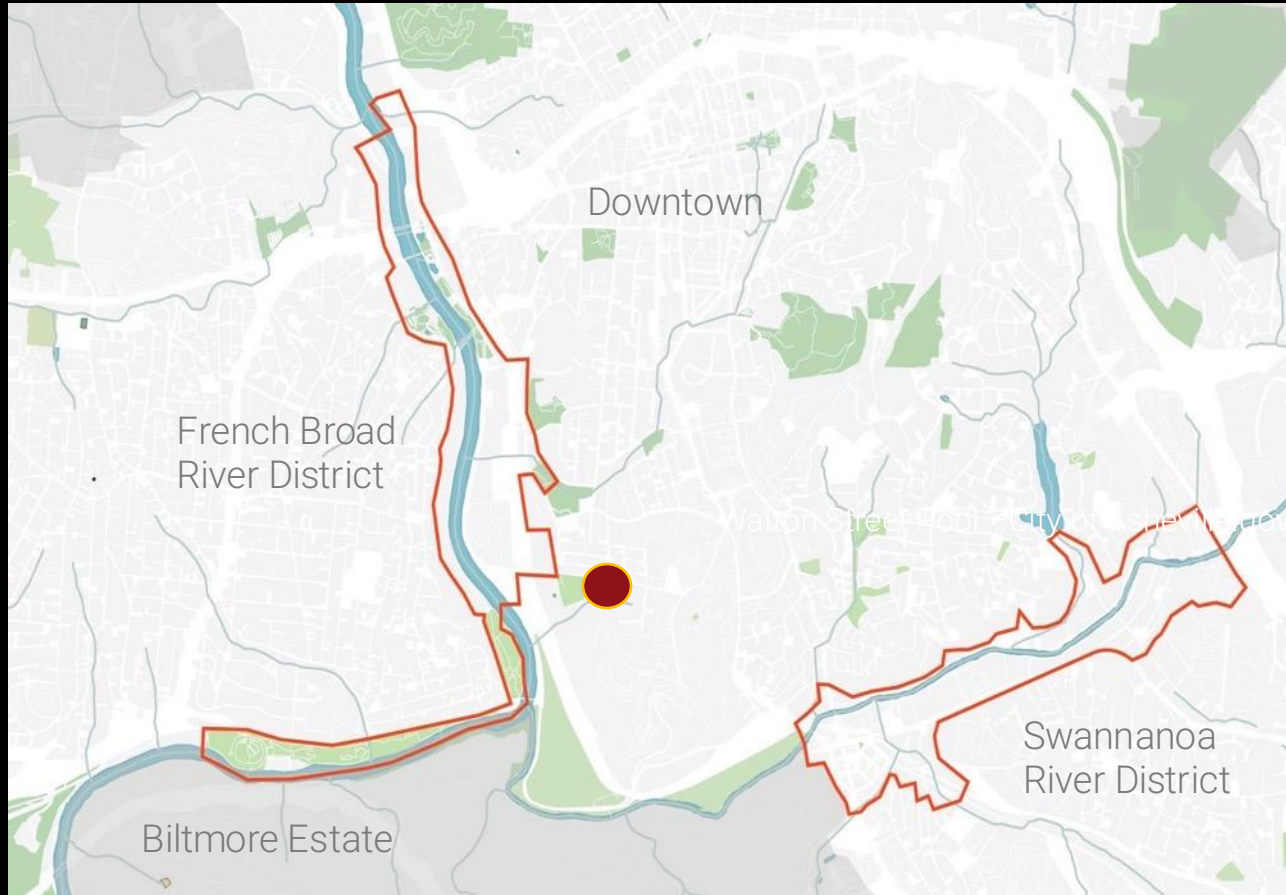


# Legacy Parks at the River Districts





# Legacy in Progress

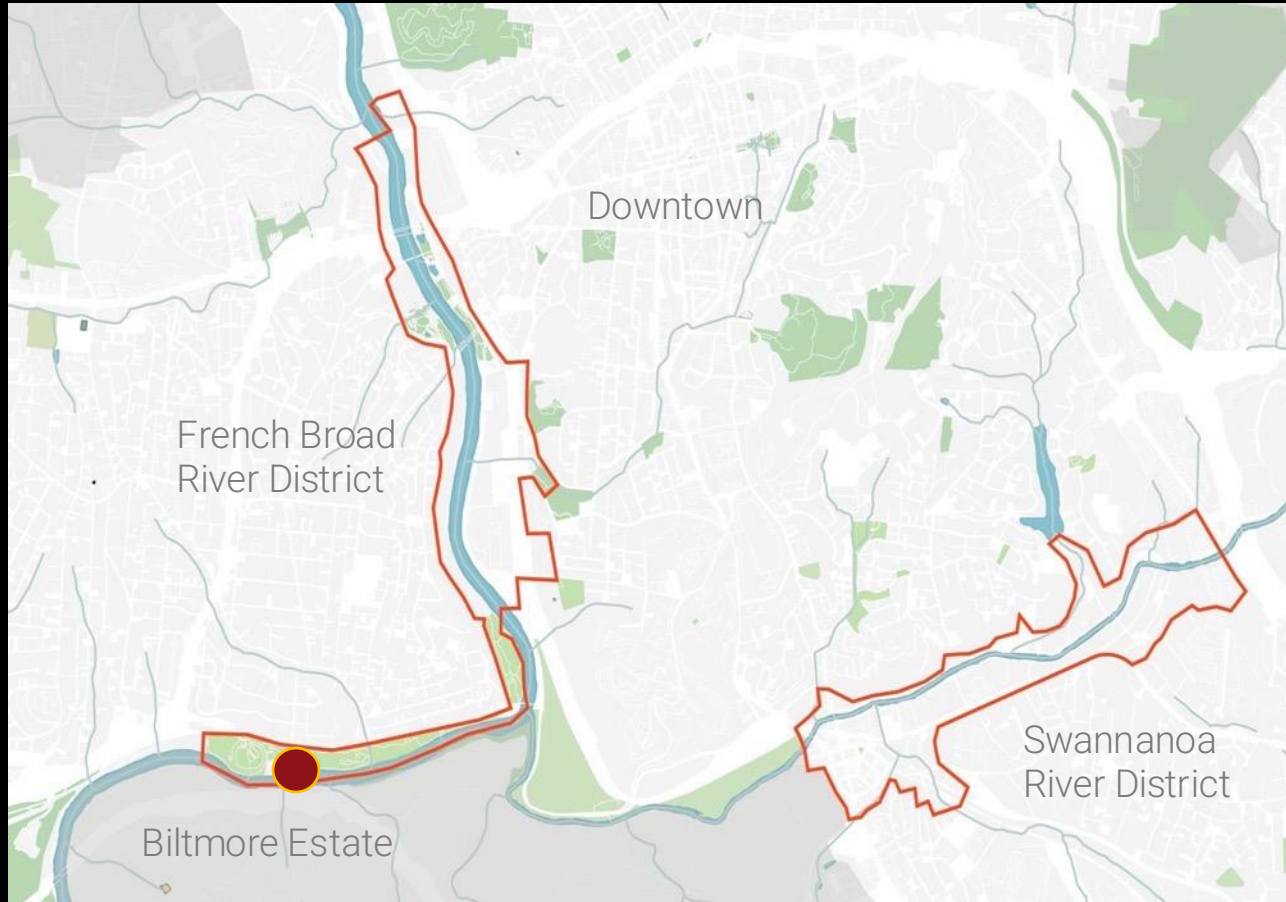


The Past (1930's)

Walton Street Pool –City of Asheville.gov



# Legacy in Progress

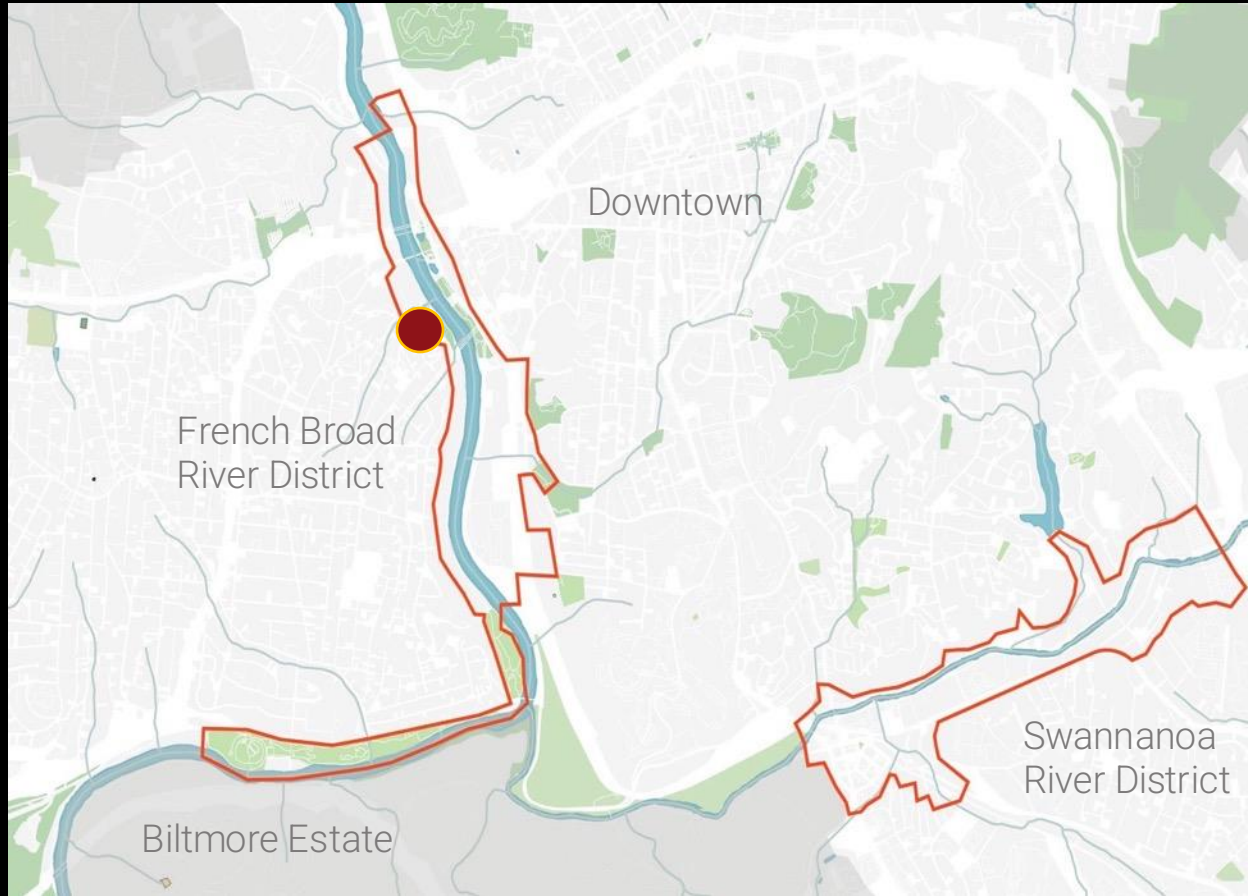


The Past (1990's)

Carrier Park Playground – City of Asheville.gov



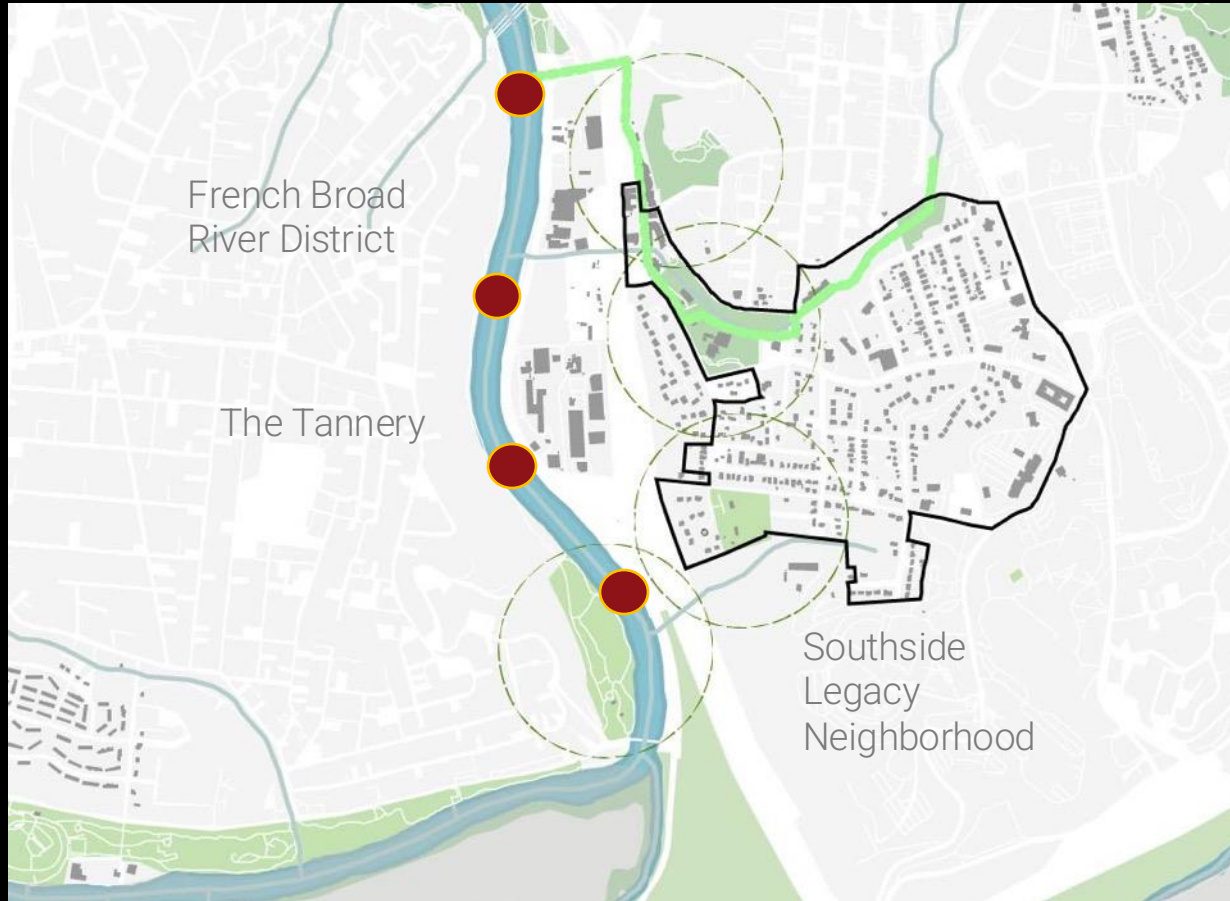
# Legacy in Progress



Recent Past (2016)



# Legacy Fulfilled



Possible Future



Hayden Homes Amphitheater



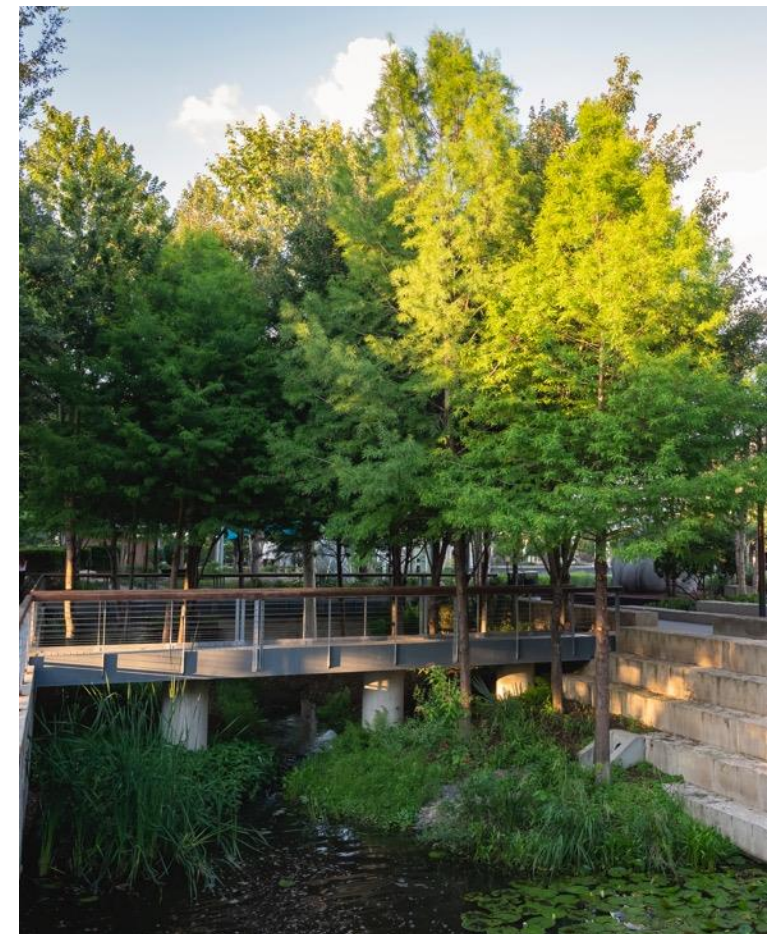
# Legacy Parks: The Benefits of Resilience



Clean Water



Biodiversity



Urban Forest



# Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

ECONOMIC

ORGANIZATIONAL

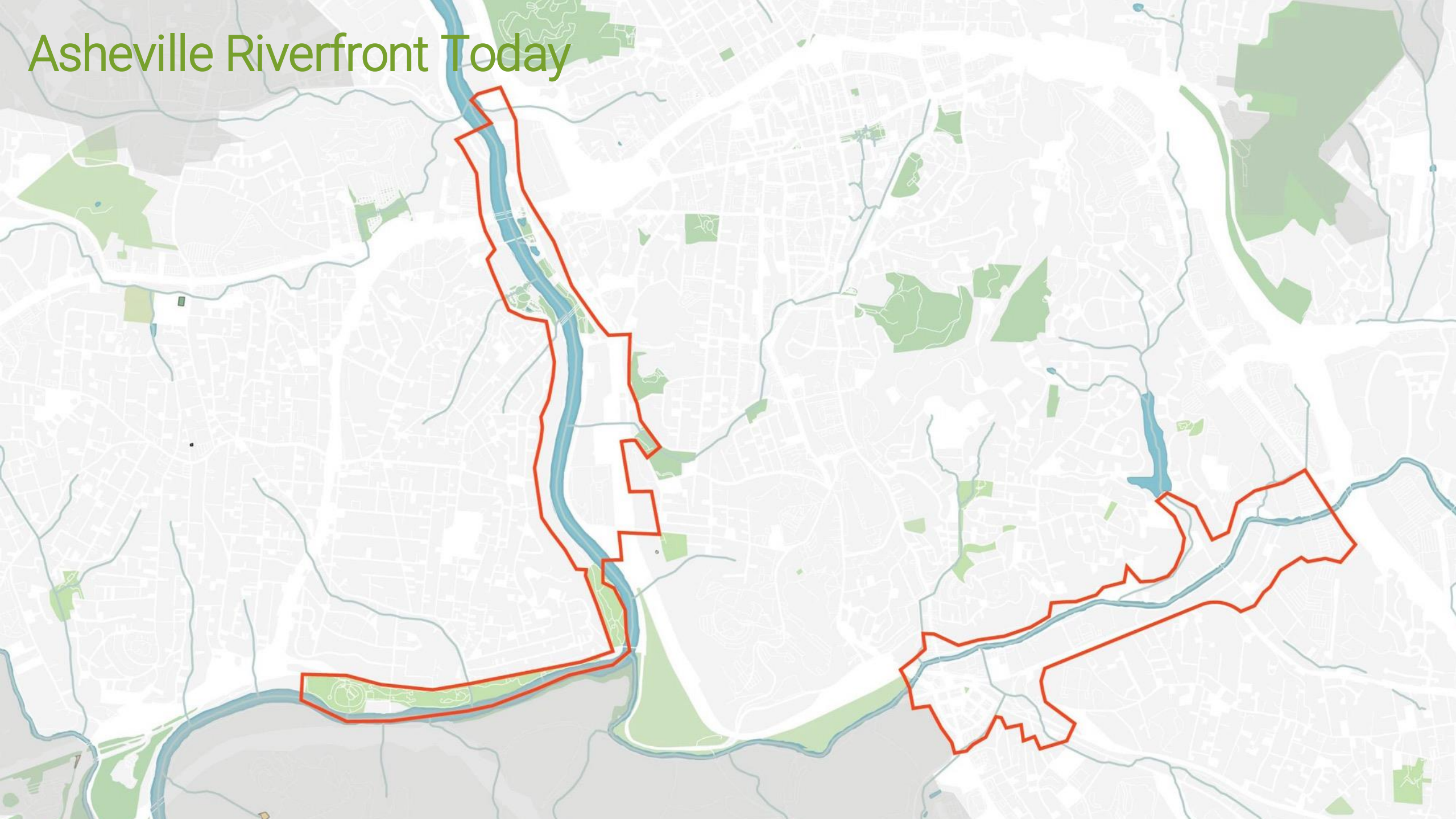
Parks

Community





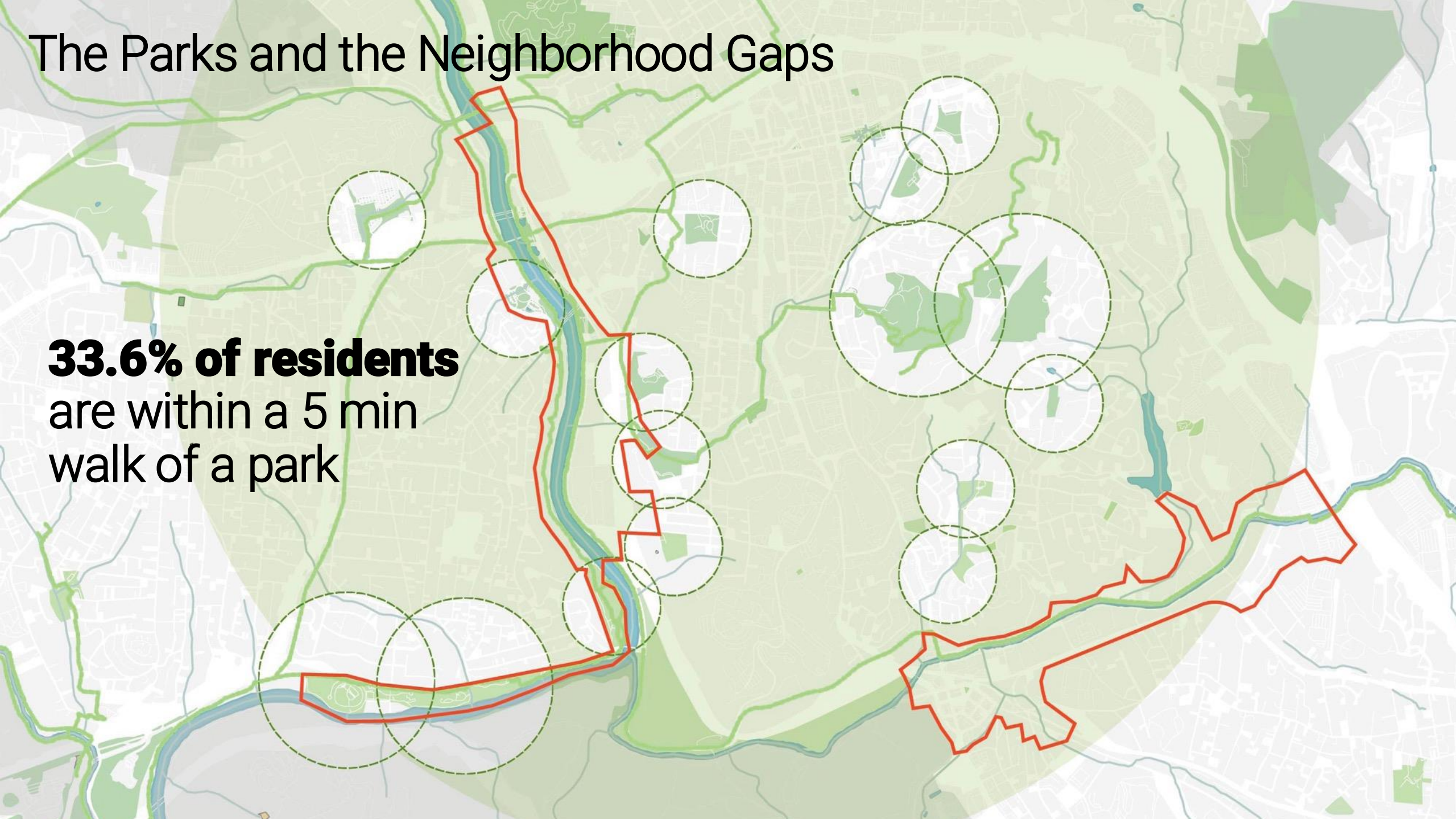
# Asheville Riverfront Today





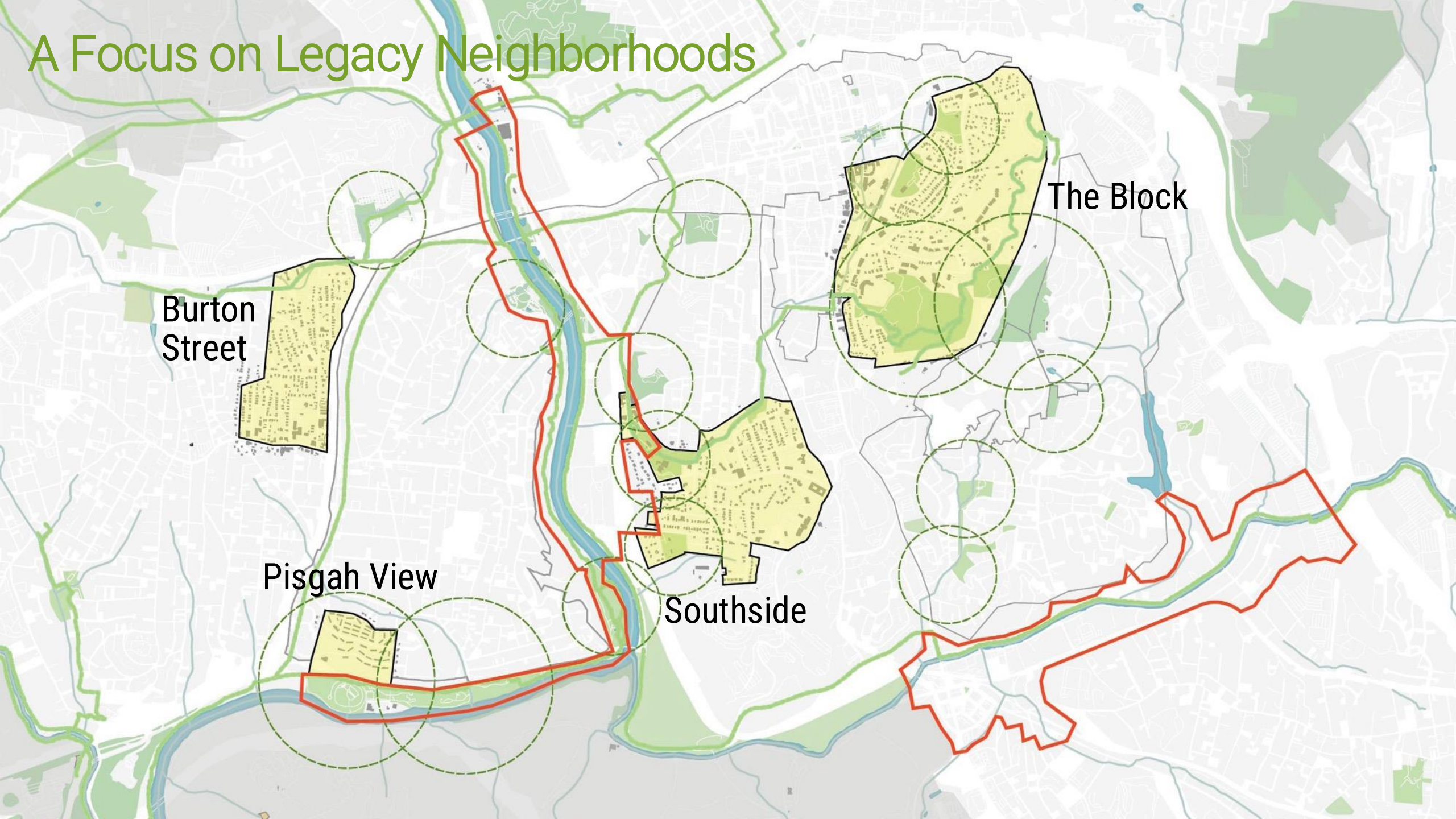
# The Parks and the Neighborhood Gaps

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





# A Focus on Legacy Neighborhoods



Burton  
Street

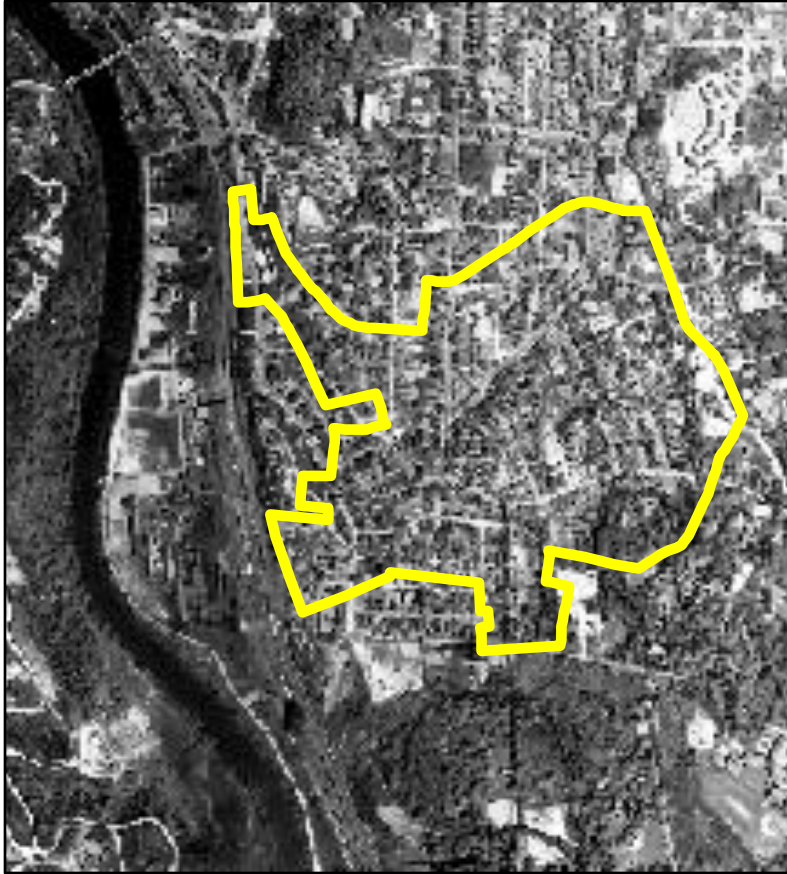
Pisgah View

Southside

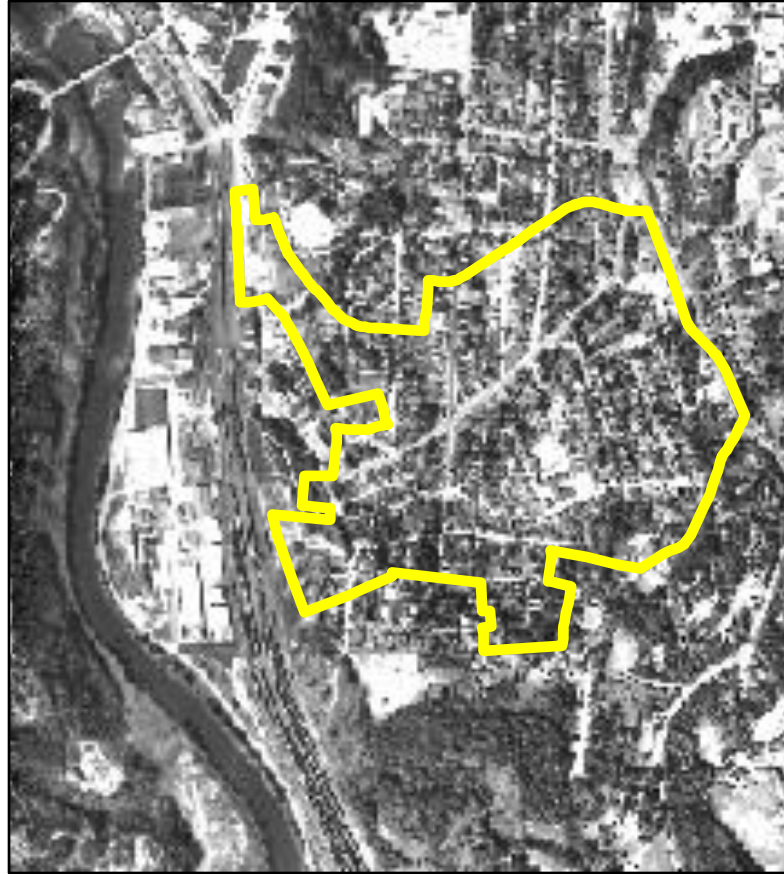
The Block



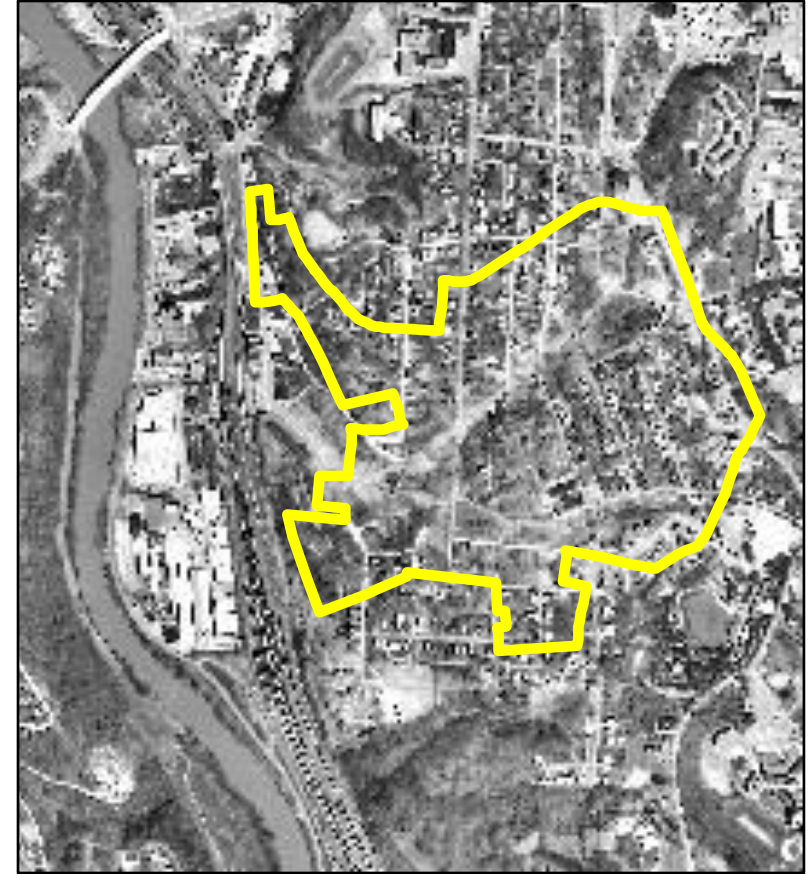
# The Evolution of the Legacy Neighborhoods



1951



1963



1975



# Strengthen Legacy Neighborhoods



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



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- Strategies to retain and grow Asheville's Black population



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- An implementable residential strategy
  - Affordable housing
  - Avenues for housing choice
  - Advance Black homeownership



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# Strengthen Our Legacy Neighborhoods

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- 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



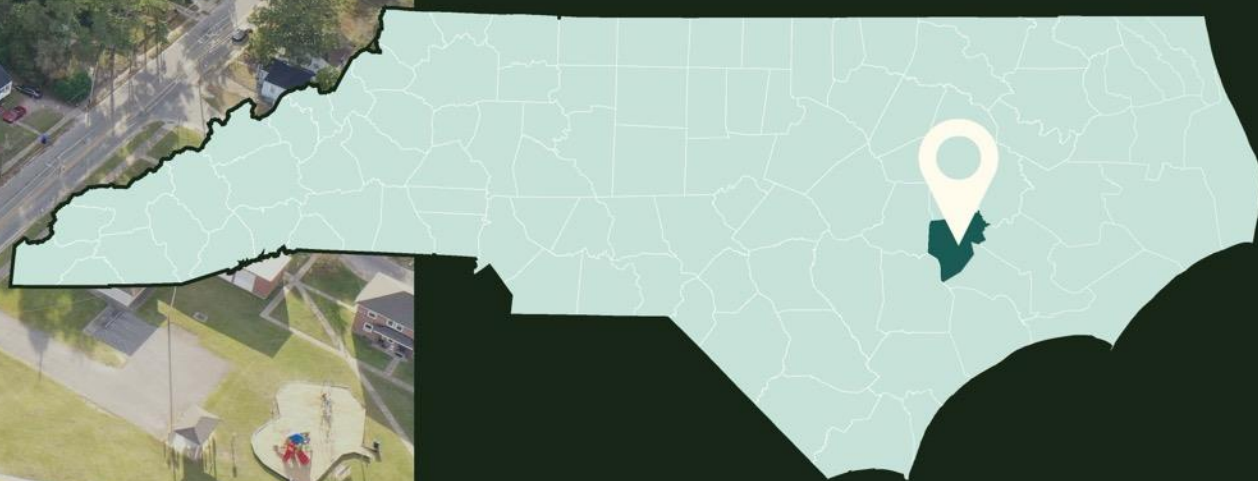




**Where Hope Takes Root**

# East Kinston

Neighborhood Hub: A  
Community-Led Resiliency  
Framework







# The Price of Neglect

EAST KINSTON



# Pillars of Empowerment



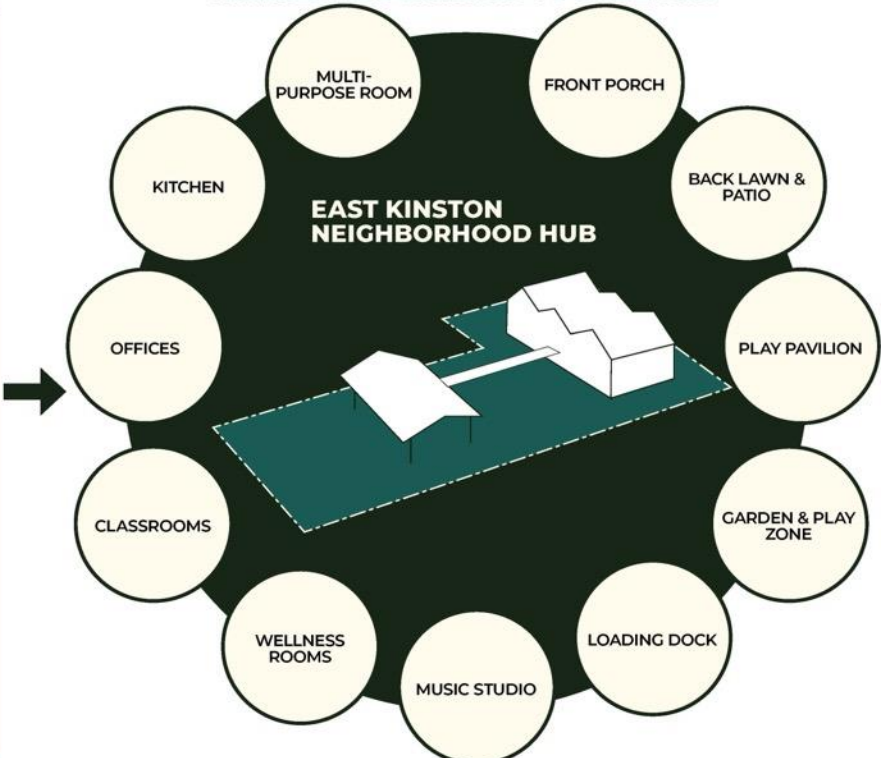
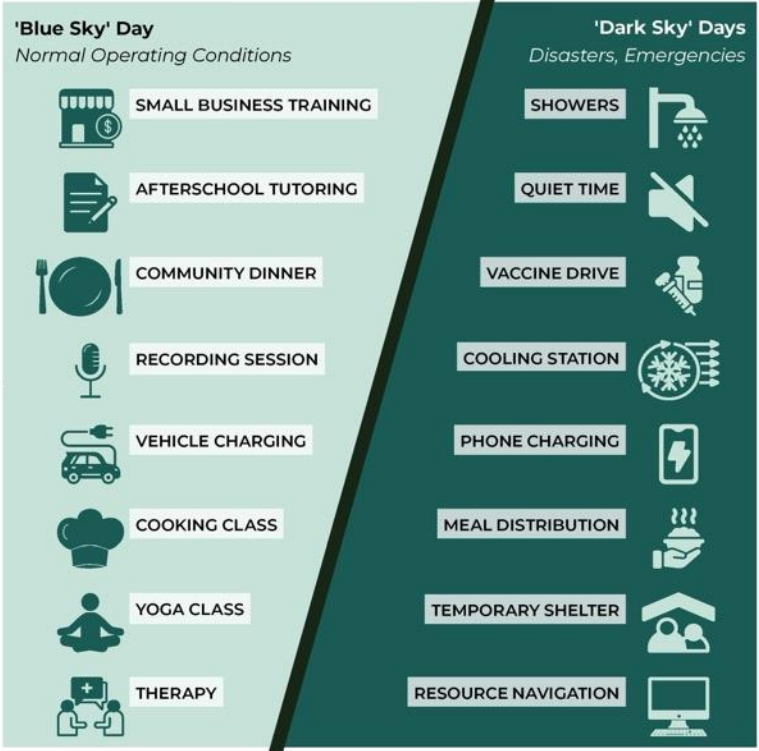
EXISTING HUB



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



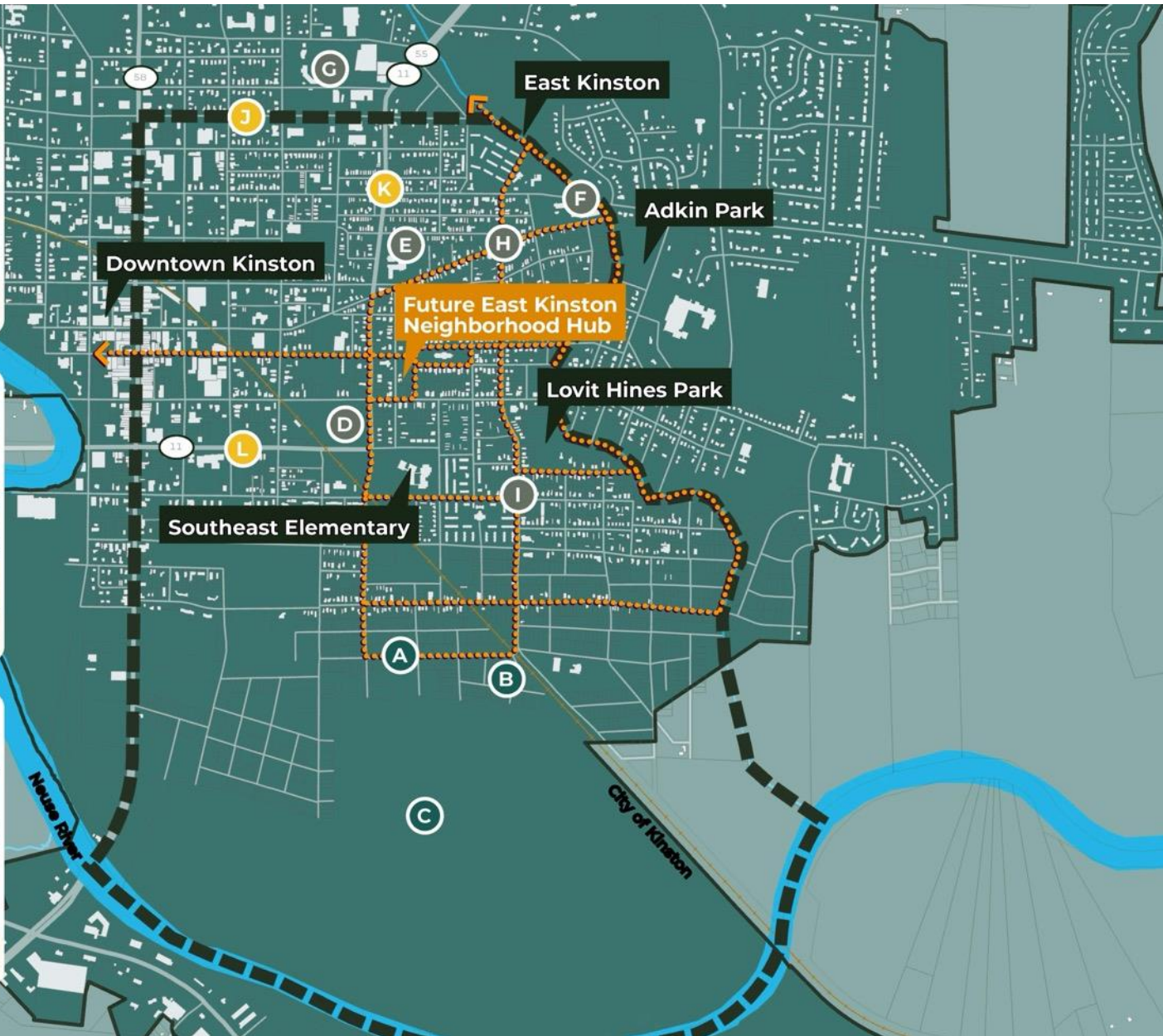
East Kinston History Trail



Historic Grainger Stadium



Lincoln City Restoration Lands







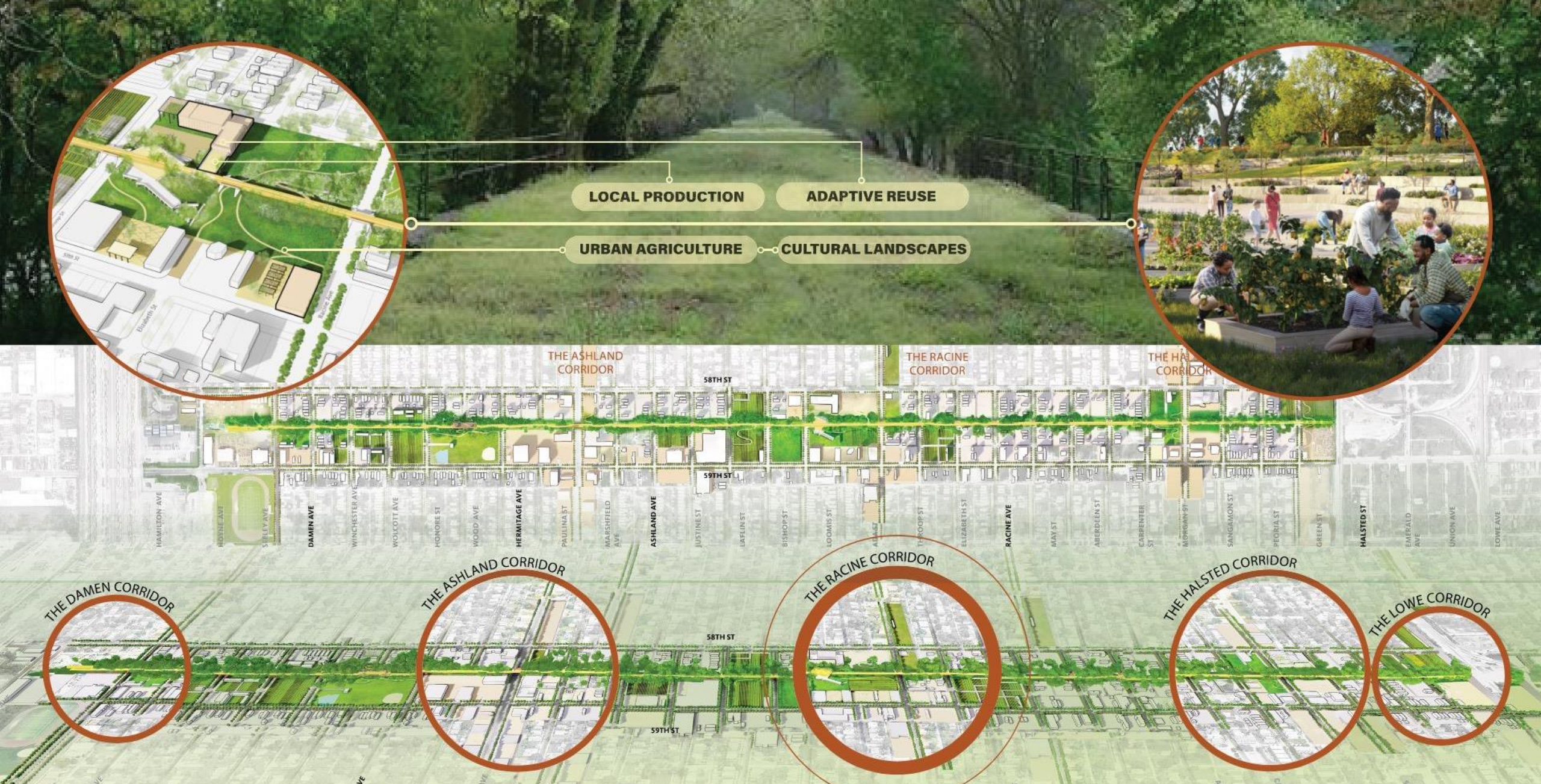


















# Investment Towards Implementation

**\$2.5M**

**CITY FUNDING FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
REMEDiation FOR  
TWO LARGE STIES**

**\$8.5M**

**CITY FUNDING FOR  
FENCING AND SIGNAGE**

**\$82M**

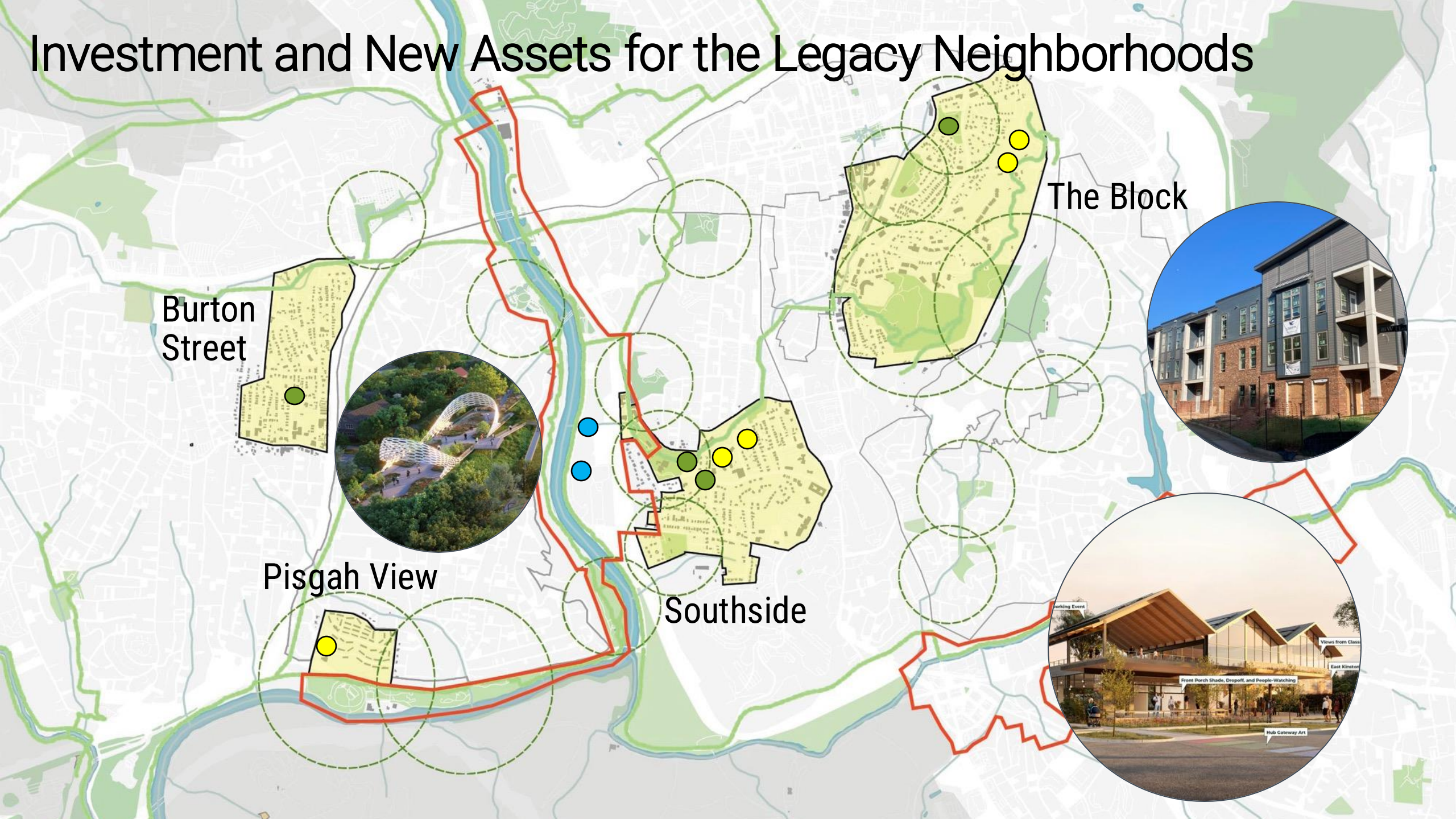
**CITY, STATE AND  
FEDERAL GRANTS  
FOR CONSTRUCTION**







# Investment and New Assets for the Legacy Neighborhoods





# Building a Legacy of Resilience

PHYSICAL

ECONOMIC

ORGANIZATIONAL

Parks

Community

Water





# 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.*

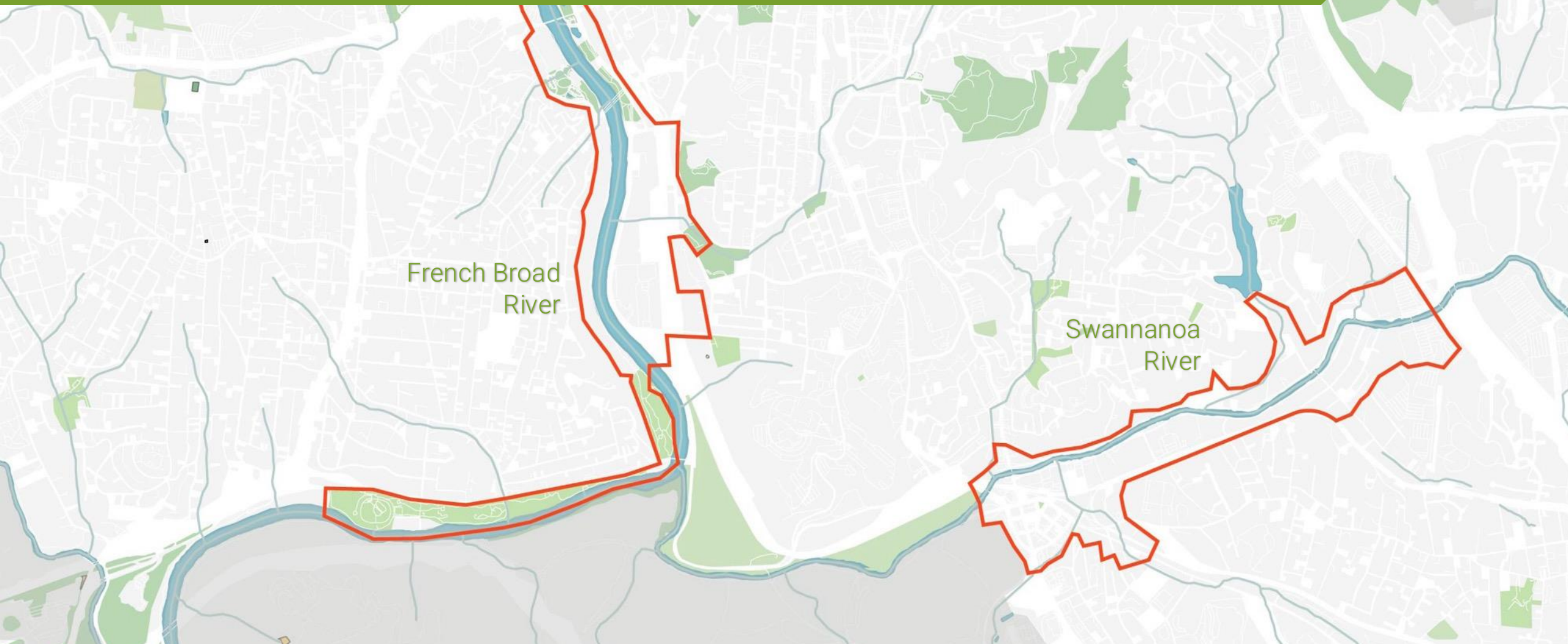


# What Does it Mean to Live with **One Water**?

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 a prominent blue line winding through a city. A red outline delineates a large area of land adjacent to the river, representing the floodplain. Green patches are scattered throughout the city area, likely representing parks or undeveloped land. The background is a light gray grid representing the city's street layout.

## 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



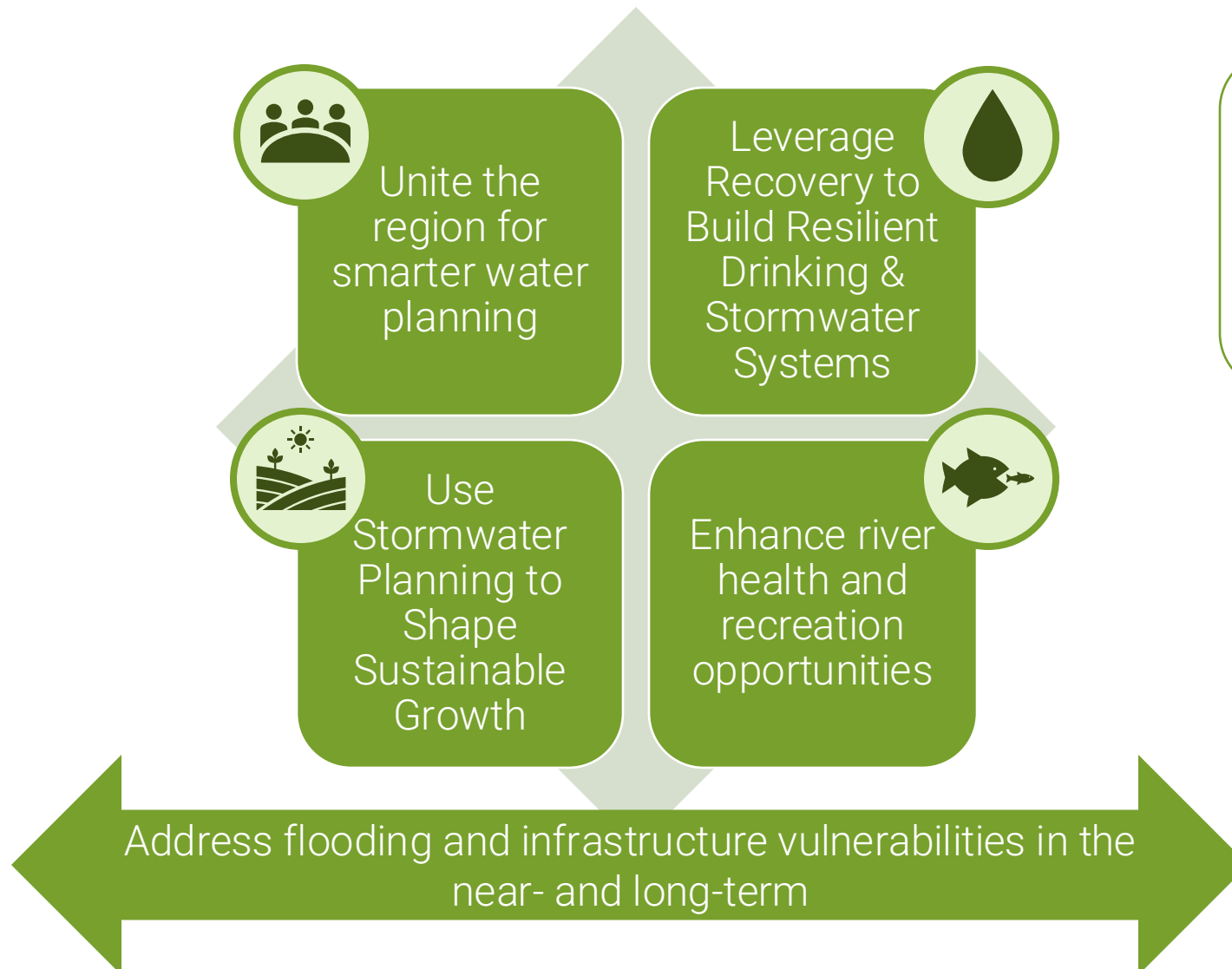
A map of a city area with a river. A red line outlines a specific region along the river. A green callout box with a tail pointing to the river contains text about the Swannanoa River. The map shows streets, parks (green), and water bodies (blue).

## 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



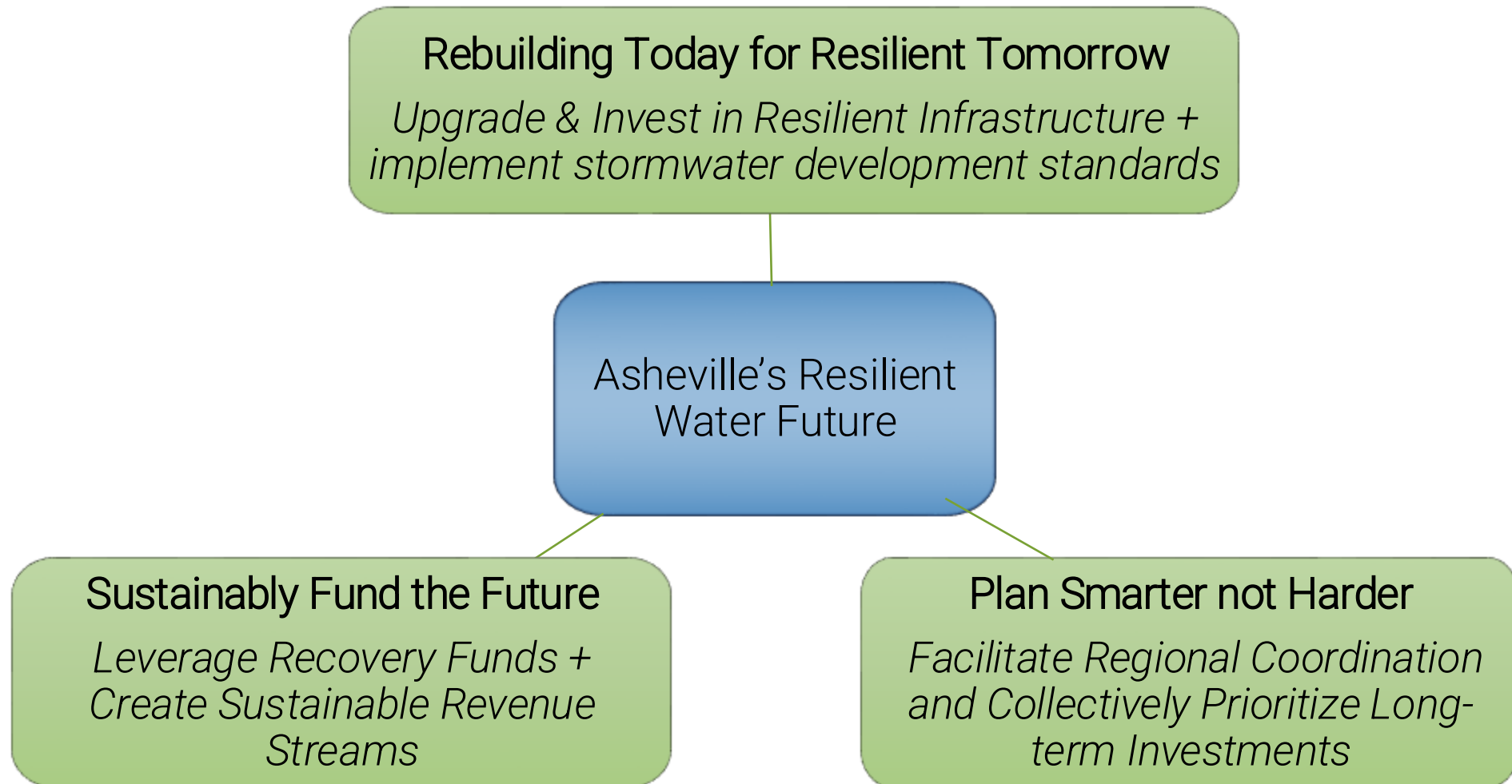
# Now is Asheville's Moment to Rethink its Approach to Water



Note: this work builds on the 2004 flood task force and complements earlier recommendations.



# 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 <b>“One Water Council”</b> (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 <b>Countywide Stormwater Master Plan</b> 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 <b>long-term infrastructure</b> - 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?
<b>Upgrade drinking water systems</b> (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
<b>Repair and expand stormwater conveyance networks</b> to alleviate “pinch points”	Reduces localized flooding and improves equity by prioritizing vulnerable neighborhoods
<b>On-site stormwater detention standards:</b> 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
<b>Restore riparian buffers and floodplains</b> 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?
Explore <b>energy recovery fees</b> to offset high O&M costs for drinking water	Creates a reliable, sustainable revenue stream to maintain and upgrade drinking water infrastructure
Create a <b>stormwater improvement bank</b> for developers unable to meet on-site standards	Provides flexible funding to complete watershed-scale stormwater improvements
<b>Aggregate river improvement funds</b> to improve water quality investments along the river	Increases impact by combining small investments into larger pots to improve water quality, recreation, and education
<b>Collaborate with &amp; incentivize private landowners</b> for septic to sewer conversions.	Improves water quality and reduces non-point source pollution from private properties



# 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 following a route that helps everyone?
- **Biltmore Village:** Will flood again, but 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?

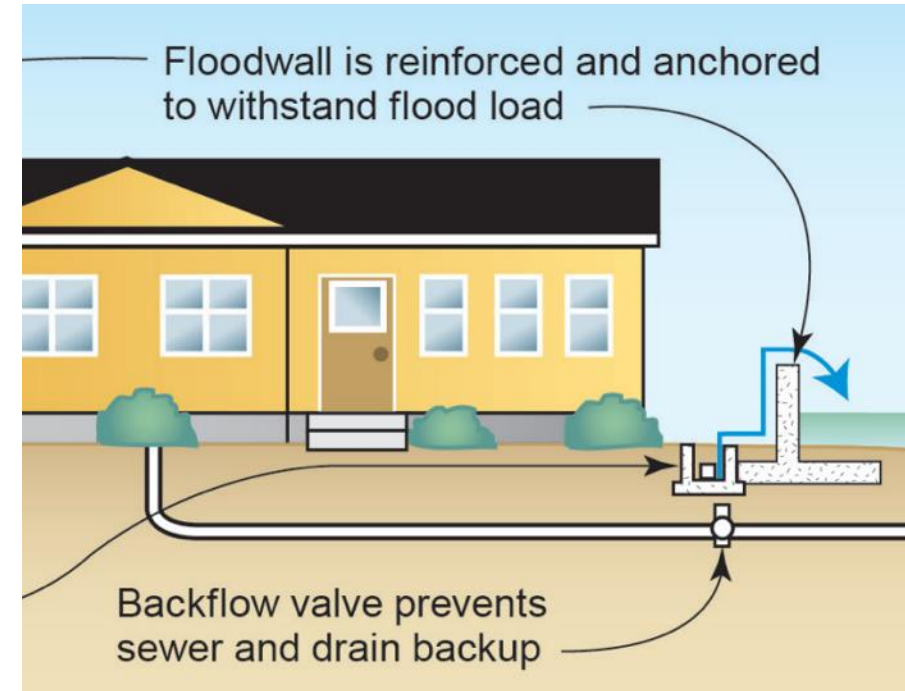
The answers indicate one of five paths...





# 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** (but what would you do if it were YOUR money)?



Some ways to reinforce a home

Source: FEMA

[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema\\_P1037\\_reducing\\_flood\\_risk\\_residential\\_buildings\\_cannot\\_be\\_elevated\\_2015.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_P1037_reducing_flood_risk_residential_buildings_cannot_be_elevated_2015.pdf)



# 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](#)

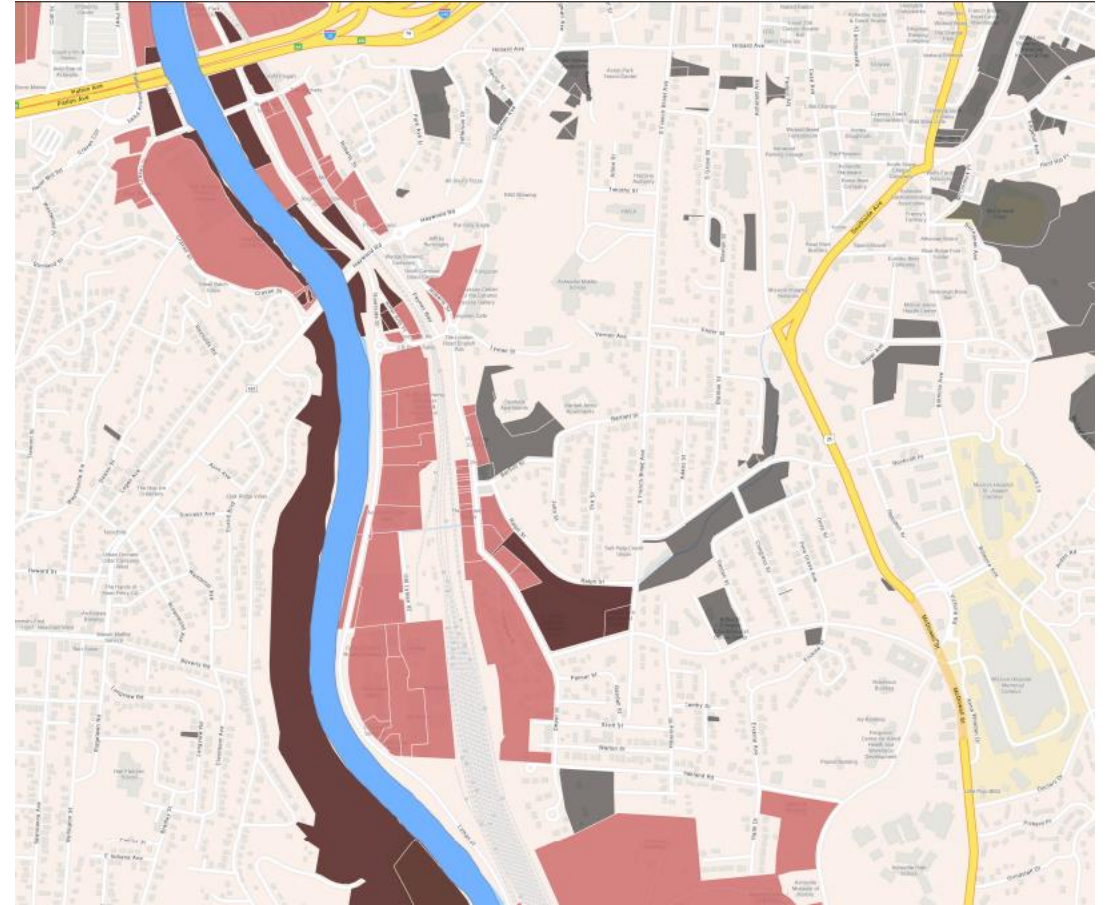
Bottom: **Low cost of loss high civic value** activities on pop up sites at riverbank with industrial uses beyond. Generated by Chat GPT





# 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

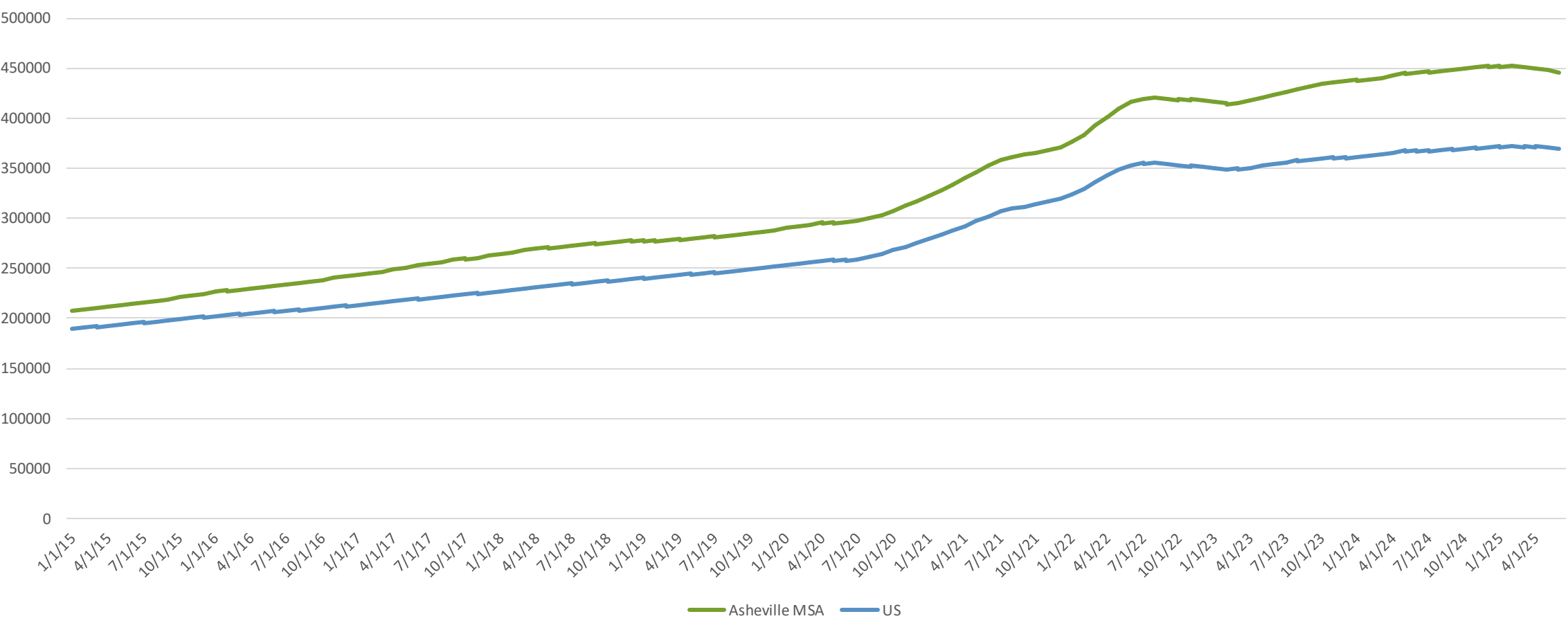
- It's hard to do things without an address
- Stakeholders told us housing is something Ashevilleians worry about
- Context matters





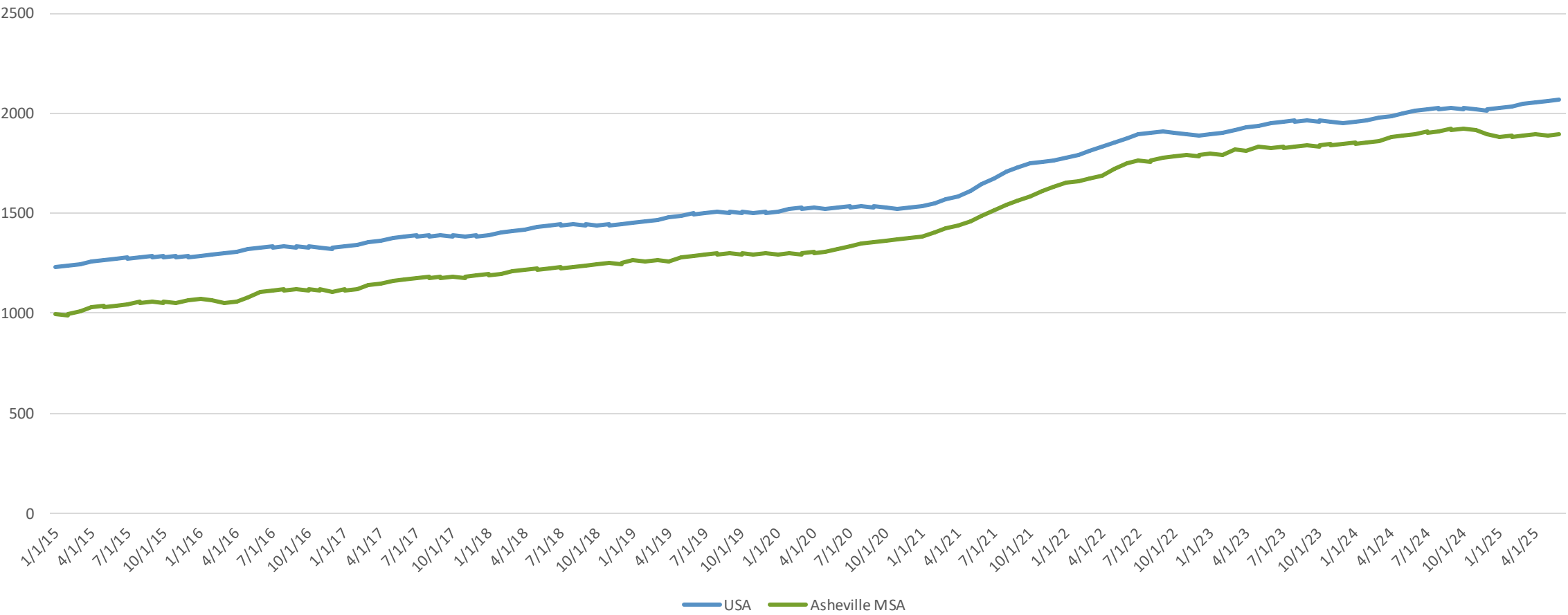
# Asheville is Expensive: Zillow Constant Quality House Prices

Asheville MSA and US, 2015-2025



# Asheville Is Not So Expensive: Zillow Rents

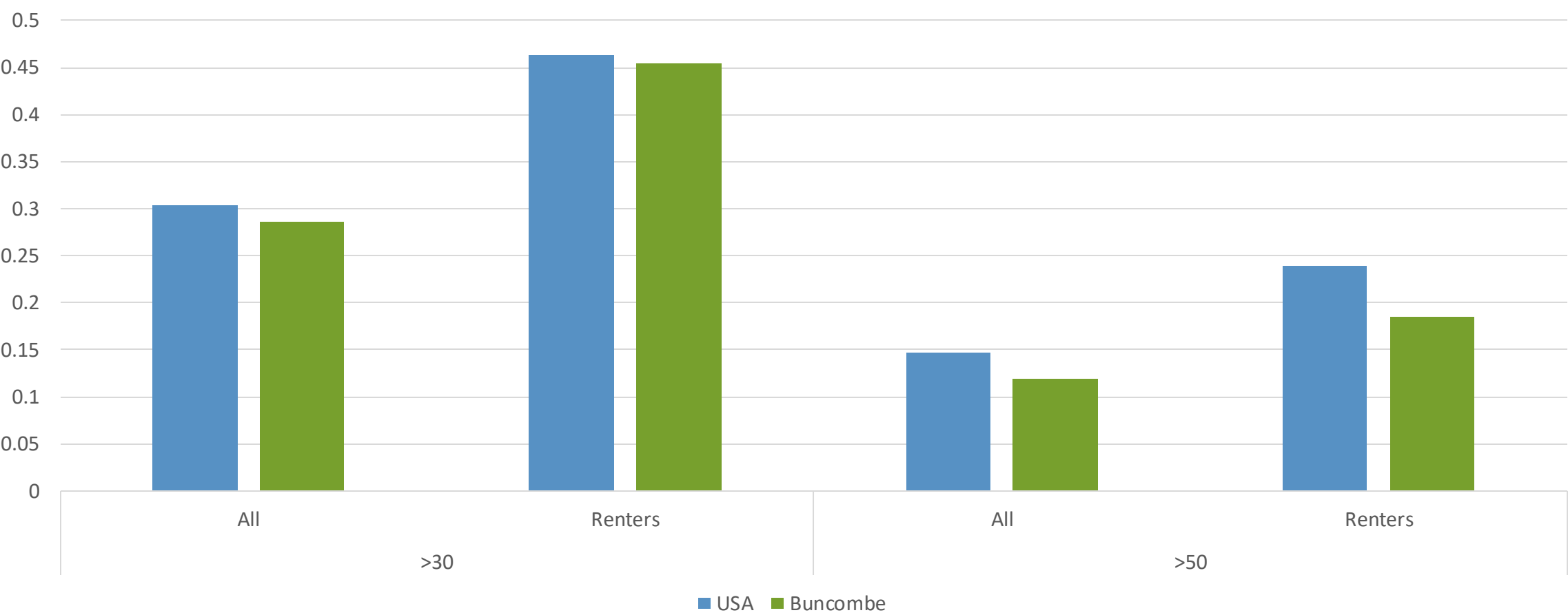
Asheville MSA and USA, 2015-2025





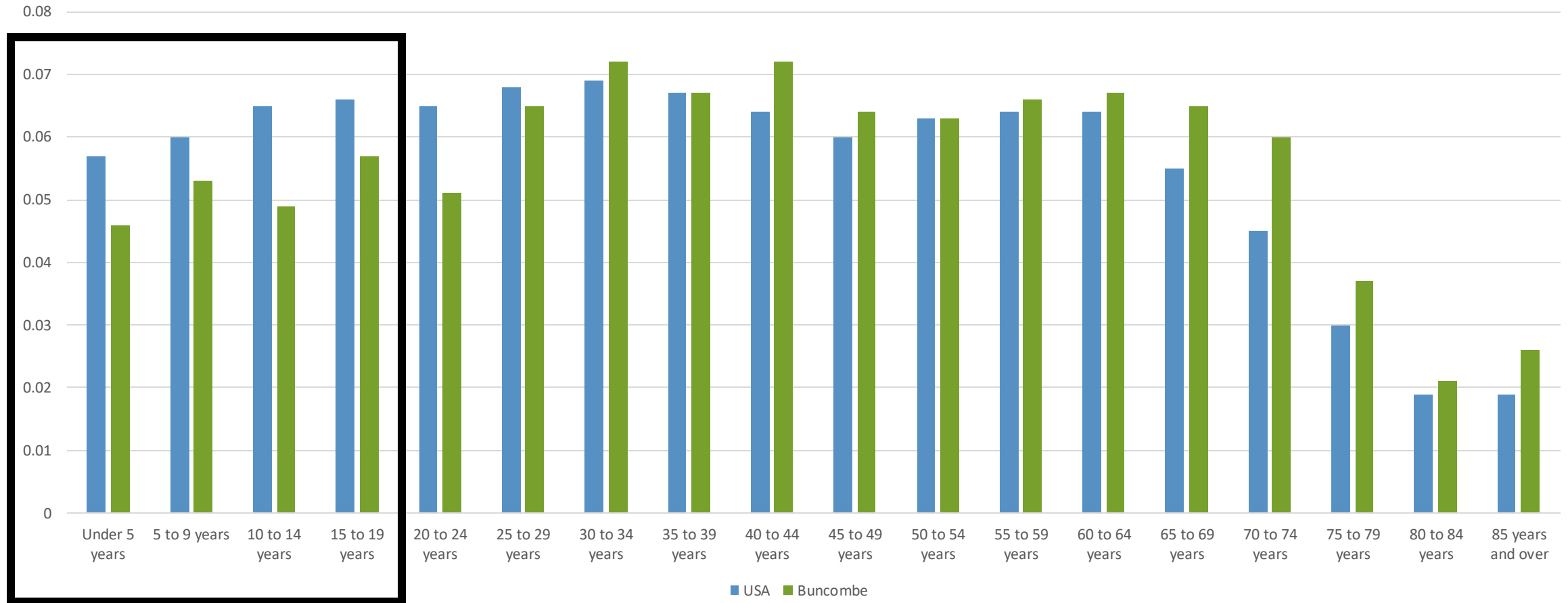
# Cost Burdened Households: US and Buncombe County

## US is Slightly More Cost Burdened



# Buncombe County Has Relatively Few Children

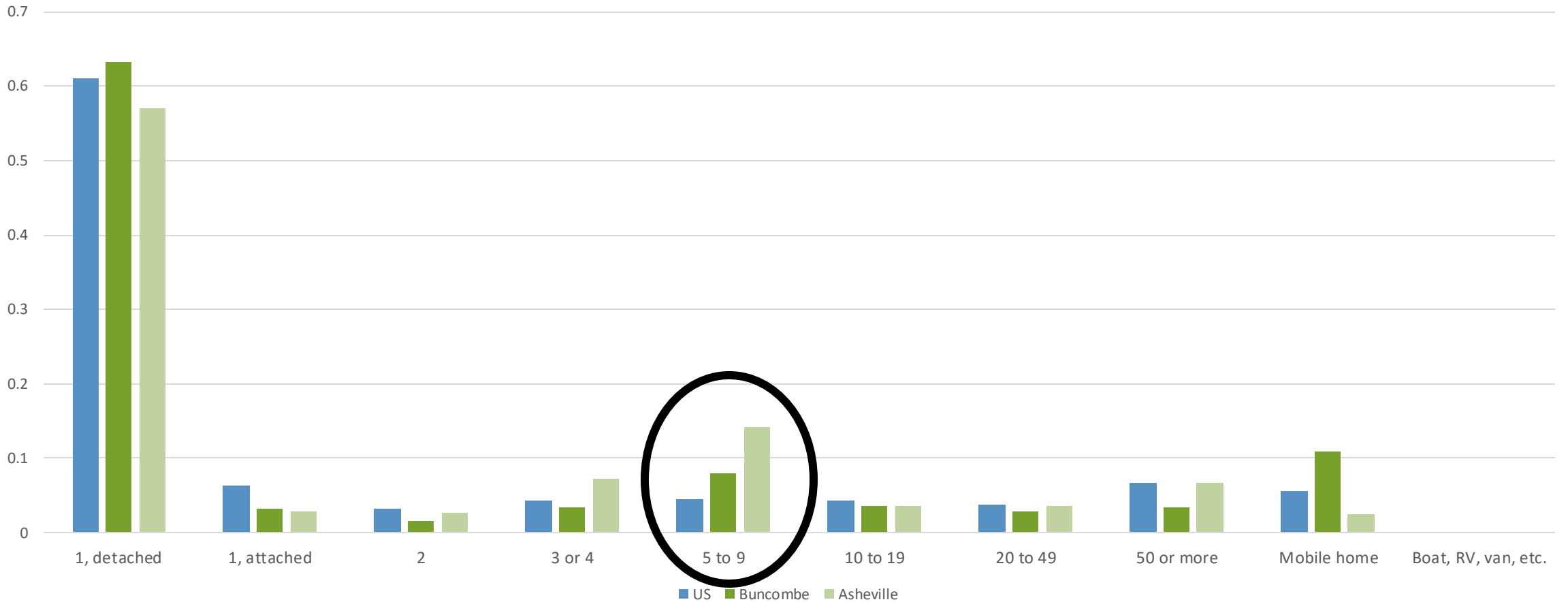
Age Distribution USA and Buncombe County (One-Year American Community Survey 2023)





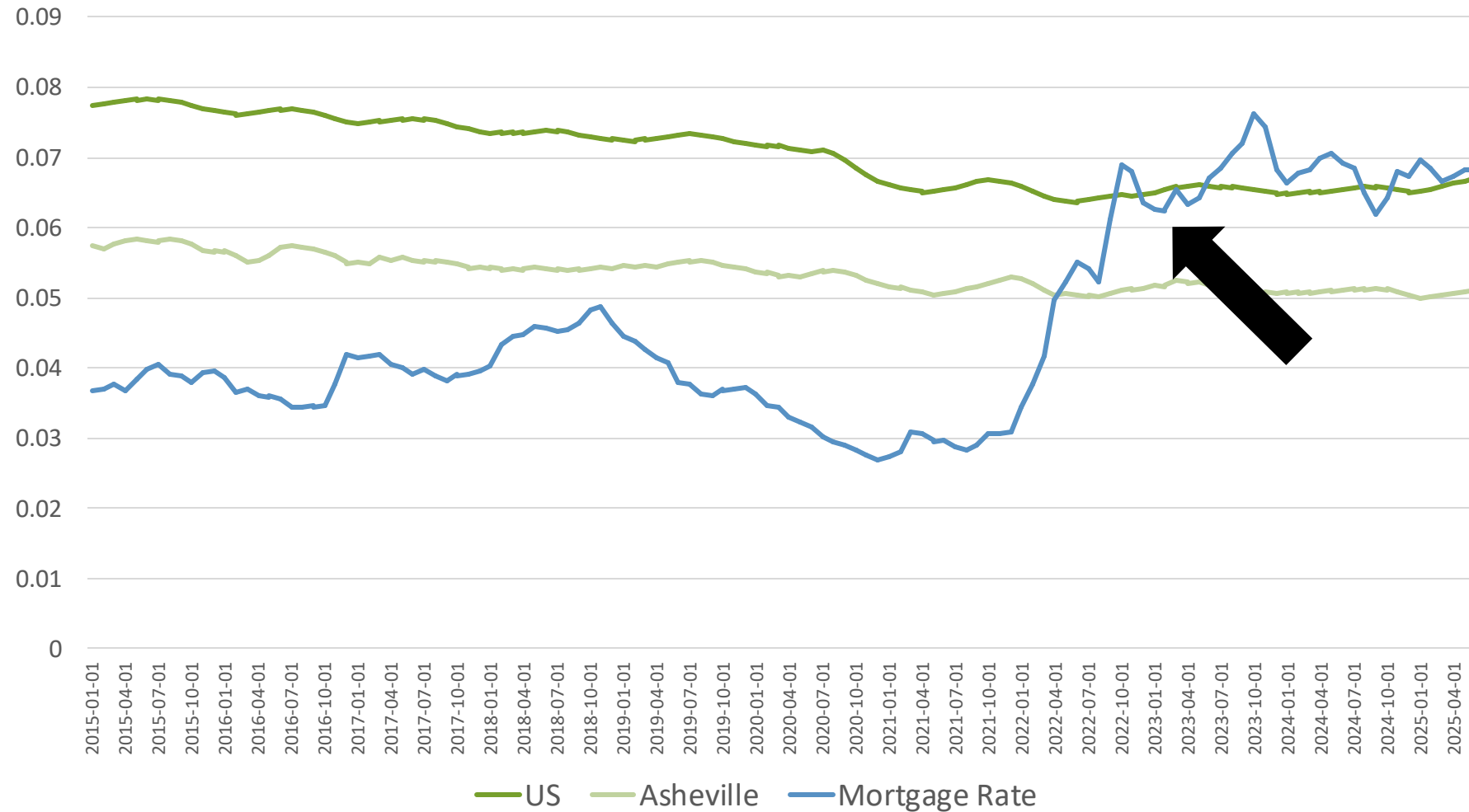
# Housing By Building Size: Asheville Has More 5 To 9s

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

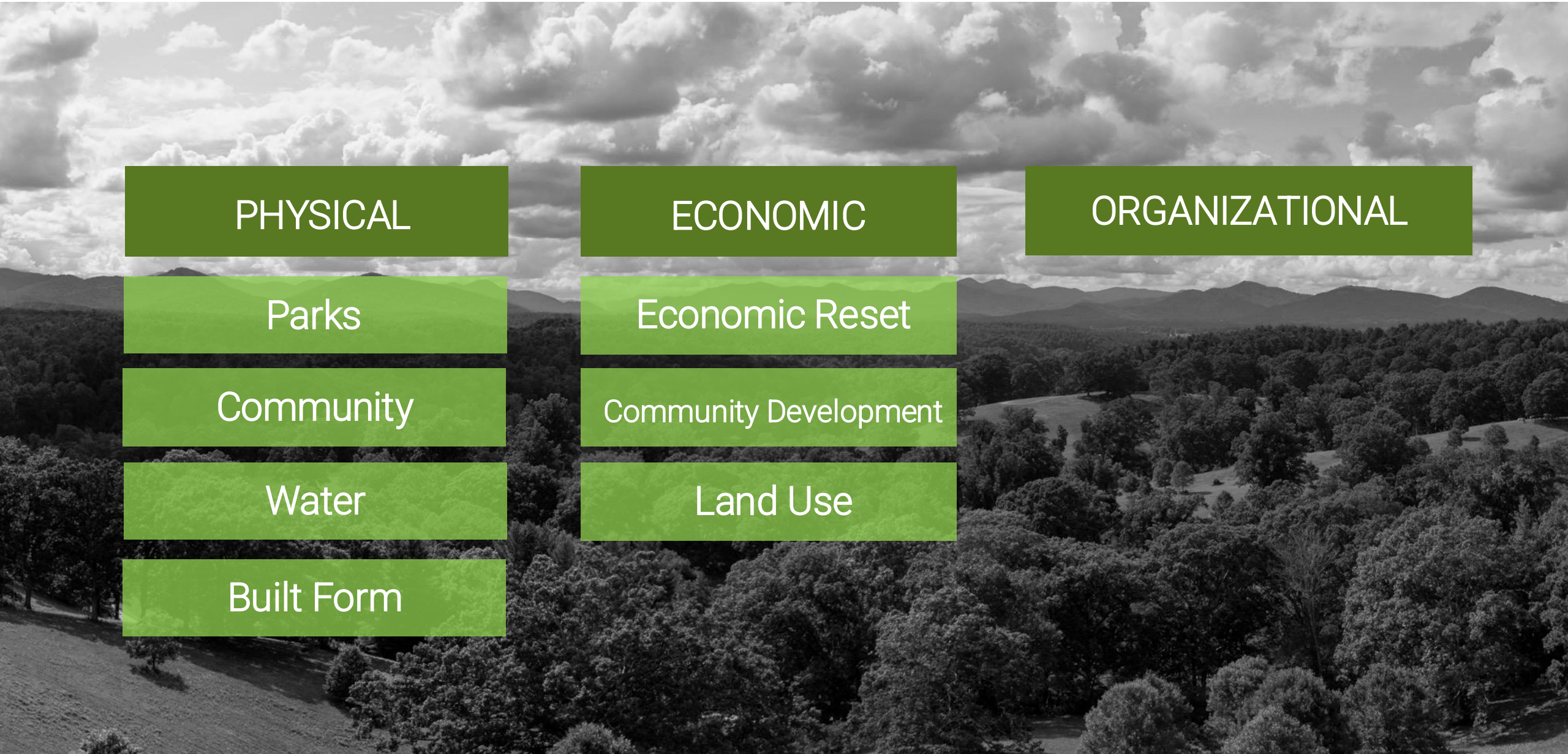
## ECONOMIC

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

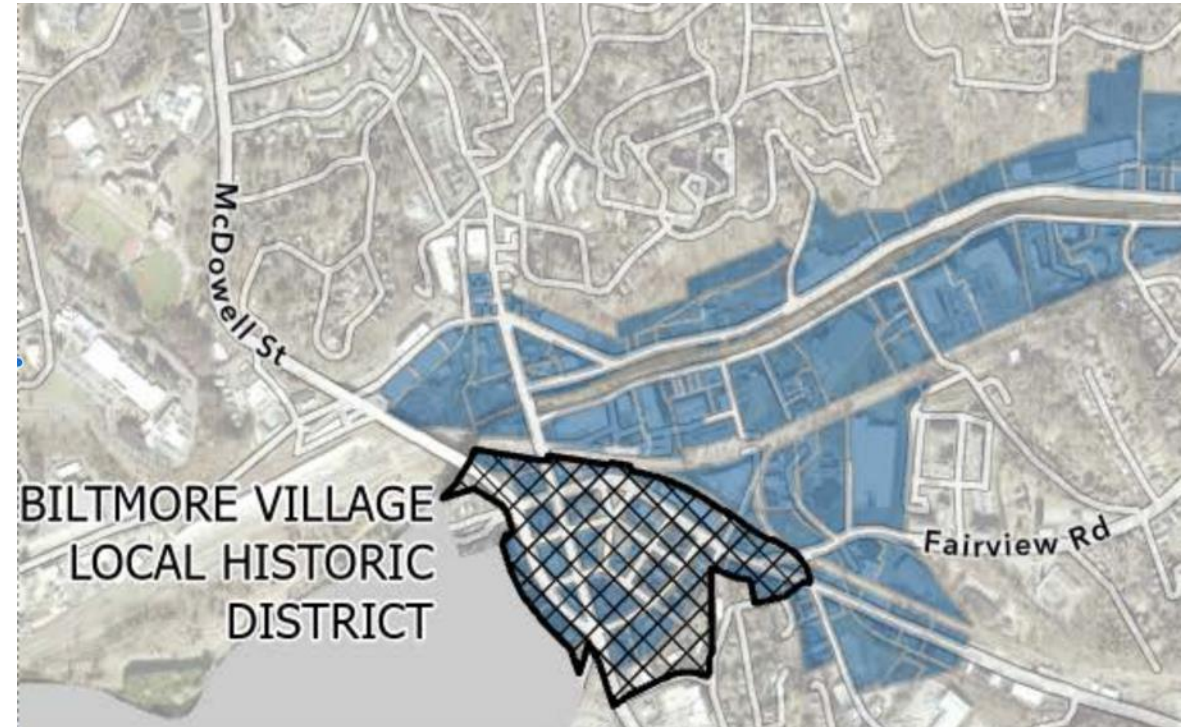




# Land Use

## Tools to bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

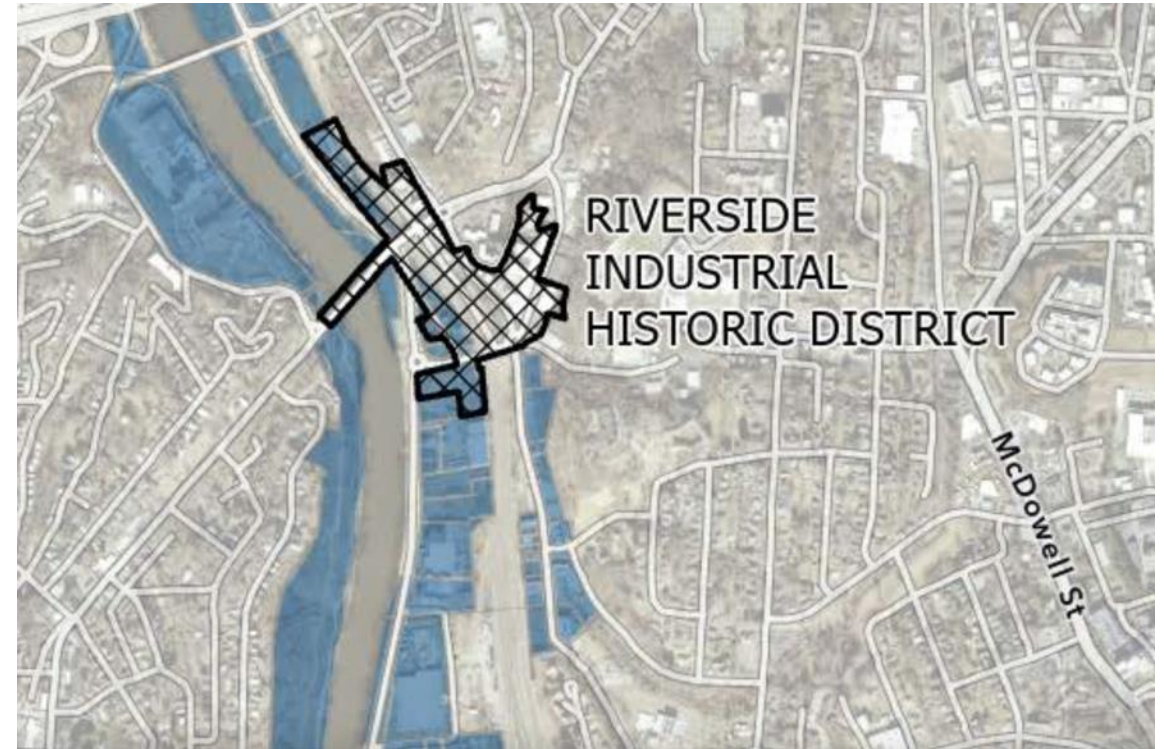
- Biltmore Village Local Historic District
  - Situated just upstream of the confluence of the Swannanoa River and French Broad River
  - Much of the district sits below base flood elevation
  - Since September 2024, Asheville's Board of Adjustment has granted seven flood variances allowing substantially 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 District?

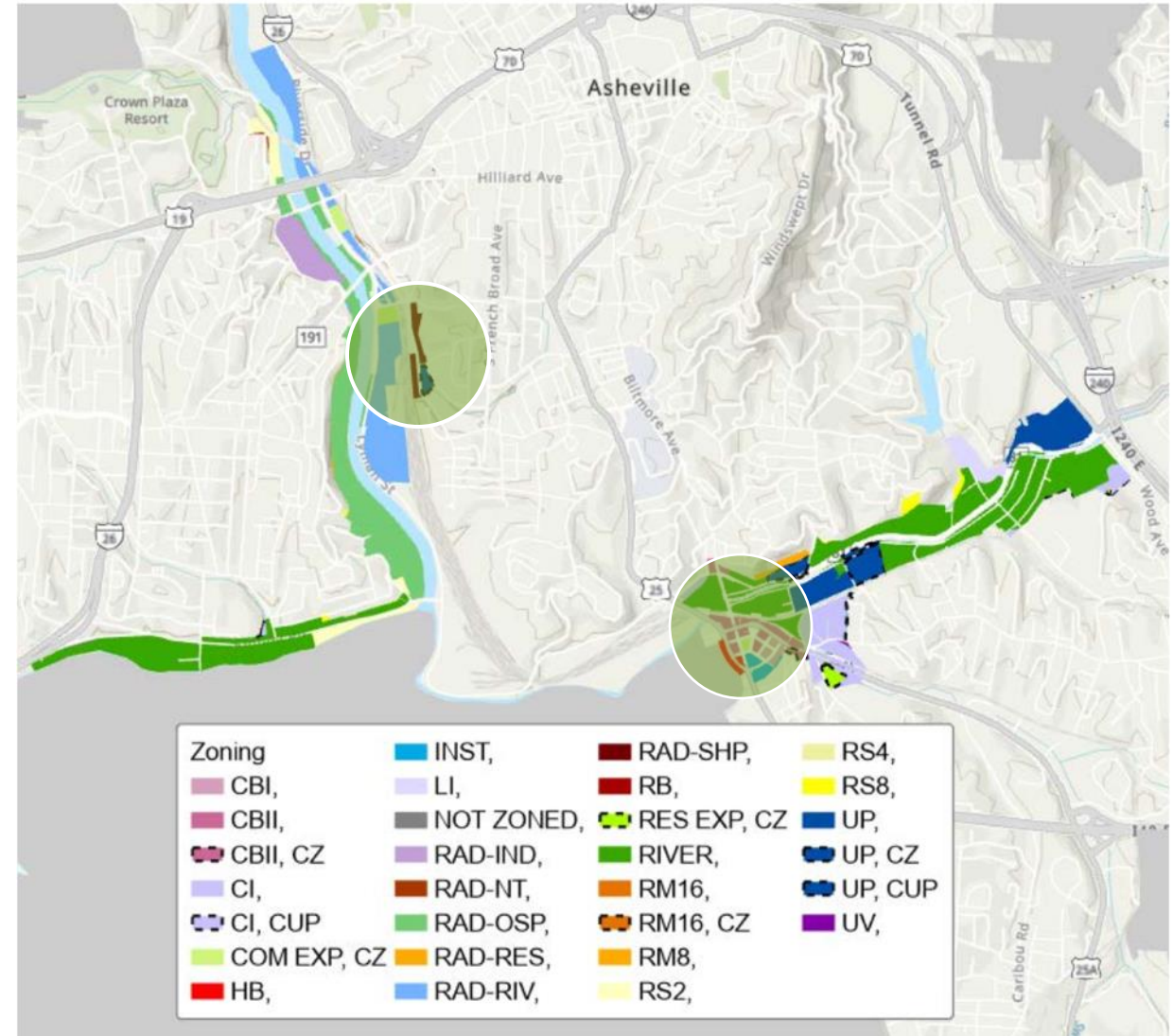


# Land Use

## 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 staff position of Development Liaison



# Land Use

## Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

### The River District Floodplain Zone

This proposed zone change is the most challenging thing we're going to show you today – and if implemented – will lead to the most impactful change that we can for the long-term health of both 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 to 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



# Land Use

## Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

### River District Mixed Use Zone

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

# Land Use

## Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

### Infrastructure Grant Program

- 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 available to 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.



# Land Use

## Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

### Soft Second” Mortgage Assistance Program

- 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 can be funded by the CBGDR grants augmented by City or other funds, will not accrue interest and are repaid only upon the refinancing or sale of the property
- One of the benefits of this program is that when the loans are repaid the money get recycled back into the fund to help finance new projects



# Land Use

## Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

### Development Liaison

- 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 these 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



# Land Use

## Tools to Bring the Legacy from Vision to Reality

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

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

It 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

And, it 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

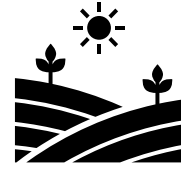
## For Long Term Resilience



- 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 – don't isolate it



# 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 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, recreation
- Incubator for 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, transferable development rights
- Simplify permitting and zoning in floodplain areas
  - Adopt River District Floodplain and Mixed-Use Commercial Overlay Districts
  - Establish Infrastructure Grant Program
  - Establish "Soft Second" Mortgage Assistance Program
  - Establish development liaison position

# Strength Through Partnerships & Collaboration

From informal efforts to structured impact



- Continue to use Public-Private Partnerships like New Belgium
- 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 new RAD