

# RIVER ARTS DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

## WILMA DYKEMAN RIVERWAY

Environmental Analysis, Project Development, and Preliminary Design

### *Project Newsletter No: 4 December 2012*



### Project Description

This project covers a 2.2 mile section of the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay, a 17 mile corridor along the French Broad River and Swannanoa River. This project will improve the transportation infrastructure in the River Arts District by improving Riverside Drive and Lyman Street, adding measures to control stormwater, constructing greenways (multi-use trails), adding sidewalks, constructing turn lanes at intersections (as needed), and possibly adding other amenities such as on-street parking, transit stops, and landscaping. The specifics of the project will be determined following an analysis of project alternatives in phase I.

The project is currently funded for Environmental Documentation, Alternatives Analysis, and Preliminary Engineering. Activities underway for 2011 – 2012 will include collection of environmental data, inventory of existing conditions, traffic analysis, alternatives development, study of environmental impacts, public involvement, selection of preferred alternative, NEPA approvals, 30% preliminary design drawings, preliminary cost estimates, implementation plan, and preliminary right-of-way estimates. The consultant team will be responsible for the Federally Approved NEPA document – a Categorical Exclusion – and Preliminary Design.



### Purpose and Need



The primary purpose of the project is to improve existing roadway geometric deficiencies along Riverside Drive and Lyman Street in the River Arts District and to enhance the multimodal mobility and system linkages (vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit) by providing efficient and convenient access from Amboy Road to Hill Street.

These improvements will enhance safety and provide additional modal options for the traveling public and visitors to the River Arts District. These modal and service connections will improve regional mobility, particularly for pedestrian and cyclists.

### Project Goals

- ❖ Be consistent with previous plans (Asheville 2025 Plan, Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Master Plan and other City plans)
- ❖ Create a Unique Gateway for the City of Asheville
- ❖ Connect adjacent neighborhoods and downtown to each other and the French Broad River
- ❖ Promote Smart Growth, including Mixed Use and a Range of Housing Options in the River Arts District
- ❖ Increase Multimodal Transportation Choices – transit, bike, pedestrian and river access
- ❖ Enhance Economic Competitiveness and Promote Sustainable Redevelopment
- ❖ Provide Recreational Opportunities for Residents and Tourists
- ❖ Improve Environmental Protection and Water Quality of the French Broad River
- ❖ Develop Opportunities for Streetscape, Amenities and Public Art
- ❖ Minimize Conflict Points for Cyclists and Pedestrians
- ❖ Preserve Future Mobility through Access Management





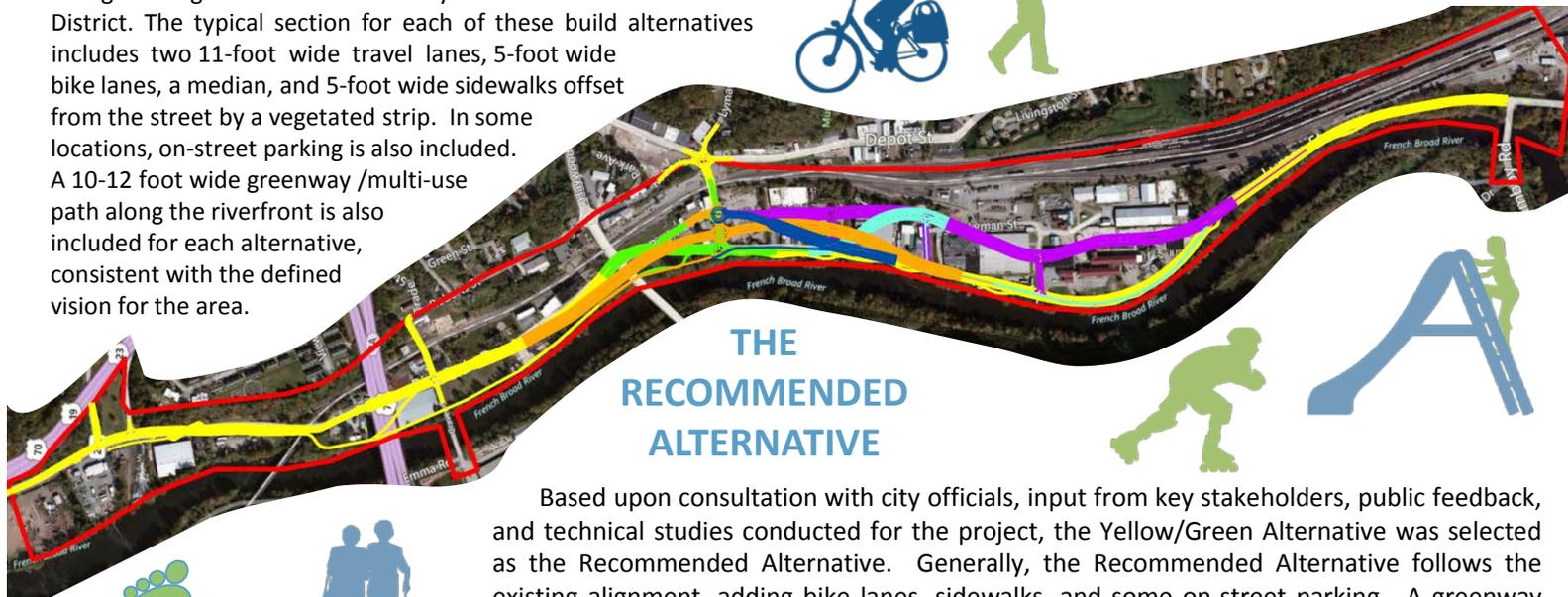
## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

A number of alternatives were considered to address the purpose of and needs for the project: Low cost measures that reduce travel demand to improve traffic flow, Mass transit, Relatively low cost measures that improve traffic flow by increasing network efficiency, Improving the existing facility, and Constructing alternatives on new alignment. The No Build Alternatives was also considered. Most of these options were dismissed early in the process because they would not fully satisfy the project purpose.

A variety of build alternatives were developed to improve existing geometric deficiencies and enhance multimodal mobility/system linkages along Riverside Drive and Lyman Street in the River Arts District. The typical section for each of these build alternatives includes two 11-foot wide travel lanes, 5-foot wide bike lanes, a median, and 5-foot wide sidewalks offset from the street by a vegetated strip. In some locations, on-street parking is also included. A 10-12 foot wide greenway /multi-use path along the riverfront is also included for each alternative, consistent with the defined vision for the area.



Build Alternatives considered (below) and Sample cross-section (above)



## THE RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE

Based upon consultation with city officials, input from key stakeholders, public feedback, and technical studies conducted for the project, the Yellow/Green Alternative was selected as the Recommended Alternative. Generally, the Recommended Alternative follows the existing alignment, adding bike lanes, sidewalks, and some on-street parking. A greenway multi-use trail would run between the improved roadway and the river for the length of the project. The next page discusses why Yellow/Green was recommended...



## FINAL DESIGN & PROJECTED COST

Once the NEPA document is finalized later this month, final design work can begin in 2013. As part of the final design phase of work, designers will take 30% plans for the Recommended Alternative's roadways, sidewalks, greenways/multi-use paths, and other improvements and will develop additional details. This next phase of work will address landscaping, public art, stormwater, coordination with utility companies and the railroad, and more.

Preliminary cost estimates are presented in the table below. These costs will be updated as final designs are developed, which will include more precise estimates for construction, utility relocation, right-of-way acquisition, and more. At this time, future funding for construction has not been identified.

Recommended Alternative	Projected Cost*
Roadway and Structures Construction	\$12.8 million

\*Note: This cost does not include Right of Way and Utility relocation costs



**RIVER ARTS DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION PROJECT**  
A Section of the Wilma Dykeman Riverway

The following table summarizes impacts resulting from the Recommended Alternative. These will be presented in more detail in the Categorical Exclusion Report for the project, which will be completed by the end of the year.

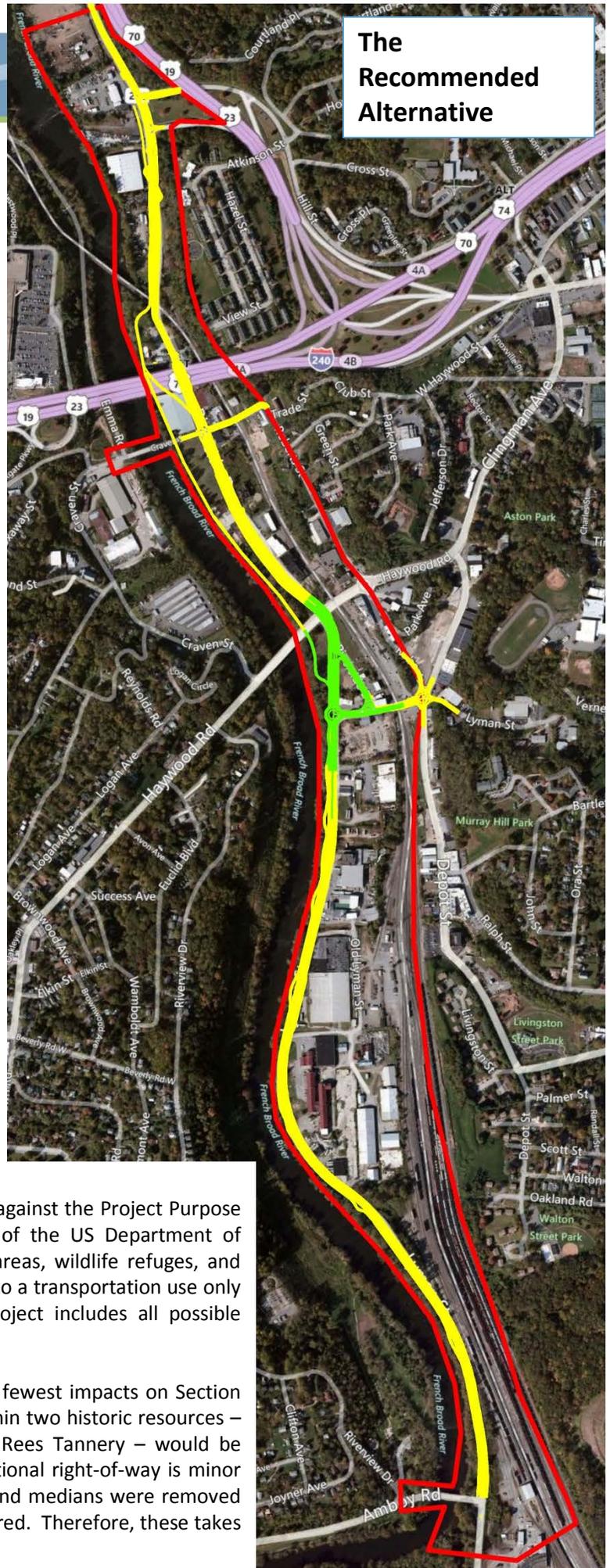
IMPACT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Plants & Animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unlikely to impact Threatened or Endangered Species</li> <li>Minor potential to impact other species</li> </ul>
Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impacts to streams due to replacement of pipes and culverts</li> <li>Project lies within floodplain &amp; floodway; permits will be required</li> </ul>
Historic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor impacts on the Riverside Industrial Historic District</li> <li>Minor impacts on the former Hans Rees Tannery (historic site)</li> <li>Archaeological monitoring during construction</li> </ul>
Community Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.05 acres of right-of-way within Jean Webb Park and 0.70 acres of right-of-way within city-owned parcel south of Jean Webb Park, planned for future park use</li> <li>No residential relocations</li> <li>Four business relocations</li> </ul>
Hazardous Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional right-of-way required from 19 parcels with known contamination</li> </ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project supports ongoing redevelopment efforts</li> </ul>
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No perceptible impacts</li> </ul>
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No perceptible impacts</li> </ul>
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No perceptible impacts</li> </ul>

**WHY IS YELLOW/GREEN THE RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE?**

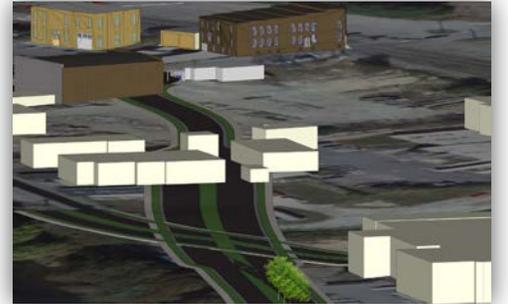
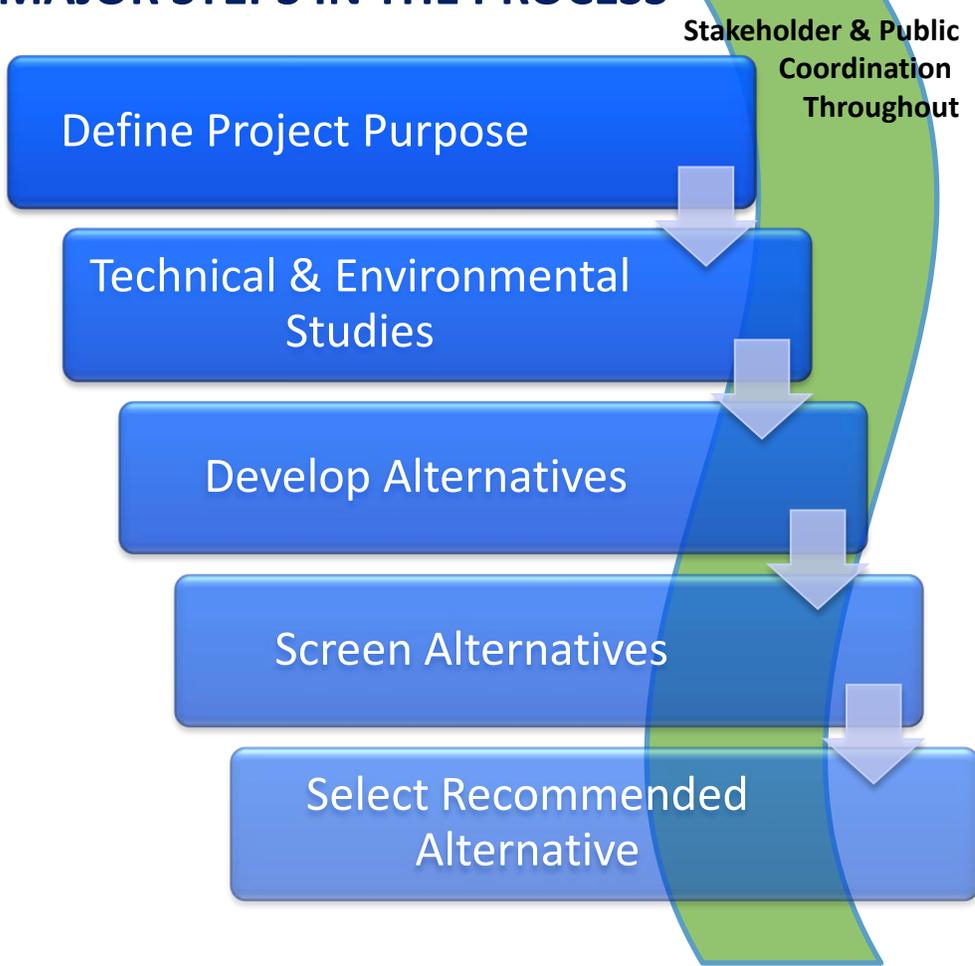
All the alternatives shown on the previous page were screened against the Project Purpose and Need then against federal law. Specifically, Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act protects publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, and historic sites. By law, a Section 4(f) property may be converted to a transportation use only if there is no prudent and feasible alternative and if the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the resource.

Of all the alternatives considered, Yellow and Green led to the fewest impacts on Section 4(f) resources. However, they do still lead to impacts. Land within two historic resources – the Riverside Industrial Historic District and the former Hans Rees Tannery – would be converted to a transportation use. At both locations, the additional right-of-way is minor and located adjacent to existing roadways. On-street parking and medians were removed from the proposed cross-section to minimize the new area required. Therefore, these takes count as ‘*de minimis*’ or minor uses.

**The Recommended Alternative**



## MAJOR STEPS IN THE PROCESS



**THANK YOU** for your input throughout this phase of the project. By sharing your knowledge of the River Arts District and your planned vision for the future, the project team has been able to develop a range of alternatives that reflect the community's values. A special thanks to those groups who partnered with the City:

1. **Steering Committee** is made up of City Staff, RiverLink and NCDOT.
2. **Advisory Committee** consists of a range of civic and community leaders and advocates.
3. **Stakeholders** represent property owners, artists, businesses and community groups within or adjacent to the study area
4. **Members of the Public** who attended presentations and provided input
5. **State and Federal Resource Agencies**



**More Questions or Comments?** If so, please contact **Dan Baechtold** with the City's Transportation Department. Please submit any comments by **December 21, 2012**.

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