THE WILMA DYKEMAN RIVERWAY MASTER PLAN

Asheville, North Carolina

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

JUNE 2004

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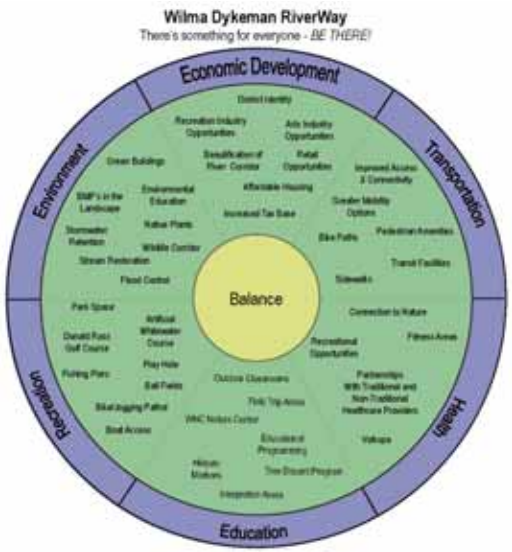
Executive Summary



THE FRENCH BROAD and Swannanoa Rivers are Asheville's last great treasures. Creative and sensitive development of these unique and precious resources provides an incredible opportunity to unlock their unrealized potential and strengthen all of western North Carolina as a destination of choice and an economic engine for the future. This plan is part of an ongoing community process, built upon the foundation of previously adopted plans, to provide a clear vision for the future of the RiverWay. Our goal is to make the urban riverfront so inviting and exciting and uniquely Asheville that you will want to BE THERE.

We have developed the acronym BE THERE as a quick reference way to recall the elements of the plan.

B BALANCE Balancing economic development in the corridor with environmental protection is our future. The rivers are our last great treasure enhancing our unique sense of place. The RiverWay and urban riverfront corridor plans acknowledge that businesses will choose where to locate based on the availability of quality of life amenities, such as our rivers and parks.

E ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Low impact sustainable development that offers a variety of housing types and prices leveraging public open space for flood control and storm water retention where music, dance, drama, visual arts, commercial, retail, business, lifestyle, and health spa centers flourish in an artist inspired and interpreted setting.

T TRANSPORTATION The RiverWay is designed to link existing and proposed parks and tourist destinations via a 17 mile greenway with separate walking and biking trails linked with common design elements offering enhanced north-south and east-west multi-access transportation options, gateways and improved access to our riverfronts.

H HEALTH The RiverWay offers a comprehensive approach to health care and wellness in body, mind and spirit. It was designed to be your recreation destination. A healthy river is a reflection of the values within the community.

E ENVIRONMENT The French Broad River watershed is a drinking water source for over a million people, offering world renowned diversity of plant and wildlife. Clean air and water are essential to our sense of place and total well being.

R RECREATION In all its forms – walking, biking, paddling, manufacturing, and retail – you name it. Launch your adventure from the RiverWay. The RiverWay is already our premier recreation corridor due to the variety of recreation options available in the French Broad River Parks. With new fishing piers, boat access and river viewing areas, an enhanced WNC Nature Center and the proposed facilities at Azalea Park - you will want to BE THERE.

E EDUCATION Understanding our rivers and our history through an artistically interpreted RiverWay enriches our lives and offers opportunities for experiential outdoor education in a living classroom.

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We named this RiverWay after Wilma Dykeman because she is a native daughter and understood, nearly a decade before Rachel Carson wrote The Silent Spring, that there must be balance between growth and environmental responsibility to maintain a sustainable community. Wilma understood that the environment deserves a line item on every balance sheet to record the true and accurate cost of development.

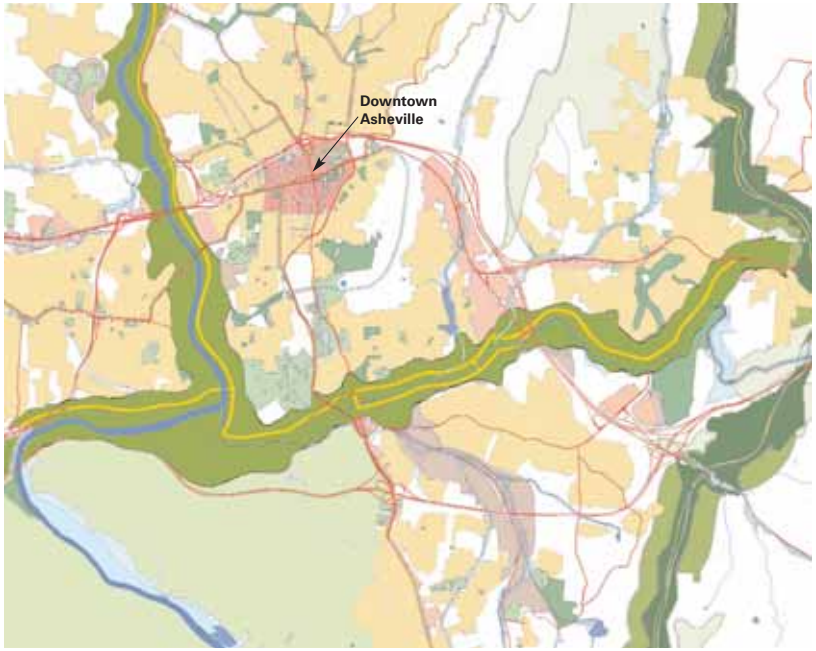
The idea for revisiting the plans for the rebirth of the rivers came about on the 10th anniversary of the creation and adoption by local governments of the Riverfront Plan in 1989. The RiverLink board of directors determined that a review of the existing plans and an update of activities were essential. RiverLink raised funds to hire a multi-disciplined team of architects, landscape architects, transportation planners and economic development specialists to make the next step; this team consisted of Urban Design Associates as urban designers and architects; LaQuatra Bonci Associates as landscape architects; ZHA, Inc. as economic market consultants; and Transystems Corporation as transportation consultants. RiverLink received an enthusiastic response from potential funders and gratefully acknowledges that support for this planning effort was made possible by funds received from the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Progress Energy, the Asheville Merchants Association, the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, Richmond Hill Inn and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Schaub. A request for proposals (RFP) was prepared and sent to firms all across the country. The national response was tremendous and reaffirmed RiverLink's mission to make a world class RiverWay.

Once the team was selected, a steering committee of key local and regional decision makers, a resource team of area experts, and a working team was assembled to coordinate a series of public information sessions, focus groups, and act as a sounding board for ideas and provide feedback. RiverLink challenged the consultants to do two things:

1. Creatively link the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers into a continuous multi-access parkway and
2. Review development in the urban riverfront to suggest sustainable economic development strategies designed to invigorate activity along the urban riverfront corridor, roughly from the I-240 or Smoky Park Bridge to Amboy Road.

An economic analysis of the region's strengths and weaknesses jump started the planning process. Don Zuchelli of ZHA, Inc. focused in on our biggest industries – health care, tourism, arts, and recreation. A bold new vision was crafted for integrating and building upon these industries, reflecting national and local trends and current demographics. Interviews were held with a wide cross section of the community to gain insight and to better understand the history and needs of this extremely popular city that continues to be featured in magazines and newspaper articles all across the country. All of the consultants were impressed with the level of participation and heard clearly that residents are proud of their heritage and uniqueness and strive daily to retain what is uniquely Asheville and not become "Anywhere USA."

What follows is a brief overview of the plan's recommendations and insights. We hope we have captured a consensus vision for the future that will inspire much discussion and a good deal of cooperation to see the plan through to implementation. The complete plan is over 300 pages and is available for your review on RiverLink's website at http://www.riverlink.org.



The RiverWay (in yellow) in the Ashville region

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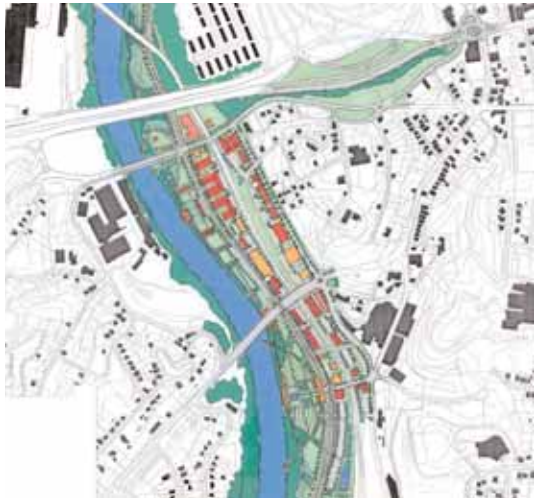
The RiverWay plan is a blueprint for the rebirth of the riverfronts in Asheville. The RiverWay is divided into seven unique but interrelated districts running along the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers within the city limits of Asheville. Each of the districts is accompanied by specific road realignment suggestions and economic development suggestions designed to create a continuous flow of activity while simultaneously connecting a series of existing and proposed attractions to create a unique and exciting transportation route and economic stimulant for our region. The most intense and in-depth economic recommendations occur within the urban riverfront.



The River Arts Districts

These recommendations are based on sound economic development research contracted specifically for this project that takes into account national and local trends and demographics and builds a creative economy for the future health and growth of our region and city. Currently between the northern city limit at the intersection of Broadway and Riverside Drive to Fairview Road along the Swannanoa River (excluding the Sayles Bleachery property), there are 75 parcels of land with a total acreage of 129,940 acres, a current tax value of $17 million (with improvements or buildings estimated as worth $11 million) and an existing building footprint of 830,059 square feet. If the recommendations detailed in this plan are followed for mixed-use development within a carefully and sensitively landscaped RiverWay, we anticipate the total redevelopment tax value to increase to $214 million. This economic miracle can be accomplished simultaneously with creating new mixed-income housing in response to our community's dire needs for new affordable housing, returning the floodplain to its natural function, providing new and improved recreational facilities, positioning Asheville as the national center for total wellness – body, mind, and spirit – and strengthening our established reputation as an arts destination all within a beautiful landscaped setting that uncovers and celebrates two of our most precious yet hidden treasures – the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers.

Each topic and suggestion is designed to present a clear vision to strengthen the urban riverfront by creating important linkages between it and the existing and proposed attractions within the RiverWay. Based on the public input and the consultants' recommendations, we have recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to the creation of the RiverWay. Think of the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay as spokes in a wheel –each spoke individually and collectively is necessary for the wheel to roll along.

District 1 - Riverside Drive North (Buncombe County Turnpike)

The northern entrance to the RiverWay is at the intersection of Riverside Drive and Broadway which will feature a landscaped and interpreted gateway to the RiverWay, in addition to north Asheville and UNCA. Several of the current uses are recommended to be phased out over a period of time since they are in the floodway, and replaced with recreational fields. The impacts of a new I-26 bridge must be continually monitored to assure that any new bridge construction is sympathetic to the river and provides access to the RiverWay and urban riverfront. Construction of the I-26 connector presents this community with a once in a generation opportunity to reconnect parts of the city by reclaiming large areas of land now occupied by ramps along I-240 on the eastern side of the French Broad River. When these ramps were built, the West End/Clingman neighborhood lost vital street linkages to downtown Asheville, as well as access to the riverfront. Physical barriers to the riverfront have created psychological barriers which exaggerate the perceived distance between the riverfront and the downtown. With land reclaimed from the interstate system, Patton Avenue can be extended to the RiverWay on the French Broad River, providing a direct connection between downtown Asheville and the Riverfronts Arts District. Patton Avenue could be developed as an important urban boulevard with mixed-use buildings in accordance with the WECAN neighborhood plan. Also, the existing railroad bridge is

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recommended for removal. The design of the railroad bridge, with its frequent piers, is a detrimental obstruction causing debris to accumulate at the bridge piers and elevate water levels upstream.

District 2 - River Arts District

The River Arts District offers an opportunity to create new open spaces as well as mixed-use mixed-income housing that preserves the industrial heritage of the mills that distinguish the riverfront and offers unique alternatives to other districts within the city. It is here that the RiverWay is closely aligned with the existing Riverside Drive between the Smith and RiverLink bridges. Park space can be developed to accommodate festivals, pavilions, and an amphitheatre by the river. Any new buildings should be arranged to create a series of courts, craft and food markets with parking beneath the building and a commitment to mitigate pollutants and maintain pre-development run off rates by creatively incorporating Best Management Practices (BMPs) into the design of both the buildings and landscape. Roberts Street is the transition street between the riverfront district and the WECAN neighborhood and since it is completely out of the flood prone area can sustain higher density mixed-use, mixed-income development producing a critical mass and great views of the river and park. A new street address is recommended behind the existing railroad tracks near the intersection of Lyman and Depot Streets to provide added density in the form of studios, lofts, and live-work space designed to expand and strengthen the current River Arts District. The interaction between Roberts Street and the proposed new construction can be improved with steps, ramps, platforms and pavilions to further link Roberts Street with the riverfront and expanded arts district. Road alignments south of the intersection of Lyman Street and Riverside Drive recall the alignment of Old Lyman Street to create more open space, remove incompatible uses and buildings from the floodway and provide ample areas for storm water retention and flood control as well as parking for the new amenities. To add interest to this area and bring in a new recreation feature, “play holes” should be constructed in the river near Jean Webb Park.

District 3 - French Broad River Recreation Area

District 3 is located 12 to 18 feet below the floodplain and is recommended primarily for a concentration of recreational opportunities and as the location for a Lifestyle Center or health spa that bridges the gap and provides a home for traditional, alternative, supplemental, complimentary, and boutique medicine to come together in one location. The historic Hand Reece Tannery is a beautiful brick building that reflects and defines District 3. It is the largest remaining industrial building in the urban riverfront and presents several challenges for adaptive reuse. However, the Tannery should be analyzed as the preferred location to cluster outdoor related manufacturers such as bicycle, camping and water sports gear makers and the Lifestyle Center in one space. An artificial whitewater course is also recommended for this area to compliment the "play holes" recommended in District 2. Most of Amboy Road is well below the floodplain and has been developed with parks and greenways. Park development should continue in this area and new mixed-use construction should be considered for the bluffs overlooking the parks to take advantage of the views afforded by the existing park and Biltmore Estate. Amboy Road is also slated to become an on/off ramp for I-26 and plans to develop a wetlands/urban forest outdoor classroom at the east end of the old speedway property should be substantial enough to accommodate a regional educational facility. Currently a footpath is funded from Amboy Road to Hominy Creek Park. Every effort should be encouraged to extend this end of the RiverWay to the Blue Ridge Parkway entrance at the North Carolina Arboretum. One of the longer term objectives of this planning effort should be to entice the estimated 20 million users of the Blue Ridge Parkway to experience the City of Asheville through creative and artistic signage marketing the RiverWay at Parkway exits near Route 70 in Swannanoa and at The Arboretum entrance.

District 4 - Meadow Road (The Roundhouse District)

This district starts at the intersection of Amboy Road and Meadow Road along the Swannanoa River. A pull-off and pavilion is proposed for the employee entrance at Biltmore Estate. The existing bridge over the railroad tracks should be modified to accommodate the new alignment of the RiverWay and additional right-of-way should be acquired to accommodate trails and sidewalks. The intersection with McDowell Street should be improved to take advantage of the McDowell Street Bridge which provides much needed grade separated access over the railroad tracks to Biltmore Village. A new gateway with native landscaping, signage and interpretative information should be installed to celebrate and announce the entrance to the RiverWay, the downtown and historic Biltmore Village. Several buildings currently in the floodplain are recommended for removal so that the new Gateway Park can be developed. The proposed

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Gateway Park can incorporate parking into the design to support retail activity in the village and access to the multi-functional trails along the RiverWay.

District 5 - Swannanoa West (Biltmore Village)

Thompson Street and Swannanoa River road just east of the Meadow Road intersection are slated to become a split pair of one-way roads to accommodate the increased traffic volumes in this stretch of the RiverWay. However, until new bridges can be constructed across the Swannanoa River at Glendale Avenue and Stoner Road, both Thompson Street and Swannanoa River Road should remain two way pairs to facilitate retail and business activity in the Village. Extra effort should be taken to preserve the natural beauty of the river valley with native landscaping and riparian buffer plantings while creating a RiverWay with increased capacity. Lookouts and sitting areas are recommended at the bridge heads for trail users.

District 6 - Swannanoa East (Governor Locke Craig House District)

This district starts at Tunnel Road at the intersection with Wood Avenue. The Sayles Bleachery site is slated for big box development and currently parcels are being assembled for additional development. In this district urban villages should be encouraged with mixed-use, mixed-income housing as a key component. To preserve the integrity of the RiverWay, shared parking and limited curb cuts should be mandated to make efficient use of limited land. The natural cycle of parking demands calls out for creative solutions. For example, offices typically need parking during the day while entertainment and retail need parking during nights and week-ends. Incentives such as reduced parking requirements can encourage shared parking and connections between lots. Limiting curb cuts into the RiverWay will provide for an enjoyable and river friendly experience for residents and visitors utilizing the RiverWay as an east-west connector.

District 7 - Azalea Park (the WNC Nature Center and Donald Ross Boulevard)

This district encompasses the historic Donald Ross Municipal Golf Course and the entrance to the WNC Nature Center. Since the roadways and topography are tight, no medians are recommended, except at intersections with changing lanes that are landscaped with native plants and interpretative signage. Immediately to the east of the Nature Center along Azalea Road the City has purchased a 155 acre track for the establishment of soccer fields and outdoor education and activities. Azalea Road is considered to be too sensitive and the topography too steep to be included in the RiverWay. Instead, the RiverWay can provide a new and enhanced entrance to the Nature Center as a destination with an outdoor classroom positioned along the RiverWay. It is recommended that the RiverWay be continued to Tunnel Road where an extensively landscaped gateway is developed to attract Blue Ridge Parkway users to enjoy and experience the RiverWay in to the heart of Asheville.

RiverLink appreciates the opportunity to advance our community vision for the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers by creating a sustainable and predictable model of growth and environmental preservation. It is our belief that in partnership with the City, County, and State officials and with our area business community, we can fulfill this plan and create a place where we will all want to BE THERE!

To view a power point presentation on the RiverWay please visit RiverLink's website at http://www.riverlink.org.

MIX OF USES IN THE RIVER ARTS DISTRICT AND THE FRENCH BROAD RECREATION AREA

1	Whitewater Course and Outdoor Sports Center	53,000 SF
2	Non-Invasive Medical and Holistic Practitioners HealthSpa	30,000 SF
3	Wildlife Habitat Center	22,000 SF
4	A new health/environmental education center	50,000 SF
5	Artisan Craftworks Display & Live/Work Housing	90,000 SF

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RiverLink

RiverLink is spearheading the economic and environmental revitalization of the French Broad River and its watershed as a destination where people canwork, live and play.

RiverLink is a non-profit regional organization founded in 1986 with the dual mission of economic development and environmental protection of the French Broad River watershed. RiverLink was created specifically to bring attention and resources to this forgotten, neglected treasure.

The French Broad travels 117 miles through western North Carolina and defines the region comprised of Transylvania, Henderson, Buncombe and Madison counties. The river, particularly the urban riverfront in Asheville, was the industrial heart of the region at the turn of the century. Cotton mills, tanneries and a large variety of factories lined the river corridor and utilized the railroad lines, which follow the river corridor. When the heyday of the industrial riverfront passed, it left abandoned buildings, junk cars and unlined landfills -- problems and opportunities for future RiverLinked generations to deal with.

The Wilma Dykeman RiverWay is an effort to deal with these and other problems left over from previous generations. The plan is the result of many years of work by hundreds of citizens and professionals who view the RiverWay as the next logical step for sustainable economic revitalization. It is a smart growth vision for our region and a call to action by RiverLink and its many partners to bring life and vitality back to this essential urban treasure. The Wilma Dykeman RiverWay builds on and expands RiverLink's earlier planning efforts: The Riverfront Plan (1989), the Open Space Design Guidelines (1991), the Edward D. Stone, Jr. Plan (1994), and the National Greenway Conference RiverLink hosted "Greenways Bring Greenbacks to Your Community (1995).

Over the years, RiverLink has been instrumental in obtaining land, through donation and purchase, to create the French Broad River Greenway system, the most visited park system in the city. RiverLink has worked with local, state and federal governments, foundations and the public at large to bring attention and resources to develop the potential of the urban river corridor as a demonstration project for the watershed. RiverLink has also been leading efforts to reclaim industrial buildings with adaptive reuse of historically significant properties along the river corridor. The Warehouse Studios, which RiverLink purchased in 1991, houses seven professional artist studios as well as RiverLink's administrative offices. The Warehouse Studios serves as a model for creative reuse of a former grain storage warehouse. RiverLink also owns the historic Asheville Cotton Mill, which it views as an anchor project site for mixed-use, mixed income development.

Simultaneously with these economic development initiatives, RiverLink has been actively promoting a wide variety of education programs on water quality issues. There are over one million people in the watershed utilizing the French Broad River as their primary drinking water source.

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The demands on our river as a drinking water source will continue to increase along with our rapidly expanding population. In 1999, RiverLink obtained the Riverkeeper license for the entire French Broad River watershed, extending the organizations' reach into Tennessee where the French Broad flows into Douglas Lake and eventually joins the Tennessee River. With our Riverkeeper program, we seek to educate, inspire and empower citizens and area governments on all the issues related to water quality - economic and environmental.

RiverLink's efforts to combat sediment, the number one pollutant in the watershed, resulted in obtaining an EPA grant to install a series of urban best management practices (BMP's) in the Swannanoa River as demonstration sites. The 22-mile long Swannanoa River makes it an ideal sub-watershed of the French Broad to test innovative techniques to curb sediment and erosion. A three-mile stream restoration project is currently underway on the Swannanoa utilizing land owned by the Blue Ridge Parkway, the NCDOT, the City of Asheville and Buncombe County. This project will become a model for urban best management practices for the state.

RiverLink's WebPage at www.riverlink.org <http://www.riverlink.org/> provides a wide variety of information for anyone who is interested in knowing more about this watershed. We invite you to study and enjoy our WebPages, read Wilma Dykeman's The French Broad and get RiverLinked. Thank you.

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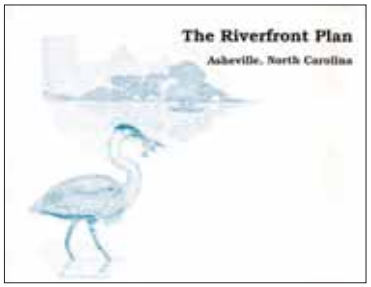
Legacy of Planning



The Riverfront Plan was developed through an ASLA/AIA charrette in 1989.

These guidelines were developed through a charrette and public process in 1991.

The City of Asheville is located at the confluence of the Swannanoa River and French Broad River, which are within the same watershed. RiverLink and the City of Asheville have been actively planning future growth with several separate but interrelated planning initiatives.

The Riverfront Plan, 1989

This was the first planning process for the French Broad River watershed. RiverLink received a Civil Works planning grant and invited the ASLA and the AIA to come to Asheville to participate in the first joint ASLA-AIA charrette held in the United States. The resulting plan was adopted by both the City of Asheville and Buncombe County. RiverLink won the NC American Planning Association Award for the Riverfront Plan in 1990 for "Large Community Outstanding Planning." Also in 1989, RiverLink won the PICA, "Best in Category" award for its design in a non-hard bound book. The Riverfront Plan, divided into three implementation phases, has guided RiverLink's work and led to this most recent planning process. The Riverfront Plan recommended several initiatives for the riverfront including the creation of a Riverfront Zoning District between the Smith and Haywood Bridges, the development of a whitewater course, improved access to the rivers with improvements to the Patton Avenue corridor, revitalization strategies for adjacent neighborhoods, landscape guidelines for parks and recreation areas and the creation of a Riverside Parkway.

The Asheville Riverfront Open Space Design Guidelines, 1991

RiverLink received a grant from the NC Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts to develop The Asheville Riverfront Open Space Design Guidelines. These guidelines have been incorporated into the City of Asheville zoning code for developing open space along the river corridor. The guidelines recognize and celebrate the uniqueness of Asheville and the need to incorporate art and artistic elements into the landscape. The guidelines have been used by communities throughout WNC as an example of creating wonderful open space that reflects the history, arts and recreational potential of our water resources as well as create an economic stimulus to reclaim underutilized and neglected waterways.

The Edward D. Stone, Jr. Plan, 1992

RiverLink received a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation to hire a nationally recognized design firm to design a system of linking interlocking greenways to wrap the urban riverfront with green space, promote sustainable economic development opportunities and enhance the growing artist community along the urban corridor. The

Edward D. Stone, Jr. Plan, 1992

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plan established a vision for the French Broad River within the City of Asheville as a continuous system of parks and trails from Amboy Road to the Asheville Cotton Mill. Several components of the plan have been implemented including French Broad River Park and the Amboy Road Greenway.

Asheville Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 1998

This plan is based upon a review of the entire community, an analysis of the existing plans and park system, the identification of user needs, the development of recreation standards, and an adherence to stated recommendations and proposals. The plan provides a framework from which the City can enhance its parks and recreation system through the year 2015.

Asheville Greenways Master Plan, 1999

The City of Asheville incorporated the RiverLink plans and developed a comprehensive vision for a system of trails and continuous greenways that interconnect city parks and the rivers with neighborhoods. The plan illustrates ways to better connect neighborhoods with the French Broad River and Swannanoa River corridors and develop a continuous riverfront trail system.

Asheville City Plan, 2025

This plan is an update of the Asheville 2010 Plan and proposes a land use pattern, transportation network and system of City services and infrastructure that reflects the community desires and wishes concerning future growth of the City. The 2025 plan includes goals, objectives, and policies that will guide the City of Asheville of maintaining a Smart Growth development model.

WECAN Community Master Plan, 2000

The WECAN plan was sponsored by Mountain Housing Opportunities and through a public planning process and charrette developed a comprehensive revitalization strategy for the WECAN neighborhood. Redevelopment initiatives include a vision for Patton Avenue and Interstate Highway 240, a Main Street along Clingman Avenue, neighborhood plans for lower Clingman, the Top of the Hill, the Arts District and the Riverfront Area.

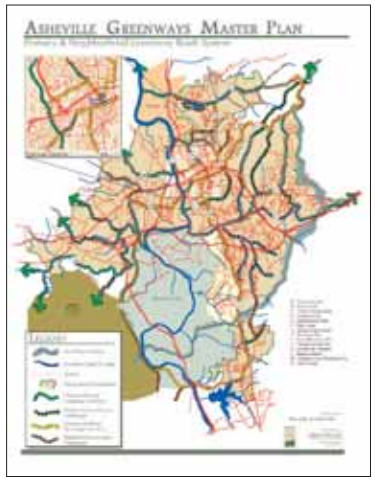
Azalea Park Plan, 2002

This plan proposes the creation of active and passive recreational areas along the Swannanoa River adjacent to the Asheville Nature Center. Over the years, man-made "Old" Lake Craig has silted in to create a flat meadow contained within a beautiful valley. The plan recommends, the development of trails, and athletic fields.

NCDOT I-26 Connector (in process)

The North Carolina Department of Transportation and the City of Asheville are currently planning revisions to the interstate system in the vicinity of the French Broad River corridor. I-26 will be extended north from the current intersection with I-240 on the west side of the river in West Asheville. This extension will cross the French Broad north of the current I-240 crossing. Several design alternatives are being considered for this major highway project.

Azalea Park Master Plan, 2002



This plan, which identifies primary greenway corridors, was adopted by the city in 1999

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The Wilma Dykeman RiverWay - A World Class Attraction

Entry to the Biltmore Estate

The Wilma Dykeman RiverWay is a once in a generation opportunity to transform Asheville's rivers into a world class destination for residents and visitors, to live, work, and play. The RiverWay is a continuous road and trail system combined with a series of concentrated nodes of development that will dramatically improve the quality of life in Asheville.

A TRADITION OF GREAT PARKWAYS

Historically, the idea of a parkway, or touring highway, was to provide for the viewing of sensational landscapes and the enjoyment of public landscapes while providing a simple diversion away from urban life to reconnect with nature and its scenic beauty. The parkway movement started in the 1930s, primarily descendants of Olmsted and Vaux's great Eastern Park-Way in Brooklyn. Over time, two types of parkways were developed – the cross-country parkway and the limited access highway. The cross-country type of parkway was designed to follow the contours of the land and respond to its scenic beauty. The more urban form, the limited access highway, allowed the urban population to have a pleasurable drive through parklands close to where they lived. Asheville is blessed with the most celebrated of the parkways, the Blue Ridge Parkway. The limited access highway, similar in character to the Bronx River Parkway, a more urban prototype, provides a uniquely varied experience by balancing the interplay between built urban form and the natural landscape.

In addition to the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Biltmore Estate offers visitors the unique opportunity to traverse the site on a variety of park drives through woodlands, stream corridors and along valley floors. Both of these historic landscapes have become landmark destinations and cherished places to visit. The Asheville river corridor has the potential to become the region's next great landscape destination, by designing a parkway that responds to this historic landscape legacy and celebrates the beauty of the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers.

PARKWAY TO RIVERWAY

For Asheville, the inherent beauty and diversity within the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers, the distant views to the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains, the eclectic mix of industrial mills and nature, and the historic legacy of the built landscape, provides a wonderful setting to develop a vocabulary for a new urban parkway – by consensus one that we will call a RiverWay because of its adjacency to rivers.

The RiverWay goals are four-fold.

1. The RiverWay will provide frontage for economic development along its length whether it is adaptive reuse of existing historic structures or the development of new recreational structures for civic and residential uses.
2. **The RiverWay** will facilitate the continual expansion of Asheville's greenway system by extending the pedestrian network linking neighborhoods to the rivers as well as to civic, recreational and cultural destinations.
3. **The RiverWay** will provide a new transportation spine that will enhance the ability to interconnect local streets and regional transportation arteries.
4. **The RiverWay** will improve and enhance the river corridors by implementing ecologically sustainable technologies and practices.

The RiverWay therefore must incorporate many facets of transportation, both vehicular and pedestrian. The river drive itself will take commuters and visitors to Asheville's downtown, its beautiful neighborhoods, and its many attractions such as Biltmore Village and Biltmore Estate. The RiverWay will ultimately provide both residents and visitors better access to both the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers.

(TOP) The Blue Ridge Parkway
(BOTTOM) French Broad River

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The Wilma Dykeman RiverWay will link a wide variety of world-class destinations.

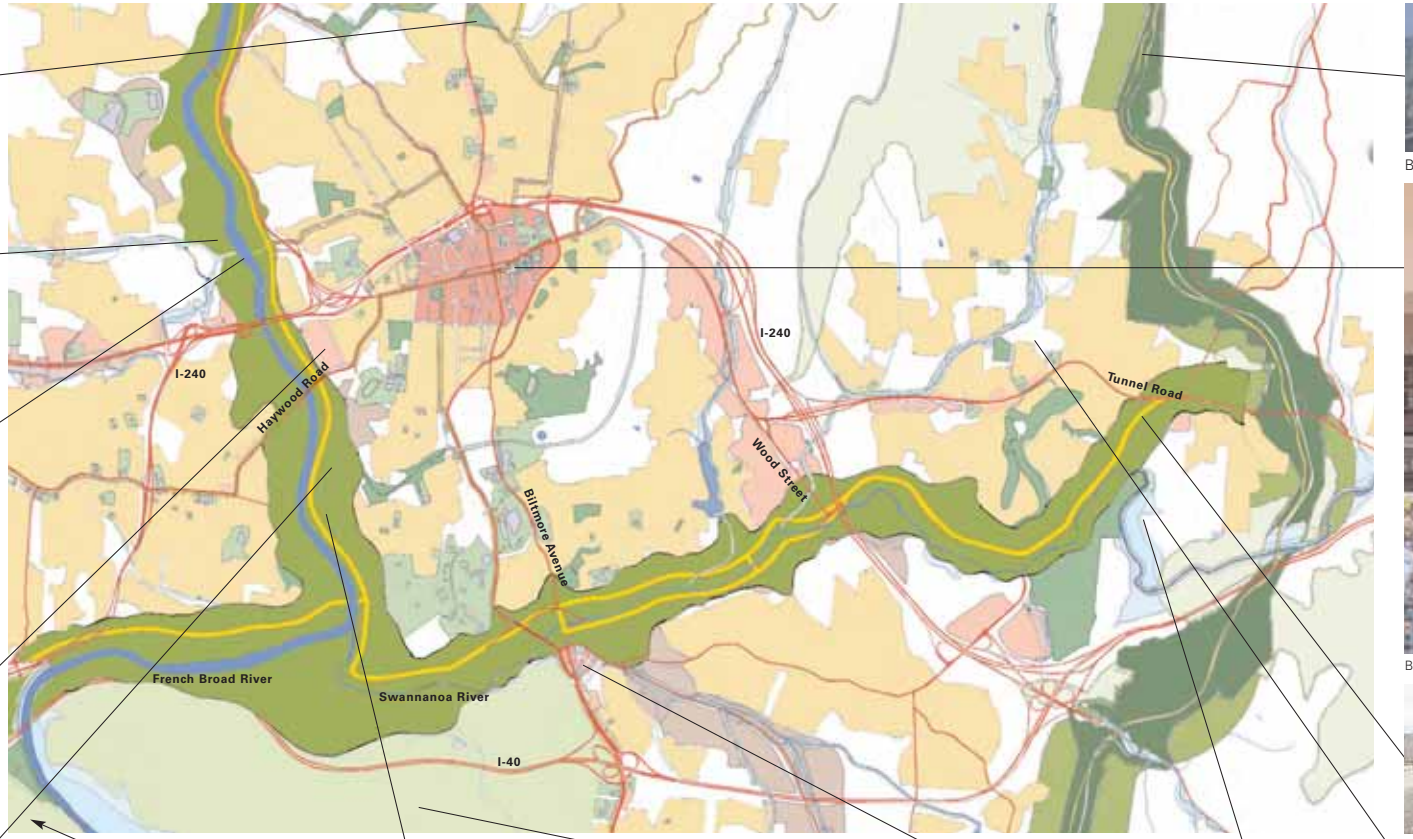
Botanical Garden

Richmond Hill Inn

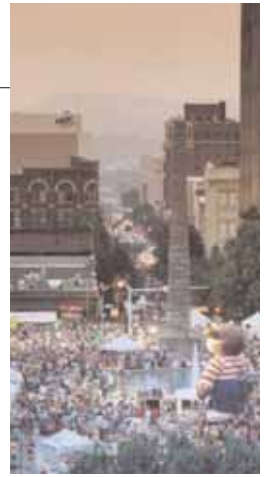
French Broad River

River Arts District

French Broad Regional Recreational Area



Blue Ridge Parkway


Bele Chere Celebration, Downtown Asheville

WNC Nature Center

North Carolina Arboretum

Proposed Wilma Dykeman RiverWay

Biltmore Estate

Biltmore Village

Proposed Azalea Park

Donald Ross Golf Course

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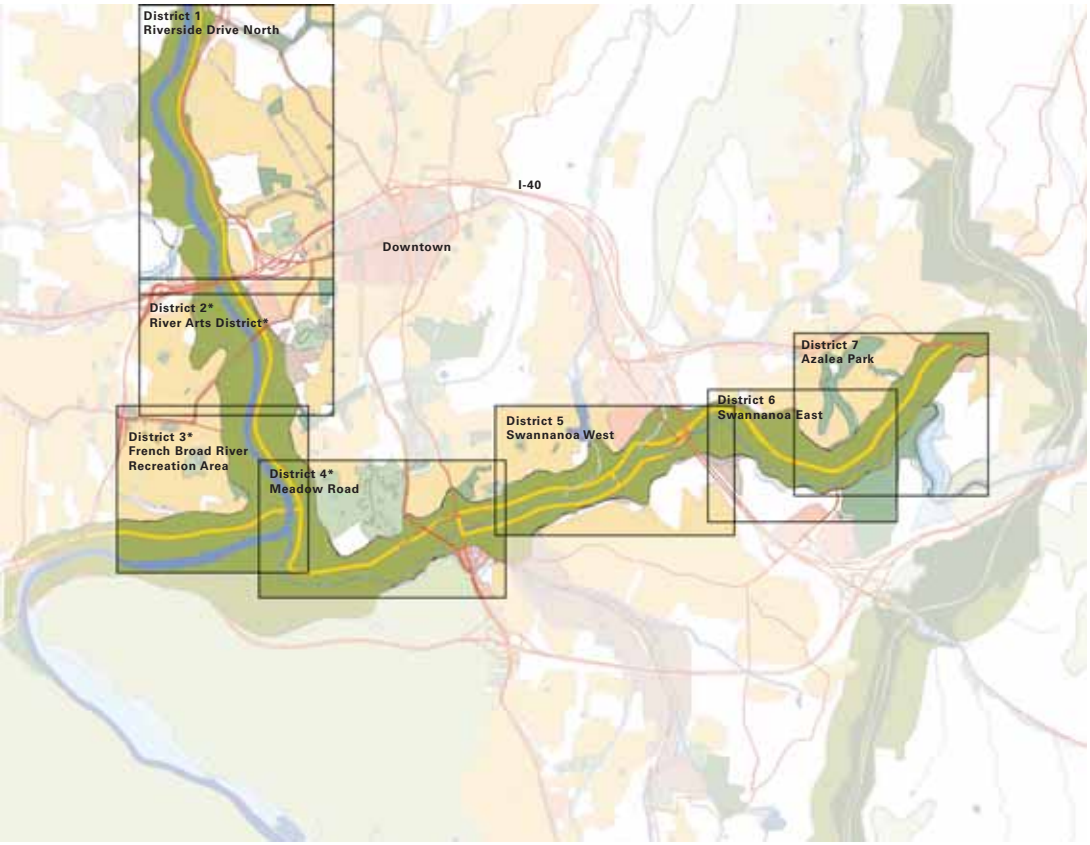
A New World Class Attraction

The Wilma Dykeman RiverWay is conceived as a total environment in the same way that the Blue Ridge Parkway is considered, as more than just a road. The Blue Ridge Parkway is fundamentally different in that it is designed to protect natural view sheds and historic resources in a wilderness setting. The RiverWay is a continuous roadway and trail system in a linear park setting within the city. The RiverWay provides access to a balance of developed areas and recreational areas, interconnecting neighborhoods, industry and visitor attractions. The RiverWay will transform the French Broad River and Swannanoa River from ignored and forgotten river valleys into significant, exciting new landscapes. By combining and improving existing roadways with a common design palette, confused and often contorted riverfront streets will be re-conceived as a graceful new road of singular distinction. In addition to the roadway, the RiverWay will include a continuous trail system, new passive and active recreation areas, and urban sections that tie into historic town centers.

The RiverWay will extend along the French Broad River from Broadway Avenue through the central riverfront, along the WECAN neighborhood, through the new recreational areas to the Amboy Road Exit on I-240. The RiverWay will also follow the Swannanoa from its confluence with the French Broad, through Biltmore Village and up river to Tunnel Road and Azalea Park where it will end in close proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Connections from neighboring residential areas and attractions are improved with new roadway intersections, gateways and trails. The RiverWay is described in greater detail on the following pages.



The Districts of the RiverWay

* Urban Riverfront - Districts 2, 3, and 4

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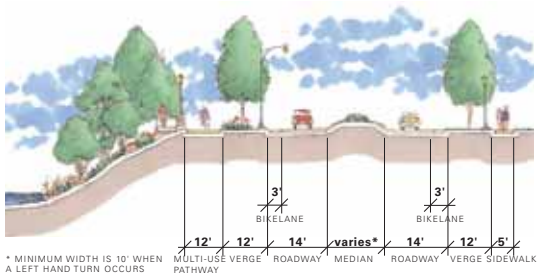
DISTRICT 1:

Riverside Drive North



Section A-A Typical design section for a two-lane RiverWay with median

District 1 - Riverside Drive North

Northern segment of Riverside Drive North

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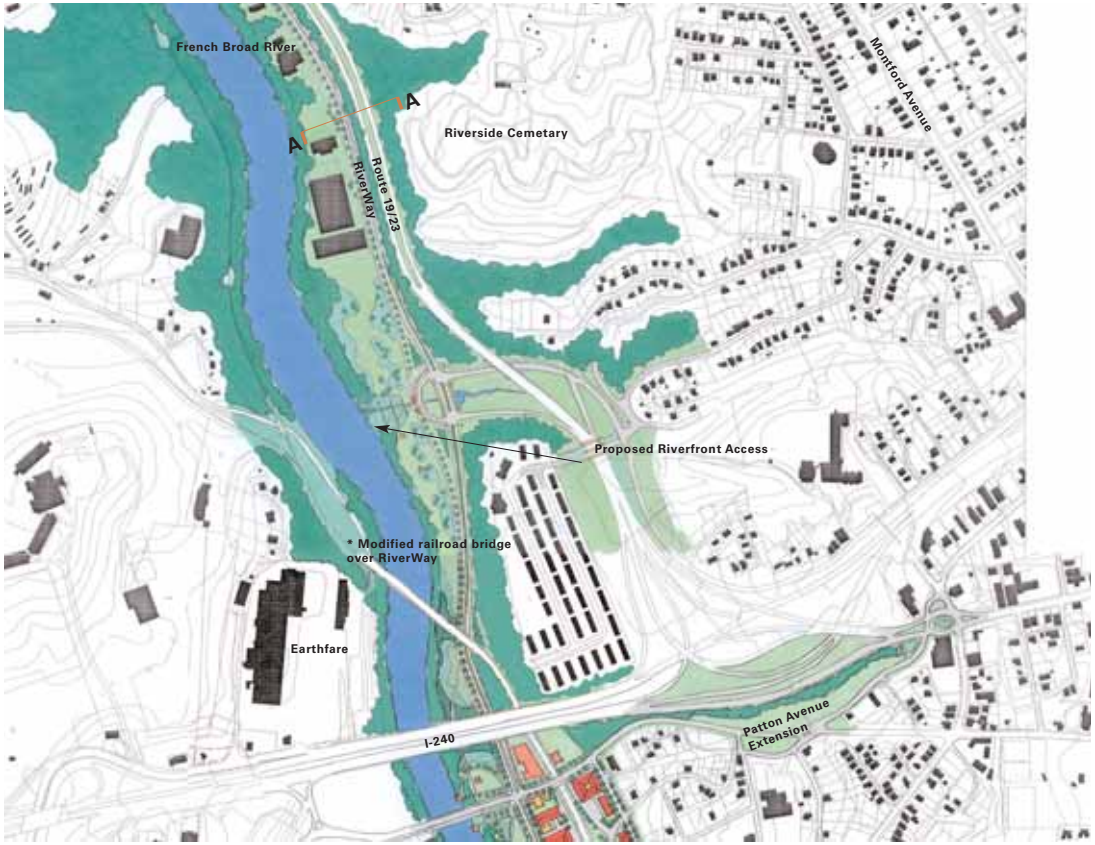
The northern entrance to the RiverWay will be the intersection with Broadway Street, celebrated with a gateway treatment (see example in the image to the right). Riverside Drive will be improved with landscaping and a continuous trail to create the northern segment of the RiverWay. Some existing uses along the corridor are inappropriate uses within the French Broad flood zone or are unattractive uses that over time should be acquired and converted into riverfront recreation areas. Some plan alternatives for the I-26 connector call for the construction of new interstate bridges over the French Broad River. The environmental impact of these bridges should be carefully considered before the preferred alternative is chosen.

Modifications to the existing railroad bridge just north of the I-240 Bridge are recommended to remove an existing kink in the road alignment. The design of the railroad bridge, with its frequent piers, is an obstruction to debris during floods and has been known to elevate water levels up stream.

Construction of the I-26 Connector will present the city with a once in a generation opportunity to reconnect parts of the city by reclaiming large areas of land now occupied by ramps along I-240 on the eastern side of the French Broad. When these ramps were built, for example, the West End/Clingman lost vital street linkages to downtown Asheville. In addition, critical access points to the river were severed. With land reclamation from the interstate system, Patton Avenue can be extended to the RiverWay on the French Broad riverfront. This will provide a direct connection between downtown Asheville and the new Riverfront Arts District. Patton Avenue can be developed as an important urban boulevard with mixed use buildings in accordance with the WECAN plan.



Southern segment of Riverside Drive North

Gateway elements, such as vertical markers, piers, poles, plazas, low walls, signage, special lighting and landscaping, wil provide a consistent palette of design elements which will help to build the unique identity for the RiverWay.

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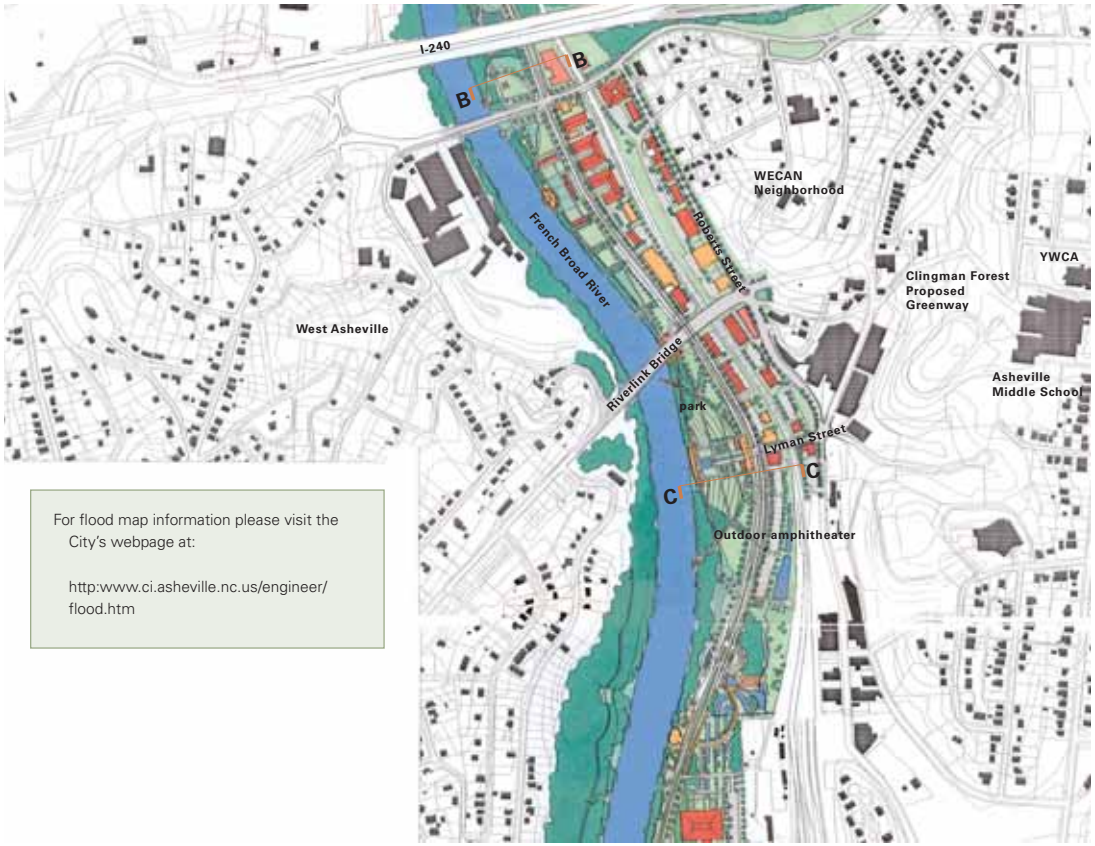
DISTRICT 2:

River Arts District

Intersection of Lyman Street and Riverside Drive today

District 2 - River Arts District



For flood map information please visit the City's webpage at:

http:www.ci.asheville.nc.us/engineer/flood.htm

The RiverWay south of the I-240 bridge enters an urban area that will evolve into a new River Arts District. Existing uses in the flood zone are recommended to be removed and replaced with a new urban riverfront park. New development will concentrate along the rail corridor and Roberts Street, overlooking the riverfront. A synergy between outdoor entertainment uses in a park setting and arts activities within a unique loft district of industrial character will become the theme of Asheville's downtown waterfront.

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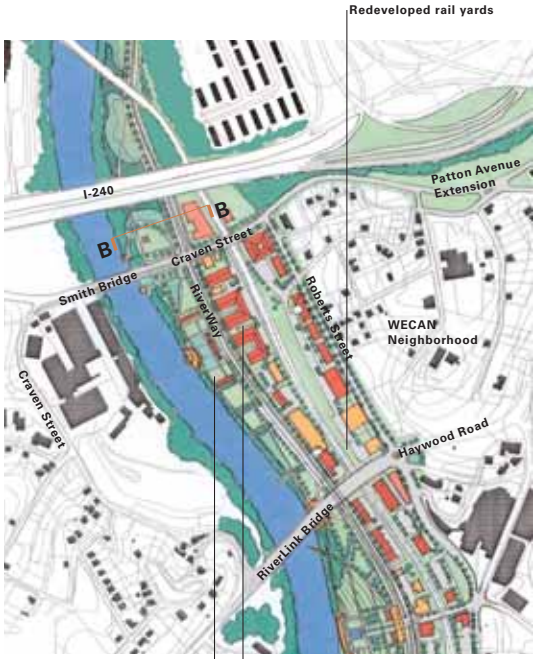
RIVER ARTS DISTRICT

The River Arts District is the site of large existing industrial warehouses and the ruins of the Cotton Mills. This district will continue to grow as a concentration of new and reused buildings of mixed-use offering live/work arrangements for artisans and those interested in living along the River. The character of the district should preserve the industrial heritage of the former mills and offer a unique alternative to other districts in the city. The River Arts District should include streetscape designs by artists and incorporate art made on the riverfront into the sidewalks and other infrastructure wherever possible.

The new RiverWay will be closely aligned with existing Riverside Drive between the Smith Bridge and the RiverLink Bridge. The park space along the river can be developed to accommodate river festivals with native open landscapes, pavilions, and an amphitheater. Located close to the downtown and Pack Square, this part of the River can be thought of as a more active event-oriented river edge.

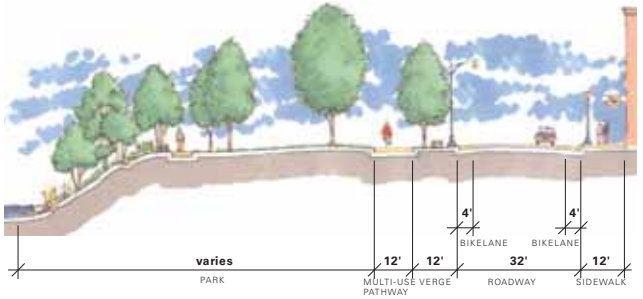
Development of new mixed-use buildings recalling the character of the former Cotton Mill buildings can be built along the RiverWay on the mill site. By arranging buildings to create a series of courts, craft and food markets can occupy spaces around the courtyards on a daily basis as temporary uses in a manner similar to farmer's markets. A synergy can develop between these ground floor uses and events in the park across the road. The upper levels of the buildings can be designed as flexible loft space which can be used for residences, studios and offices.

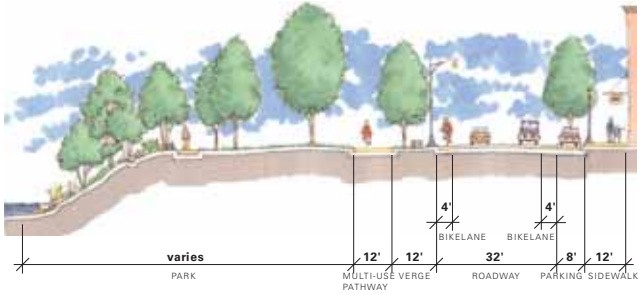


* Because of the flood plain, parks and festival space are appropriate uses along the river edge.

Proposed elevation of the east side of Riverside Avenue near Craven Street.

TOP **Section B-B** Typical urban section at historic development area
BOTTOM **Section B-B** Parking alternative; Typical urban section at historic development area





Proposed Cotton Mill site redevelopment (Please refer to the Urban Riverfront Development Summary, page 34, for a detiailed illustration of building prototypes.)

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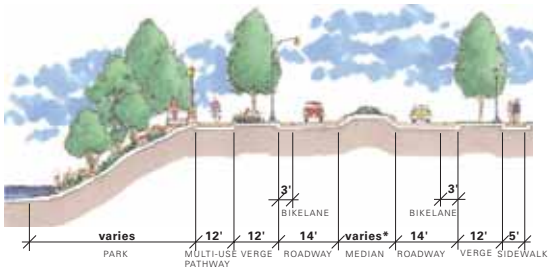
Roberts Street can be developed for primarily residential uses with buildings of a character similar to houses in the WECAN neighborhood. These sites will offer terrific views of the French Broad River and should be very attractive.

The mix of uses will create an attractive setting for a health spa, described in the RiverWay market study. This spa will offer health screening, diagnostic services, and a range of alternative therapies for guests.

A large flat area of former rail yards, still controlled by the railroad, can be transferred to private ownership in the future. Just a few feet below the flood plain, this prime land can be developed with new mixed-use buildings of industrial character to expand the arts district. By building a street along the back of existing industrial buildings on Roberts, and building new space of similar character, the lower levels will become the focus of a new arts oriented street, between the riverfront and Roberts Street. Space between existing buildings on Roberts can be improved with steps, platforms and pavilions to further link Roberts with the riverfront area and the new arts street.

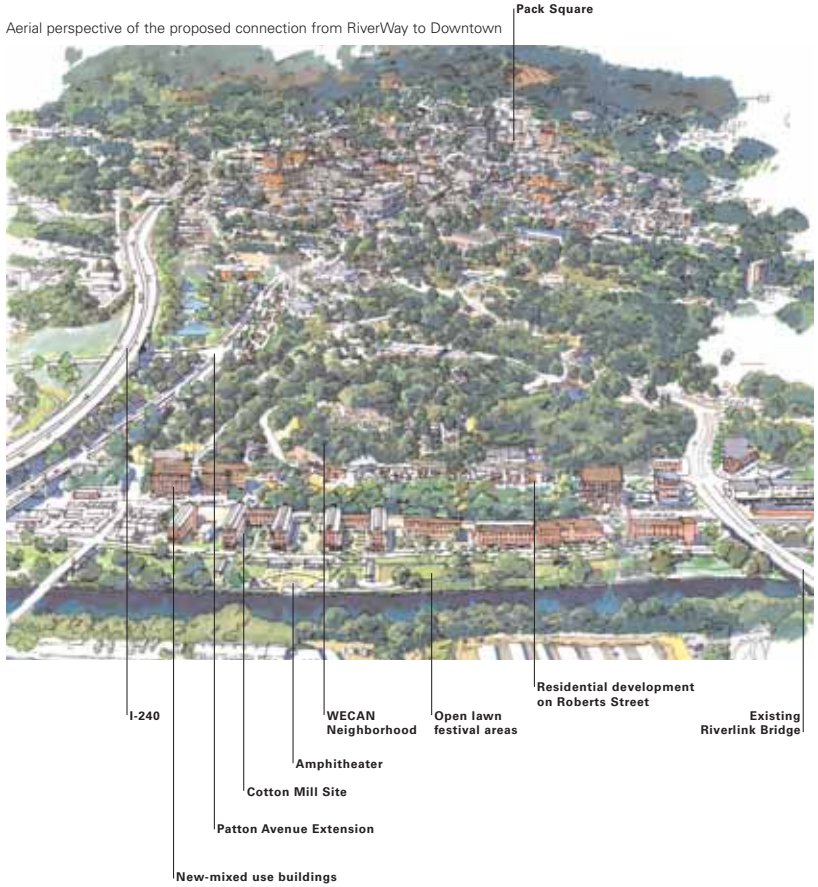
South of the RiverLink Bridge, the RiverWay is relocated east to deepen land on the river side of the roadway for more park space and trails. It is recommended that over time, the stone supplier, bottled gas company and recycling plant be relocated to other more suitable areas. A large park space can be developed along the river in this area with parking to the east of the RiverWay.



* MINIMUM WIDTH IS 10' WHEN A LEFT HAND TURN OCCURS

Section C-C Typical design section for a two-lane RiverWay with median

Aerial perspective of the proposed connection from RiverWay to Downtown



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DISTRICT 3:

French Broad River Recreation Area

French Broad River Park, Phase 1

District 3 - French Broad River Recreation Area

A large bluff on the western side of the French Broad overlooks the confluence of the Swannanoa River with the French Broad River at the point where it bends and turns north. The RiverWay passes along the historic Tannery building on the east bank of the French Broad and intersects Amboy Road. Building on the success of the French Broad River Park, the large flat areas around the Tannery and along Amboy Road will be further developed into active and passive recreation areas linked together by the RiverWay.

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THE TANNERY AREA

The site of a former tannery, this area is currently occupied by an architecturally significant tannery building now used for a mix of office and retail uses. Much of this district is filled with metal warehouses and rail yards.

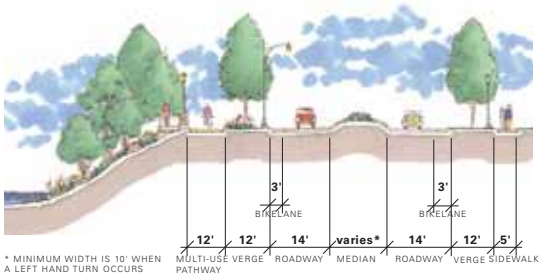
Because it is well below the flood plain, the tannery area should be developed primarily as park space for a variety of outdoor activities including a whitewater kayaking course, space for recreation oriented businesses and a new educational park integrated with the river connected to trails along the RiverWay.

There has been considerable interest in using the central French Broad riverfront to promote and develop an outdoor recreation center for the region. The Tannery District can accommodate a new artificial whitewater course for training whitewater skills and nurture the creation of recreation related industries. Asheville can actively recruit boat makers, bicycle manufacturers, camping gear makers and other outdoor related enterprises to cluster together in this location. With this mix of uses, Asheville can become a major destination for visitors seeking outdoor experiences and specialized training. This location can serve as home base for outfitters and suppliers for a variety of water and mountain experiences.

Land is available for development in a natural riverfront setting. New facilities will be required to be designed to meet the requirements of the floodway. Six acres of land can be made available to accommodate new buildings and park space.

AMBOY ROAD AREA

A program is developing to create a series of urban research and educational centers across the county. Local promoters are keen on finding a suitable site for this use and are attracted to underutilized land adjacent to the old speedway along Amboy Road. The design team illustrates the creation of a building and landscaped park designed to meet the needs of the program. This site is well suited for this use because of easy access and a protected view shed of the Biltmore Estate across the river. Because it is within the floodway, development in this section of the river corridor must be carefully considered.



Section D-D Typical design section for a two-lane RiverWay with median

The existing tannery buildings can become the focus for recreational activities.

The RiverWay along the French Broad River will accommodate motorists, cyclists, joggers, walkers, and tourists. A new pedestrian bridge will cross the river and connect to the French Broad River Park.

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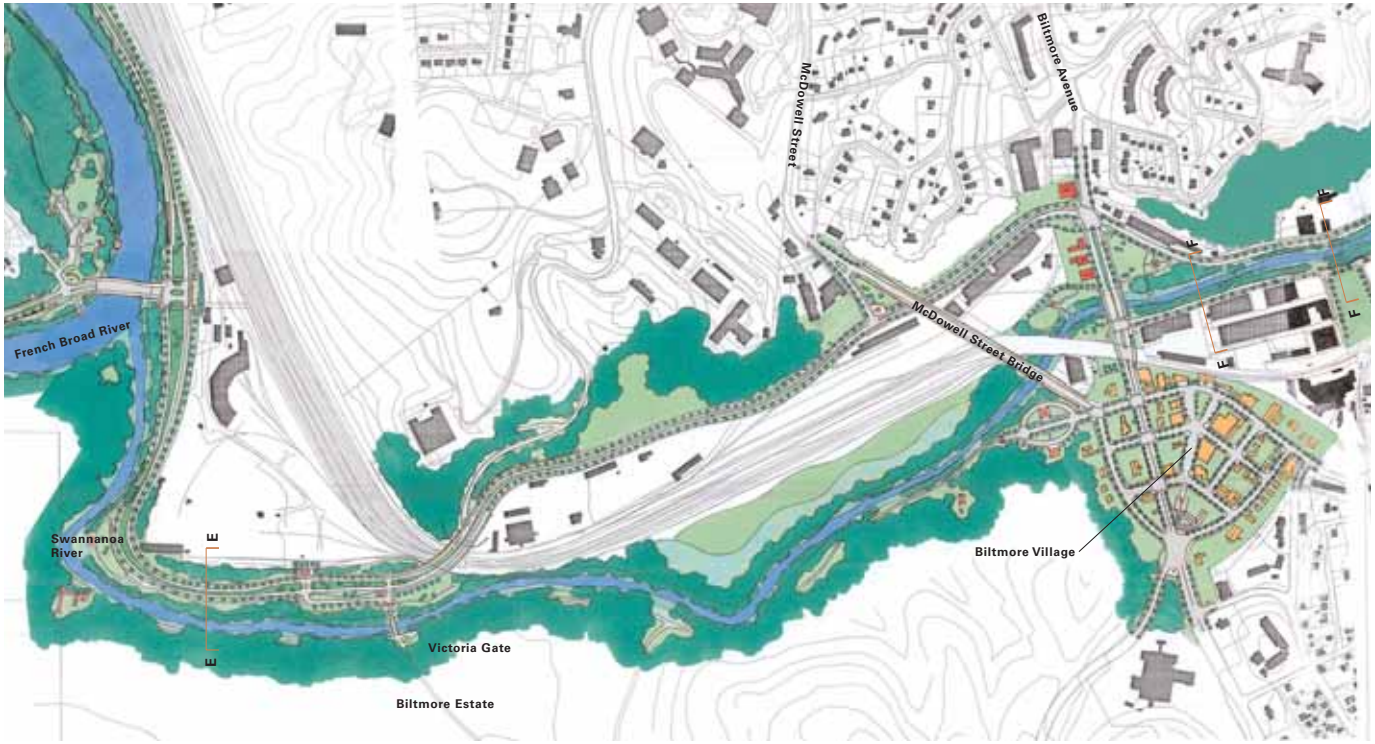
DISTRICT 4:

Meadow Road

Historic Victoria Gate at the Biltmore Estate

District 4 - Meadow Road



The RiverWay will closely follow the alignment of Meadow Road, passing along the north shore of the Swannanoa, opposite the Biltmore Estate before passing over rail tracks and through an industrial area into Biltmore Avenue. The RiverWay is constricted by industrial uses and rail yards and will change character as it approaches the urbanized area of Biltmore Village. At that location, the RiverWay will divide into two separate roadways lining each side of the Swannanoa as it moves up stream.

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The RiverWay will intersect with Amboy Road and continue along the Swannanoa River. The RiverWay will move slightly into land owned by the railroad to allow for the construction of pedestrian trails along the river. A pulloff and pavilion is proposed at the employee entrance to the Biltmore Estate. The existing bridge over the rail tracks may be modified to accommodate the new alignment of the RiverWay and additional right-of-way will be required to accommodate the trails and sidewalks.

The intersection with McDowell Street will be improved to take advantage of the McDowell Street Bridge which provides grade separated access over the railroad tracks into Biltmore Village. New gateway elements on McDowell will celebrate the approaches to the RiverWay.

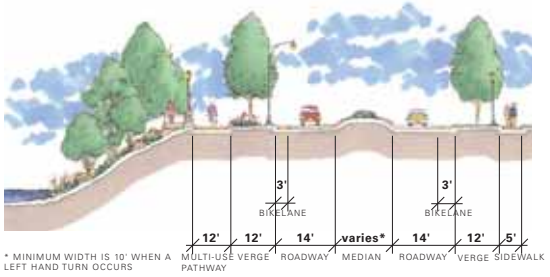
The floodway of the Swannanoa along Biltmore Avenue should be enhanced with a new gateway park, celebrating the intersection of Biltmore Avenue and the RiverWay. By cleaning up this area and building a new park, an appropriate entry into Biltmore Village is created. Parking can be incorporated into the design of the park to support retail activity in the village and access to trails along the RiverWay.

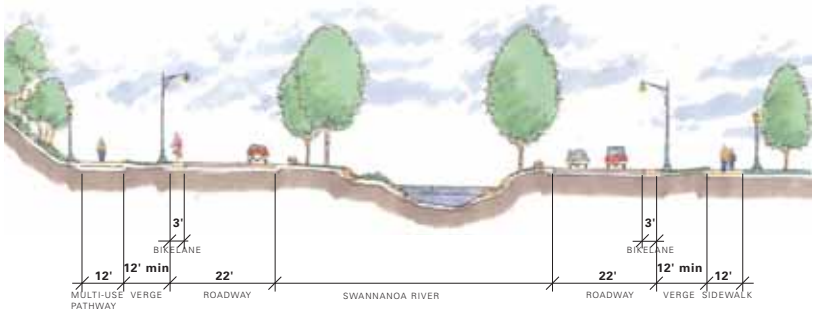
Biltmore Avenue is wide at this location to accommodate turning movements as the RiverWay transitions from a single two-way alignment west of Biltmore to a split one-way pair east of Biltmore Avenue. A one-way pair is needed to accommodate the increased traffic volumes in this stretch of the RiverWay.

Existing conditions of Biltmore Avenue at the Swannanoa River crossing.

A new gateway park for the city and Biltmore Village is located in the floodway zone of the Swannanoa at the entrance to the Village.

TOP **Section E-E** Typical design section for a two-lane RiverWay with median
BOTTOM **Section F-F** Typical Swannanoa RiverWay section





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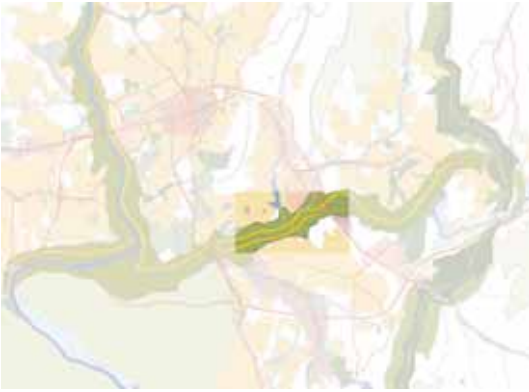
DISTRICT 5:

Swannanoa West

Swannanoa River



District 5 - Swannanoa West

After passing Biltmore Village and the new entry park, the RiverWay splits into a pair of one way roadways as it meanders up the picturesque Swannanoa River valley. The character of this stretch of the RiverWay is quite different than the French Broad sections. The valley is a narrow and intimate landscape with steep valley walls. However, this stretch of the RiverWay will carry a higher volume of traffic. By utilizing the existing Swannanoa River Road and Thompson Road roadways, the natural beauty of the river valley is preserved while creating a roadway of increased capacity.

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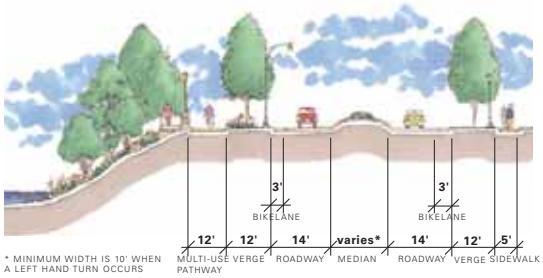
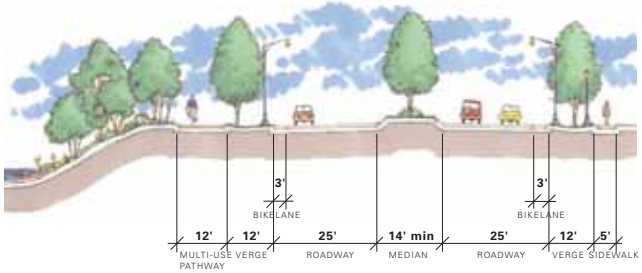
After passing Biltmore Village and the new interface at Biltmore Avenue, this segment of the RiverWay utilizes the existing roadways of Swannanoa Road and Thompson Steet. This segment has a four lane cross section designed as a split pair of one way roadways, each two lanes wide. The roadways follow the north and south banks of the Swannanoa River, and the river is essentially the natural landscaped median for the RiverWay. The Swannanoa River is situated in a narrow delicately scaled valley with varying depths of land between the river course and the valley walls. The amount of space available for a roadway, trails, and required buffer area along the river's edge is constricted in certain areas. Alternative configurations were explored in the design process including a five lane cross section with the middle turning lane also used as a landscaped median, however extensive regrading and retaining wall construction would be required to accommodate this design on the north side of the Swannanoa River. By splitting the RiverWay and utilizing existing roadways, extensive regrading and alterations to the natural environment of the river valley is avoided.

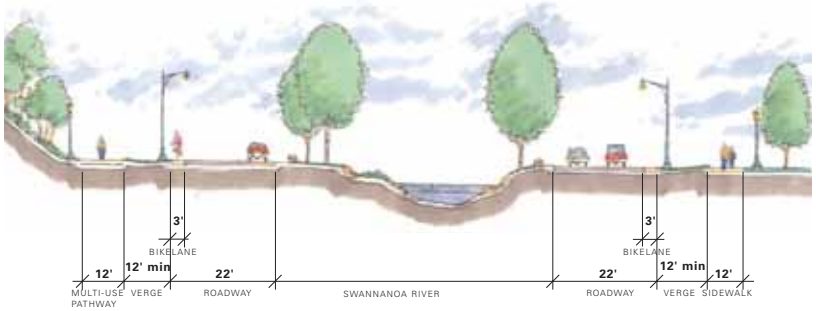
The east bound and west bound sections of the RiverWay are interconnected with new bridges proposed at Stoner Road and Glendale Avenue. Sufficient length is given to the interconnecting bridges to provide stacking room for turning cars. Lookouts and sitting areas are provided at the bridge heads for trail users. East of Glendale Avenue the split pair of roadways rejoins into a medianized cross section as it approaches Wood Street. A gateway landscape is proposed for the intersection of the RiverWay and Wood Street.

Riverlink has secured a $1.5 million grant for Azalea Park to demonstrate stream restoration techniques. Lessons learned at the Azalea Park project in Swannanoa West can be applied throughout the districts.

TOP **Section G-G** Typical design section for a two-lane RiverWay with median
MIDDLE **Section H-H** Typical four-lane RiverWay section with median
BOTTOM **Section I-I** Typical Swannanoa RiverWay section







Swannanoa River

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DISTRICT 6:

Swannanoa East

Donald Ross Golf Course owned by Buncombe County

District 6 - Swannanoa East

After the Wood Street intersection, the RiverWay passes by the Sayles Bleachery site, the location of a new big-box retail development. The RiverWay will be designed to accommodate the traffic volumes for the new retailer. East of this development node, the RiverWay returns to a narrower cross section as it passes through a narrow corridor by the Golf Course. A new bridge and intersection is created at Fairview Road. At a bend in the river, the RiverWay splits into a medianized section with a new pull-off and overlook area.

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After the Wood Street intersection, the RiverWay passes by the Sayles Bleachery site, the location of a new big-box retail development. The RiverWay will be used to gain access into the new retail development and as with all big box retailers, adjacent parcels are often redeveloped to take advantage of the draw created by the new destination retailer. The following design principles for new development are required to protect the natural environment of the RiverWay.

1 Encourage shared parking to reduce curb cuts and better control access. In urbanized areas, common parking facilities make much more efficient use of land resources because of the natural cycle of parking demand; office uses need parking during the day, while entertainment and retail uses need more parking in the evenings and on weekends. Incentives such as reduced parking requirements can encourage shared parking and connections between lots.

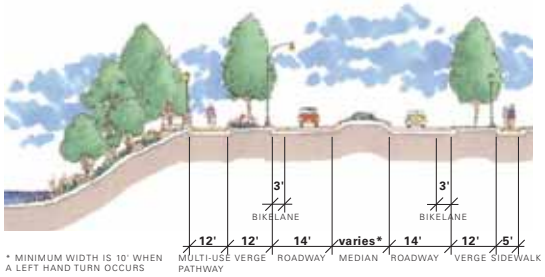
2 Establish a 40-foot build-to-line which requires any construction to be located 40 feet from the front property line. This will create a stronger address by clearly defining the public space, give buildings greater presence on the RiverWay, and minimizing the impact of parking lots on the RiverWay because they will be located to the side and rear of buildings.

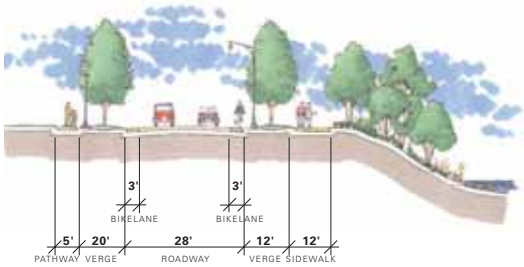
3 Require a high level of landscape standards for the front yards to govern the space between the building and the curb, which will be the environment of the RiverWay. Prohibit parking in the front yards and prohibit driveways in front of buildings.

4 Encourage the consolidation of small parcels into larger development parcels. This will give developers more flexibility in their site planning and enable the development of larger mixed use buildings.

5 Require landscaping techniques, such as rain gardens and bioswales, to reduce non-point souce pollution and retain stormwater.

TOP **J** Typical design section for a two-lane RiverWay with median
BOTTOM **K** Typical two-lane RiverWay section without median





Existing conditions of typical small commercial parcels, with a high number of curb cuts, utility poles, and inconsistent setbacks and landscaping.

Existing buildings with the implementation of proposed streetscaping and shared parking program, minimizing curb cuts.

Consolidation of existing parcels showing new mixed-use development with streetscaping and shared parking.

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DISTRICT 7:

Azalea Park

Entrance to Azalea Park

District 7 - Azalea Park

The RiverWay varies in design in response to local conditions along its entire length. In this section, the roadway and trails link to Azalea Park and the Western North Carolina Nature Center. Many streets intersect the RiverWay and the intersections are distinguished with landscaped medians. The RiverWay's eastern entrance at Tunnel Road is celebrated with a graceful gateway landscape treatment and visually transitions visitors from a commercial corridor to a scenic river drive.

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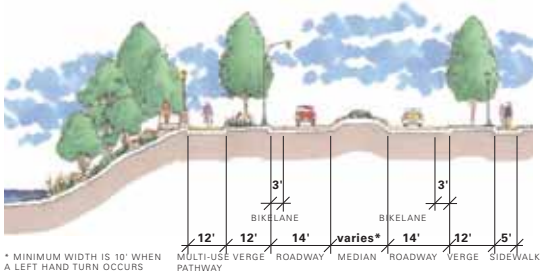
The RiverWay varies in design by responding to local conditions along its entire length. In urban nodes, the RiverWay narrows to an urban cross section with separate trails becoming sidewalks. In some areas, it will handle increased traffic volumes and require greater roadway width. In other areas, the RiverWay can expand out to create a wider median and achieve a "parkway" quality.

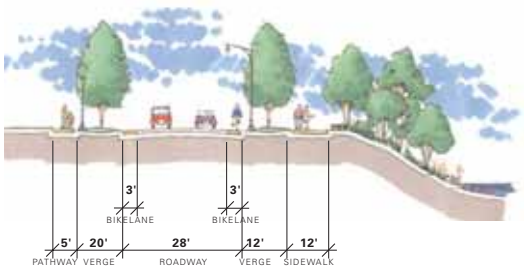
Tight conditions such as those found along the Swannanoa will require a design without a median in favor of preserving the natural buffer between the roadway and the river. The RiverWay changes at a smaller increment as well. It will be difficult to provide a continuous median along this stretch of the RiverWay, so medians are used discretely at intersections as entrance statements.

The RiverWay will improve access to the proposed Azalea Park. Early design options included directing the RiverWay up through Azalea Park. These options would dramatically alter the character of the landscape and were dropped in favor of the existing Swannanoa River Road alignment. An improved entry to Azalea Park is proposed with a new slow speed two lane park drive. The enhancement of the North Carolina Nature Center as a destination is encouraged, including moving a living classroom outside to study natural systems and sustainable urban landscape technologies.

The RiverWay is celebrated with a gateway treatment at the intersection with Tunnel Road, which should be similar in character to the other gateways along the RiverWay, and will serve as a major entrance into Asheville along the new attractive river oriented RiverWay. In close proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway, the RiverWay has the potential of extending a world class scenic road experience deep into the heart of Asheville.

TOP **Section L-L** Typical design section for a two-lane RiverWay with median
BOTTOM **Section M-M** Typical two-lane RiverWay section without median





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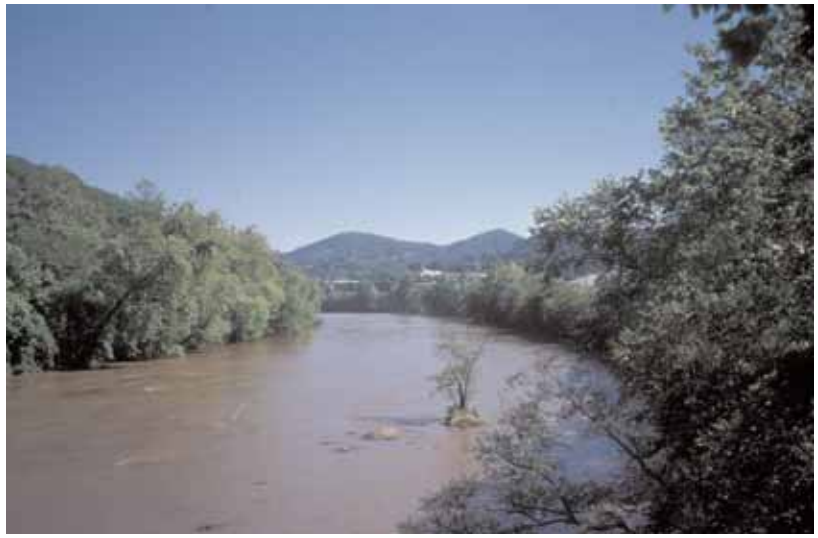
RiverWay Landscape Design Palette

In the industrial and urban context that defines the Asheville riverfront, there is the need to design the RiverWay to enhance development, foster better connections to existing neighborhoods, and redefine the corridor as an ecological system. The design of the RiverWay should meet the following criteria.

DESIGN CRITERIA

- Preserve the scenic quality and natural beauty of the corridor.
- Provide for a visual connection to the water.
- Develop a park vocabulary – a road within a park that flows with the landscape, calms traffic and is pedestrian friendly.
- Include a rich palate of landscape elements and imagery.
- Interface with existing neighborhoods and provide links to Asheville's best destinations.
- Become a catalyst for recreation opportunities.
- Provide a sound framework for the enhancement, creation and integration of ecological systems in all sections of the RiverWay corridor and build on sustainable design principles.

Amboy Road Park greenway trail



French Broad River

Swannanoa River

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Landscape Character

Great parkways have certain universal qualities that define their character and image as a built landscape form making them memorable and timeless. The Blue Ridge Parkway, for example, defined principles that addressed landscape preservation and integration, the protection of view sheds and the development of a rich landscape vocabulary. The best prototype for this RiverWay is one with a more urban form such as the Grand Rounds Parkway System which has become the defining element of the Minneapolis landscape. Similarly, the RiverWay should become Asheville's urban escape.

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY Bridge at Route 70

BILTMORE ESTATE Natural stone bridge

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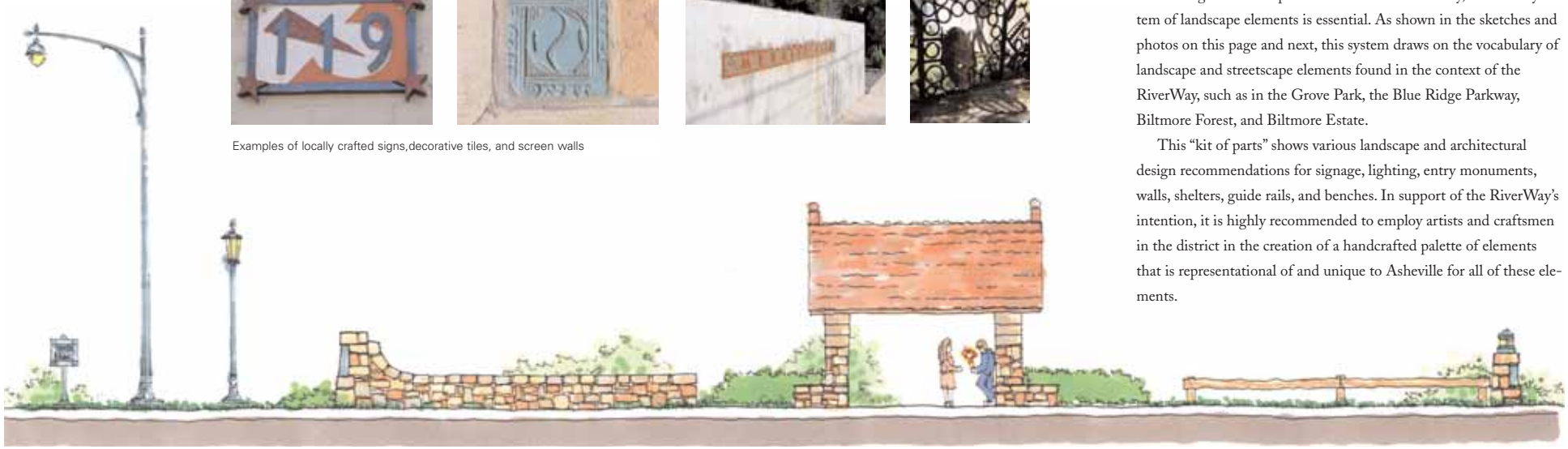
Typical section of RiverWay with trails and landscape elements

GROVE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD Park entry, stone shelter, and pylon

BILTMORE ESTATE Roadway character

Examples of locally crafted signs,decorative tiles, and screen walls



Iron Sign Lighting: Roadway and Pathway Entry Monument and Stone Wall Paviilion / Shelter (stone and wood) Wood Guide Rail and Pier

Landscape Elements

In building the landscape character for the RiverWay, a unified system of landscape elements is essential. As shown in the sketches and photos on this page and next, this system draws on the vocabulary of landscape and streetscape elements found in the context of the RiverWay, such as in the Grove Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Biltmore Forest, and Biltmore Estate.

This "kit of parts" shows various landscape and architectural design recommendations for signage, lighting, entry monuments, walls, shelters, guide rails, and benches. In support of the RiverWay's intention, it is highly recommended to employ artists and craftsmen in the district in the creation of a handcrafted palette of elements that is representational of and unique to Asheville for all of these elements.

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Mile marker

Locally crafted signage and bus shelter (Highwater Clay marker, French Broad River Park sign, and Merritt Bus Shelter)

Proposed RiverWay Pendant Lighting and Post Lights

Stone Entry Features

Stone entry features modeled after the gateway treatment at the Grove Park Shelter (see photos on page 28)

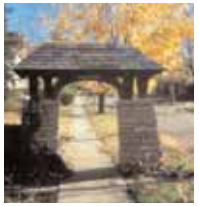
Stone bridge crossing

Stone wall at the FBR Park

Park benches

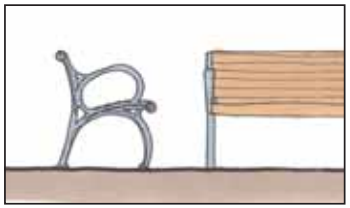
Bicycle Posts

French Broad River Recreational Facility



Gateway Features

Stone guide wall



Locally crafted bench

Trash cans

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TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The trails that parallel the RiverWay and the rivers should respond to their landscape setting and anticipated usage. All trail types described below are applicable to every district within the RiverWay, depending on the varying landscape conditions and urban development intensity. Three trail types are recommended:

Major Multi-Use Trails

These trails are usually associated with developed, high use areas where a lot of traffic is anticipated. Width should be 10 to 12 feet and paving surfaces can be stone, concrete or asphalt.

Multi-Use Recreational Trails

These trails are recommend for more passive settings and along the top of the riverbank. Trail width should be six to eight feet and paving surfaces should be porous in nature, such as stabilized earth, granite or crushed limestone for full accessibility. Maximum slopes for this trail surface should be 5%.

Footpaths

These paths are recommend for ecologically sensitive areas and very natural areas such as woodlands. They can be of minimum width with wood mulch bark or crushed stone for surfacing.

For full accessibility, it is recommended that the trails maintain a maximum grade of 5%.

MINNEAPOLIS Dual trail system

PITTSBURGH Soft, porous trail

MINNEAPOLIS Dual trail system

Asheville greenway

ASHEVILLE Asphalt multi-use trail

MAJOR MULTI-USE PATHWAYS Hard surface paving materials (for use in developed, high traffic areas)

MULTI-USE RECREATIONAL TRAILS Soft, porous paving materials (for use in passive settings)

FOOTPATHS Natural areas, natural materials (for use inecologically senstive areas)

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River Addresses, Overlooks, and Access Points

Creating river address is an important element in the design of the RiverWay. Cultural and historic sites, ecologically sensitive areas, and scenic vistas are just a few of the addresses that can be identified. Interpretation of the cultural aspects, historic events, ecology, sustainable design techniques, among other key riverfront facts are important to relate to trail users and implementation of an effective and unified signage system is recommended.

These photographs show the different nature of river address, including a soft and natural river overlook in Minneapolis, a river access point in Pittsburgh with porous paving, boulder seating and natural vegetation, and finally a formal overlook to the City of Pittsburgh with a interpretative compass marking as part of the overlook. The type of overlook should respond to the setting, its anticipated use and its prominence along the rivers.

Materials should be in character with the landscape and architectural vocabulary of the RiverWay and Asheville's rich tradition of landscape elements.

PITTSBURGH River access

PITTSBURGH Overlook to city

MINNEAPOLIS Natural riveredge park

Overlook and walking trail proposed in the RiverWay

River overlook at scenic vista point using recommended landscape palette

The existing Jean Webb Park could be improved for better river access

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Landscape Patterns

Currently, the riverfront is a deteriorated landscape, with invasive plant materials a limited hierarchy of vegetation types. An important recommendation of this master plan is to restore the landscape to a healthy ecosystem with a variety of landscape types and habitats. There is two dominant landscape types existing along the riverfront, the vegetated slopes along the riverbank and scattered, secession type woodlands of poor quality. A third type, park like landscape settings are limited.

Recommended Landscape Types: Water Edge Plantings.

The vegetative areas along the rivers are critical to maintain and enhance. The green slopes must be preserved. Eroded areas must be stabilized and replanted. Where undesirable vegetation is found, it should be removed and replanted. Where streams and drainage ways exist, wetlands and bio-swales should be created to clean storm water prior to it finding it way to the river.

Woodland Edges

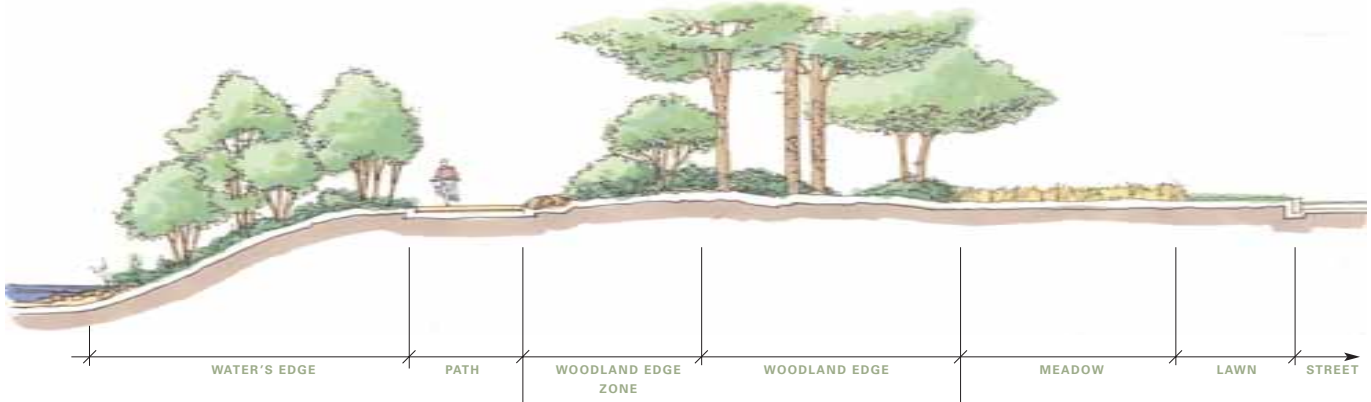
This is a new landscape type that does not exist in the river corridor and needs to be introduced. These transition plantings will provide for diversity in plant material types, using under story trees, shrubs, and ground plane plantings, as well as habitat for wildlife.

Meadow

A landscape type that also is rarely found in the corridor. The introduction of this type will provide for a naturalist setting, add diversity and reinforce wildlife habitats.

Park Landscapes

A more cultivated, pastoral landscape suitable for park areas. Here, more ornamental planting patterns are acceptable, but an indigenous palette of plantings should be used.



In all these landscape types, a native, indigenous palette of plantings should be used. Partnerships with great resources such as the North Carolina Arboretum or the Botanic Garden to develop plant lists appropriate for each type are recommended. Test plots and plantings are encouraged and can be used as an educational tool.

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ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Environmentally sensitive design is based in understanding the natural systems of a building site. The sun angles, wind direction, soil types, water drainage, and the natural flora and fauna are all considered when designing a building and its surroundings. Using this knowledge wisely can lessen the impact of construction on our environment, increase efficiency, lower costs, and create beautiful places. The integration of sustainable and ecologically sound principles include: the protection of our water supply, maintaining biodiversity and conserving materials and energy.

Stormwater Management

This includes protecting aquifers and open water courses by managing run off from roads, parking areas and roofs. The use of bio-swales, and collection areas planted with vegetation, will collect runoff and clean pollutants.

Paving and Site Materials

The use of porous paving materials, recycled building materials, and natural landscape materials are essential to providing a unique image and fostering sustainability.

Plant Materials

Maintaining a mix of native plants found in this region is critical to enhance the biodiversity of the RiverWay. Plants should be categorized by grouping or plant association responding to the diverse landscape character.

Typical parking lot incorporating ecological techniques including: bio-swales, porous paving and native plant materials resulting in a more natural garden setting.

Pebble paving

Crushed limestone paving

Example of bioswale

Stormwater catchment in a decorative garden setting

Porous pavers

Section through bioswale at paving area

Longitudinal section of terraced bioswale

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Urban Riverfront Development Summary

OBJECTIVES

- Development within the corridor should relate to the creation of unique mixed use arts districts tied to the city's working arts industry.
- Expand outdoor recreation opportunities in the city.
- Expand options for families by offering a range of activities for people of all ages.
- Provide opportunities to educate visitors about the importance of river ecology and advanced land management practices within urban settings.
- Do not squander Asheville's last great natural treasure with uses that will bring harm to the environment.

ZHA MARKET STUDY

ZHA, the economic market consultant, conducted a study that analyzed the population and demographic trends affecting Asheville's economy including population and households, income and spending power, and employment profiles and implications. ZHA believes that the RiverWay can take advantage of growing national trends in the traveling business, leisure and tourist industry by accommodating a series of uses that can take advantage of the natural settings of the rivers and that strengthen Asheville's growing national reputation as a major recreation and leisure destination. The design team explored ways to transform underutilized land into uses connected to the city with improved transportation ways, recreational opportunities, museum and festival venues, bikeways, trails and active water sports. The key is the combination of enough of these uses to create a critical mass for attracting unique commercial vendors, housing, and other contributing economic uses.

1 Asheville Whitewater Course and Outdoor Sports Center

Asheville presents a great opportunity to enhance its position as a center for whitewater sports with the creation of an artificial whitewater venue offering a competitive course for education and training. "ZHA's interest is in fostering a multitude of man-made and natural uses of the river itself and to use its environment to sponsor a series of water-related sports (fishing, canoeing, competitive and non-competitive kayaking and other activities). These sports would foster the establishment of an array of specialized commercial establishments offering guides, equipment for purchase, and related clothing articles, etc. In essence, once the venue builds up to a nationally recognized level, attendance would cause a spiraling affect, attracting special displays and products difficult to find in the traditional shopping venues." The French Broad River Recreational Area is an ideal location for these activities because of large flat areas that can be developed for outdoor venues.

2 Non-Invasive Medical and Holistic Practitioners Health Spa

An 80,000 square-feet Health Spa is proposed in the Urban Riverfront area in a new or rehabilitated building located in the River Arts District (see map on next page). Within a neighborhood but adjacent to the natural areas of the RiverWay, an ideal setting is available for a unique wellness facility that can be an extension of Asheville's hospital complex. "With Asheville's position in the medical field, ZHA believes that there are numerous opportunities for independently sited health practitioners, developing a new complex that complements the services provided at the existing hospital. Asheville has a fully established corridor along Biltmore Avenue for traditional physicians and clinics but few know of the extent of worthy holistic practitioners in the local marketplace. For instance, a quick reference of the advertisements in the Mountain Xpress News founds ads for four yoga centers; eight massage therapists, two herbal remedial shops, and three lifestyle coaches. ZHA further notes that that three wellness centers currently exist near Asheville – the Asheville Yoga Center, the Black Mountain Wellness Center, and the North Carolina School of Natural Healing. However, since no definable center or organized structure between non-invasive practitioners and the hospital exists development of such an entity represents a unique opportunity for RiverLink, Inc. as a coordinator and/or organizer."

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3 Wildlife Habitat Center

During the planning charrette, ZHA explored the concept of creating a site for a hands-on nature education center. "During the charrette, ZHA was pleased to note a USA Today article discussing the National Audubon Society's plans to establish hundreds of new nature centers across the country by 2020, with a special focus on urban areas. On June 5, 2002, the Society celebrated the opening of its first urban Audubon Center in Prospect Park in Brooklyn, New York, in a $5 million renovated boathouse that recaptured the building's 1905 Beaux Arts architecture. Primarily oriented to urban children, the program provides an opportunity to directly experience nature. Audubon centers often find their signature focus around the fascination for birds, but the educational thrust is a deeper appreciation for the entire habitat of nature and its elements." A location for this facility was considered along Amboy Road opposite the Biltmore Estate.

4 A new Health and Environmental Education Center

At the time of ZHA's market study, the Health Adventure was considering alternative locations for its Pack Place facility including the riverfront. They subsequently chose another location, however we believe the riverfront offers a unique setting for an institution or center desiring an attractive riverfront setting in the heart of the city. Locations are suggested for new facilities in the Arts District and south towards the recreation areas.

5 Artisan Craftworks Display & Live/Work Housing

A riverfront artisans district is emerging out of the industrial heritage of the riverfront and high concentration of artists in Asheville. There is a strong desire and effort to reinforce and support additional development that builds on this character of an artists community. "Considerable interest and continual comments from the charrette and its many stakeholders pointed to the need to centralize the handcraft industry of Asheville upon the French Broad River environment to take advantage of the sizable live/work population concentrated in this area. The concept is to cluster the focal point of this industry in the designated 'River Arts District' to be situated around the intersection of Lyman and French Broad River. The district would include the intersection of Haywood and Roberts at the eastern end of the RiverLink Bridge. ZHA endorses this concept (as being proposed by the UDA Team) and envisions the ability to attract a specialized commercial developer capable of capitalizing on this centralization theme to bring together a cluster of vendors and suppliers."

The French Broad River corridor provides opportunities for river oriented activities and strong linkages between the river, adjacent neighborhoods and the downtown. The public planning process identified a series of unique development ideas that would be compatible with the beautiful setting of the rivers and emerging activity clusters.

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Throughout the design process, the team sought to achieve an appropriate balance between developed areas and natural areas. The team had to balance the desire to create activity clusters with enough critical mass to attract visitors while preserving the natural beauty of the rivers as they course through the city. The flooding of the rivers is a significant influence in creating an appropriate balance between development and natural areas. What may appear as flat, attractive, affordable development land along the river may in fact be land subject to flooding levels 10' or greater above existing grade. The UDA team identified certain portions of the French Broad riverfront, less effected by flooding because of their relative ground elevations with respect to the 100 year flood plain, that are more suitable for development. Some of the development proposals are within the floodzone, and methods are suggested for complying with city requirements for development in these floodable areas.

To provide a direction for the development of new construction within the French Broad riverfront which addresses the mix of uses proposed by the market consultant during the charrette, UDA developed a series of conceptual diagrams for a few building types that were more specific to the proposed mix while working within the constraints of the flood plain. As these conceptual prototypes are further developed into detailed buildings, it is highly recommended that they all support RiverLink's goal of environmental reclaimation and sustainability of the riverfront by incorporating green building technologies throughout the design and construction process that conform to LEED certification.

UDA developed four prototypes with a variety of uses including residential townhouses, retail spaces, artists' studios, lofts, offices, and live/work studios. These prototypes are meant to describe appropriate and functional ways in which mixed uses can co-exist within a single building type and address flood plain issues:

The first type, the Loft Prototype mixes studios and loft units in a large building type reminiscent of the old industrial buildings within the context of the riverfront. The units within this type are flexible in their configuration and can operate as either residential units or studios. The second type, the Commercial Prototype, mixes retail and office uses above with a floodable first floor which could accommodate a seasonal market or retail use. The third type, the Live/Work Prototype, provides an area on the first floor adjacent to the internal parking space that can either be a studio or a retail space. Above this level are two living units: a one story flat and a two story townhouse. The last prototype, the Townhouse Prototype, is similar to the live/work prototype with a terrace leading up to the first floor which accommodates a bonus room and the internal parking space with a two story townhouse above.

COTTON MILL SITE: New mixed-use buildings along the RiverWay.

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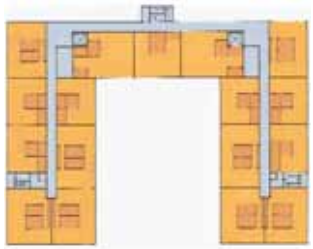
DISTRICT TOTALS

	TOTAL GROSS SQUARE FEET (GSF)	RESIDENTIAL GSF	OFFICE GSF	STUDIO GSF	INST. GSF	REC ORIENTED BUSINESS GSF
River Arts						
New Construction	407,850	333,950	39,500	34,400		
Rehabbed Buildings	105,250	78,450		32,800		4,000
French Broad River Recreation Area						
New Construction	50,000				50,000	
Rehabbed Buildings	96,100					96,100
TOTAL New Construction	457,850	333,950	39,500	34,400	50,000	
TOTAL Rehabbed Buildings	211,350	78,450		32,800		96,100
TOTAL	**669,200**	**412,400**	**39,500**	**67,200**	**50,000**	**101,100**

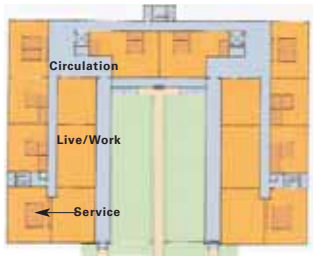
1. Loft Prototype

Intended to recall the character of the former Cotton Mills and other industrial properties which line Riverside Drive within the River Arts District, the Loft Prototype consists of three versatile floors which provide a mix of office, residential, and/or studio space. The parking garage which lies beneath provides a transition from existing ground level to the elevation necessary to place the first floor units above the 100 Year Flood Elevation. Ground floor units are especially well suited for artist studio space as the loading docks, which double as external circulation, will allow artists' work to spill outside and into the central courtyard beyond.

Loft Precedents



Typical upper floor

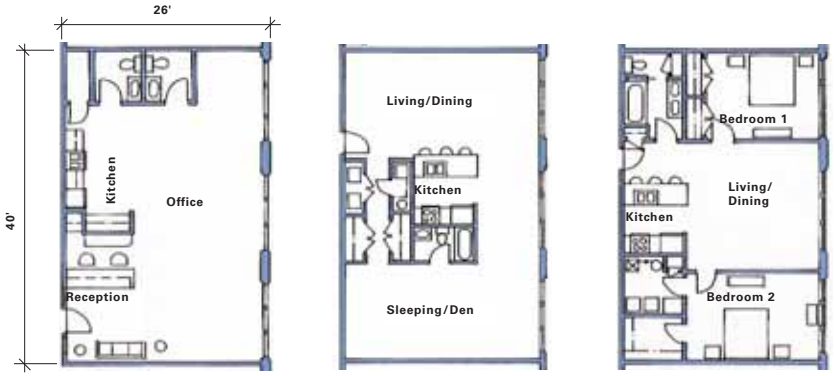


Ground floor level

Underground parking level

0 40 80 Feet

LOFT PROTOTYPE UNIT FLOOR PLANS



Office Configuration

Studio Configuration

Two Bedroom Configuration

0 8 16 Feet

0 20 40 Feet

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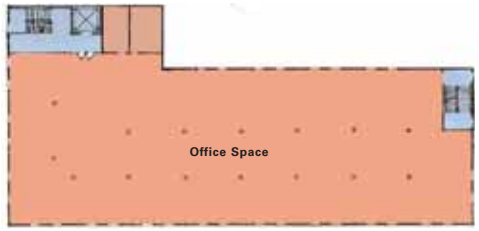
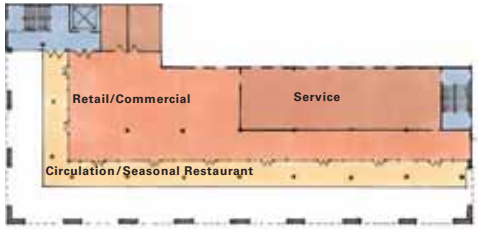
2. Commercial Prototype

Intended to incorporate seasonal market or commercial uses in its floodable first floor, the commercial prototype allows for either retail or indoor/outdoor dining on its second floor and attached balcony space, which is situated just above the 100 Year Flood Elevation, while allowing for office space on its upper floors.

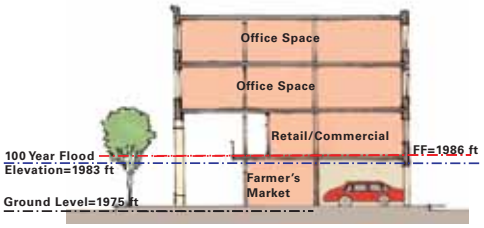
This commercial prototype would be an ideal anchor for a potential restaurant/retail use across from RiverLink's offices on Lyman Street as it intersects Riverside Drive. This prototype is ideally suited for locations close to the river with upper floors providing views to the water. Because of potential locations close to the water, the building needs to be designed so that it can be flooded on the ground floor.



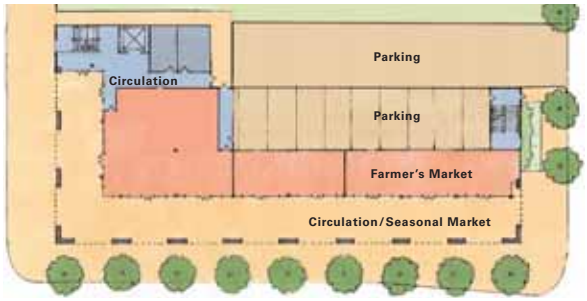
Typical Third & Fourth Floor Office Space



2nd Floor Retail/Commercial Space



Illustrative Section



Ground Level Plan with Seasonal Programming

0 15 30 Feet

0 20 40 feet

ABOVE AND BELOW: Elevation Studies

COMMERCIAL PROTOTYPES:
Retail/Office (Above)
Commercial Precedent (Below)

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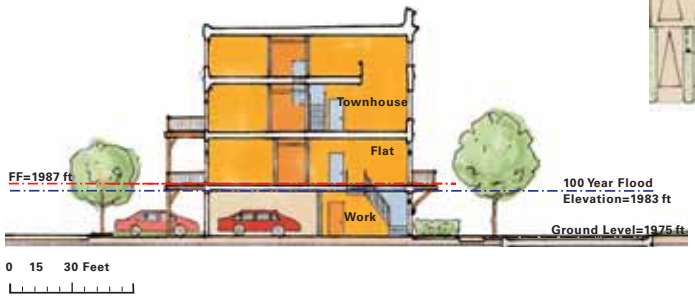
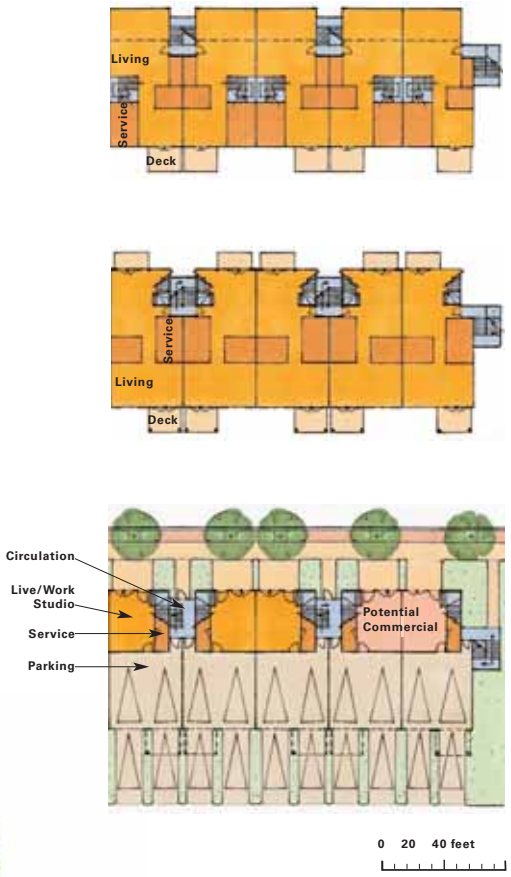
3. Live/Work Prototype

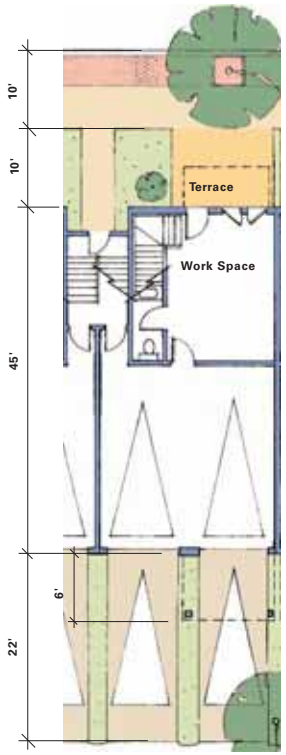
With its first floor set above the 100 Year Flood Elevation, the Live/Work Prototype incorporates a Live/Work Flat on the first floor, with a two-story townhouse set above on its second and third floors. The ground floor garage accommodates one enclosed parking space for each of the units, with an additional space for tandem parking partially covered by the first floor deck. Set beneath the 100 year flood elevation, the ground floor space which fronts the street can be used as either a work space of the Live/Work Flat or opened up to the sidewalk as a small retail space. This frontage could be extended across multiple units as the market allows, with the retail spaces set at the corner of each block for maximum exposure.

Proposed along Riverside Drive both north and south of the RiverLink Bridge as well along Lyman east of the railroad tracks, the studio/retail space of the ground floor can allow small shops and working studios to spill out onto their terraces and thereby aid in activating the district's street life.





LIVE/WORK PROTOTYPE UNIT FLOOR PLANS



GROUND FLOOR
Parking and Live/Work First Level designed to be flooded

FIRST FLOOR:
Live/Work Second Level Flat

THIRD FLOOR
Townhouse Second Level

SECOND FLOOR
Townhouse First Level

0 8 16 Feet

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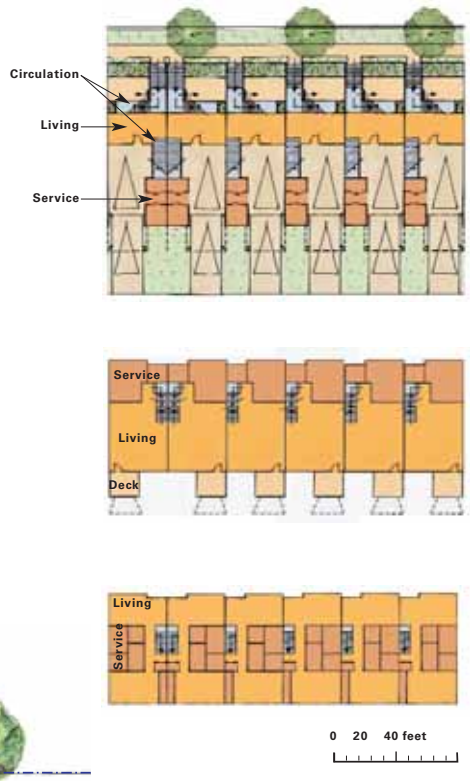
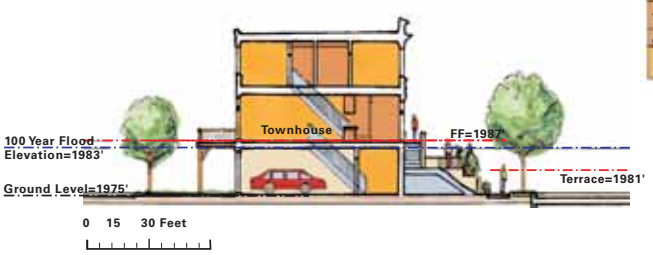
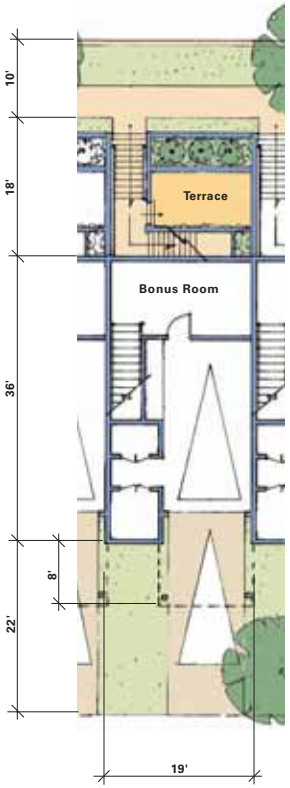
4. Townhouse Prototype

These townhouses sit above a parking podium which while intended to set the first floor above the 100 Year Flood Elevation, also allows for elevated views down each court and ultimately to the riverfront park beyond. With covered parking and storage space below, this prototype creates a very residential feel, extending to the street below via a series of stairs which encounter an outdoor terrace and a cascading series of landscape elements along its way. Like the Live / Work Prototype, the ground floor accommodates one enclosed parking space for each of the units, with an additional space for tandem parking partially covered by the first floor deck.





TOWNHOUSE PROTOTYPE UNIT FLOOR PLANS



GROUND FLOOR
Parking and Live/Work First Level designed to be flooded

FIRST FLOOR:
Live/Work Second Level Flat

SECOND FLOOR
Townhouse First Level

0 8 16 Feet

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Floodway Constraints

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations have designated the riverfront areas into two categories.

Floodway

Areas of the river that correspond to the regular water flow but are expanded in width as zones to be protected from development and obstructions that would adversely impact the flow of the river during high water.

Floodzone AE

A wider area is designated as susceptible to flooding at least once every 100 years. Development in this area can occur but must be designed with commercial uses one foot above 100 year flood level and residential uses two feet above the 100 year flood level. The flood level is determined by FEMA.

Flood proofing has been used in other cities to develop commercial uses below the flood plain level but is expensive because the building must act like a dam during floods to protect the interior. In many areas of the country, floodable uses such as parking are placed below the flood plain to elevate useable floor areas above.

FLOOD ISSUES FOR RIVERLINK PROJECTS

- Finished floor elevations for commercial construction must be 1' above the 100-year floodplain elevation
- Finished floor elevations for residential construction must be 2' above the 100-year floodplain elevation
- Fill can be placed in the floodzone area
- Fill cannot be placed in the floodway unless the developer is able to show that "no-rise" will occur in the 100-year floodplain. If the floodway changes, the developer must get a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) and a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) from FEMA. The developer must still provide a "no-rise" certificate
- Dry flood proofing (sealing up a building to ensure that floodwaters cannot get inside it) is allowed
- Wet flood proofing (letting the water in and removing everything that could be damaged by a flood) requires a variance from the Board of Adjustments. Certain hardships must be proven prior to this variance being allowed.
- Some variances are allowable for Historic Buildings; however, lowering the finished floor elevation is not
- All main utility systems must be located above the 100-year floodplain elevation; this includes the main HVAC (Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning) and electrical units
- Parking lots can be constructed in the floodzone
- The roadway can be elevated within the floodzone to create a buffer
- One way to provide for dry flood proofing is to build a wall around the structure. The wall must be structurally designed to contain all of the floodwaters environment.

FLOOD PLAIN Asheville's history is dominated at points by major floods that dramatically transformed the riverfront. Flooding has literally wiped away significant uses during the 20th century and continues to have a major influence on decisions about future uses along the attractive flat lands adjacent to the river streams.

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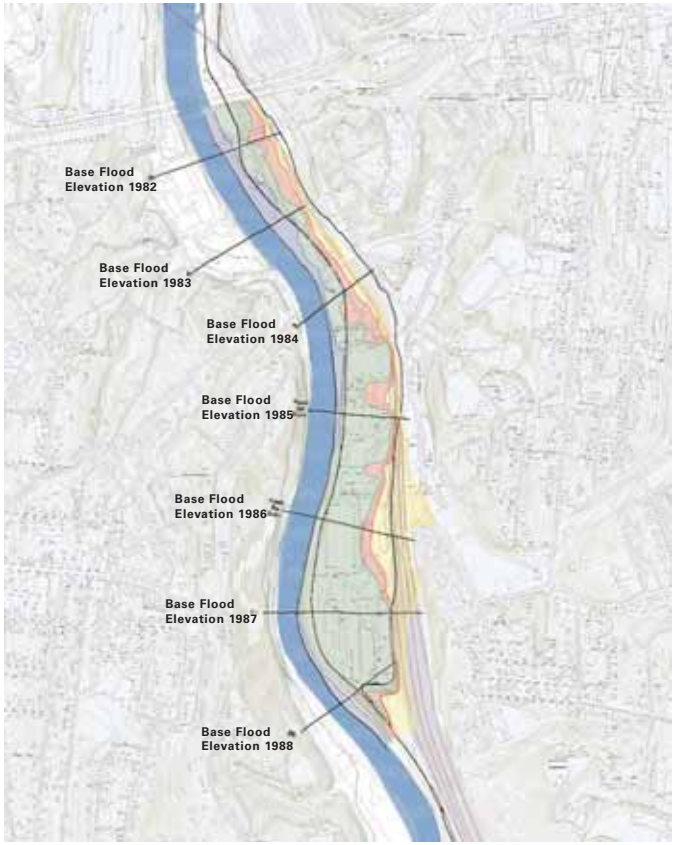
Flood Plain Elevation Analysis

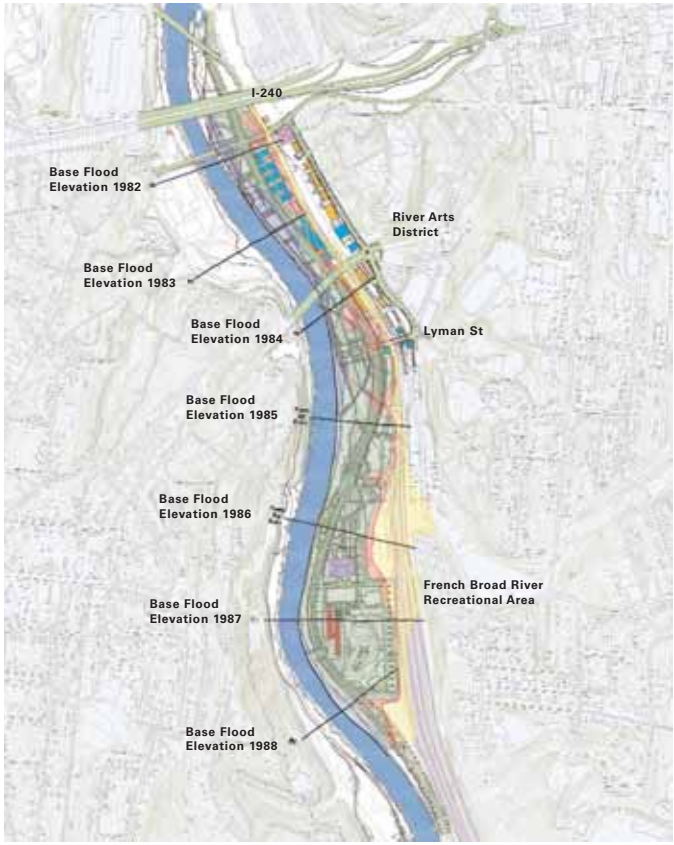
To understand the relationship between the existing ground elevation and the flood plain elevation, analysis drawings isolating these issues were developed. The depth of the ground below the flood plain is indicated in four different colors ranging from yellow (higher ground, between 0 and 4 feet below flood elevation) to blue (lowest ground, 12+ feet below flood elevation). The FEMA flood plain elevations are indicated as solid black lines. This drawing indicates that the majority of the riverfront property, especially south of Lyman Street, is between 8 and 12 feet below flood plain elevation and would require any new construction to be raised up one floor.

GROUND BELOW FLOOD PLAIN BY 12'–16'
GROUND BELOW FLOOD PLAIN BY 8'–12'
GROUND BELOW FLOOD PLAIN BY 4'–8'
GROUND BELOW FLOOD PLAIN BY 0'–4'

EXISTING BUILDINGS
RESIDENTIAL
MIXED-USE: RESIDENTIAL AND STUDIO
INSTITUTIONAL
REC. ORIENTED BUSINESS
OFFICE
NEW INFRASTRUCTURE



Flood plain overlaying existing conditions



Flood plain overlaying proposed development

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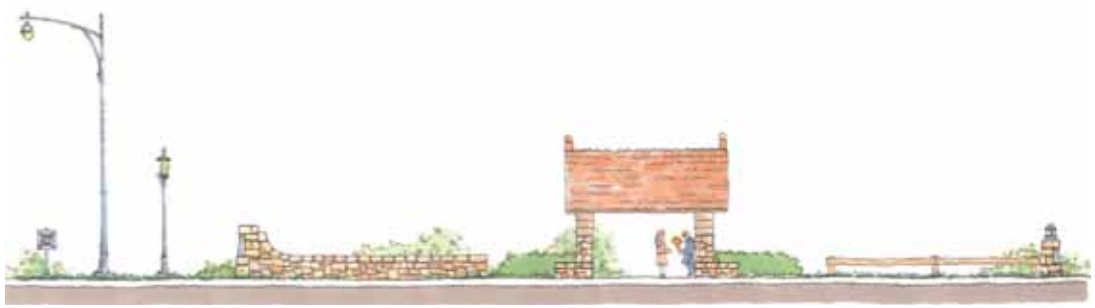
Landscape Elements

In building the landscape character for the RiverWay a unified system of landscape elements is essential. As shown in the sketches on the next two pages, this system draws on the vocabulary of landscape and streetscape elements found at Grove Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Biltmore Forest, and Biltmore Estate. This kit of parts shows various landscape and architectural design recommendations for signage, lighting, entry monuments, walls, shelters, and guide rails. It is highly recommended to use local artists in the creation of a handcrafted palette of elements that is representational of and unique to Asheville.

Stone entry features



Iron Identification Sign, Roadway Lighting, Pathway Lighting, Entry Monument and Stone Wall, Stone and Wood Shelter, Wood Guide Rail and Pier

Post Light

RiverWay Pendant Light

Stone guide wall

Mile marker

Typical signage for parks

Stone bridge crossing

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