

Asheville's East of the Riverway area is an economically, culturally, and environmentally sensitive area requiring special attention by our local, regional, state and federal leaders. A fundamentally new model of revitalization, guided by sensitivity to its unique vulnerabilities, is needed. The area East of the RiverWay, a 1100 acre area connecting the Riverfront to downtown, will serve as the target for collaborative and concerted revitalization efforts that will provide a model for the rest of Asheville's riverfront redevelopment, and for sustainable development efforts in the region and beyond.

New models of affordable housing development (the Glen Rock project), economic models (health and wellness, advanced manufacturing, the creative economy, green collar jobs), and awareness of the connection between the environmental quality of the river and its attractiveness (RiverLink) have emerged as the leading themes of this area. Emerging as well has been grass-roots community leadership, evident in organizations based in the neighborhood such as WECAN Association and Asheville's Green Opportunities, and in citizen boards such as the Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission. There is a growing awareness that the links between jobs, housing, energy, transportation and the environment are guiding public policy and changing the City and region's social and economic conditions.

Asheville's downtown has been a model of success for local engagement within the context of national and regional public policy and changing market economics. As downtown revitalization efforts moved from catalytic development toward maintenance, refinement, and continual improvement, many looked outside of downtown for the next



revitalization opportunity. Visionaries in urban greening, environmental protection, historical preservation, affordable housing, and arts and culture had already been hard at work in Asheville's riverfront, especially in the River Arts District. This area, and the adjacent neighborhoods to the east – separately known as South French Broad, WECAN, Hillcrest, Livingston Street, and the Medical District- serve as the French Broad River's connection to downtown.

The Glen Rock, Depot Street: 60 units of affordable housing and 10,000 square feet of commercial Space.

Current Status

There are sensitivities and challenges to redevelopment in this area: protection of water quality for a river serving one million people as a drinking water source, and serving many more as their center for recreation and wellness; addressing issues stemming from the urban renewal programs of the 1970's, when dislocation of the City's low income (and predominately African American) population, caused many to lose economic ground amid changing social structures; reparation of disconnected transportation routes that occurred due to poor integration of transportation planning with routes to schools, major employment centers, and common areas of recreation. Construction, tourism and service jobs replaced well-paying manufacturing jobs. High-end housing, with a growing base of second home development, led to spiraling land values where topography, and in the case of the riverfront, floodplain areas, already limited development.

The east Riverside area of Asheville was a microcosm of these changes. While the urban renewal movement had at its essence a program to replace unsafe and dilapidated housing, its effect was also disruption of neighborhoods and social and cultural supports. Industries that had once supported a middle class fled to cheaper locales. Asheville's riverfront was largely abandoned. The neighborhoods near the river remained very low income, by-passed for new development and new job opportunities. Changing understanding of flood hazards made previously developed areas off-limits, while past industrial practices left brownfield legacies.

Project Outcomes

Asheville now seeks to take the next steps in achieving sustainability and livability. The City proposes to achieve these outcomes:

1. To create a regulatory environment with the flexibility and vision to guide growth toward sustainability;
2. To support the demonstration of livability principles in the targeted East of the RiverWay area where:
 - a. Existing neighborhoods will have sustainable connectivity to jobs, schools, training and services. Asheville will accomplish this by completing the pre-development planning for an integrated system of greenways, safe streets and improved transit service to the target area;
 - b. New energy efficient and healthy mixed-income housing will be built close to centers of existing job growth, especially for persons of low income;
 - c. Affordable housing and economic opportunities will be created through infill and recycled parcel development, especially along greenways and in the riverfront area where our program of brownfield identification, remediation and proposed reuse will be enhanced and supported;
 - d. A baseline will be established, goals set, and financial resources found to improve the energy efficiency and affordability of all residences and businesses in that area, already being modeled in a residential weatherization partnership and a PACE program in the pre-implementation phase;
 - e. Land for affordable housing will be "banked" for future development.
3. The integration of clean environment, cultural enhancement and healthy economy will be the foundation of Asheville's future.

This program of livability will be developed and implemented by a wide-ranging partnership of neighborhood residents, property-owners and businesses, including private and not-for-profit interests with resources strategically targeted for concrete results. Asheville's program will occur also in the context of the regional sustainability planning program, in which Asheville is a fully engaged participant.

Leverage and Collaboration

In the East of the RiverWay area, the City has strategically targeted substantial investments of City funds. The new Livingston Street Center, now under construction, will serve the residents of the East of the RiverWay area with a new cultural center, water splash park, and recreation facilities. The city has committed \$2 million to



the first phase construction, with \$591,000 to be spent during the grant period. Both the Livingston and Reid Centers are located on the proposed Town Branch Greenway. The Town Branch Greenway will also provide access to Housing Authority public housing communities on Livingston and Erskine Streets. The City has invested \$1,000,000 in City Housing Trust Funds and \$500,000 of HUD HOME funds in the Glen Rock housing development, leveraging \$6,000,000 in other funding, including private investment through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program. Key federal investments include the DOT investment of \$590,000 towards the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay; and \$400,000 of EPA investment in Brownfields along the RiverWay.

The City's existing investments in the Greenways and Wilma Dykeman RiverWay underscore the City's commitment of resources to this area and the activities in this application:

- Designation of the Riverfront District including the entire East of the RiverWay district as Urban Progress Zone #2, making increased tax credits for sustainable business investments available;
- Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Preliminary Engineering Project, \$590,000 (DOT). The primary outcome includes a completed NEPA assessment for 2.2 miles of the RiverWay, entirely included within the East of the RiverWay district;
- City of Asheville River District Brownfields Assessment Grant from EPA in the amount of \$400,000 program operating from 2007-2010 resulted in 26.76 acres of land ready for redevelopment in the target area;
- "Reading, Riding, Retrofit" grant award from EPA, \$75,000 to be used within the City of Asheville, for funding school building and transportation energy efficiency retrofits while implementing sustainable policies and procedures. It is expected that 1/3 of that money will be spent within the East of the RiverWay District
- Clingman Avenue Streetscape project, roadway construction project connecting downtown to the riverfront, including traffic circle at riverfront connection/bridge, beautification, bike lanes, safety improvements, landscaping. \$900,000 has been spent on this project this year.

The City's primary partners in this project are:

Mountain Housing Opportunities
Housing Authority of the City of Asheville
UNCA/RENCI
Land of Sky Council of Governments
Buncombe County
Asheville Design Center
Green Opportunities
Advantage West
Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission

Management

Project Manager - Jeff Staudinger, Community Development Director.

Riverfront Redevelopment Coordinator - Stephanie Monson, Urban Planner.

Sustainable Community Project Specialist - The City will hire a Project Specialist to coordinate the day-to-day work of the project partners; engage community residents; develop new collaborations; ensure that project tasks are coordinated and that work is not duplicated; and communicate the project to all partners and other interested parties.

Other City of Asheville staff will be directly involved in project delivery. This will include staff from Planning and Development, the City Manager's Office, Office of Sustainability, Transportation, Public Works and others. Professional expertise in area condition inventory and assessment, and pre-development planning will be procured by City staff and its development partners. Anticipated professional consultants will be engaged in architecture, engineering, environmental assessment and related fields.

Funding and Work Plan

The City applied for \$3,000,000 for the East of the Riverway Sustainable Neighborhood Program from the federal HUD Sustainable Community Challenge Grant/DOT TIGER II Planning Grant program. The project work plan was developed for the grant application. The City has received an award of \$850,000 of TIGER II funds. The City will be negotiating a Phase 1 work plan with its federal partners in the coming weeks.