



CITY OF WILMINGTON RAIL TRAIL MASTER PLAN

November 2020 DRAFT



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Wilmington, Delaware, showing a mix of urban development and greenery. In the foreground, a concrete bridge spans a green, grassy area. To the left, there are residential houses and trees. In the background, a dense urban area with various buildings is visible, including a tall construction crane on the left. A green rectangular text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

SETTING THE STAGE

The Wilmington Rail Trail Master Plan is a collaborative process to develop a vision and actionable strategies for improving the rail corridor between 3rd Street and McRae Street in Downtown Wilmington. The Master Plan brought together a coalition of Wilmington stakeholders representing private businesses and industry, planning practitioners, elected officials, non-profit organizations and institutions, and residents of the City.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Wilmington Rail Trail Master Plan was a collaborative effort by the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, the City of Wilmington, the Arts Council of Wilmington and New Hanover County, the Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail, and the members of the steering committee. This plan is a reflection of the coordination and participation of these agencies, community organizations, stakeholders and the public. The combined effort of everyone’s contributions was highly valuable and is greatly appreciated.



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BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Over the last 7 years, the Wilmington area has been growing an air of excitement and energy surrounding the idea of the Wilmington Rail Trail. This section highlights the initiatives that preceded the master plan effort, as well as the history of the surrounding area and its significance to the project.



GRASSROOTS BEGINNING

The Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail began as a coalition of civic leaders, developers, elected officials, and Wilmington residents passionate about revitalizing the rail corridor between McRae Street and Third Street. The group shared visions of plans similar to New York City's High Line and the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville, SC when they went before the Wilmington City Council seeking endorsement as an official group. The City Council passed a resolution of support for the Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail in May 2019, and since then the group has actively been building a coalition of community support for the Rail Trail. The Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail have focused on building partnerships with public and private entities, recruiting volunteers for trail clean up, and fundraising to help make the Wilmington Rail Trail a reality.

FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIPS

The success of the Wilmington Rail Trail will largely depend on collaboration with many city, regional, and statewide partners. This process, as well as the support of the Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail, provides a tremendous platform for the Wilmington MPO, the City, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Rail Division, private businesses and industry, community organizations, and other stakeholders to continue regular and meaningful conversations surrounding the implementation of the Rail Trail. Accomplishing the vision of the Rail Trail will require a commitment to strong partnerships and a willingness to present a collective voice as the process continues.



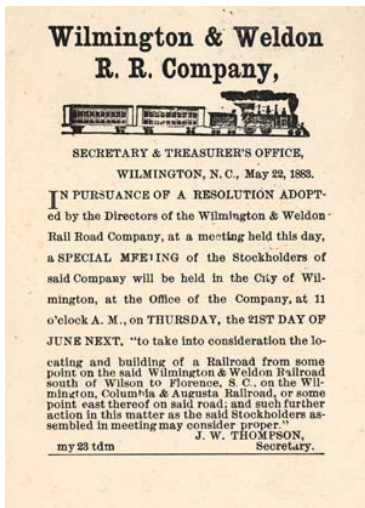
HISTORY OF THE CORRIDOR AND COMMUNITY

ATLANTIC COAST LINE

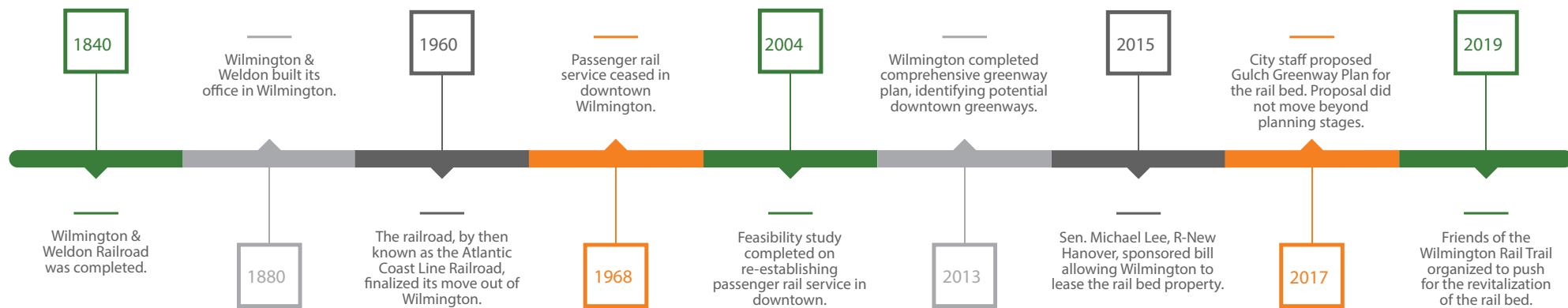
The Wilmington and Weldon Railroad was a segment of the Atlantic Coast Line (ACL), a major railroad in North Carolina because it connected Wilmington to the greater East Coast. At its peak, the ACL stretched over 9,800 miles long. The ACL was a major contributor to Wilmington's growth in the late 1800s and through the first half of the twentieth century. The ACL employed nearly 1,700 workers in New Hanover County, making the rail a core element of the success of the local economy.

The Closing of the ACL

Given its importance to Wilmington's economic system, the city was impaired in 1955 when the railroad's headquarters was moved out of the city after 115 years of being a staple in the community. Rail traffic to Wilmington began to decline and the ACL officially closed when Union Station was demolished in 1970.



TIMELINE OF THE RAIL BED



NORTHSIDE COMMUNITY

Housed in the Northside neighborhood, the ACL closing hit this community the hardest. People began to move out of the city to look for job opportunities elsewhere and empty storefronts and rundown vacant buildings were becoming notable marks of the neighborhood.

A Comeback Story

The Northside neighborhood has since seen tremendous growth and redevelopment. This activity was spurred on by the adoption of a comprehensive Northside community plan in 2003. Additionally, economic growth occurred with the establishment of various business and attractions along the waterfront. The Northside neighborhood has also established itself as an arts destination with the redevelopment of the Brooklyn Arts Center. The Brooklyn Arts Center serves as a hub of activity when it provides a venue for concerts and markets along with other events. The growth and redevelopment efforts of the last two decades have been critical to the comeback of a thriving Northside neighborhood; however, the area is still planning to grow its opportunities by connecting communities and destinations in Wilmington.



VISION AND GOALS

Prior to the outset of the Master Plan, the Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail established the vision and goals through grassroots community coalition building. Over the course of the planning process, regional leaders and stakeholders worked together to refine the vision and goals that guided the development of the Master Plan.

A Unique Project with Transformative Potential

Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail plan to reactivate the unused space in the Northside community of Downtown to connect arts and cultural assets using an urban trail for walking and biking that combines public art, wayfinding, and pedestrian amenities. This new greenway will service the needs and capture the character of the surrounding district. The project will benefit stakeholders who live and work in the district, the Greater Wilmington community as a whole, and area visitors alike, while providing sustainable economic development to the area.



Connect Wilmington Northside neighborhood to Downtown, area amenities, and other parts of Wilmington



Create a unique space for art, exercise, and community engagement



Contribute to and foster sustainable, arts-driven economic development



Honor and celebrate the local history and culture



PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COORDINATION

The Master Plan's success is contingent upon the support of partners and the public. The coordination between interested parties and stakeholders was integral to the planning process and carried out through various points of outreach.

STEERING COMMITTEE

A steering committee of members identified by the WMPO and the Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail was formed to guide the development of the Master Plan. The groups' combined expertise stemming from their various agencies and backgrounds contributed to every stage of the planning process and informed the recommendations laid out in this document.

Walking Tour

The steering committee met three times during the Master Plan development process. In the first meeting the project team and steering committee members took a walking tour of the corridor to get a first hand look at the state of the corridor today and explore the transformative potential of the area.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

For a week in June 2020, the project team held a series of small interviews with groups of stakeholders. These stakeholders included members of 10 different agencies including various city departments, the Cape Fear Community College, New Hanover County NAACP, Northside Bridge Builders, and the Arts Council. The conversations from these interviews resulted in goal and vision development and produced a robust catalogue of amenities and art and history installations for the trail.

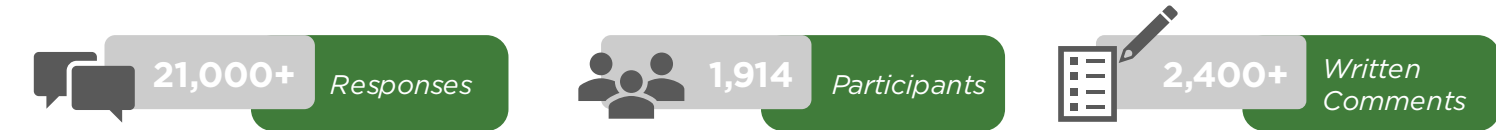
PRESS RELEASE

In September 2020, the City of Wilmington released a video to bring awareness to the Wilmington Rail Trail project and foster support for its development. In less than a month the video garnered over 600 views on YouTube.

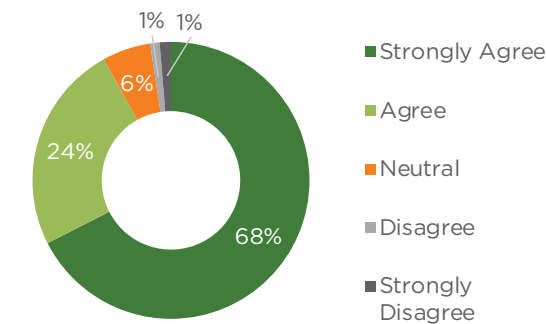


PUBLIC SURVEY

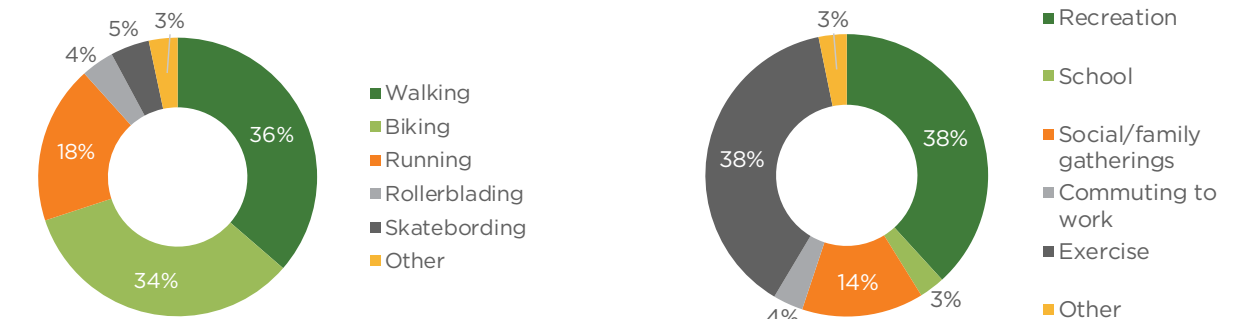
An online survey was widely distributed to the residents of the City of Wilmington through advertisements circulated to various established community groups and organizations. The survey gauged public interest in the Rail Trail and asked for respondents' vision of the trail. The survey was open for a month in September and October 2020. A summary of responses are shown below and the full survey and all responses are included in Appendix A.



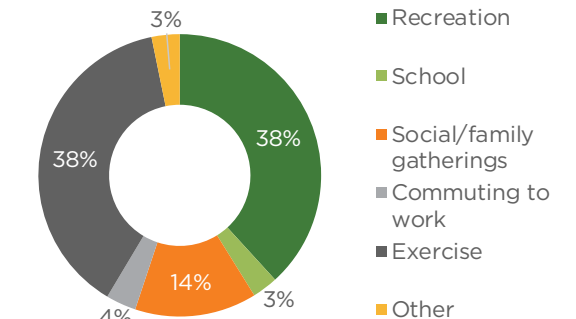
I would visit and use this trail if built.



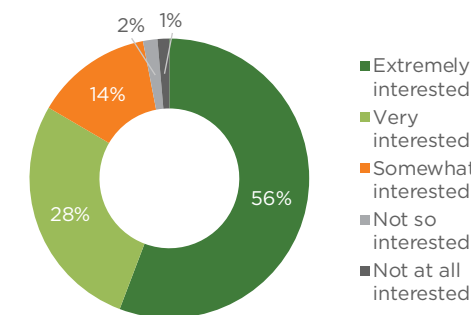
If this trail was built which of the following activities would you engage in?



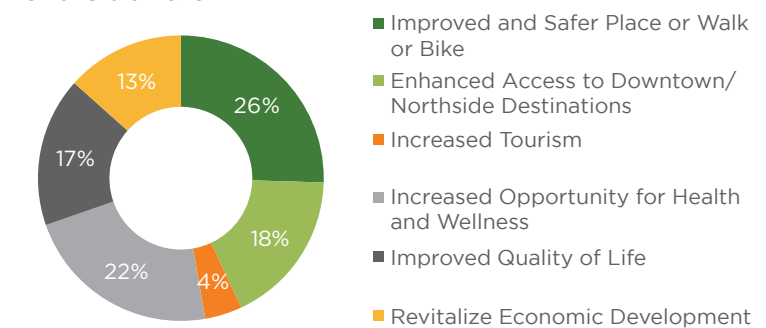
For what reasons would you use the trail?



How interested are you in this project?



What do you think the top three benefits of the trail are?



*When asked about incorporating public art or local history into the trail, participants provided over **1,000 comments voicing their support** for the inclusion of aesthetic and educational elements. While the ideas provided were diverse and creative, the vast majority of people emphasized the **importance of keeping instillations local** to the community.*

EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter provides a snapshot of the current conditions related to the proposed trail and the surrounding area. Understanding the conditions of the proposed trail corridor is a preliminary step in the creation of a thorough framework within which to plan the Wilmington Rail Trail.

This chapter dives into the demographics of the proposed trail’s surrounding area, the potential barriers and constraints to implementing the trail, the linkages the trail may provide to the bicycle, pedestrian and transit networks, and a look into the development potential the rail corridor holds.



DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic data provides an overview of the current conditions related to the people of Wilmington that work and reside near the proposed trail. Understanding the area through demographic and socioeconomic information lays the groundwork for understanding mobility needs. The data explores population, race, employment, and mobility as they relate to the rail corridor.

4,854 people live within 1/2 mile of the trail corridor



19% of households within 1/2 mile of the corridor don’t have access to a car

Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate

22,005 students attend Cape Fear Community College

Source: Colleague Database – 2018-2019

TOP 3 INDUSTRIES

8,841 jobs available within 1/2 mile of the trail corridor

- ① Public Administration
- ② Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- ③ Educational Services

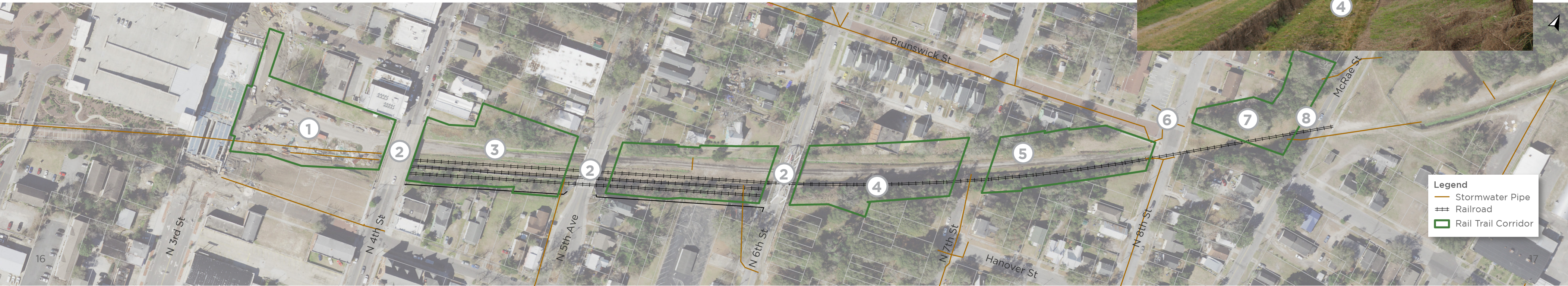
Source: OnTheMap, 2017

BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS

The Rail Trail will be located within the depressed area of land that currently exists as an inactive rail corridor. Given the nature of the past use of the area for freight rail and the limited extents of the corridor, several potential barriers exist to implementing the trail. The following elements could be considered constraints to the proposed design and should be considered in the implementation of the trail.

- ① Consider potential impacts to the 3rd Street parking lot located near the entrance of the trail corridor
- ② Avoid impacts to existing bridges on 4th Street, 5th Avenue, and 6th Street
- ③ Avoid impacts to historic wall located along the northern side of the corridor.
Understanding the full extents of the historic wall will require coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office during project development when detailed designs are being developed.
- ④ Avoid impacts to rail lines to allow them to function as commuter rail in the future
- ⑤ Avoid impacts to sanitary sewer force main manhole
- ⑥ Consider the transition to the road network by exploring potential improvements to the existing sidewalks and crossings
- ⑦ Avoid the existing brick wall
- ⑧ Avoid the power pole near McRae Street

RAIL TRAIL CORRIDOR



LINKAGE OPPORTUNITIES

The Wilmington Rail Trail was first introduced in the 2013 Comprehensive Greenway Plan as a segment of the Downtown Trail which is planned to encompass The Promenade and Northside areas, connect to Archie Blue Park, and follow Burnt Mill Creek to Forest Hills Elementary. The Wilmington Rail Trail represents an important link for the multimodal connection of the downtown and the greater Wilmington area.

EXISTING AND PLANNED MULTIMODAL CONNECTIONS

Walk Wilmington: A Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan

In addition to the Greenway Plan, the City of Wilmington has adopted a variety of plans to outline a multimodal future for the City and the greater Wilmington area. One of these initiatives is Walk Wilmington, a comprehensive pedestrian plan that strives to create a transportation system where streets, sidewalks and other pedestrian accommodations are designed to make pedestrians feel safe and comfortable. Walk Wilmington emphasizes the importance of the walking environment to everyone regardless of mode choice because residents, employees, and visitors experience Wilmington at the pedestrian scale. The efforts of this document can be seen on the figure below where improvements in sidewalk connections have expanded over the past decade.

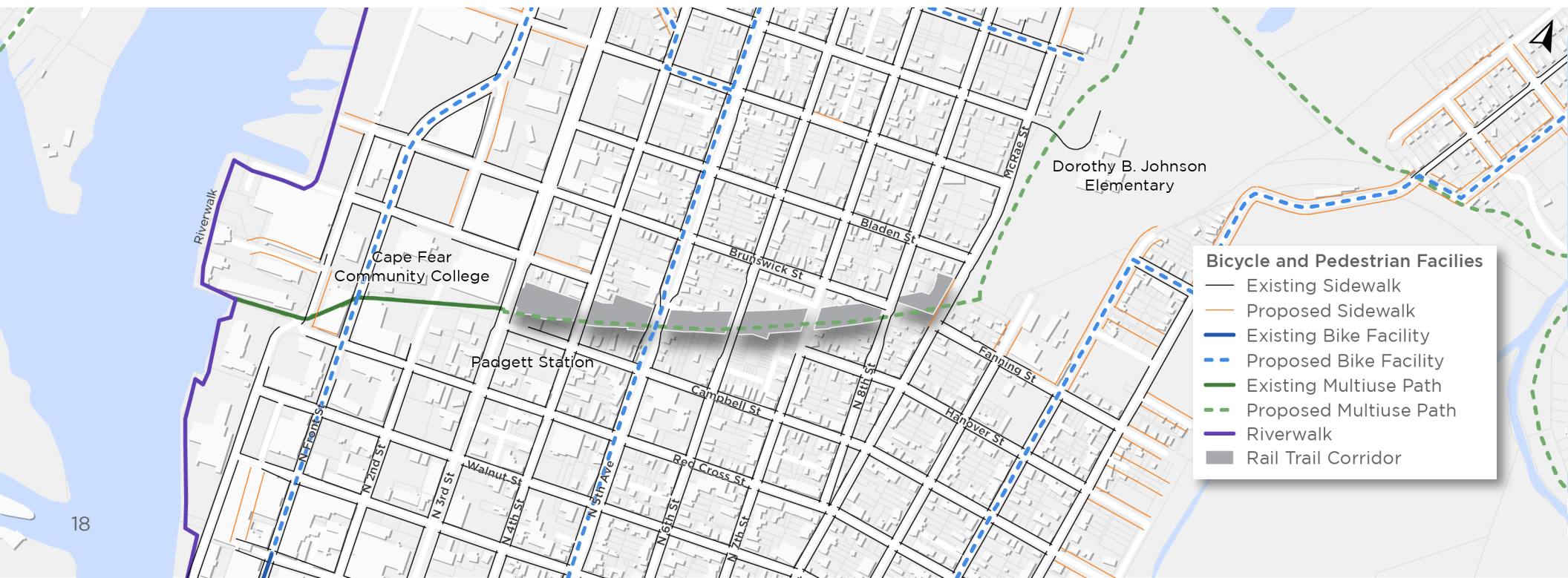
River to the Sea Bikeway Master Plan

The River to the Sea Bikeway Master Plan lays out the foundation for a bikeway that connects the downtown Wilmington to Wrightsville Beach. The goal of the River to the Sea Bikeway is to provide visitors and residents with more transportation opportunities, recreation and physical activity while having an east-west connection across Wilmington. The bikeway traverses from the foot of Market Street fronting the Cape Fear River in downtown Wilmington, follows the historic path of the Historic Beach Car Line, enters Wrightsville Beach at the Heide-Trask draw bridge and ends at Johnnie Mercer's Pier at the Atlantic Ocean. The River to the Sea Bikeway is intended to connect to the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail, a 15-mile multiuse trail, and the downtown Riverwalk, providing bicycle and pedestrian access to numerous recreational, cultural, and educational destinations in Wilmington.

Wave Transit

In addition to pedestrian and bicycle facilities, Wave Transit, the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority, serves the downtown Wilmington area. The trail corridor is located adjacent to the Padgett Station, a bus stop that services nine bus routes, shown on the figure below. The Wilmington Rail Trail would provide an important link for pedestrians and bicyclists who live or work downtown to access the greater Wilmington area through public transportation. Padgett Station is the first step in the larger multimodal transportation project coming to downtown which is discussed in the next section.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS



TRANSIT ROUTES



AREA POTENTIAL

SURROUNDING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Zoning

Downtown Wilmington's development pattern is compact, defined by small lots, a tight street grid network, and less emphasis on the automobile. Development influences the function on an area by providing a framework for making decisions and changes to transportation, parks, utilities, and other infrastructure. Both the land use, the actual use of a property, and zoning, the type of development permitted, indicate that the area surrounding the Rail Trail corridor supports residential living and mixed use development. This land use represents an area type that can greatly benefit from a trail as it would provide a connection from the residential areas it runs through to the downtown area where people work, shop, go to school, and recreate. The trail would also provide a recreational space to serve this area.

Resale Activity

The figure on the following page categorizes parcels surrounding the Rail Trail corridor based on the year that they were last sold. The figure shows that most parcels were sold in recent decades, concentrated from 2010 to 2020. This indicates that downtown Wilmington has a fairly high resale activity meaning that it is an economically viable area that continues to redevelop.

Development Plans

Three developments are proposed on the block between Red Cross Street and Hanover Street. This area is shown in the figure below.

Wilmington Multimodal Transportation Center

The Wilmington Multi-Modal Transportation Center (WMTC) will be located between North 3rd Street and North 4th Street, and between Red Cross Street and Hanover Street, on the northern edge of downtown. The WMTC will provide improved facilities and convenience for public transportation users by combining Wave Transit, the downtown trolley, and inter-city buses serviced by Greyhound. It will also be the downtown station for future passenger trains. WMTC represents an investment in downtown Wilmington and its economic development.

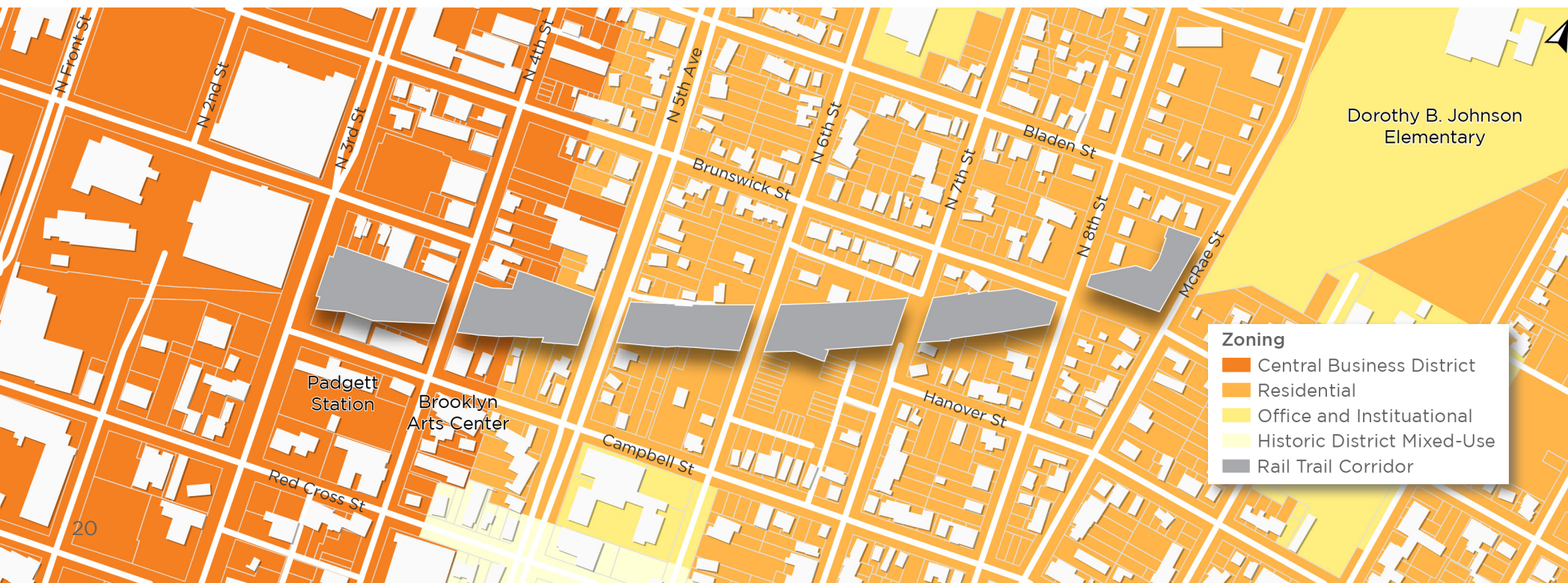
Train Station

The train station will service the future commuter rail that is proposed to run from Wilmington to Raleigh. The station is set to be housed in the transitional location between the City's commercial district and historic neighborhoods. The master plan for this train station indicates the importance of keeping the historic and cultural fabric of the surrounding communities intact by revitalizing an underutilized city block through public/private partnerships that encourage an art district along 4th Street.

3rd Street Parking

The paved lot at the western end of the Rail Trail corridor is being converted into a parking lot that will connect to Hanover Street. This lot will be shared by the City and Cape Fear Community College.

ZONING



RESALE ACTIVITY



RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing conditions of the corridor, the history of the area, the barriers and opportunities, and the voices of stakeholders and community members each informed the recommendations outlined in this chapter. These recommendations lay out the phased implementation plan, detail an alignment and access areas, and explore the art, history, and amenities that will connect the trail and the community.

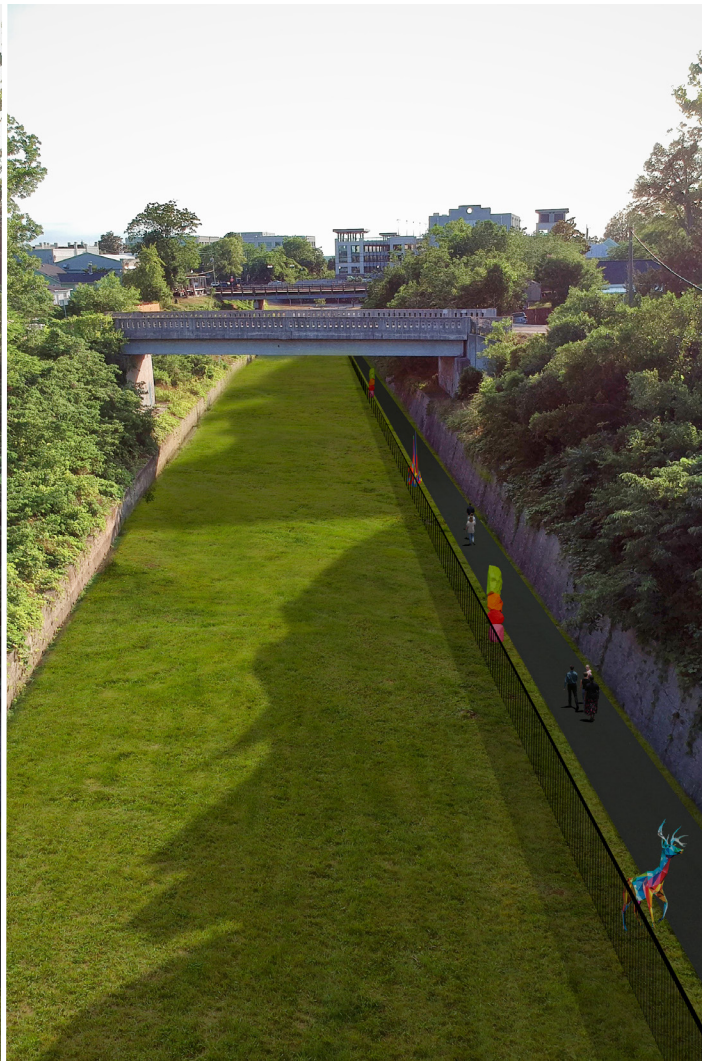
IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

The Wilmington Rail Trail corridor should unfold in a three phase process. Phase 1 will consist of preparing the corridor for development by creating a drainage system and leveling the land. Also included in Phase 1 is the construction of the trail for use by the public. Phase 2 would implement the protective fencing of the trail and incorporate the public art and amenities that are laid out further in this chapter. The implementation of the fence would need to be coordinated with NCDOT to explore the fencing options as they can be incorporated into the trail as a safety precaution that is also sculptural and aesthetic in nature. The final phase is the build-out of the passenger rail service, completing the rail component of the multimodal corridor.

PHASE 1



PHASE 2



PHASE 3

WILMINGTON RAIL TRAIL

TRAIL ALIGNMENT

The Rail Trail is recommended to be 12 feet wide and run for about half a mile from 3rd Street to McRae Street, within the railroad corridor. The trail will span six city blocks where it crosses under four bridges, starting at the 3rd Street Bridge, and will meet the road network on Brunswick Street to continue across North 8th Street and finally end at McRae Street.

Connection Points

The trail will run through the proposed 3rd Street parking lot and connect to the Cape Fear Community College Campus by tying into an existing multiuse path which leads to the Riverwalk.



Access Points

The Wilmington Rail Trail will have four access points that allow for entry and exit onto and off of the trail. To ensure the effective connection and ease of transition between the trail and the greater transportation network, the details of the access points will be explored in the design phase.

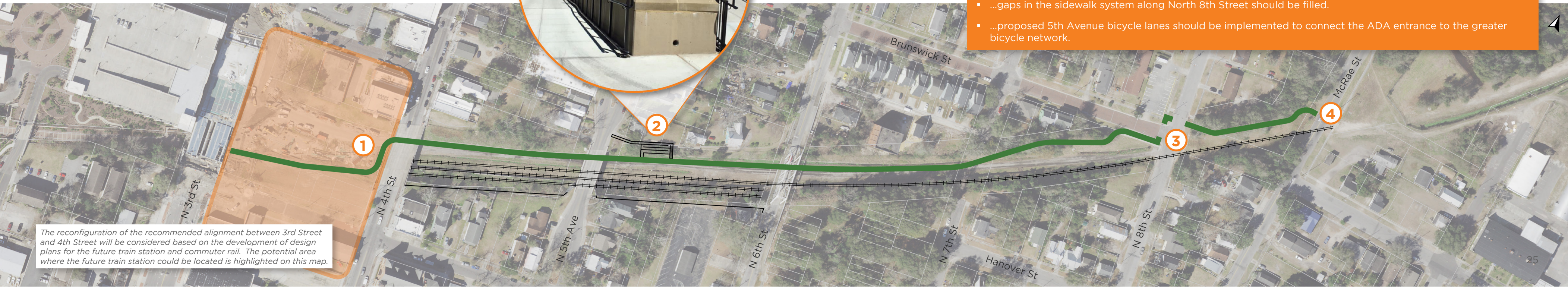
- 1 **3rd Street Parking** - The trail will pass along the future 3rd Street parking lot.
- 2 **N 5th Avenue** - On the north side of the North 5th Avenue bridge, a staircase and ADA access ramp are proposed. Due to the length of the corridor, an additional access point is not necessary but could be implemented in a later phase of the Rail Trail development.
- 3 **N 8th Street and Brunswick Street** - The trail and the roads will both be at grade at this intersection, allowing for easy access.
- 4 **McRae Street** - The end point is envisioned to have a future extension to Dorothy B. Johnson Elementary and the Boys and Girls Club.

NETWORK ENHANCEMENTS

The Rail Trail provides a critical link in a multimodal system that the City of Wilmington is trying to implement. To support the success of the trail in its goal to connect downtown Wilmington, the...

- ...Downtown Trail should be built to connect to the Rail Trail at McRae Street.
- ...gaps in the sidewalk system along North 8th Street should be filled.
- ...proposed 5th Avenue bicycle lanes should be implemented to connect the ADA entrance to the greater bicycle network.

RECOMMENDED ALIGNMENT



The reconfiguration of the recommended alignment between 3rd Street and 4th Street will be considered based on the development of design plans for the future train station and commuter rail. The potential area where the future train station could be located is highlighted on this map.

PUBLIC ART

OVERVIEW

The visual elements of a trail can considerably reshape the experience for the user. Encouraging people to use active modes of transportation is not solely accomplished by providing a physical path but by ensuring that the trail has a purpose in how it provides the connection to a given destination. There are endless ways to enhance the aesthetics of a trail that allow many possibilities to improve the pedestrian and bicyclist experience while using the Wilmington Rail Trail.

Benefits of Art Incorporation

Placemaking

Incorporating art into a trail is an important part of placemaking or creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being. Even more important than the art itself, is a sense of connection to the art which can occur organically when a community leverages their local history, character, and aspirations when designing art for a public space.

Public Participation

To further the impact of the art, it's important that public voices are heard through public engagement. Art displays can start as a grass-roots movement that garner attention and public support or as part of a proposed project such as this one, where public art is an element of the design. Regardless of its inception, public engagement during implementation of the trail and its art is key to the success of the project.

Economic Development

Public art installations along a trail can also support and enhance economic development because they attract pedestrian traffic in an area where it previously did not exist. The trail then serves as a new attraction in addition to a new connection which supports local businesses and retail.

Application for Wilmington Rail Trail

Public Art

Art can take many forms from a temporary instillation, a mural on the side of a building or wall, or a sculpture that becomes known and recognized as a landmark. With Wilmington's rich history and the available talent of local artists, the Rail Trail could have any number or type of art pieces unique to the community. Because of this, the agencies involved in the implementation of the trail should establish a proposal process, driven by public involvement, that identifies and chooses the public art for the trail. This process can occur as many times as desired depending on the established permanence of the art.

Landscaping

Providing landscaping that serves in both functionality and aesthetics by creating shade while simultaneously covering eyesores, for example, will create a comfortable and desirable trail for people to utilize. The incorporation of local plants and trees will cultivate a greenspace that has a significant impact on the visual appeal of the Rail Trail.



Atlanta Belt Line, Atlanta, GA



Charlotte Rail Trail, Charlotte, NC



Charlotte Rail Trail, Charlotte, NC



Black Heritage Trail, Portsmouth, NH

“...THE NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS ITS OWN HISTORY, INCLUDING LANDMARKS LIKE THE THELMA BULL AND HARRY FORDEN BRIDGES ALONG THE TRAIL, AND 422 S. 7TH STREET SITE OF THE DAILY RECORD OFFICES... THESE ARE ALL POSSIBLE THEMES FOR ARTISTS TO WORK WITH.”
-NED IRVINE, INTERVIEW WITH ENCORE MAGAZINE IN 2019

AMENITIES

OVERVIEW

The amenities the Rail Trail provides can transform the level of enjoyment and comfort that people experience while they are using the trail. Many types of trail amenities can be included along the Rail Trail, what's important is that the amenities fit the desired function of the trail.

Public Art Incorporation

Aside from providing a basic function, amenities can also become elements of public art, such as a glowing instillation that provides light while being aesthetically pleasing or a bench that is a piece of art itself. As with public art, the options to blend art and amenities are endless and the instillation of such pieces should follow the proposal process outlines in the previous section.

Amenity Options

- 1 Safety Measures** - Lighting is vital for safety on the trail, especially underneath the bridges where natural light may be diminished. The implementation of blue light emergency phones, railings, and fencing where appropriate would also ensure the safety of users.
- 2 Wayfinding** - A comprehensive wayfinding system and consistent signage design will advertise the trail to people unfamiliar with the area and encourage more utilization of the Rail Trail.
- 3 Signage Placement** - The wayfinding signage should be consistent in design and intentional in placement. The most appropriate location for signage is at major intersections, decision points, and access points.
- 4 Seating** - Seating along the trail would provide people with a place to pause to rest if needed, or allow them to take in the scenery and enjoy an art instillation.
- 5 Water** - Providing water fountains along the trail would give people and their pets access to a refreshing drink while exercising.
- 6 Exercise Equipment** - The installation of exercise equipment would support the health of the community by providing a resource for people to train and exercise.
- 7 Trash Receptacles** - By providing trash receptacles, the trail section would discourage littering.
- 8 Access Points** - Access points allow people the freedom to enter and exit the trail as they please. These access points should have the users in mind and accommodate for those on wheels by being ADA compliant.
- 9 Crossings** - Any time the trail crosses a road, the crossings should be multimodal to account for bicyclists as well as pedestrians.



ACTION PLAN

Building off of the vision, recommendations, and community engagement shared in the previous pages, this section sets the stage for the next phases of the Wilmington Rail Trail. Successful implementation of the Wilmington Rail Trail will be directly tied to the continued collaboration of agencies and residents. Key next steps include moving the trail into engineering and design and continuing to explore potential funding opportunities.



NEXT STEPS

To support the implementation of the Wilmington Rail Trail, the MPO should undertake the following tasks in collaboration with the City of Wilmington, NCDOT, and members of the public:

- Work with the City of Wilmington to secure funds to support engineering and design
- Complete preliminary engineering and design to indicate “shovel-readiness” and provide detailed project cost estimates
- Further explore the possibility of local, grant, or state funds to construct the corridor
- Coordinate with NCDOT about lease and encroachment agreements
- Continue coordination with NCDOT about train station location as the building footprint is refined

The design and construction of greenway projects can be funded through a combination of federal, state, local, and private sources. Success in pursuing funding and permits will also rely on inclusion of the project in fiscally constrained local and regional transportation plans. Funding sources may be through the City of Wilmington, the Wilmington MPO, NCDOT, or competitive grant processes. The section below outlines the most likely funding sources for the Wilmington Rail Trail; however, multiple opportunities should be considered to augment existing and potentially awarded funding.

WMPO Direct Apportionment Funds

The Surface Transportation Program – Direct Apportionment (STP-DA) program was established in North Carolina in order to provide Metropolitan Planning Organizations designated as Transportation Management Areas (with an urbanized area population in excess of 200,000) with additional funding and increased control over the distribution of funds. STP-DA funds are distributed through WMPO and provide the region the full control over the planning and design phases of a project. This enables the WMPO to directly program the funding for a project as long as it continues to conform to STP-DA policies established by NCDOT. However, usage of STP-DA funds requires the local government to provide a 20% funding match, as well as money for project planning and design.

Local Funds

Local funds are typically used for strategic projects identified by the community as being necessary to improve the local transportation network. Local funding sources tend to be limited and include general revenue expenditures, as well as proceeds from bond programs which still require general fund support of debt service. Transportation bonds have been instrumental in the strategic implementation of local roadways, transit, and non-motorized travel throughout the City of Wilmington. Since the Rail Trail is within State-owned right-of-way, approvals, permits, and partnership will be required from NCDOT. Transportation bonds position Wilmington to better leverage other funding sources by allowing the municipality to provide necessary funding matches. Often, a bond package will include a specific list of projects or local project goals, to which the Wilmington Rail Trail could be added.

Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant Program (Bicycle and Pedestrian)

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) awards matching grants to local governments for parks, public beach access, and improvements in state parks. PARTF funds have been used to help build and maintain parks, greenways, trails, playgrounds, and other facilities for community use.

Community Development Block Grant Program

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is administered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to local or county governments for projects to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities for persons of low- and moderate-income. CDBG funds may be used to improve public facilities as part of a community development strategy, including infrastructure such as pedestrian infrastructure like the Wilmington Rail Trail.

National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant

Our Town is the National Endowment for the Arts' creative placemaking grants program. This funding source supports projects that integrate arts, culture, and design into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. This grant program requires a partnership between a local government entity and nonprofit organization.

OPINIONS OF PROBABLE CONSTRUCTION COST

To better understand and capture the costs to implement the Wilmington Rail Trail, opinions of probable cost were generated for the trail, needed retaining walls, an additional mid-point access, and hydraulic improvements. This is a preliminary construction estimate, based on available data and refined estimates will need to be conducted once engineering and design has been completed. This cost does not include soft costs for engineering and design or amenities such as landscaping, benches, or public art. It is assumed that public art will be funded and installed through community initiatives and potential grant sources.

Direct Corridor Construction Costs

- Trail Costs and Grading: \$500,000
- Concrete Steps and ADA Access Ramp: \$1,400,000

Potential Associated Corridor Construction Costs

- Retaining Walls: \$2,600,000
- Hydraulic Improvements: \$900,000
Drainage improvements would need to be built to American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association standards.

Total Cost: \$5,400,000

Disclaimer: The Consultant has no control over the cost of labor, materials, equipment, or over the Contractor's methods of determining prices or over competitive bidding or market conditions. Opinions of probable costs provided herein are based on the information known to Consultant at this time and represent only the Consultant's judgment as a design professional familiar with the construction industry. The Consultant cannot and does not guarantee that proposals, bids, or actual construction costs will not vary from its opinions of probable costs.

CONCLUSION

The Wilmington Rail Trail Master Plan is a commitment to promote and encourage multimodal travel as a priority for the City of Wilmington. The agencies involved recognize the importance of safe and enjoyable pedestrian and bicycle facilities to provide the vital connections to the Northside Community, Cape Fear Community College, and all destinations the downtown area has to offer. This plan is a vital step in creating a vibrant community where multimodal transportation thrives, in turn benefiting the community's mobility, safety, health, economy, environment, and livability. This Master Plan, when supported by the City of Wilmington, the WMPO, the Brooklyn Arts Center, and the Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail along with the neighboring community serves as an impactful advocacy tool to make walking and biking safe and convenient ways for residents, students, and visitors to travel, play, and recreate—regardless of age, ability, or background.



