

# When a Place Reaches Its Breaking Point:

Mending 100-Years of  
Development Abuse along  
Saw Mill Run

American Planning Association: Pennsylvania Chapter

2023 Annual Conference



# Advisory Committee Members/Stakeholders





# Planning-Design Team Members



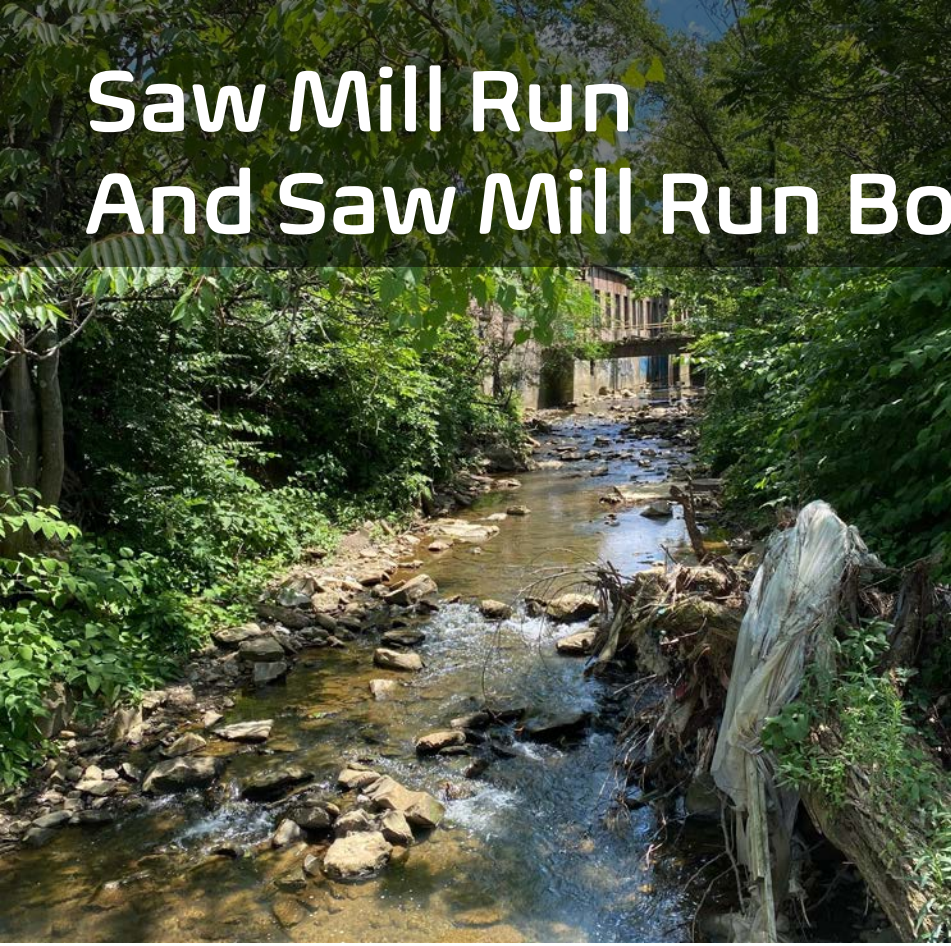




# Saw Mill Run Boulevard



# Saw Mill Run And Saw Mill Run Boulevard





# Seldom Seen Greenway





# Seldom Seen Greenway





# Seldom Seen Greenway







## Pittsburgh Main Thoroughfares and the Downtown District

-Frederick Law Olmsted

- In 1910 report, Olmsted urged for the Saw Mill Run stream corridor to become a “green boulevard” of open space to protect against flooding and serve as a valuable public asset to the Pittsburgh region.

*Stream Channel has changed since 1910*

**Several transportation corridors**

South Busway

Pittsburgh Regional Transit T-Lines

Pittsburgh-West Virginia Railroad

Route 51 (ADT 19,000 to 38,000)

**Commercial and industrial development**

encroached upon the stream

**Residential development** nearby, and **parks, greenways**, and open, undeveloped space occurring on the steep surrounding hillsides

Together, these conditions generate increased runoff and heighten the area's vulnerability to flooding.

## Pittsburgh Main Thoroughfares and the Downtown District

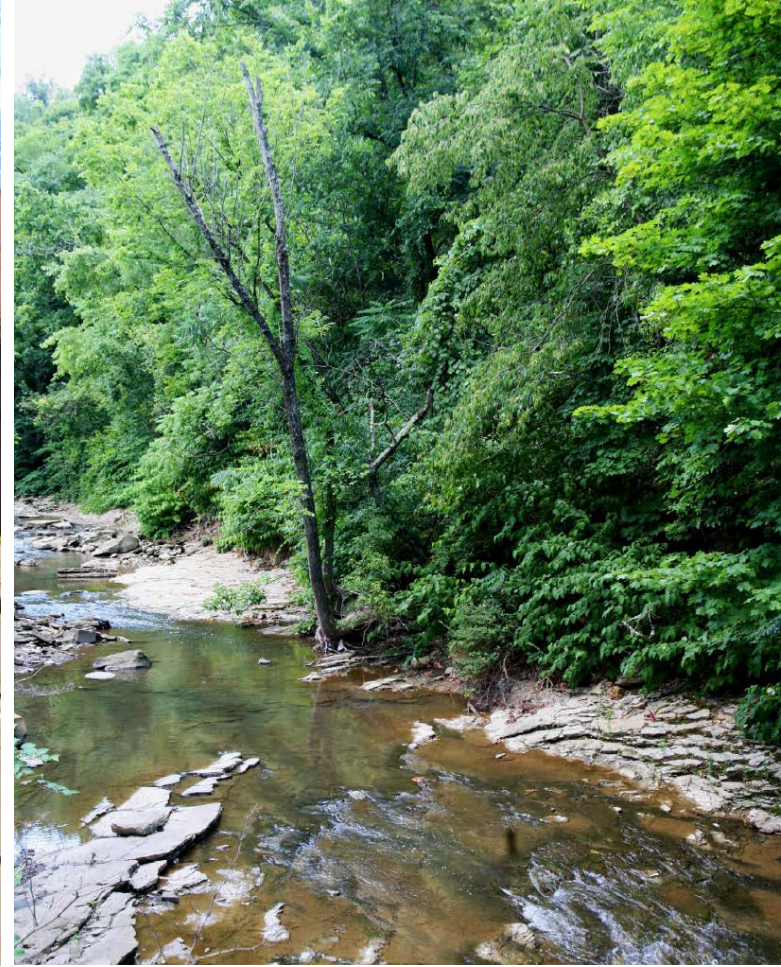
**-Frederick Law Olmsted**

- In 1910 report, Olmsted urged for the Saw Mill Run stream corridor to become a "green boulevard" of open space to protect against flooding and serve as a valuable public asset to the Pittsburgh region.



# Purpose

- Create a plan to pursue a renewed vision of the Green Boulevard for the Saw Mill Run Corridor over the next generations







# Planning-Design Funds

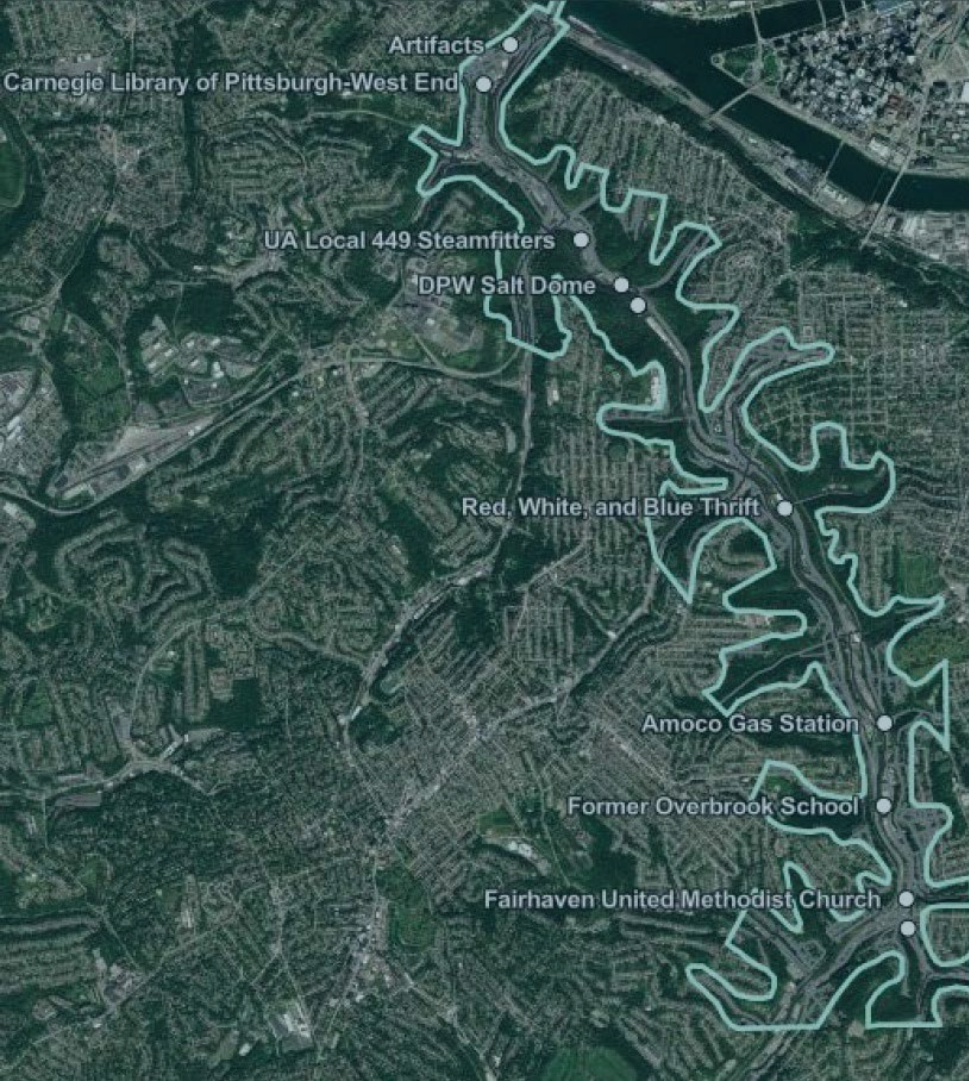
- Grant funding from the Commonwealth is part of the Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2), using the Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation Fund under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.



# Saw Mill Run Green Boulevard Master Plan



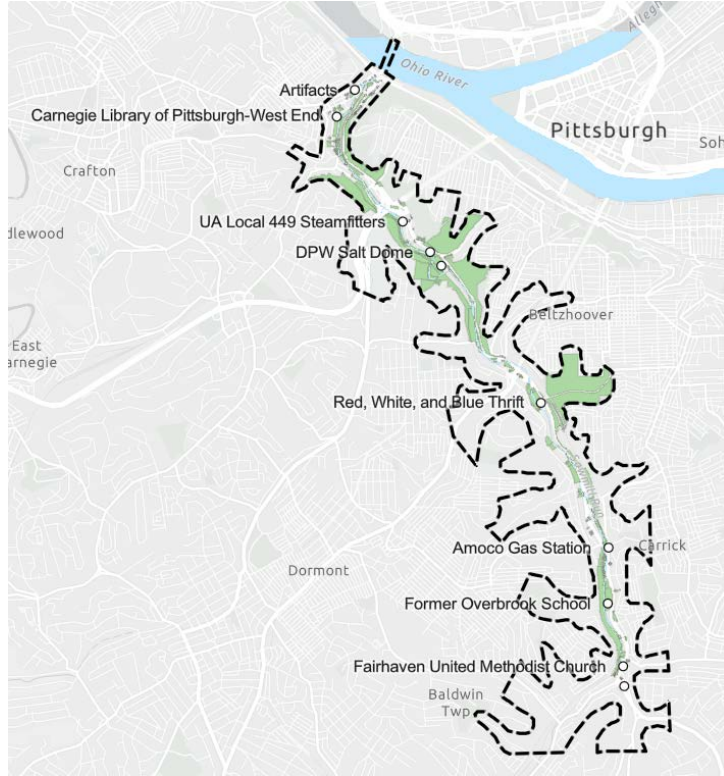
- Project Overview
- Background Context
- Outreach
- Key Issues, Challenges & Drivers
- Overall Corridor Recommendations
- Develop Designs for “Focus Areas”



# Project Overview

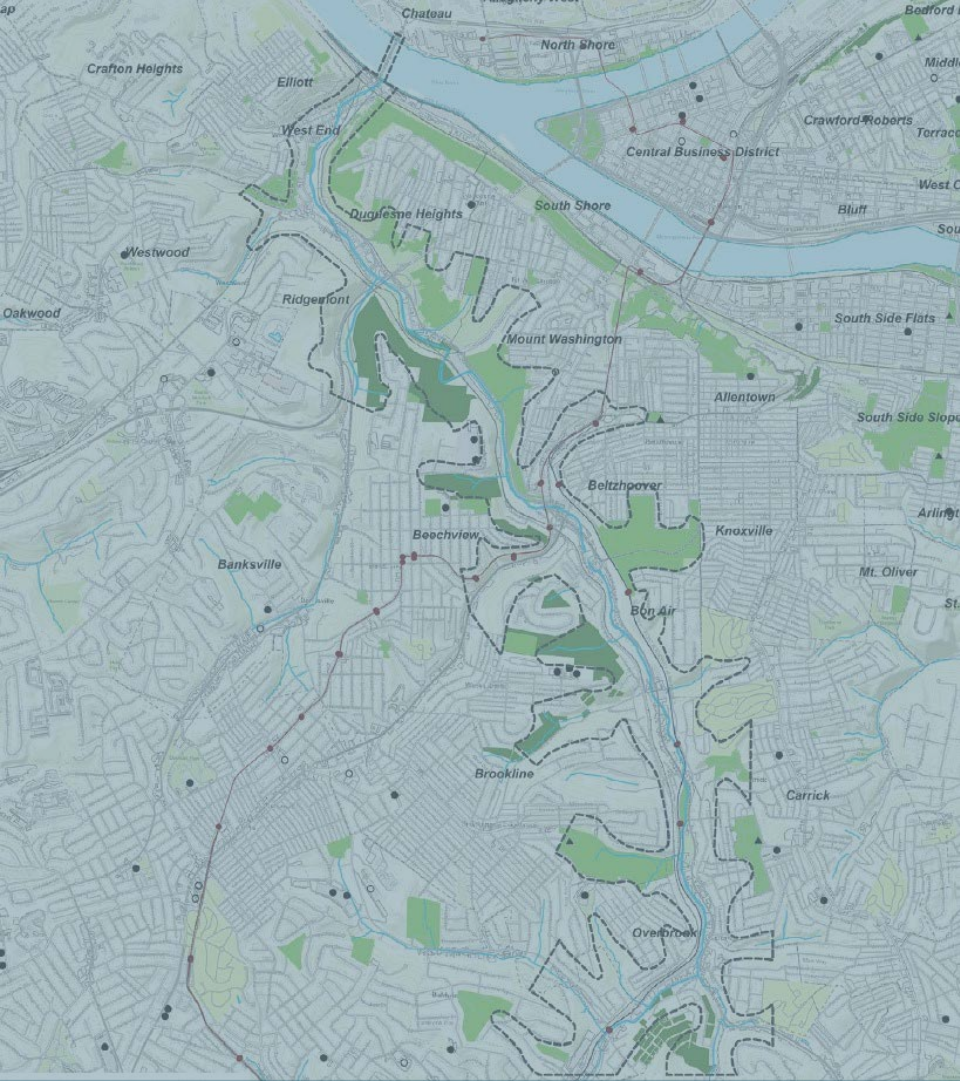


# Project Overview



- Study corridor includes the Route 51 corridor from the Ohio River to the intersection with Route 88, from the stream to the nearest ridgetop on either side of the road
- Parcels within the Study Corridor were characterized into six typologies based on the condition of the stream, topography, position within the watershed, and land use and ownership.

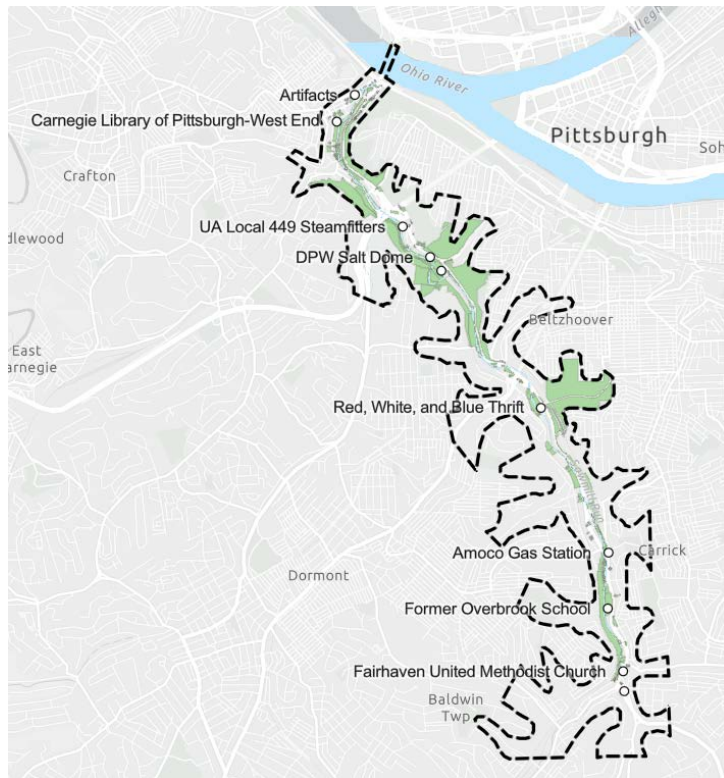




# Background Context



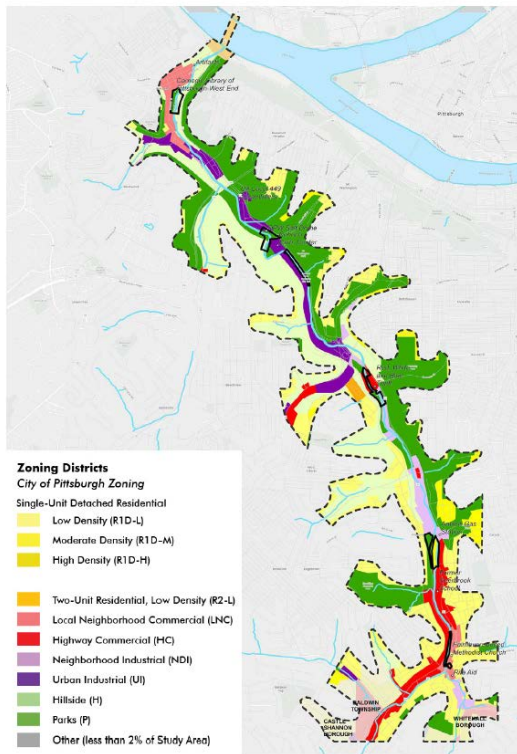
# Background Context



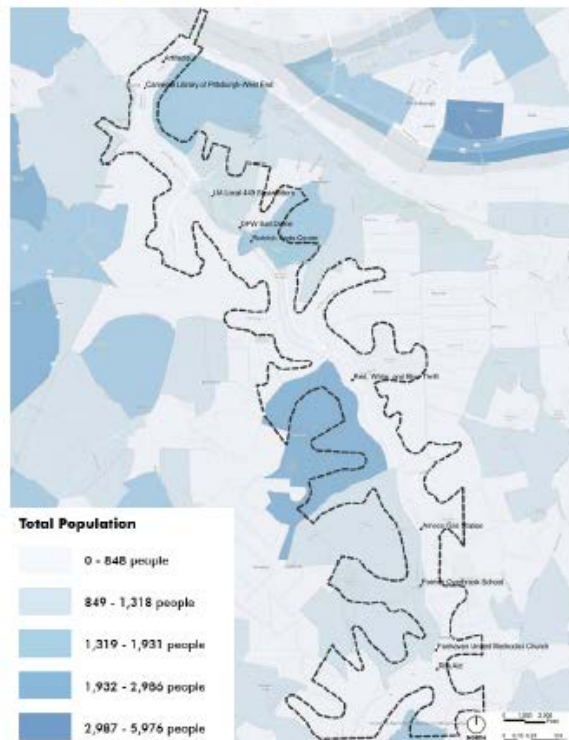
- Saw Mill Run is an urban stream and a tributary to the Ohio River with a watershed of almost 11 square miles
- The Study Corridor includes 1,983 acres and roughly 5,500 parcels along Saw Mill Run Boulevard, from the Ohio River to the intersection of Routes 51 and 88.

# Background Context – Zoning and Demographics

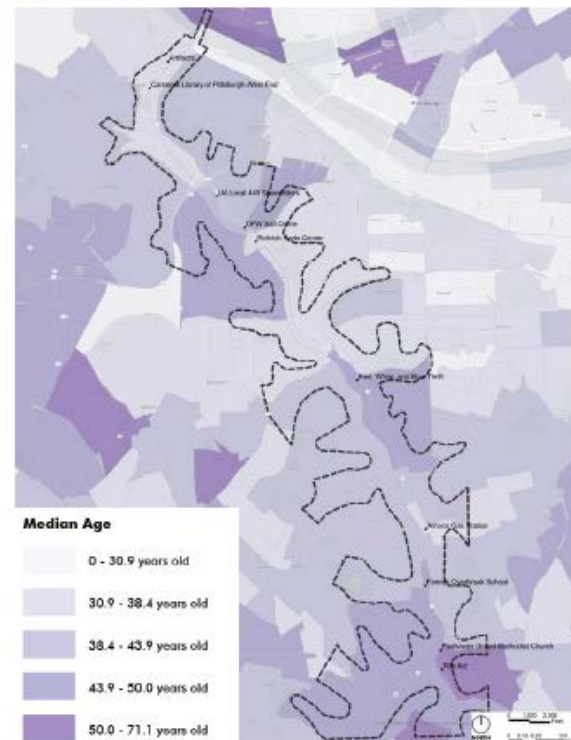
ZONING MAP



Total Population Map



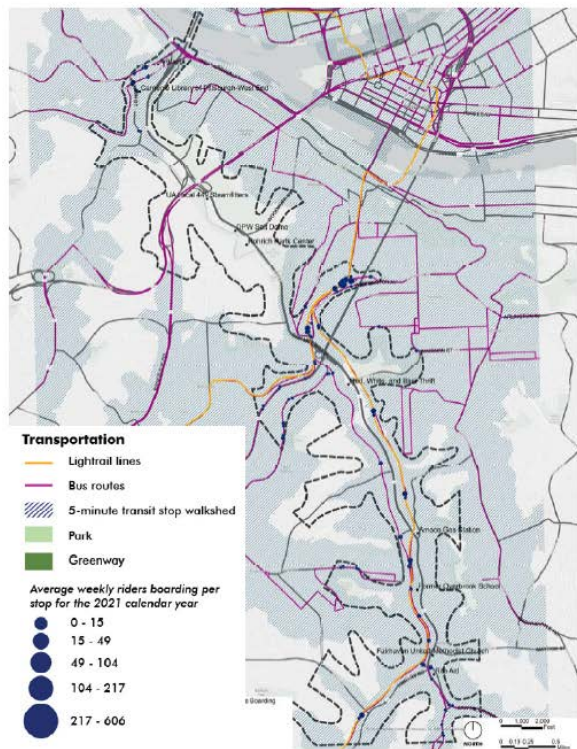
Median Age



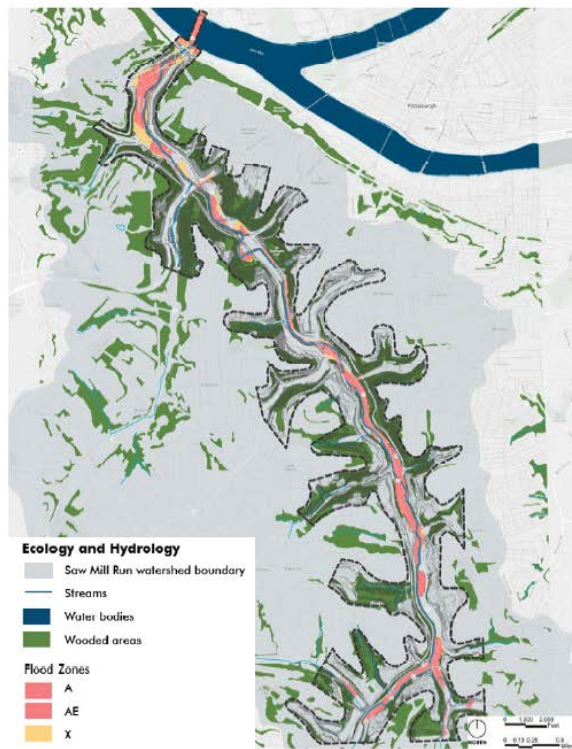


# Background Context – Existing Conditions

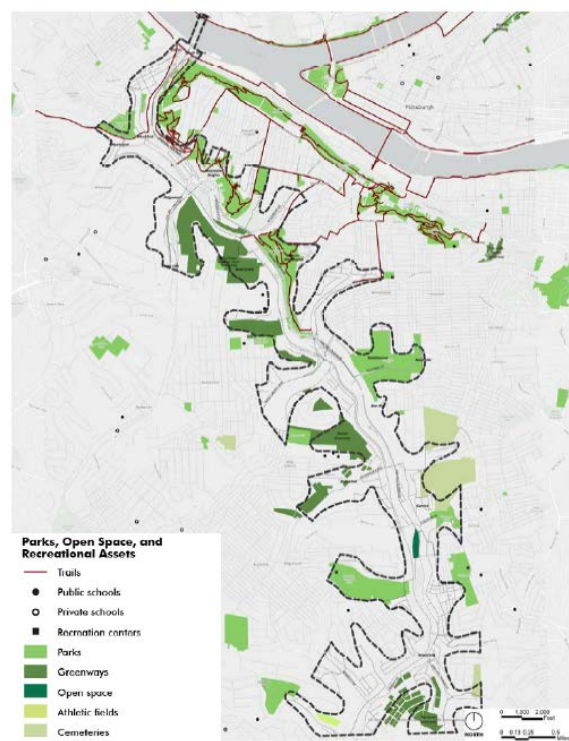
## Transportation



## Natural Resources

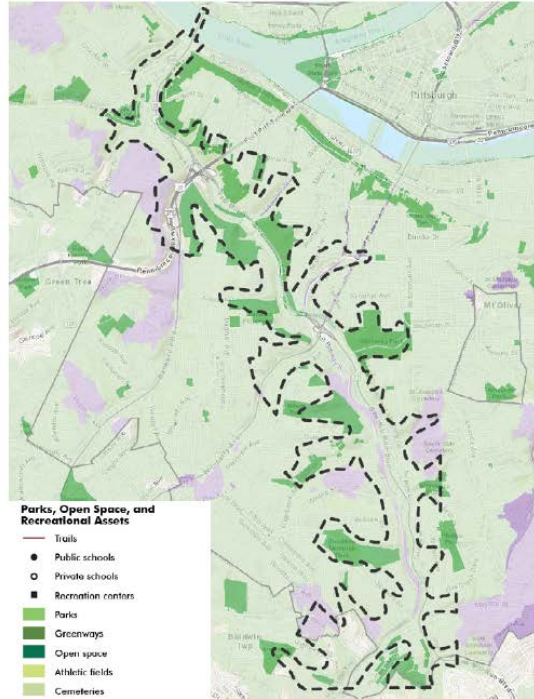
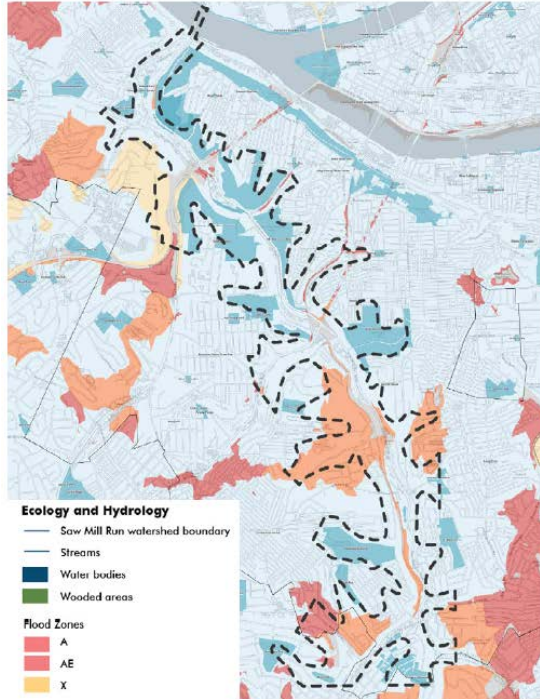


## Recreational Assets

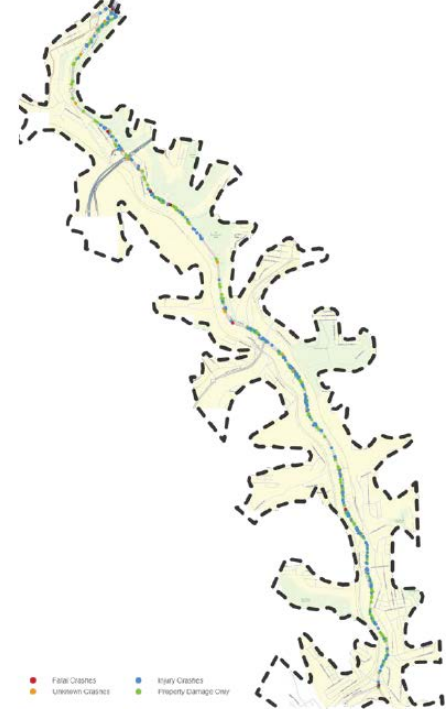


# Background Context – Areas of Vulnerability

Park Access

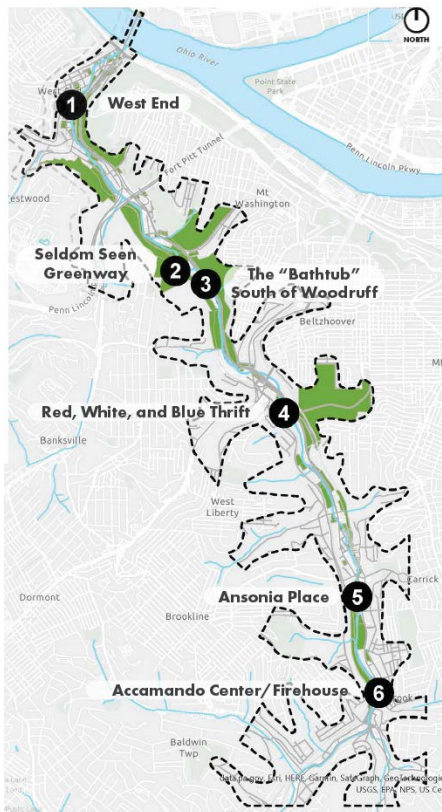


Crash Prone Areas





# Background Context – Design Focus Areas



- Parcels immediately adjacent to Saw Mill Run were evaluated to identify common conditions, such as topography, ownership, and stream constrictions.
- Creation of six categories, or "typologies" that can generally be used to describe site conditions. The Design Focus Areas represent the typology and serve as examples of the types of interventions that could be considered for similar areas. They are dispersed along the Corridor and may span several parcels.



Outreach



# Outreach

- Advisory Committee
- Corridor Tour
- Public Workshops
- Stakeholder Interviews



THE CITY OF  
**PITTSBURGH**



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



**WATERSHEDS**  
OF SOUTH PITTSBURGH



**environmental**  
planning & design



*Public Workshop*



*Stakeholder Bus Tour (Photo Credit: TrailBlaze Creative)*

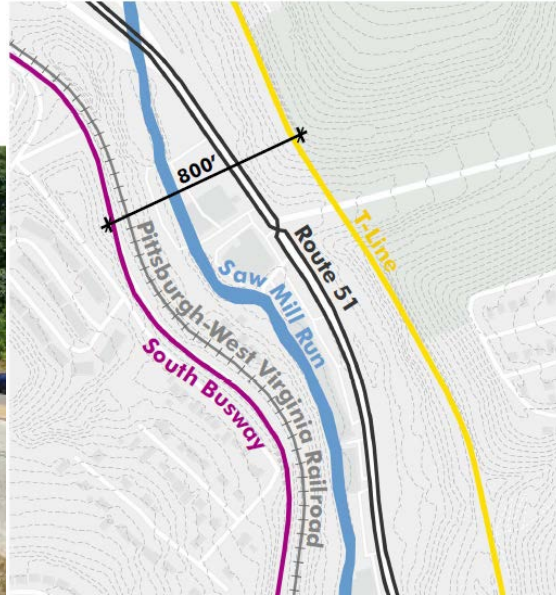
**MCMMAHON**  
a Bowman company



# Key Issues, Challenges, and Drivers



# Key Issues – Disjointedness



- in Ownership
- in Management
- for Pedestrians
- From the City

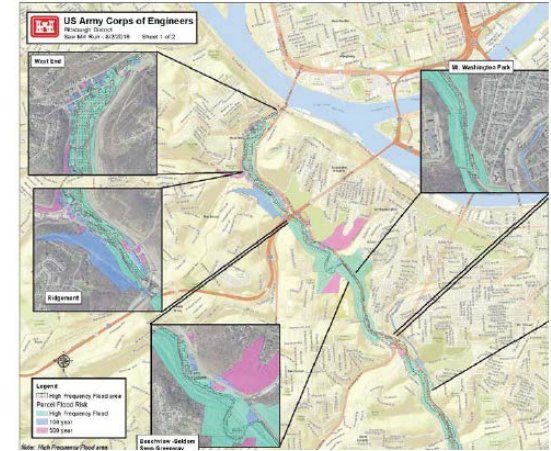
It has evolved into a  
“Corridor of Corridors”



# Key Issues – Over-Burdened



- Traffic
- Legacy Projects and Policies
- Development Pattern
- Flooding
- Over-Zoned





# Key Issues – Chronic Flooding



# Key Issues – Environmental Quality

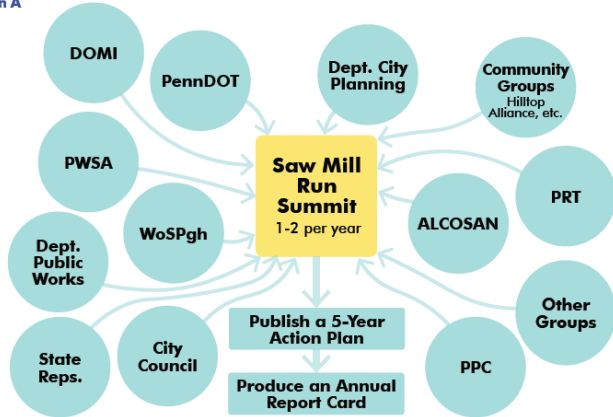
Rating	RCI Range	RCI Score	Design Focus Area
Optimal	0.75-1.00		
Sub-Optimal	0.50-0.74	0.73	Seldom Seen
		0.60	Ansonia Place
Marginal	0.25-0.49	0.46	Red, White, and Blue Thrift
		0.40	Bathtub
Poor	0.00-0.24	0.21	Wabash Park
		0.17	Accamando Center





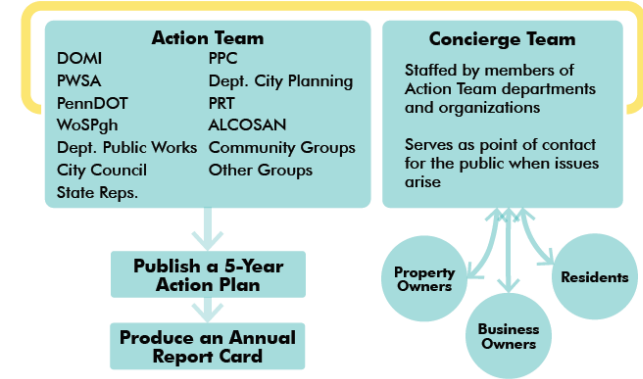
# Key Issues - No "Champions"

Option A

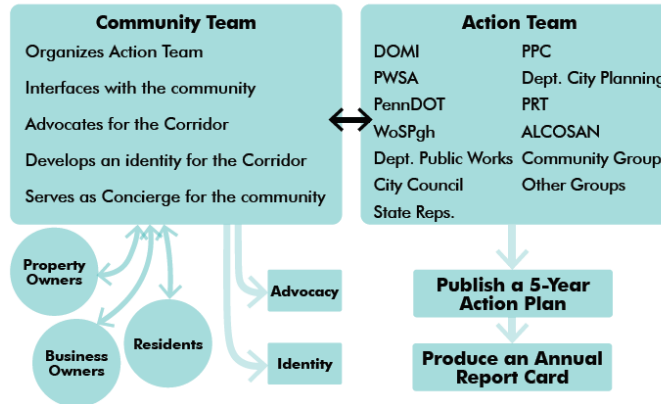


Option B

## Saw Mill Run Task Force



Option C





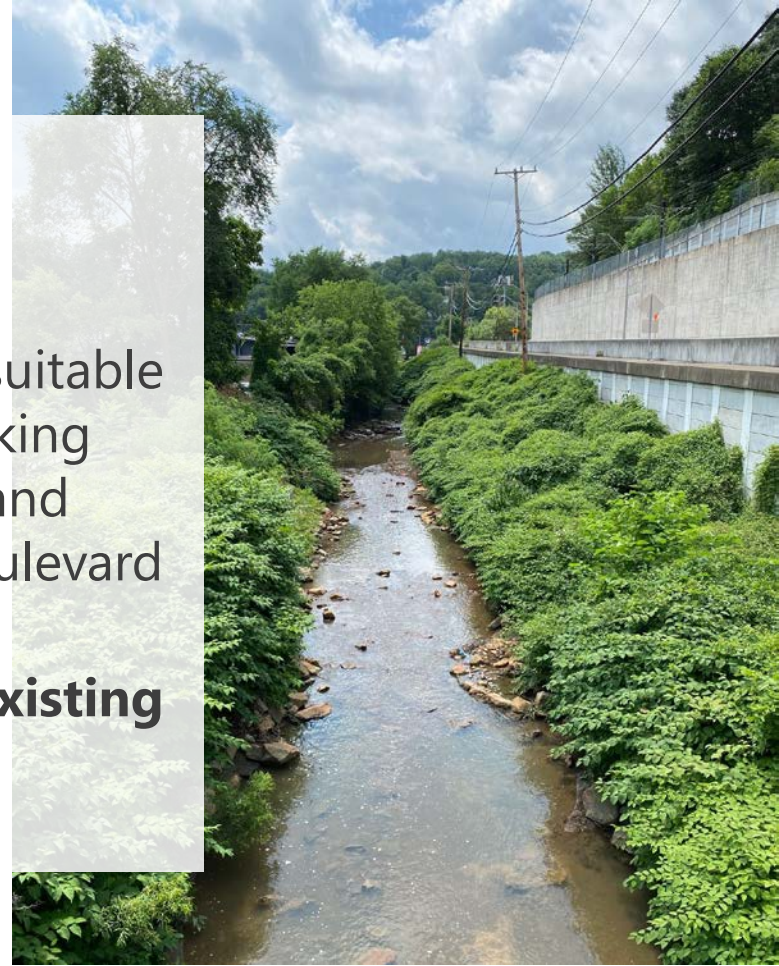
# Overall Recommendations





# Planning and Management

- Coordinate with the various stakeholder organizations and agencies to determine a suitable structure and level of involvement for a working group or “Task Force” to regularly convene and pursue the implementation of the Green Boulevard Master Plan.
- Expand/broaden the purpose/focus of the **existing** zoning overlay in order to avoid a “map amendment” process.







# Planning and Management

- Use the zoning overlay to address:
  - ✓ **Vehicular Access Management:** reduce the number of ingress and egress points onto Route 51 and better delineate traffic flow from parking lots onto Route 51.
  - ✓ **Impervious Surface Reduction:** Introduce minimal landscape standards and islands requirements to reduce the amount of impervious surface in the lot.







# Planning and Management

- ✓ **Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Requirement:** Require sidewalks along Route 51 to interconnect parcels, open spaces and transit facilities.
- ✓ **Setbacks:** Require both parking and building setbacks that complement the landscape and sidewalk requirements.



# Planning and Management – Recap

- Expanded/Broadened **Public Safety Zoning Overlay**
  - ✓ Vehicle access management
  - ✓ Impervious surface reduction
  - ✓ Pedestrian safety and mobility
  - ✓ Control of setbacks
  - ✓ Post-development/retroactive streambank and steep slope stabilization



The background of the slide is a collage of four images. The top-left image shows a blue sky with white clouds. The top-right image shows a dense green forest. The bottom-left image shows a street scene with cars and a crosswalk. The bottom-right image shows a stream flowing through a lush green area.

# Corridor-Wide Design & Implementation

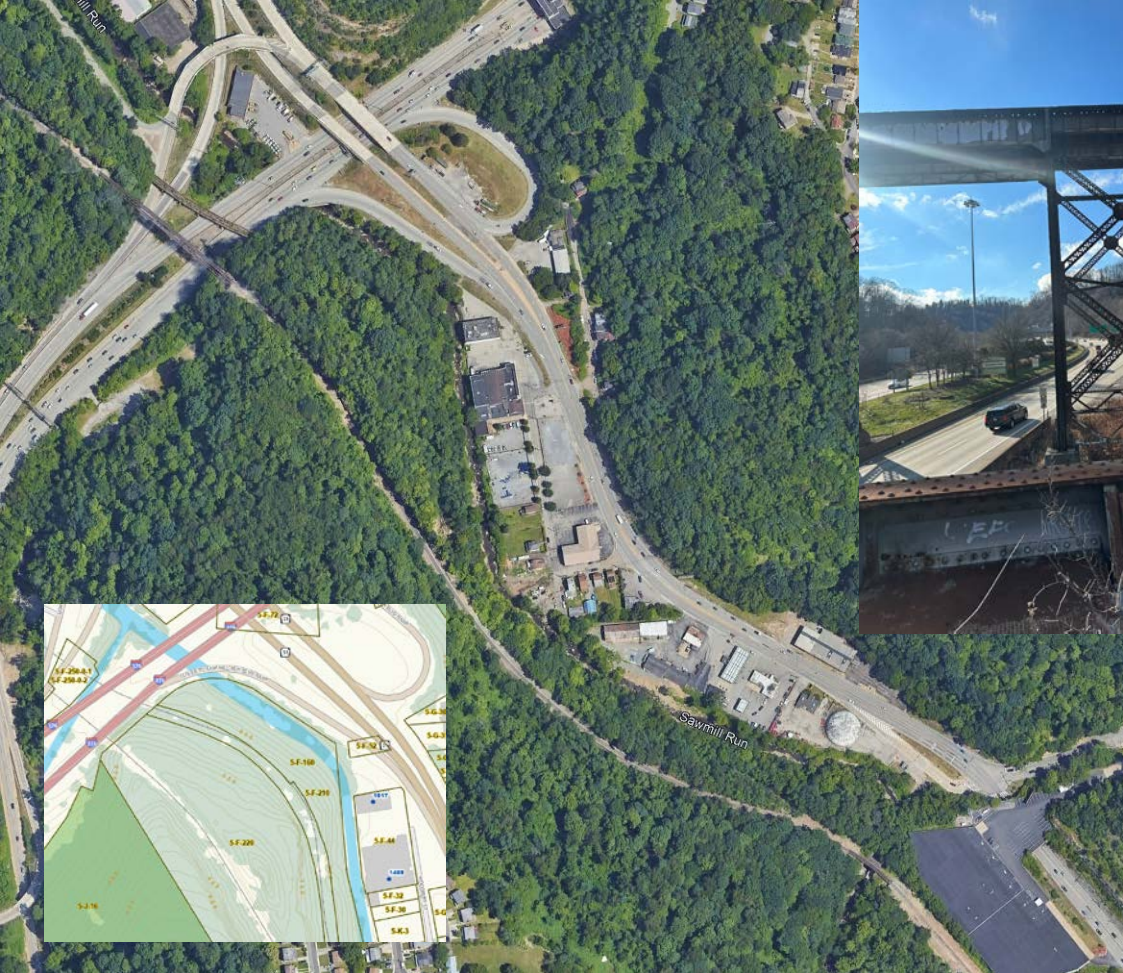
- Coordinate with PennDOT during the development of the Route 51 reconstruction plan to integrate improved access management controls, pedestrian safety measures, and other recommendations identified in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) Roadway Safety Audit.



# Corridor-Wide Design & Implementation

- Improve pedestrian connectivity to parks, green space, and transit resources
  - ✓ Provide accessibility improvements to connect to bus stops and T-Stations.
  - ✓ Seek grant funding to pursue the implementations of the six Design Focus Area recommendations.
  - ✓ Conduct a trail feasibility study and geotechnical analysis for the PennDOT-owned railroad corridor from Seldom Seen Greenway to the West End.





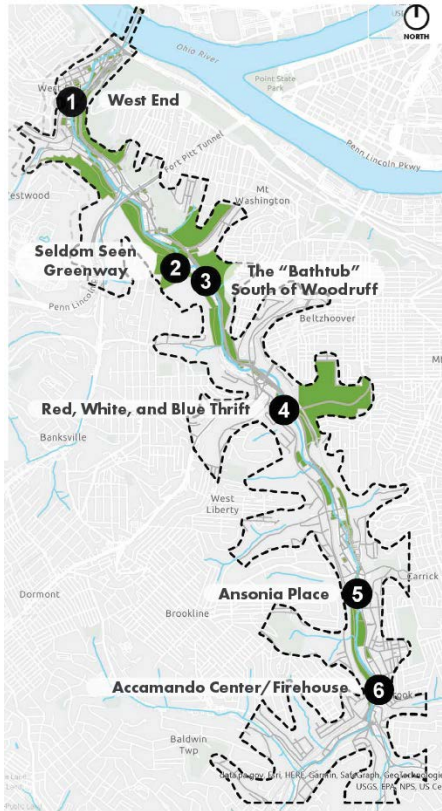




## Design Focus Area Recommendations



# Design Focus Areas



The Design Focus Areas represent the typology and serve as examples of the types of interventions that could be considered for similar areas. They are dispersed along the Corridor and may span several parcels.

## Parcel Typologies and Design Focus Areas

- 1. Lowland Neighborhood
- 2. Park/Greenway
- 3. Channelized Slope on Private Land
- 4. Channelized Wall on Private Land
- 5. Lowland Public Land
- 6. Channelized Slope on Semi-Public Land
- Parcel not adjacent to Saw Mill Run
- 1 Design Focus Area location and number

**Map Legend:**

- Black Area: Study Area
- Black Circle: Super-Pole Sites
- Black Line: Project Footprint
- Red Area: 1 - Local Neighborhood
- Yellow Area: 2 - Private Land
- Green Area: 3 - Open Space
- Blue Area: 4 - Open Space on Private Land
- Light Blue Area: 5 - Open Space on Public Land
- Dark Blue Area: 6 - Open Space on Public Land
- Dark Green Area: 7 - Open Space on Public Land
- Dark Brown Area: 8 - Open Space on Public Land

**Map Labels:**

- University City
- University City Water Treatment Plant
- University City Water Reclamation Plant
- Proposed Site
- Proposed Building Footprint
- Proposed Parking Lot

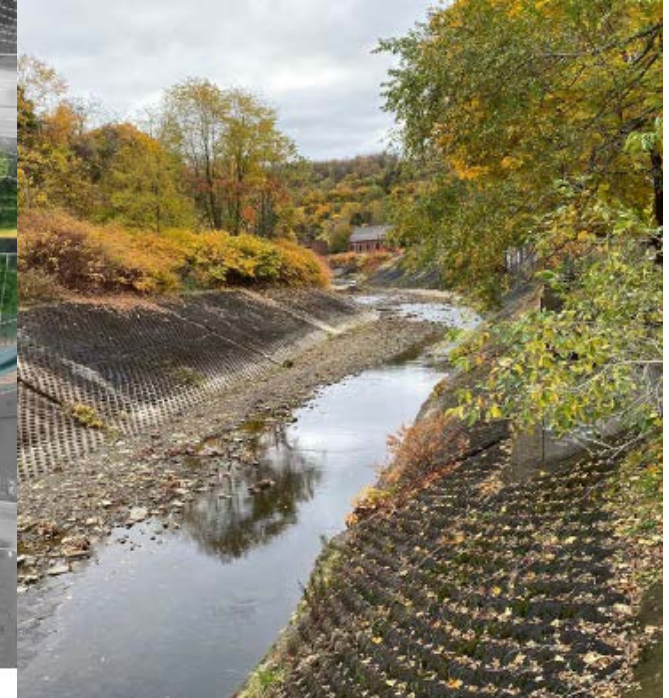
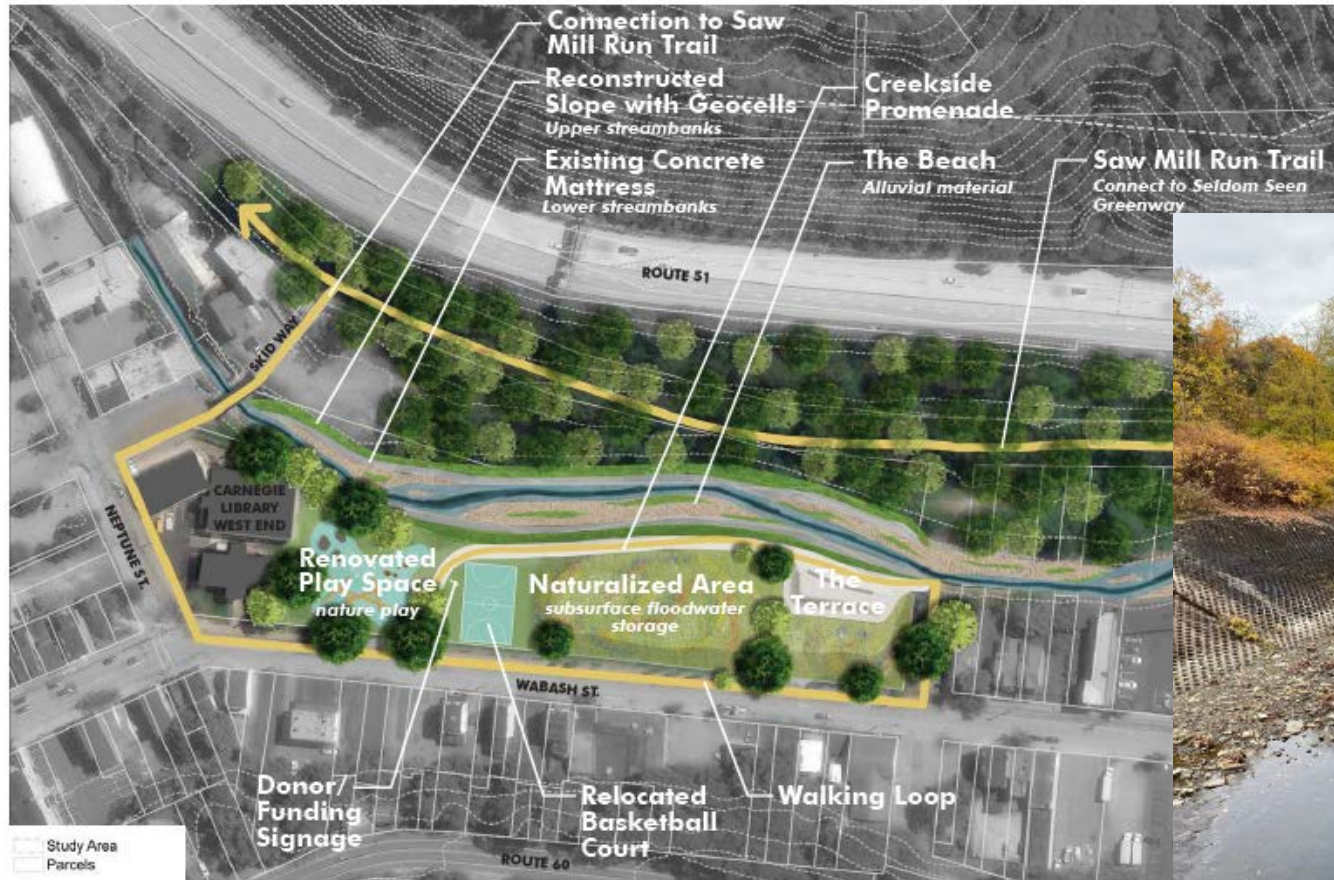
**Scale:** 0 100 200 Feet

**North Arrow:** N



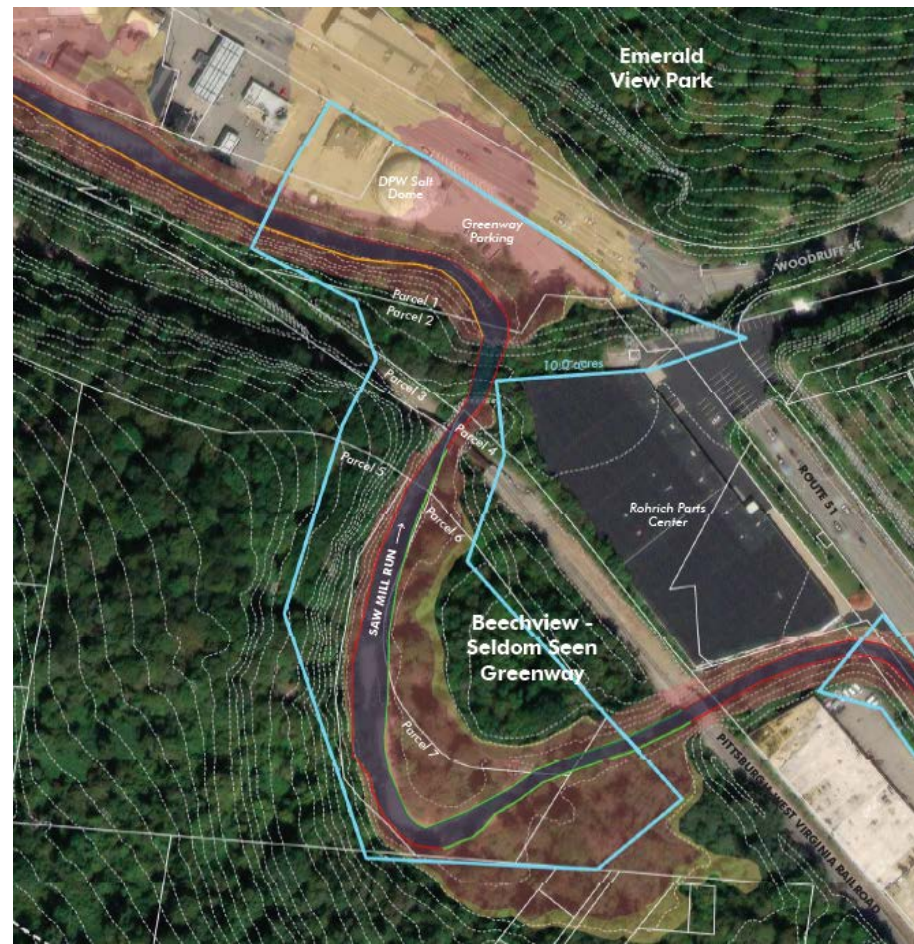


# Wabash Park





# Seldom Seen Greenway





# Seldom Seen Greenway

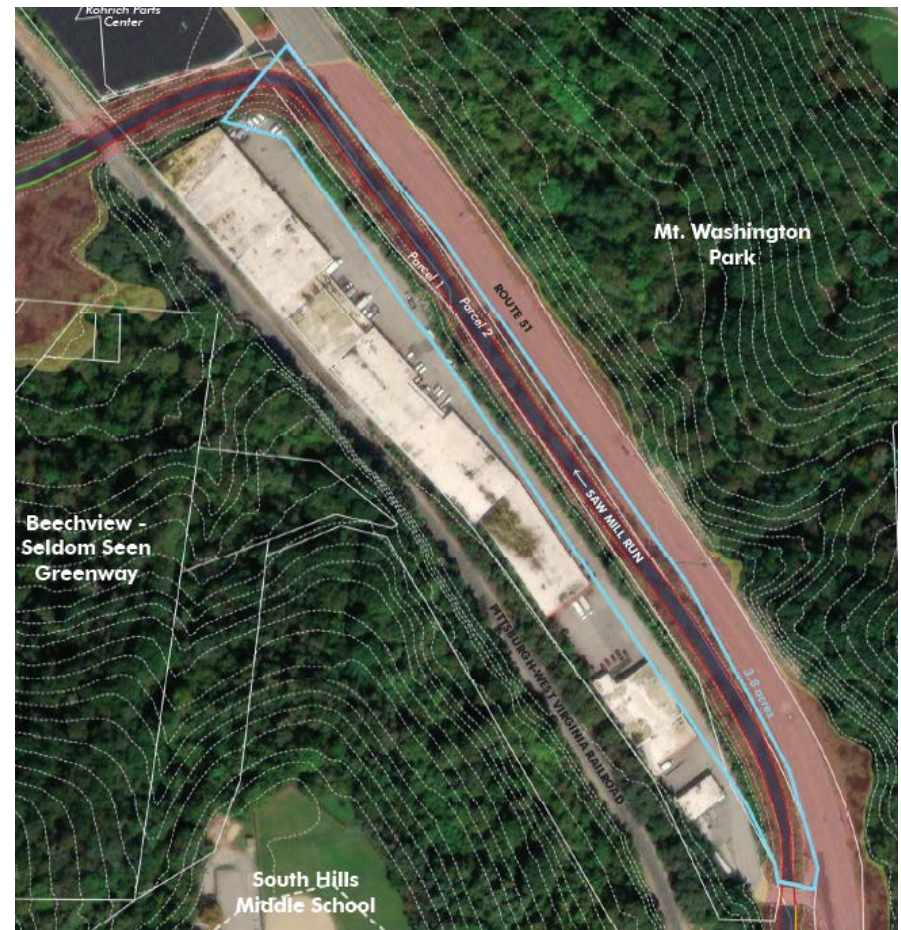




**Map Legend:**

- Grey line: Existing Road
- Black circle: Bridge/Pier Structure
- Black line: Proposed Right-of-Way
- Orange line: 10-foot wide buffer
- Yellow line: 10-foot wide easement
- Green line: Proposed Transitway
- Light green area: 100-foot wide right-of-way
- Dark green area: 10-foot wide easement
- Light blue area: 10-foot wide easement
- Dark blue area: 10-foot wide easement
- Light brown area: 10-foot wide easement
- Dark brown area: 10-foot wide easement
- Light grey area: 10-foot wide easement
- Dark grey area: 10-foot wide easement

**Map Scale:** 0, 50, 100, 200 feet

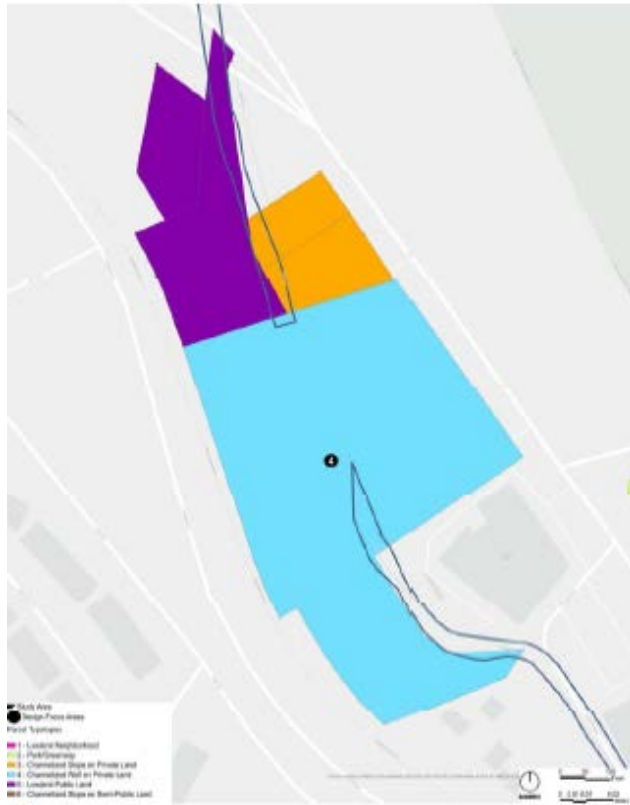




# The "Bathtub"



# Red, White & Blue Thrift

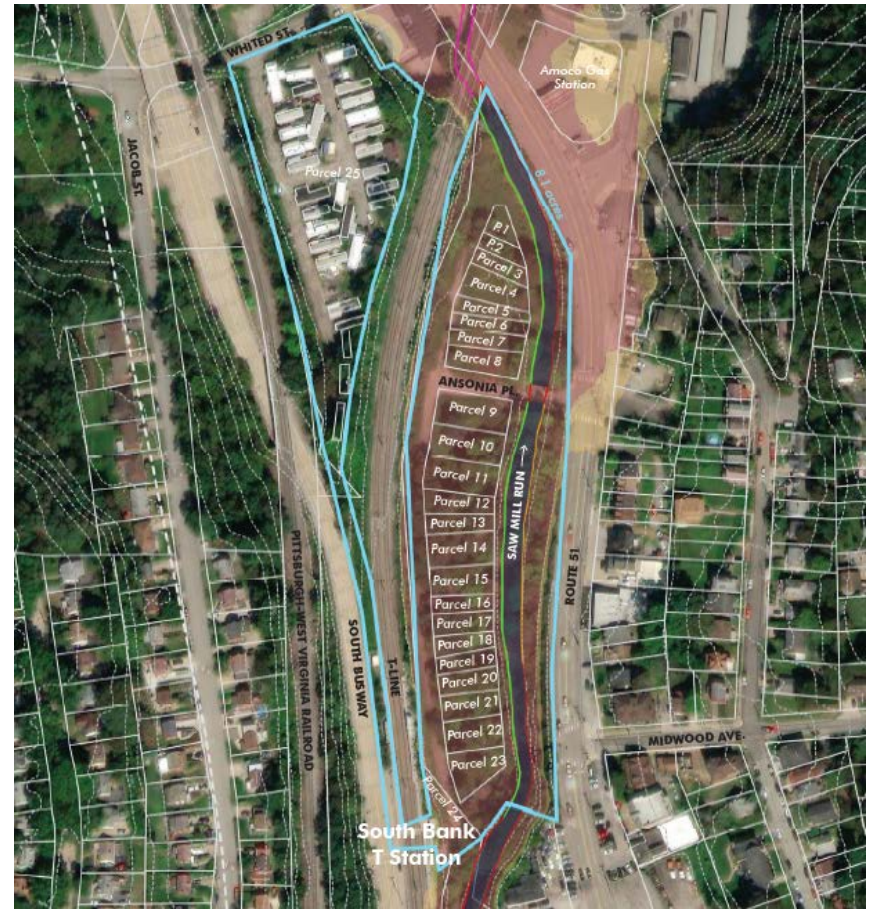
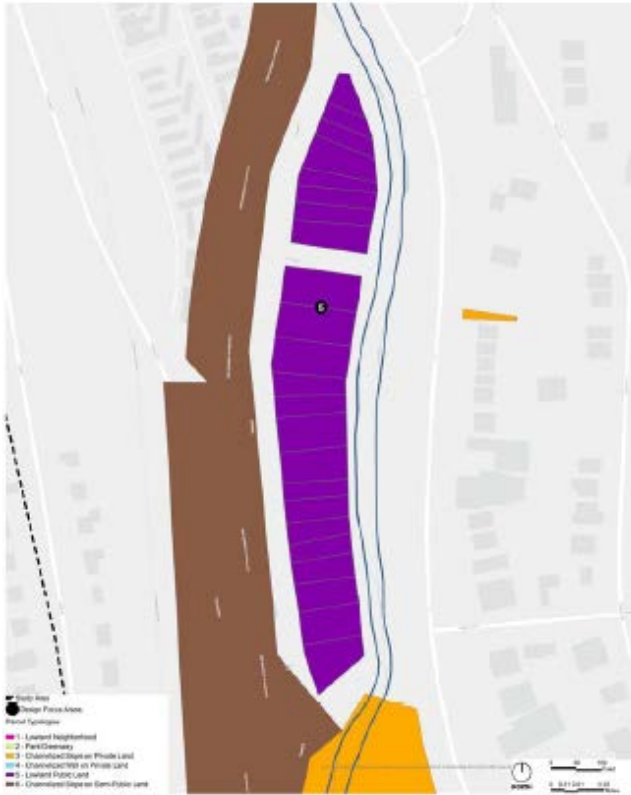




# Red, White & Blue Thrift



# Ansonia Place

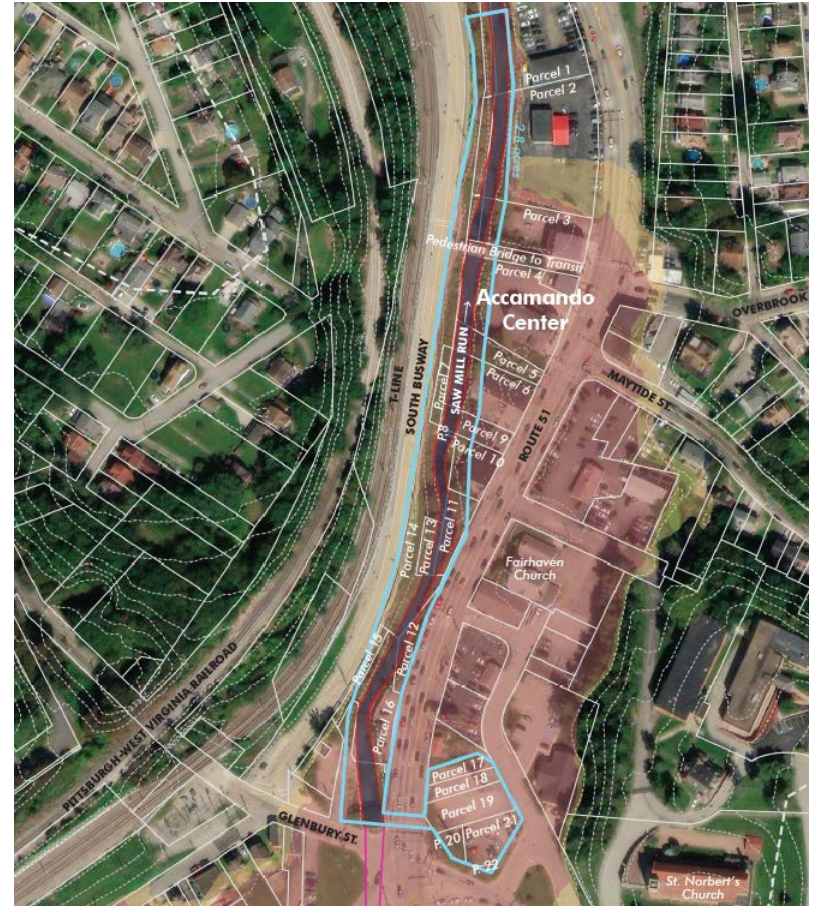




# Ansonia Place

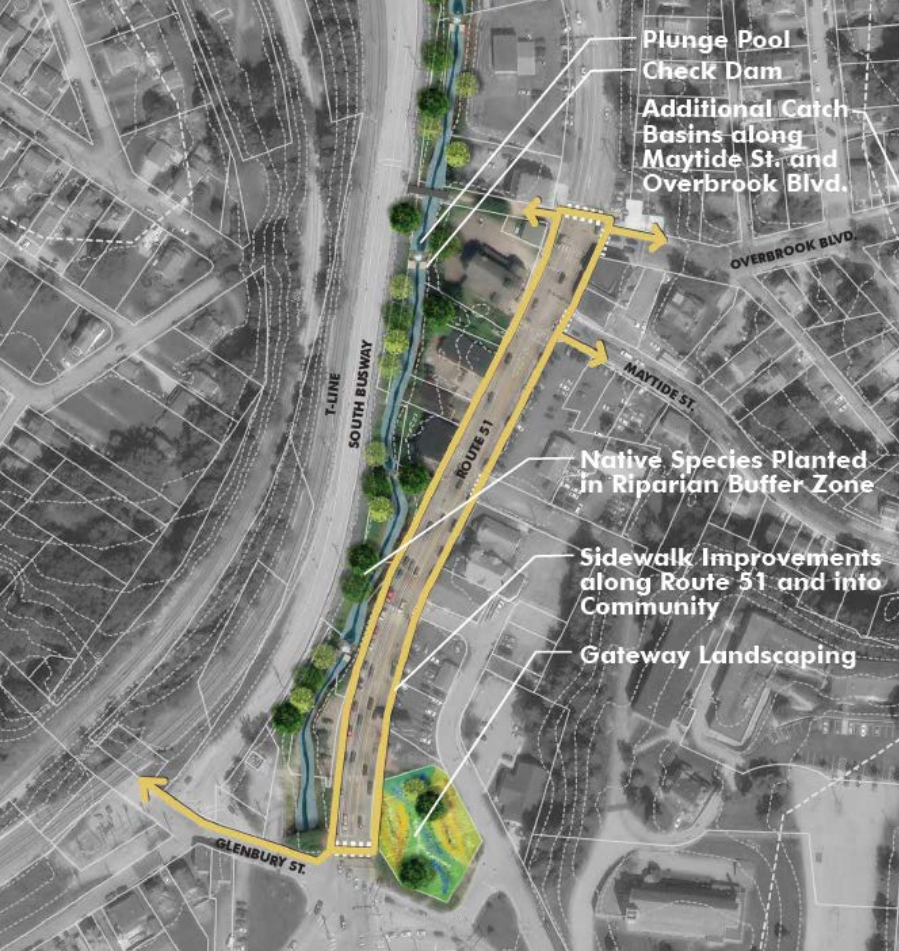


# Accamando Center





# Accamando Center







# Costs and Funding



# Probable Costs and Funding

- DCED CFA Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program
- DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program
- DCNR Riparian Forest Buffer Program
- DCNR/DEP Growing Greener Environmental Stewardship Fund
- USDA/NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- PennDOT Transportation Alternatives Program
- PennDOT Multimodal Transportation Fund
- SPC Multimodal Transportation Fund
- NFWF Urban and Community Forestry Grants
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

Summary Table				
Design Focus Area		Projected Cost	Sq. Ft.	\$/SF
1	Wabash Park	\$1,791,625	283,140	\$6.33
2	Seldom Seen Greenway	\$2,483,350	435,600	\$5.70
3	The "Bathtub"	\$273,150	165,528	\$1.65
4	Red, White, and Blue Thrift	\$2,104,150	248,292	\$8.47
5	Ansonia Place	\$3,598,550	352,836	\$10.20
6	Accamando Center	\$501,325	121,968	\$4.11

- USFWS Grants
- Pennsylvania Parks Fund
- NFWF Grants
- The North Face Explore Fund
- KEEN Effect Grant
- AARP Community Challenge Grant



Questions?