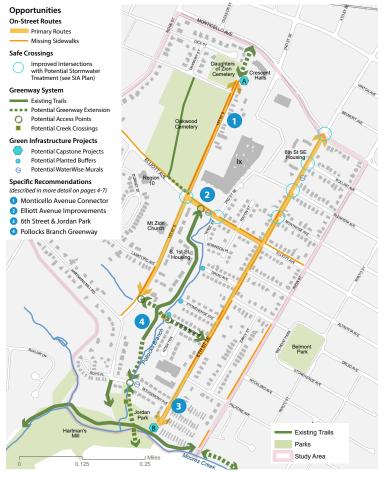# Pollocks Branch Walkable Watershed

Overview

The City of Charlottesville partnered with the James River Association (JRA), Skeo Solutions, the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP), and the Bridge PAI on a grant-funded effort called the Pollocks Branch Walkable Watershed.

The City was interested in this opportunity to engage residents, including many that are underserved, in identifying and designing green infrastructure projects to address multiple City and community goals. Working together, they recognized Pollocks Branch as an opportunity to connect, rather than divide, the community.

The Pollocks Branch Walkable Watershed effort linked the concepts of clean water and healthy communities to identify and implement opportunities to:

- **Connect the neighborhood** to Pollocks Branch, Moores Creek and nearby parks/natural areas.
- **Provide safe passage and routes** for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Make **green infrastructure improvements** to clean stormwater before it enters the creeks.
- **Engage and educate** residents.

The outcome was the Pollocks Branch Walkable Watershed Concept Plan. A set of near term action steps have been identified and a series of community improvements implemented. City cross-departmental coordination, partnership building, and environmental stewardship activities are ongoing.

Opportunities

On-Street Routes
- Primary Routes
- Missing Sidewalks

Safe Crossings
- Improved Intersections with Potential Stormwater Treatment (see SIA Plan)

Greenway System
- Existing Trails
- Potential Greenway Extension
- Potential Access Points
- Potential Creek Crossings

Green Infrastructure Projects
- Potential Capstone Projects
- Potential Planted Buffers
- Potential WaterWise Murals

Specific Recommendations
(described in more detail on pages 4-7)
1. Monticello Avenue Connector
2. Elliott Avenue Improvements
3. 6th Street & Jordan Park
4. Pollocks Branch Greenway

- Existing Trails
- Parks
- Study Area

Walkable Watershed Process Highlights

Shared understanding – through mapping and analysis, the project team developed a series of maps that City staff and the community used to develop a shared understanding around community needs, issues, and opportunities.

Build on existing initiatives - the Concept Plan builds on the design goals of the Strategic Investment Area (SIA) Plan, integrating pedestrian, cyclist, and watershed improvements into a collective vision to improve both Pollocks Branch and neighborhood quality of life.

Community engagement – throughout the process, the project team worked with key stakeholders, community leaders, and residents to identify and prioritize projects and incorporated their feedback into a Concept Plan that had broad support. Approaches included meeting with organizational leadership, holding public meetings, attending existing meetings, and hosting a community festival. This helped forge new and strengthen, expand, and diversify existing partnerships.

Respond to community input – the project team refined the Concept Plan after hearing community concerns about a potential green infrastructure project.

Engage youth and awareness through art – the Bridge PAI worked with Legal Aid Justice Center and PHAR's Youth Leadership Group to engage local youth living in CRHA's 6th Street property. The youth were paired with a local artist and urban ecologist in WaterWise - a project-based art and environment camp where they researched and experienced the importance of the Pollocks Branch watershed and responded through the creation of a sidewalk/storm drain mural in their neighborhood. Charlottesville High School students also decorated rain barrels that the project team installed at resident's homes.

June 2018

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

During the project, stakeholders and local organizations contributed to the effort, strengthening ties with the City and the neighborhoods within the watershed. Those organizations included:

- Ridge Street Neighborhood Association
- Residents of South First Street
- Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA)
- Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR)
- Urban Agriculture Collective of Charlottesville (UACC)
- Preservers of Daughters of Zion Cemetery
- Center for Urban Habitats
- Community Bikes
- Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District
- Legal Aid Justice Center
- Rivanna Conservation Alliance
- Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards
- Charlottesville City Schools
- Various City of Charlottesville Departments

Outcomes

By connecting watershed goals with community needs and existing City and organizational initiatives, the Pollocks Branch Walkable Watershed project has had continued success, which has included:

Greenway Access and Pedestrian Safety

- **Improved Access** - funding identified to design and install a pedestrian bridge crossing Pollocks Branch to connect South First Street and Rockland Avenue, as well as landscaping to filter stormwater at the end of Rockland Avenue.

- **Expanded Greenway** - an improved and expanded Pollocks Branch Greenway, including a new trailhead and access point on Elliott Avenue, a creek overlook installed on Rougemont Avenue, and new access to Jordan Park. These efforts included several volunteer trail work days and trail/stream clean-ups.

- **Pedestrian Safety** - a new crosswalk and relocated bus stop along Elliott Avenue and intersection improvements as part of a Safe Routes to School project were installed.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure

- **Rainwater Harvesting System** - installed to reduce stormwater runoff from a building rooftop and supply water to a large community garden for residents of CRHA's South First Street property.

- **Rain Barrels** - approximately 50 rain barrels installed at homes in the watershed, some of which were decorated by local high school art students.

Community Stewardship

- **Youth Engagement** - a summer camp paired local youth with an urban ecologist and artist to explore Pollocks Branch and its watershed.

- **Community Art** - a storm drain mural, whose design was inspired by local youth and their summer camp creek discoveries, was installed in a highly visible location in the community near the youth's homes on 6th Street SE.

- **Regional Spotlight** – a community partner-led walking tour of the neighborhood and project outcomes was featured at the Annual Choose Clean Water Coalition Conference.

- **Volunteer Cleanups** - multiple volunteer workdays and cleanups improved access to the trail and creek and removed litter and debris.

- **Community Festival** – event provided an opportunity to bring residents of South First Street and the surrounding area together in a fun, family-friendly atmosphere to celebrate the opening of the Pollocks Branch Greenway, share ideas, and learn about their local waterways and stewardship opportunities. Worked closely with a community leader to tailor the event program and activities and ensure successful outreach. Nearly 100 neighborhood residents joined the Festival!

- **Education** - a series of watershed education events helped the City meet the public education and outreach requirements of their MS4 stormwater permit.

- **New Stewards** - educational, fun events for residents of all ages helped to transform the neighborhood's relationship with Pollocks Branch from disconnected to stewards.

Partnerships

- **Partnership Building** - strengthened partnerships and collaboration between City departments, CRHA, study area residents, community organizations, and businesses.

- **Leverage Existing Initiatives** - connections to existing City planning efforts, such as the 2013 Strategic Investment Area Plan.

Anticipated Next Steps

The City will continue to explore partnerships and grant opportunities to implement improvements identified by the Walkable Watershed process.

The final plan is available at: http://www.walkablewatershed.com/charlottesville/