



ALBEMARLE ROAD CULTURAL TRAIL



Charlotte

DECEMBER
2022

Technical Assistance Panel

REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

ULI - The Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

More information is available at uli.org.

ULI Charlotte

ULI Charlotte is a District Council of the Urban Land Institute. The mission of ULI Charlotte is to complete the ULI experience at a local and regional level through education, research and the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Sponsor

With support from The JPB Foundation, ULI Charlotte convened a group of ULI member experts to provide technical assistance to the City of Charlotte through the ULI District Council Cohort for Park Equity (CPE). CPE is a ULI program that leverages member expertise to advance equitable access to parks, trails, and open space, with a focus on investment in underserved neighborhoods. Along with ULI Charlotte, four other ULI District Councils participated in the Cohort for Park Equity, including Austin, Dallas, New York, and San Antonio.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL (TAP) PROGRAM

TAP Objective

The Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program is offered by ULI Charlotte to provide objective and responsible advice on land-use planning, development and redevelopment issues to local municipalities and community-based nonprofits.

Program Description

The District Council TAP is a service offered as part of ULI's national Advisory Services program. Since 1947, the Advisory Services program has assisted communities by bringing together real estate, planning and development experts to provide unbiased, pragmatic advice for addressing complex land-use planning and development issues.

The ULI Charlotte TAP program provides similar services to local governments, private developers, community development corporations, and many other organizations. Once a project is designated for a TAP, ULI Charlotte assembles a panel of volunteers with expertise in areas necessary to focus on the sponsor's problem or issues.

Through TAPs, ULI Charlotte can evaluate a broad array of issues because of the diverse backgrounds of local ULI members. ULI members are real estate and land use professionals with expertise in land use policy and practice, including retail, office, industrial, residential, and mixed land uses in a multiplicity of urban forms.

TAPs generally focus on issues surrounding a particular site or topic that impacts a larger study area or jurisdiction. Panelists analyze community and neighborhood goals, consider land-use strategies in the context of preliminary feasibility analysis, and make recommendations for next steps.

The sponsor organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and presenting it to the panel. TAP members typically spend a day and a half developing an understanding of the problem, generating recommendations, and presenting findings to the sponsoring organization.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Committee Chair

ULI Charlotte's TAP Committee is chaired by Jessica Rossi of Kimley-Horn. The committee is responsible for the marketing, review, and implementation of the Technical Assistance Panels. When a TAP is engaged, the committee selects volunteer members of ULI who most appropriately fit the engagement objectives and provide a wide variety of experiences.

TAP Panelists

Full biographical sketches are included in the appendix to this report. Panelists for this study were:

Panel Chair

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Panelists

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DL Howard Consulting Group

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ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

Engagement

ULI Charlotte received a grant from The JPB Foundation to participate in the ULI District Council Cohort for Park Equity (CPE), a program managed by ULI to advance equitable access to parks and open space in cities throughout the United States. ULI Charlotte partnered with the City of Charlotte's Economic Development Department - Corridors of Opportunity team to analyze trail development opportunities in the Albemarle Road Corridor, one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Charlotte.

Project Scope

In 2020, the City of Charlotte launched the Corridors of Opportunity program to provide job creation, high-quality services, and viable, long-term career paths for residents in six main neighborhoods located along roadway corridors throughout the city. The six corridors have systemically high unemployment and poverty rates and have been identified as focus areas for special economic

development. The city selected the Albemarle Road Corridor as a key priority through the Corridors of Opportunity program and conducted a robust study and community engagement process within the neighborhood to understand challenges and needs. The city summarized findings from the study and community engagement process in the [Albemarle Road Corridor Playbook](#), which identifies next steps along with potential funding sources and partnerships.

One key idea from the community engagement process was the concept of a cultural trail that would provide multi-modal transportation for residents while celebrating the neighborhood's cultural and ethnic diversity. The City of Charlotte requested ULI's assistance in further exploring the cultural trail concept by identifying key destinations along the trail (including anchor tenants, developments, transit stops, and job centers) and a potential location for the trail.



With an intention of harnessing inclusivity along the Albemarle Road Corridor, the TAP identified how equity, health and open space can be incorporated into the trail while including the surrounding neighborhoods' international culture and vibrancy. The TAP panelists refined the details for alternative open space and connectivity options that offer safe and equitable access to jobs, housing, retail, entertainment, education, and other desirable destinations along the corridor.

What is a Cultural Trail?

A cultural trail is an active transportation facility (regular trail) with additional focus on the reflection of the authentic history and character of the community it flows through. Cultural trails are often found as links between urban nodes and along a pedestrian path and linear parks. This linkage provides safe mobility for all citizens to engage and participate in the local economy while serving as a catalyst for economic growth.

According to the panel, a cultural trail can:

- Serve as a real transportation option to **connect citizens to both essential services and community amenities.**
- Connect to existing and planned greenway trail systems to allow users to **move around the community for mobility and leisure.**
- **Spur economic development** to support individual businesses and the commercial needs of the area.
- **Celebrate the history and character** of the area.

Why a Cultural Trail within the Albemarle Road Corridor?

The Albemarle Road Corridor, with over 50 languages and over 60 countries representing a rising refugee community, is well known as Charlotte's most diverse corridor. While it possesses a strong vehicular spine with existing commercial spaces, the community transportation needs are not met, and the business

community is experiencing decline. The panel heard the following two critical elements from the community:

1. It is important to have safe transportation options along the Albemarle Road Corridor.
2. There is a lot of pride in the diversity of the corridor and it would be a missed opportunity not to embrace that diversity as part of the way people experience the community as they walk and bike through the corridor.

A significant opportunity exists for multicultural engagement and providing a thoughtful built environment to be enjoyed by residents. The corridor has the physical ability to leverage a trail and adjoining new development. The revitalization of the Albemarle Road Corridor presents an opportunity to empower the city's local workforce while supporting economic mobility for the region's newest residents.

Over the years, the Albemarle Road Corridor has attracted a diverse demographic of residents as 80% are non-White or Caucasian, including 36% Black and 31% Hispanic or Latino. The median household income of the Albemarle Road area is \$46,000, compared to the city's \$69,000. For decades, government investment in public spaces overlooked low-income neighborhoods and communities of color like this area, but the Albemarle Road Corridor Cultural Trail is the opportunity to make a significant investment to improve mobility, leisure, and economic stability in a diverse community.

With an opportunity to expand on Charlotte's campaign of becoming a "world class city" and its reputation of championing multiculturalism, public art, and authentic community engagement, the Albemarle Road Cultural Trail serves as a multifaceted investment that would provide access to the outdoors and the mainstream economy while meeting the post-COVID demand for more open spaces and unique experiences.

Unique Qualities Albemarle Road Presents for a Cultural Trail

The panel identified the following qualities that support the feasibility of an Albemarle Road Cultural Trail:

- **Regional draw** for international food and cuisine.
- **Refugee welcomeness and cultivation** exceeds all other areas of the Charlotte region, despite a high transient population. Former residents return to the area as a place of comfort and refuge for new American families. Additionally, the welcome center at the Simmons YMCA offers a centralized location for a variety of cultures.
- **Historical significance** of the name "Albemarle." Nathaniel Batts, also known as "Albemarle," was the first English explorer to become a settler in North Carolina after purchasing his land from the American Indians in 1660. Having traded with the Indians since the 1650s, Batts set an example of fair dealing and friendship with people of different origins.
- **Family friendly environment** with 26% of the population being children under the age of 18.
- **Strong community-led organizations** such as business chambers, neighborhood associations, and religious institutions have created trust with residents.
- **Proximity to natural areas that** receive routine maintenance from local municipalities, including Campbell Creek Greenway, Evergreen Nature Preserve, and Albemarle Road Park.
- Additional **amenities and open space** in and around the community (some privately owned), including small bodies of water and open space.
- **Properties available** for redevelopment, offering high traffic providing high visibility along the corridor.
- **Variety of religious institutions** that have created trust with residents.
- Significant **reinvestment** along the corridor anchored by the Eastland Mall redevelopment project.

- **Small vestiges of open space** ripe for redevelopment, noting adjacent **housing options near and within NOAH** (naturally occurring affordable housing) multifamily properties, institutional uses, empty lots and city and state right-a-way.

Key Attributes of a Cultural Trail

As outlined in the Briefing Book provided to the TAP panelists by the City of Charlotte, the primary components of a cultural trail as defined by residents, elected officials, and city staff are as follows:

- key destinations at least every quarter mile along a walkable and shared use path;
- trail connections that reflect the proximate communities;
- experiential driven commerce such as restaurants and live music venues;
- arts and cultural engagement;
- series of experiences along a bike and walking network;
- connect arts, nature, and unique characteristics of the community;
- captures sense of place; and
- intentionally rooted in the existing culture.

What We Learned

Albemarle Road's Challenges

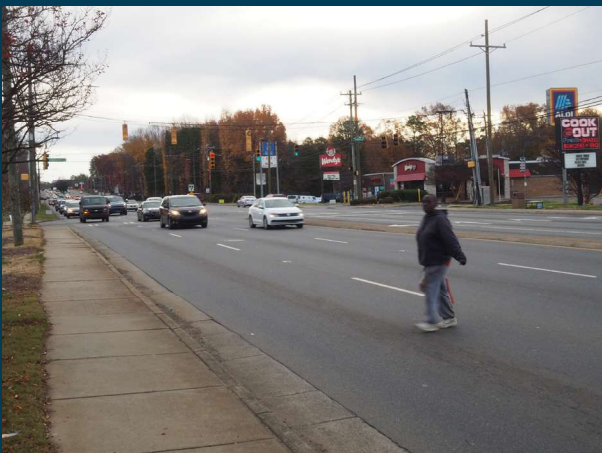
Like many communities in Charlotte and throughout the Carolinas, the development patterns of Albemarle Road and Central Avenue are car-oriented, low-density and singular landuse, and these are dangerous for pedestrians seeking to access essential goods and services. The corridor was defined by local stakeholders to be a high transit and pedestrian active corridor, but it lacks many necessary components, such as midblock crossings and wide sidewalks. While the corridor's median area provides opportunity for

beautification with street trees and plantings, it also creates a false sense of security for pedestrians who often cross the road midblock and are visually shielded from oncoming cars. Albemarle Road is a state-owned road also known as North Carolina State Highway 27. As a result, the state operates and maintains the roadway, rather than the City of Charlotte.

2. With over 50 languages spoken along the corridor, it's a challenging task to engage with varying languages and cultures. Also, the businesses within the area often struggle due to the depressed incomes along the corridor.
3. Relationships across various bodies of local government can be a challenge but will be necessary to execute with success. The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County don't always act in sync, but their partnership will be required to deliver and operate a new project of this scale. It appeared during the panel research that the low- to mid- management levels at both jurisdictions were on board to work together on this project.
4. Historically, the synergy between North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT)

has been a challenge. Because much of the state consists of rural communities while Charlotte remains the most densely populated metropolitan city in North Carolina, the needs and desires are vastly different than other cities.

NCDOT sees Albemarle Road as a six-lane highway and important connector from Eastern North Carolina to Independence Highway and Charlotte's Center City. Moving vehicles efficiently and safely through the corridor, especially at peak demand, is the primary objective for NCDOT. Albemarle Road is classified as an avenue on Charlotte's Street Map with an average daily traffic count over 40,000 (based on NCDOT's website). Like many busy roadways in Charlotte, rear-end collisions create daily hazards for drivers and challenges for NCDOT and CDOT. The existing cross section of Albemarle Road within the study area contains six (6) 9-10' lanes, turn lanes, five-foot sidewalks, and a variable width median. Numerous curb cuts along the entire study area compound the congestion and contribute to the collisions. Current restrictions to the size of the Albemarle Right-of-way prevent additional lanes and multimodal paths. Further



Example of pedestrian crossing Albemarle Road with high levels of oncoming traffic.



A high-transit corridor capable of connecting people to job centers such as Executive Center Drive.



study is warranted to create a cross section that would accommodate vehicles and other modes. During the TAP, representatives from NCDOT shared that the road is on a list to receive future investments. NCDOT is conducting a thorough traffic count study for the corridor to determine the feasibility of reducing the number of lanes to five, with a turning lane. With the absence of a turn lane, drivers often make illegal and unsafe U-turns in the midblock, throughout the corridor.

6. Although pedestrian activity is a high-priority for CDOT, the corridor is listed as having high levels of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian injuries compared to other areas of Charlotte. With few dedicated crossings, pedestrians are often forced to jay-walk across the busy highway to access public transportation on both sides of the corridor.

Recommendations: Existing Built Environment of Albemarle Road

A cultural trail would be a valuable amenity to the area, offering multi-modal connectivity that could catalyze redevelopment efforts. The panel recommends the city partner with NCDOT to re-imagine the six-lane road section of the corridor to support redevelopment opportunities while increasing safety and connectivity for pedestrians. The reduction of a lane provides space for a shared use path ranging from eight to ten feet wide. It will be key for the city and NCDOT to understand the

impacts to adjacent land uses to determine if any additional right-of-way may be available to accommodate a multi-use trail. While all the impacts are not clearly understood at this level, the benefits could allow for a singular park-and-walk experience for residents and shoppers visiting the corridor.

During interviews with stakeholders, the panel realized the corridor has a host of partnerships that present potential for major impact to increase the quality of life for residents through trail and transit-oriented redevelopment within the next decade. Within the Assets section below, we will expand on the panel's observations and recommendations of current assets along the corridor.



Multiple small commercial strips present affordable opportunities for neighborhood serving businesses and redevelopment opportunities to attract higher income shoppers from surrounding neighborhoods.

Equity = Access + Influence + Opportunity

Equity Observations: A Trail for All

The Albemarle Road Corridor is culturally, socioeconomically, and generationally diverse. The large immigrant and refugee population represents 60+ countries. Informally, the neighborhood is known as an international hub, with a variety of small businesses that serve the culturally diverse community. For 14 years, the neighborhood hosted the "Taste of the World" food festival, which drew visitors from across the city to sample the corridor's many international cuisines. Today, local stakeholders feel additional resources are needed to fulfill and sustain the vision of being an international hub that consistently draws visitors from across the region for a unique experience.

The corridor's renowned diversity is evidenced by a creative placemaking project on nearby Central Avenue. Led by residents and a local artist, the project showcases each country's flag on a city-owned garbage can. According to the Quality-of-Life Explorer (as of 2020), 44% of housing units in the area were owner-occupied, compared to 56.4% across Mecklenburg County, offering a good mixture of homeowners and renters in the corridor. The average sales price of homes was \$203,000 compared to \$366,000 across Mecklenburg County, leaving room for home value appreciation. Adding equitable infrastructure investments will help increase generational wealth among homeowners and forthcoming first-time homebuyers. As greenways and trails continue to be one of the most requested amenities of homebuyers, the orientation of a trail will increase the desirability of the area's single-family housing stock.

Although the business community is diverse, we heard

from local stakeholders that even more variety is desired, including national restaurant and retail chains. Also, the panel noted the pool of neighborhood leaders and champions should be cultivated to expand its diversity to be more reflective of present cultures and demographics.

Equity Recommendations: A Trail for All

The panel recommends centering equity in decision-making about the cultural trail. The trail's accessibility for all residents will improve quality of life and economic mobility outcomes. With equitable decision-making, the entire community receives opportunities to improve economic, education, and health standards. Well known neighborhood redevelopments such as the SouthPark Loop and Ballantyne Reimagined are underway in predominantly white neighborhoods. The families around the Albemarle Corridor seek similar access and connectivity.

Health: Conduit for Healthy Living

Various anchor institutions, neighborhood business associations, and small business leaders serving the community gathered to share how the built environment impacts their community's health and well-being. Stakeholders highlighted the eagerness of business owners to see a heightened level of public investment and resources to enable widespread success and access to opportunity.

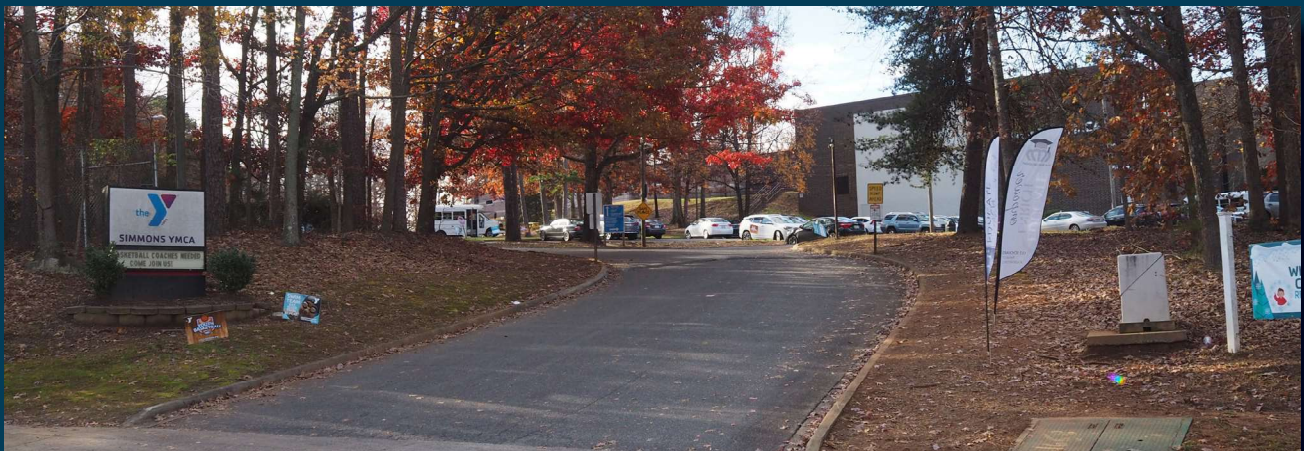
The Simmons YMCA shows its commitment to supporting the health and well-being of the community with its robust program offerings, including a fitness center, childcare, indoor and outdoor pools, an amphitheater, waterpark, and group exercise classes. Like other YMCAs within core neighborhoods in Charlotte, the

facility sees high use, but membership rates are low. A financial barrier likely limits the community's access to memberships that provide access to exercise equipment and facilities. The gap in membership revenue threatens the sustainability of this valuable neighborhood business, thus the health outcomes for residents.

As a reflection of the existing community, the YMCA offers an on-site New American Welcome Center that is a shining star along the corridor. With a focus on language and education, employment, health and well-being, citizenship and civic engagement, and community development, the YMCA seeks to empower immigrants to achieve their full potential. This programming makes Simmons YMCA an integral part of the community, providing key resources to new residents who may otherwise feel out-of-place in their new homes. While the YMCA provides an important benefit to the community, the panel observed that the center is difficult to access without a car. Since a high

proportion of residents walk and use public transportation, investments should be made to connect this community amenity with the rest of the corridor.

Several businesses and services support the health and public safety of the Albemarle community. The corridor has a strong presence of medical offices, urgent care clinics, and pharmacies. Recently, newly constructed police and fire stations were completed on the eastern end of the corridor near Albemarle Road Elementary School and Albemarle Road Middle School. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children have at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Yet, more than 80% of adolescents in the United States do not achieve this minimum, and more than 25% of adults report no leisure-time physical activity. This issue is exacerbated in the southeast region of the country where neighborhoods are primarily developed to be car-centric. Therefore, the various parks and open spaces that are present throughout the corridor are not easily



"If there is no affordable childcare nor access to transit for the residents of the East Corridor, connecting them to other corridors in the Charlotte Region, any efforts will constantly be lagging behind! Whatever we do at the Simmons Y needs to be connected to a more robust or customized Transit Service Schedule by CATS or an additional provider, while providing wrap around services like Childcare and After School and Mental Health Support for families whose heads of household have more than one job."

- Astrid Chirinos, Executive Director of the Simmons YMCA

accessible for residents. With a modern approach of re-introducing walkability, the issue of lack of physical activity among the youth could be extinguished by making it easier for families with children to access greenspace and parks by foot.

Residents expressed their dismay with the current infrastructure as it does not promote health through the possibility of physical activity. Most streets have insufficient sidewalks and bike lanes for walkable access to essential services. For further context to the physical disconnectedness of the community, the panelists observed the absence of sidewalks or access points between the neighborhood elementary and middle schools with the YMCA. To attend nearby afterschool programs, children must walk along a heavy traffic road or take a bus less than one mile away. This limits families' experience of living in a well-designed village-minded community of modern communities with active transit. Together, YMCA and neighborhood schools have 54 acres of land with oversized parking lots and bisecting tree buffers, limiting the highest and best use for the collective acreage. Each anchor institution is grounded in wellness, lifelong education, and citizenship, and all are nearby and offer substantial resources to the community. However, all are challenged by limited direct connectivity.

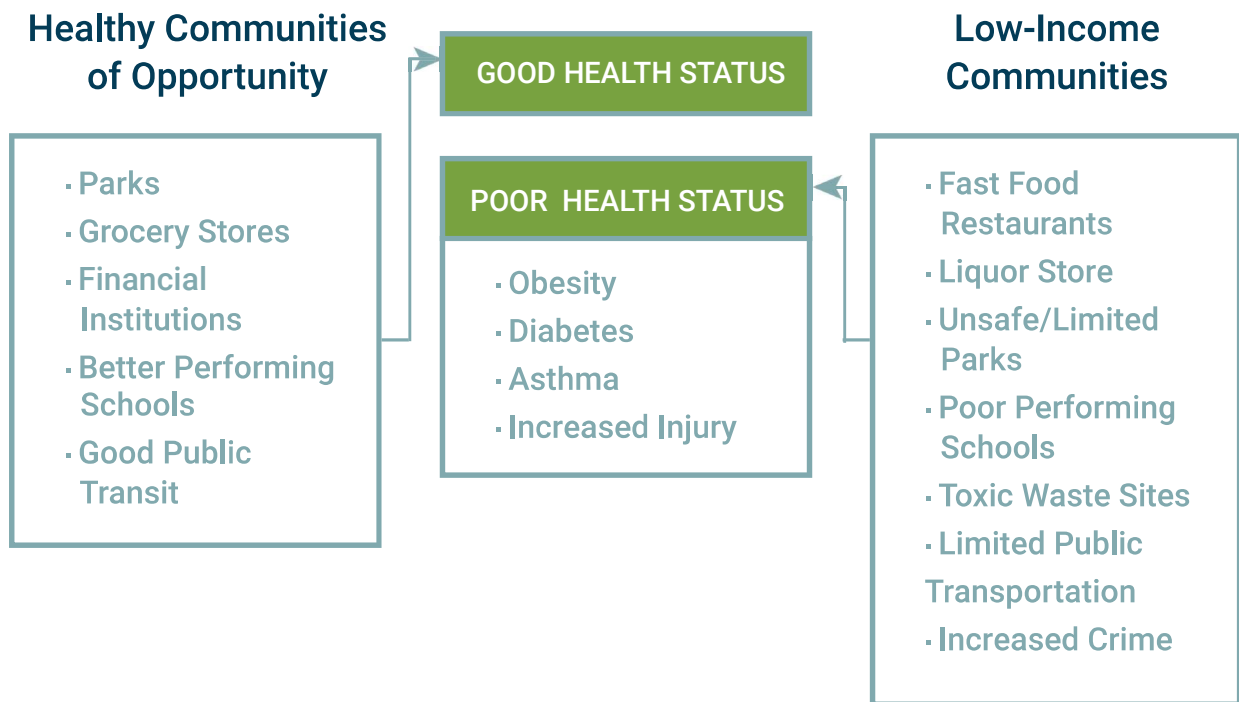
Health Recommendations: Conduit for Healthy Living

After observation, the panel affirms leaders' intentionality of centering the health of residents by making healthy choices easier for everyone. As accessibility to trails and open spaces increases community health, leaders should include direct and intentional health promotion opportunities and education along the trail. The panel suggests partnering with an external consultant to conduct a

health impact assessment. Below is a link to the CDC's Parks and Trails Health Impact Assessment Toolkit that could be used to measure collective impacts and apply for grant funding that could be leveraged to construct the trail: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/parks_trails/default.htm.

As part of increasing community health, the safety concerns expressed by residents and business owners should be addressed. The panel noted that health and safety expand beyond injury prevention. Health and well-being include mental health, social connectedness, and chronic disease prevention for all residents, no matter their citizenship status. The economic stability and growth of this vital portion of Charlotte is dependent on the health and well-being of all its residents.

In using equitable language, the panel recommends transforming communities from a "poor health status" plagued by obesity, diabetes, asthma, and increased injury to a "good health status" absent of those conditions by transitioning low-income communities to healthy communities of opportunity. As depicted in the chart below, the built environment and types of businesses occupying those spaces determines the health status of the community.



ULI's Building Healthy Places Initiative Outlines 10 Key Principles for Healthy Corridors

1. Use the lens of health to convene stakeholders.
2. Understand the context of the corridor and determine how jurisdictional boundaries affect the corridor.
3. Analyze and understand the corridor's development potential; rethink land uses and zoning that are incompatible with community needs.
4. Proactively address transportation and infrastructure challenges.
5. Leverage anchor institutions as key partners (including hospitals, major employers, and universities).
6. Identify champions; redeveloping the corridor in a holistically healthy way will require many partners.
7. Engage proactively with communities along the corridor and put in place strategies to prevent residential displacement.
8. Engage with business owners and landowners; local businesses that serve the corridor should remain and thrive.
9. Facilitate healthy food access through retail and policy solutions.
10. There is no one source of funding; seek out multiple opportunities from public and private sources.

The 10 Key Principles can be achieved through various changes to the built environment, including:

Design and land use patterns that support community needs:

- buildings pulled up to sidewalks
- improved parking strategies
- housing options
- vibrant retail environment
- high-quality parks and public spaces
- healthy food options.

Engaged and supported people who live, work, and travel along the corridor:

- regular programs in the community gathering spaces
- accommodations for pets
- a defined identity
- measures to address safety and perceptions of safety
- engaged residents and local business owners
- organizations that facilitate long-term improvements and resident engagement.

Linkages to other parts of the city:

- well-connected, multimodal street networks
- safe and easily identifiable connections, including sidewalks and trails
- transit, including enhanced bus service or rail
- bike infrastructure.

Improved infrastructure:

- safe and well-marked pedestrian crossings
- traffic speeds conducive to pedestrians and other users
- utility lines and traffic signs and signals that are underground or that blend in
- sidewalks wide enough for a variety of users, buffered from the street, and unobstructed
- streetscapes that add visual interest and safety, with trees and green buffers



Streetscape with protected sidewalk in Seattle, Washington



Bump outs reduce the crossing distance and enhance pedestrian safety.



Planted buffers protect sidewalks from traffic.



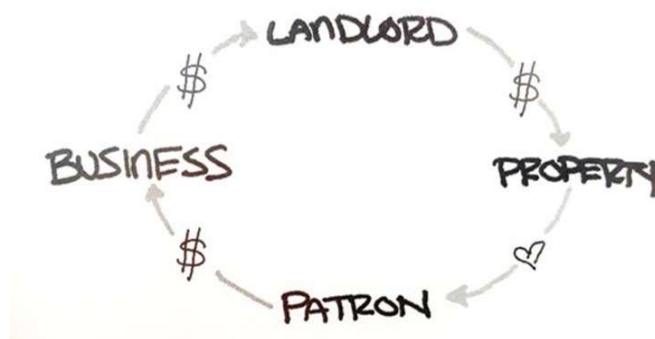
Retail businesses pulled up to sidewalks help foster a dynamic street environment.



Wide sidewalks offer ample space for seating areas.

Economic Drivers: Trail Investment + Cycle of Affordability

Many stakeholders referenced a love for the existing businesses and the previously celebrated Taste of the World food festival, but those businesses are struggling as they do not have enough patrons with high levels of disposable income and their operation costs are high due to the inflated economy. With declining revenue streams, landlords cannot capture enough rent from their tenant base to make property improvements. Out-of-date or unsafe properties tend to see fewer customers, leading to less revenue for the business. This negative cycle is difficult to break and limits the economic mobility of the entire community. To break the cycle, an external entity, such as a municipality, could seed funds that shift the cycle from decline to progress.



A panelist's doodle above demonstrates the economic cycle.

In discussion with business associations along the corridor, the panel learned that commercial strip owners want more types of tenants that can produce a wider variety of jobs. The residents and neighborhood associations also want more jobs located along or near the corridor. Affected by a labor shortage, transit improvements and offerings from Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) to connect residents with other nearby job dense corridors are constrained.

While occupying space in the 1980s office park along Executive Center Drive, the panel noted the large building stock that is poised for redevelopment and envisioned a regenerated corridor of innovation and collaboration sitting adjacent to the Campbell Creek Greenway. With a collection of small and mid-size businesses, along with strong organizations in the neighborhood, a reimagined business park could support upward mobility efforts for existing residents and those who travel through the corridor to access jobs Uptown. In a post-COVID real estate market, analysts predict businesses moving away from costly central business district offices to office park environments where employees can take advantage of hybrid work locations, reduce their commute times, and be near community amenities. With a few modern updates such as replacing the tinted glass windows with low-E clear windows, the office park along Executive Center Drive could be a great location for high-growth industries paying livable wages. Similar modern upfits and new office construction has taken place in other Charlotte communities such as Plaza Midwood to help drive commercial development and office relocation as shown in the redevelopment of a U.S. Postal Service building pictured below.



Commercial office building along The Plaza Road with modern upfits such as low-E glass windows.

Economic Drivers Recommendations: Trail Investment + Cycle of Affordability

As the City of Charlotte has already identified several goals in the Corridor Playbook for Albemarle Road, the panel chose to highlight the goals leaders should start on immediately. These goals include:

Target opportunity employers to locate and expand in the corridors. As this area has available space including executive office parks and vacant land, locating large businesses in renewed spaces should be considered.

Spark commercial real estate development and redevelopment within the corridors. The cultural trail would be a stimulus for private investment, as seen with Charlotte's greenway system and Lynx light rail and in peer cities with mild climates such as Durham's planned Belt Line and Atlanta's existing Belt Line. Private dollars will follow the public dollars.

Assist corridor residents with overcoming barriers to employment and accessing career and economic opportunities. The trail will be a means to get residents to employment in the corridor and to transportation hubs for employment outside. The hub at the Eastland Mall site is already highly used and could be even more effective if residents had a safe and convenient route to get to it.

CASE STUDY: Durham Belt Line City Place and Erwin Oil Redevelopment



Durham Belt Line Trail Project Area Map

The Durham Belt Line is in the planning stage and has already attracted several private redevelopment projects. One of the panelists is the developer for a mixed-use redevelopment project along the Durham Belt Line with retail, multi-family apartments, and a pocket park, all designed to engage with the future trail. The mere planning of the public trail provided a renewed energy that private developers flocked to and is resulting in active commercial, housing, and entertainment environments for the community.



Site plan for the City Place and Erwin Oil redevelopment along the Durham Belt Line.



Front elevation rendering for the Wye Apartments and pocket park along the future Durham Belt Line. Not pictured but included in the project is the preservation of the City Place commercial building.

Programming and Participation Matters

The panelists conveyed the importance of investing in programming along the trails, which leads to activation and an enhanced sense of community pride. This point was evidenced by the Edna's Porch creative placemaking project along the Lynx Blue Line Light Rail. As depicted below, this reimagined parcel of land adjacent to a mid-rise apartment community is now a vibrant asset that brings people together from all walks of life.



Before picture of Edna's Porch along the Lynx Blue Line Light Rail.



After picture of Edna's Porch along the Lynx Blue Line Light Rail.

While it falls outside the TAP scope, the prevention of displacement is a critical component that must be contemplated responsibly. Proactive policy intervention is needed to address the consequences of the trail's economic development success. Policies should be intentionally driven to serve existing community members who make this corridor unique and vibrant.

Engagement: Diverse Community Participation

The city is committed to engaging the corridor's diverse community, as shown by the robust engagement process it hosted while developing the Albemarle Road Playbook. The production of the Corridors of Opportunity playbook featured 50 unique opportunities for stakeholder engagement. The city constantly expressed the importance of elevating the various cultures within the corridor that would inform an immense amount of community investment. Yet, in discussions with stakeholders and leaders, the panel learned that community engagement with this diverse community can be challenging, with a vast number of dialects and cultural norms represented.

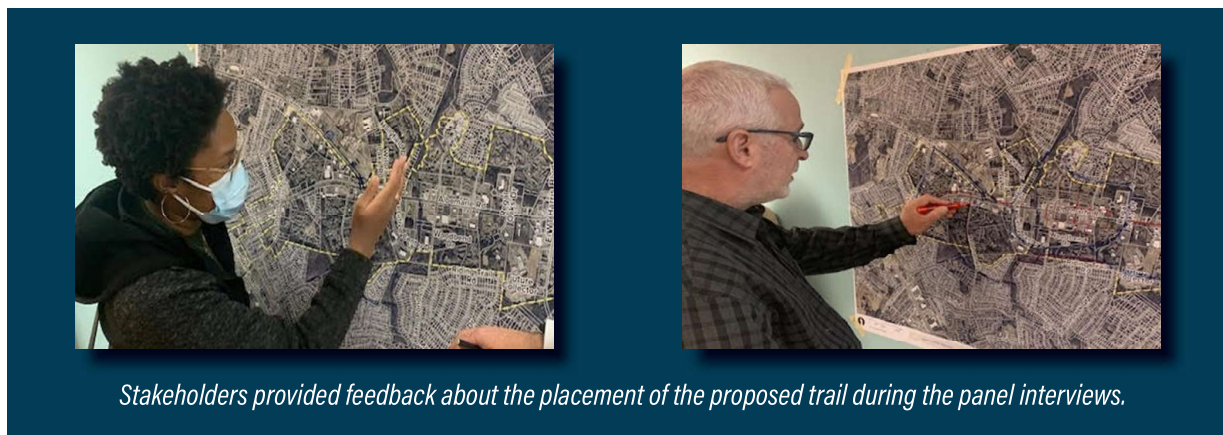
Engagement Recommendations: Diverse Community Participation

As the development of a cultural trail could catalyze significant change along the corridor, community engagement must be consistent and continuous. Equitable community engagement is a process that seeks the community's input to ensure well-informed decision-making and cooperative, trusting relationships. It must be representative of the community's geography, ethnicity, age, gender, and other diverse characteristics. The city and its partners should consider some key points for more robust community engagement:

- **shift the engagement paradigm:** Why are we not hearing from certain/all populations?
- **center marginalized populations:** How have the social constructs of racism, classism, and xenophobia been contributing factors in decision-making?

- **consider intersectionality:** How do we respect the various and cross-cutting social identities of community members and the community at large?
- **consider the historical context of the community:** What harm was done in the past that can help reduce harm in the future?
- **engage with the communities in ways that center their lived experiences:** How can communities' lived experiences inspire and inform our outcomes?

The panelist recommends the city identify a trusted champion to lead engagement efforts to remain consistent and continuous throughout this redevelopment process. That champion needs to be extremely intentional in the inclusion of all stakeholders through engagement and implementation to ensure the improvements are for all.

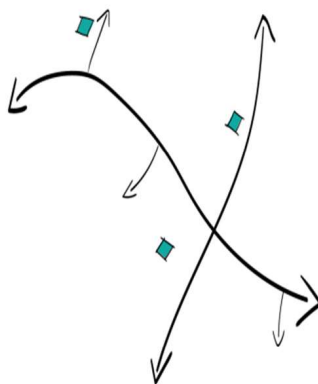


A Plan with Options

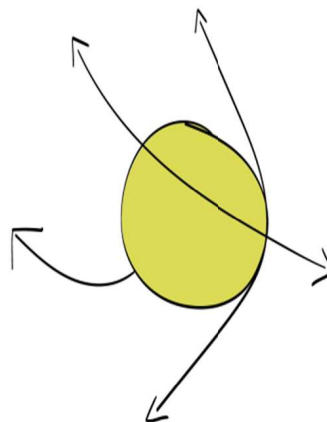
Since stakeholders had a significant amount of context and enthusiasm about the possibility of a cultural trail, panelists asked attendees to draw out their vision for the trail.

After reflection on the drawings, discussions about previous experiences, case studies, and learnings from the stakeholder interviews, the panel recommended several plan options for the city to consider.

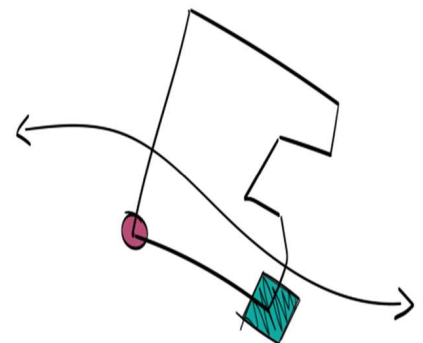
- The Spine + Fingers
- The Loop + Fingers
- Zig-Zag: Urban Retrofit



A Spine with Fingers



B Loop with Fingers



C Zig-Zag

- **consider intersectionality:** How do we respect the various and cross-cutting social identities of community members and the community at large?
- **consider the historical context of the community:** What harm was done in the past that can help reduce harm in the future?
- **engage with the communities in ways that center their lived experiences:** How can communities' lived experiences inspire and inform our outcomes?

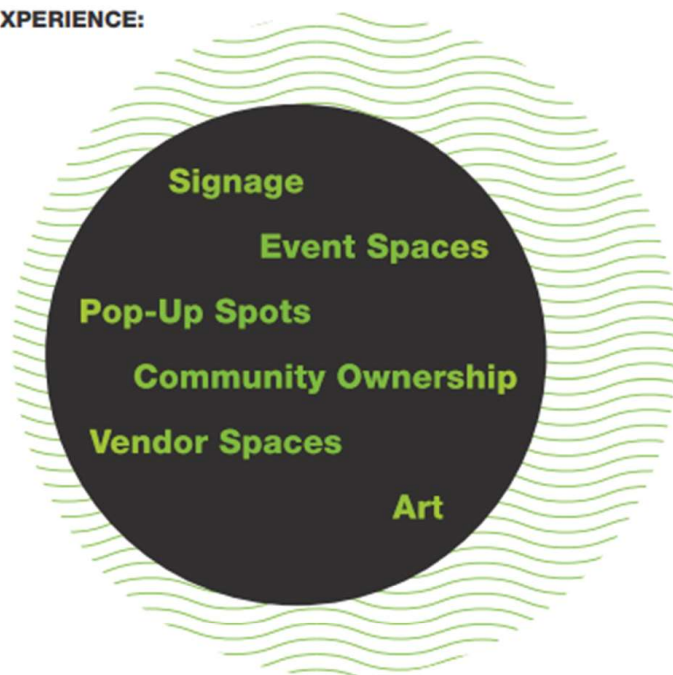
The panelist recommends the city identify a trusted champion to lead engagement efforts to remain consistent and continuous throughout this redevelopment process. That champion needs to be extremely intentional in the inclusion of all stakeholders through engagement and implementation to ensure the improvements are for all.

Cultural Experience

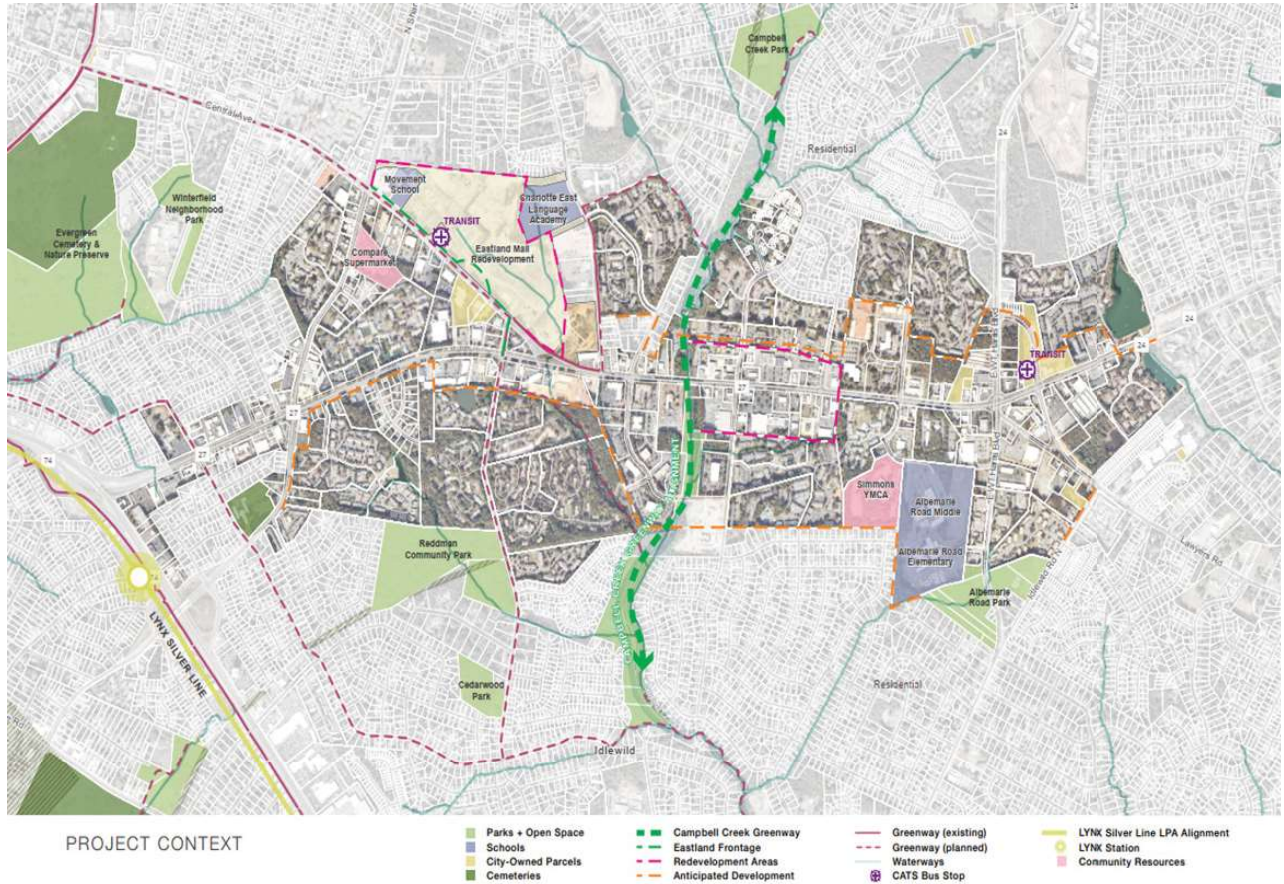
A rich cultural experience within the trail can be achieved with the design options identified by the panel. With either option the city and leaders choose, the importance of programmatic ideas and influences would be vital to the success of the cultural trail. All stakeholders need to continue collaborating with each other and outside partners, adding value to keep the spaces and places active and vibrant and creating an environment that draws new energy and a circular economy desired by residents and businesses.

As the existing residents possess strong values of community ownership and a do-it-yourself mentality, there should be nods throughout the cultural trail toward this lifestyle. As this area is a haven for New Americans that may live in other areas of the region, this cultural trail should have a unique distinction as a city-wide destination place. As the opportunities for redevelopment around a trail-oriented development are endless and continuing to emerge as the most requested modern amenity, the malleable nature of this effort is profound.

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE:



With the Eastland Mall mixed-use planned urban redevelopment, a large amount of mapping and catalyzing efforts have raised capital for public and private open spaces. With Albemarle Road's 1980s nuances seen in the garden-style walk-up apartments, ponds and fountains, the ability to champion a nature-oriented corridor is promising for developers looking for redevelopment opportunities near the corridor. Below is a map that features the various parks, potential greenways, schools, city-owned parcels, Lynx Silver Line Light Rail, and other proximate assets in relation to the proposed cultural trail.



The Spine + Fingers Concept

The Spine

The Spine is the exclusive of other ideas that can be shaped with two options. The Spine begins on Central Avenue, just a few blocks north of Winterfield Neighborhood Park, and travels east past the North Sharon Amity Road intersection and Eastland Mall redevelopment before adjoining Albemarle Road. Then, the Spine travels eastward on Albemarle Road, just past the Lawyers Road intersection. The McAlpine Creek Greenway crosscuts the Spine by running perpendicular to Albemarle Road, allowing fluid connectivity for pedestrians and bikers along the trail traveling from surrounding neighborhoods.

The first and most preferred option is being informed by a road diet that fully separates the multiple proposed uses – walking and biking. A road diet is a roadway reconfiguration that involves narrowing or eliminating travel lanes to calm traffic and increase safety of all roadway users. The second option is to retrofit the existing infrastructure with varied width that allows existing curbs to remain.

Preferred Method for the Spine

The Spine would physically define the cultural trail, a visual message of the city's investment into the corridor. As a true means of active transportation, the Spine would support healthier lifestyles for safe walking and biking along the corridor to enable residents to reach essential and entertainment destinations. With an increase in pedestrians, there would be greater need for safe block crossings spread along the corridor to effectively help reduce hazardous jaywalking.

With heightened foot traffic and connectivity, the support for existing small, neighborhood businesses would allow commercial landowners to receive greater profits to make improvements to their properties. The influence of heavier pedestrian activity and connectivity would also celebrate the car-free lifestyle often experienced in immigrants' native communities. Reducing the usage of cars would also support Charlotte's goal of becoming a low carbon city by 2050.

A thorough road diet would support the reimagining of separated facilities that could equally prioritize all modes of transportation. With the limited time for the TAP, the panel did not make specific road diet recommendations; however, the panel agreed that walking and biking trails should be raised and completely separated from motorized traffic, as shown in the graphics below.



Retrofit Method for the Spine

The cultural trail's multi-use path can also have varied widths to allow for the existing curbs to remain. An anticipated savings on demolition and reconstruction should allow for a quicker, cheaper, and more feasible option for leaders should they be inspired to act quickly. With a retrofit approach, leaders can still accomplish a raised trail separated from motorized traffic, but the ability to separate pedestrians from bikers would be limited and does not provide the most ideal experience for all stakeholders.



Albemarle Road's existing sidewalk conditions.



Albemarle Road's redeveloped sidewalk conditions and consequential development.

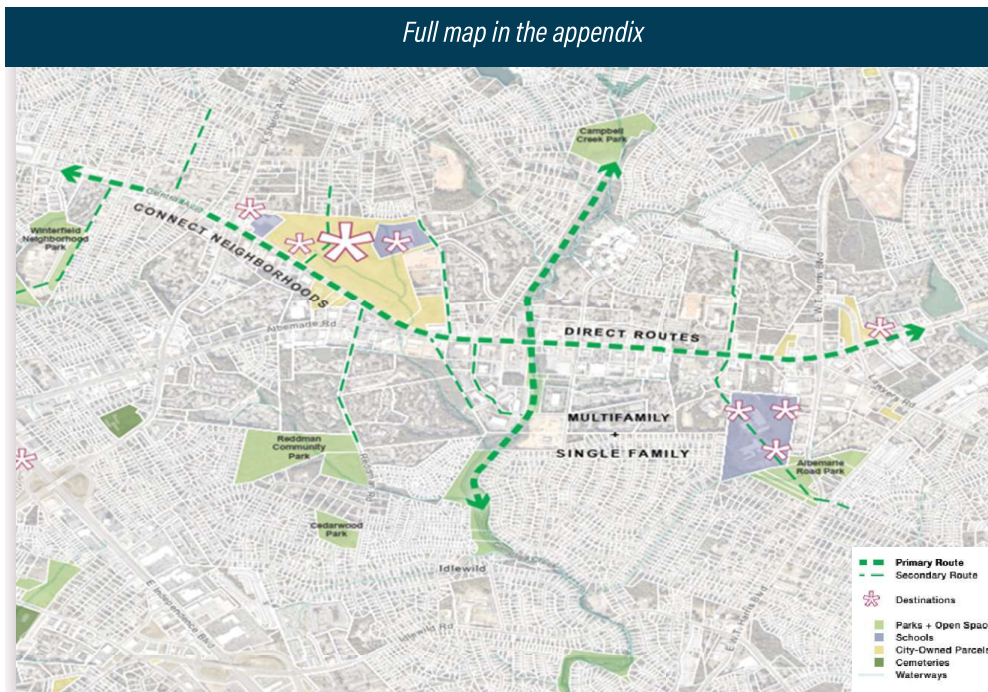


For a better driving experience, the panel also recommends level-of-service improvements at traffic signals. During the TAP, panelists experienced extended wait times for drivers to turn from Farm Pond Lane to Albemarle Road during rush hour traffic. To protect drivers, walkers, and bikers, a thorough access management analysis to the Spine is recommended. The Spine should be a value-add to the thoroughfare and not a burden.

With creative freedom, leaders should aim to celebrate quirky, authentic and non-uniform experiences since the multi-use path would not be held to NCDOT rules. The trail represents an opportunity to express the creative nature of the city's diverse artists and energy of a prominent New South city.

The Spine + Fingers Concept Drawing with Existing Destinations

Respecting the work previously done by stakeholders and the drawings provided by interviewees, the panel created a concept that would connect fingers to the Spine. As you will find in the concept images, this infrastructure idea connects the people to the Albemarle Road corridor and addresses real transportation holes experienced by residents. The fingers are positioned throughout the corridor to connect large populations of residents and businesses to a proximate shared use path that leads to the Spine. The Spine starts from the highly developed Central Avenue and continues down to the Eastland redevelopment that houses an existing Community Transit Center. The highly utilized Community Transit Center includes passenger shelters with information, a landscaped open-air plaza, driver's comfort station, and pedestrian pathways.



The next proposed finger after the Eastland community at Reddman Road would connect residents living in the various multi-family communities to the Spine. During the panel's interview with CDOT, the leaders proposed reimagining a triangular parcel bisecting Central Avenue, Albemarle Road, and Reddman Road into an open space plaza with over 50 flags representing the corridor's diversity and serving as a front door to the Eastland community and Albemarle Road. The parcels are owned by Fifth Third Bank and a private owner that leases spaces to Atrium Health as an urgent care facility. The panelists believe both land uses could be relocated into the Eastland community as anchor tenants for the developer while providing essential services to the community.

In efforts to maximize the investment Mecklenburg County has committed to the development of Campbell Creek Greenway, the panel suggests it as the next finger along the Spine. This proposed finger would not only leverage public infrastructure dollars, but also connect the commercial business park on Executive Center Drive, the Farm Pond Lane Elementary School under construction, and single-family subdivisions such as Idlewild Farms. This level of connectivity allows for families to walk their children to school on the way to work, providing connectivity to a broader greenway and trails network and increasing existing property values.

The final proposed finger along the Spine would start at Albemarle Road Presbyterian Church, which serves as a strong partner to the surrounding community, is the front door to both Albemarle Road Elementary and Middle schools and is easily connectable to Simmons YMCA and the critically acclaimed New American Center. With the Greater Charlotte YMCA's continuance of redeveloping inner core branches, this proposed finger could serve as a major destination for residents seeking to connect to resources, open soccer fields, and faith-based activities.

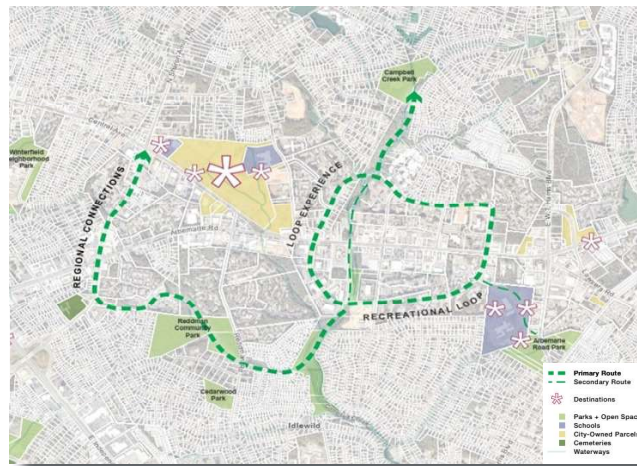
With over 60 countries represented throughout the corridor, each finger could be culturally unique so residents can see themselves in the built environment, instilling a sense of welcomeness and pride.



From top left to bottom right: Sav/ Way Foods grocery store along the proposed trail; Delicias Restaurant is a highly regarded fresh bakery along the proposed trail; Simmons YMCA is a destination for refugees visiting the New American Center; and Albemarle Road Middle School is known as one of the most culturally diverse schools in CMS as evidenced by the mothers dressed in their native garb.

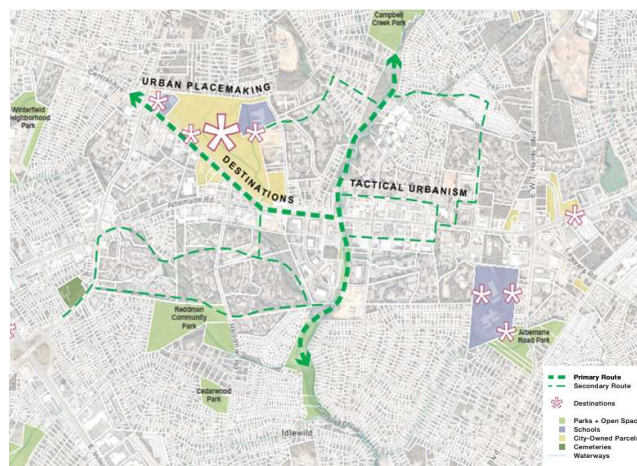
The Loop and Precedents

Another option is to arrange the cultural trail in a loop with fingers. The advantage of this design is its ability to build off the existing natural corridors. With intentional connectivity, leaders can create a hierarchical loop with pockets that celebrate various cultures. Centered around the forthcoming Campbell Creek Greenway, the Loop presents additional recreational options. The Loop also connects the main commercial strip along Albemarle Road with the culmination of the neighborhood schools, Simmons YMCA, and multiple-family residential communities, creating an internal beltline for the area. The fingers connect the surrounding single-family subdivisions with the Loop and the Sharon Amity Road corridor.



Urban Retrofit Approach and Precedents

The final option recommended for the cultural trail is an urban retrofit. With an intent to improve pedestrian and biking infrastructure to provide connectivity to existing key destinations, this option can be layered into existing development and leverages partnerships with landowners and potential redevelopment projects. The design utilizes portions of the previous two concepts, the Spine and the Campbell Creek Greenway, but also introduces smaller loops and connections to mixed use developments along the corridor. This concept recognizes that the connection to essential goods and services is paramount and adds value to existing development. With a spirit of partnership, this option would require public investment on private property to equip the area with shared-use paths while maintaining much of the present infrastructure.



This approach would have an immediate impact to highly frequented destinations such as commercial strips with adjacent land, currently vacant or underutilized. Below are a few images that displays a reimagined space beside an existing commercial strip that could host an international food fair.



Present view



Reimagined

This level of public investment on private property would spur local trail-oriented businesses along multiple paths. Residents with entrepreneurial ambitions can take advantage of the unlocked real estate along the pathways and negotiate affordable leases for businesses such as bike rental repair shops, food trucks, and creative retail. This level of public investment on private property would spur local trail-oriented businesses along multiple paths. Residents with entrepreneurial ambitions can take advantage of the unlocked real estate along the pathways and negotiate affordable leases for businesses such as bike rental repair shops, food trucks, and creative retail.



Examples of small businesses that are trail-oriented and easily accessible for entrepreneurs to deliver: bike rental and repair shop (left), and coffee and cocktail bar (right).

CATS Micro-Mobility Program

CATS estimates that 7.69% of workers in the Albemarle Road Corridor take public transportation to work. In the Envision My Ride Bus Priority Study in May 2022, the Albemarle Road Corridor is one of six identified priority bus corridors, including the highest ridership route in the CATS System (Route #9 Uptown to Albemarle Road & Harris Boulevard), for microtransit. CATS's vision will include a dedicated fleet of smaller transit vehicles hailed through the CATS Pass App. The service will operate within defined zones, bringing residents to mobility hubs such as the Eastland Transit Center and the Albemarle Park and Ride. Included in this new mobility ecosystem will be the ability to call for ride sharing services like Lyft and Uber also within defined zones to complete the first mile/last mile issues many CATS customers face each day.

**New Mobility Tool
Microtransit**

- Completes the mobility landscape
 - First / Last Mile Connections with smaller vehicles & ride share
 - On Demand Zones
 - Curb-to-Curb / Curb-to-Hub
 - App-supported interface
- Implemented across the country
 - Atlanta: MARTA
 - Dallas: DART
 - Denver: RTD

Icons include: a car, a person, a map, a smartphone, a bus, and a person with a suitcase. Text labels include: "Dedicated Provider" and "Ride Share (Lyft, Uber, Etc)".

Elevate Micro-Mobility Access

As the purpose of the cultural trail is to provide active transportation and connection, the panel recommends the new infrastructure be supplemented by various micro transit options that are smaller and more flexible than traditional, route-dependent public transportation. Branding the corridor as a vibrant international area will help the district continue The Loop also connects the main commercial strip along Albemarle Road with the culmination of the neighborhood schools, Simmons YMCA, and multiple-family residential communities, creating an internal beltline for the area. The fingers connect the surrounding single-family subdivisions with the Loop and the Sharon Amity Road corridor to attract and support diverse residents. With a keen focus on health equity, the means of active transportation will destigmatize biking and walking to destinations as acceptable activities typically found in only majority white communities.

Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) is piloting innovative transportation programs to provide equitable access for low-income populations. For example, the micro-transit initiative will support the cultural trail as the "last mile" for riders enjoying a pleasurable experience. The concept, which is already implemented in Durham, Wilson, and other cities across North Carolina, allows a passenger to request a pickup and drop-off that can connect them to existing transit lines or their destination. The CATS administrators say the concept is like ridesharing apps such as Uber or Lyft but operated by the public transit authority. The cost of a ride within certain zones is the same as a bus fare: \$2.20.

With scooter and bike share infrastructure similar to Charlotte's Uptown community, residents have more options to reach destinations and spend time with neighbors. The culmination of the cultural trail and higher quality investment in supportive infrastructure would greatly increase the quality of life experienced by residents along the corridor.

Active Programming

Inspired by the constant programming that many panelists witnessed firsthand around the Atlanta Beltline, the panel agreed this component is just as important as the cultural trail's physical infrastructure. As the Beltline is home to festivals, concerts, public art, pop-up shops, fitness classes, and a host of other activities outside of restaurants/bars and residential uses, the programming of spaces remains the highest correlative factor to its widespread success.

As stakeholders informed panelists of the grassroots success of open-air markets, food festivals, and other activities that have taken place along the Albemarle Road corridor, the opportunity to program spaces and places along the cultural trail would be met with much enthusiasm and capability.

Other Key Considerations

After myriad discussions with stakeholders, the panelists noted a list of additional considerations for leaders to ensure the success of a cultural trail and its beneficiaries:

- Get placemaking grants through Charlotte's Urban Design Center.
- Support micro-transit with the Uber-like public transportation pilot program via CATS.
- Build capacity between each organization to support the larger goals of this report.
- Create engagement -- nothing for us without us -- to reach all.
- Prioritize engagement to build consensus for phased implementation.
- Engage! Don't walk away after the cultural trail is built. Continue to program, maintain and focus on operations.
- Offer matching grants for businesses through the economic development division of city government.
- Consider master leases of ground floor.
- Adopt the 2040 Comprehensive Plan efforts.
- Champion a feasibility study to advance the concept outline with this report.
- Be incremental, allow for organic. Small wins.

The Atlanta Beltline Atlanta, GA

Below are images of the Atlanta Beltline that is a widespread success for the City of Atlanta, the surrounding neighborhoods of the beltline, and the development community.





CLOSING NOTES: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

With an intention of harnessing inclusivity along the

Albemarle Road corridor, the TAP identified how equity, health and open space can be incorporated into the trail, including the surrounding neighborhoods' international culture and vibrancy. The TAP panelists refined the details for alternative open space and connectivity options that offer safe and equitable access to jobs, housing, retail, entertainment, education, and other desirable destinations along the corridor.

"Engaging with the community around open space and trails, while elevating economic development helps the City of Charlotte get on the right track for future implementation." **City of Charlotte**

Short Term

- discussions with Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation regarding funding priorities.
- discussion with NCDOT on road diet for Albemarle Road; planning and implementation of an Open Streets festival in the corridor to invigorate equitable and healthy places (implementation grant to assist with translation services for the corridor as this is planned).

Long Term

- integration of trails into developments as the corridor is re-invigorated.
- increase health and equitable access to alternative transportation modes, prioritizing safety.

One of the TAP panel recommendations stated that equitable community engagement is a process that seeks the community's input to ensure well-informed decision-making and cooperative and trusting relationships. It must be representative of the community's geography, race/ethnicity, age, gender, and other diverse characteristics.

Corridors Connect (CC) is a collaboration of the City's Corridors of Opportunity Initiative and the City and County's Open Streets Program that encourages community-wide opportunities for connectivity, wellness, and equity through multiple events located in all six Corridors. With smaller neighborhood-focused routes, these events will connect residents and visitors to explore the six corridors' diverse and vibrant neighborhoods, local parks, recreation centers, and local businesses.

On March 16, 2023, the City of Charlotte was awarded a grant by ULI to partially fund the implementation of marketing activities targeted at non-English speaking residents in the Albemarle Corridor. The objective is to ensure inclusivity and effective communication with the target audience in the promotion of an upcoming event.

The Corridor's Connect program brings to the Albemarle Corridor a focus on the uniqueness of the area which can help revive the energy and support of this corridor revitalization. Getting the message out about the new Mecklenburg County priorities for trails and open space will further enhance the connectivity of the community and help re-invigorate community collaboration.

The Albemarle Community Engagement began on June 22, 2023, where several community members engaged with the Corridors Team. Eight community members signed up to volunteer and participate in the upcoming community activation planning meetings. The Corridors Connect event for the Albemarle Corridor is scheduled for October 15, 2023.

While the ULI Grant will not cover all the activities and collateral for the community event, the City committed to match the funds to carry out an inclusive engagement to ensure that the Albemarle community has ample opportunities for connectivity, wellness, and equity through the Corridors Connect Event. This includes investing in media outreach through Spanish-language newspapers, radio, or TV, as well as providing translated promotional materials, the event will have a broader reach and higher participation from the target audience. Additionally, allocating funds to support local artists from the Albemarle community will enhance cultural representation and enrich the event's programming.

Implementing these recommendations will help ensure effective communication, increased community participation, and a memorable experience for all attendees. The proposed initiatives align with the city's commitment to inclusivity, fostering a sense of belonging among the Albemarle residents.



APPENDIX A: THE TAP PROCESS

Sponsor and Panel Introductions

The ULI panelists assembled on December 1, 2022, in space used by the YMCA at 5855 Executive Center Drive in East Charlotte, for brief introductions to city staff.

Driving and Walking Tours

City staff led a tour of East Charlotte and the Albemarle Road corridor. City staff and panelists that were familiar with the area pointed out notable new developments and redevelopment opportunities. The group discussed research in the Briefing Book provided in advance to the panelists.

Stakeholder Interviews

Before and after lunch, panelists met with two groups of community stakeholders. Both sessions were attended by city staff, public transportation leaders, business owners, residents, neighborhood leaders, and representatives of organizations related to East Charlotte, all of whom volunteered to provide input (see List of Stakeholders in Appendix B).

Public Listening Session

Following the stakeholder interviews, the panel met with the city of Charlotte's Corridors of Opportunity team, which is within the city's Economic Development division. The team provided clarity and context to the stakeholders' comments and input.

Panel Work Session

The following day, on December 2, 2022, the panel met to review what was discussed the day and evening before, collaborate on potential strategies, assign tasks, and review the timeline leading up to the final presentation with city staff.

Panel Presentation

The panel presented its final recommendations to the city and members of the public in the afternoon on December 2. After presenting their findings and recommendations, panelists fielded questions and comments.

Report Preparation and Release

This TAP report was prepared under the leadership of ULI Charlotte and offers a summary of the activities during the program, key findings, and panel recommendations.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

The panel conducted two sets of stakeholder input sessions the morning and afternoon of December 1, 2022. Invitations to stakeholders were extended and arranged through the city of Charlotte. Interviewees included city staff, elected officials, residents, business owners, community leaders and representatives of the East Charlotte community. A broad spectrum of community interests and perspectives was represented in the two groups, including those from immigrant communities and majority white neighborhoods. All attendees were recognized and given a few minutes to state their issues or concerns, and general discussion in a roundtable format followed.

Stakeholders Interviewed

Jon Bontrager, YMCA of Greater Charlotte

Kate Cavazza, City of Charlotte Urban Design Center

Vivian Collins, Prospera NC

Mimi Davis, East Charlotte Coalition of Neighborhoods (ECCON)

Todd DeLong, City of Charlotte

Deborah Dryden, East Charlotte Coalition of Neighborhoods (ECCON)

Maureen Gilewski, CharlotteEAST

Erin Gillespie, City of Charlotte Corridors of Opportunity

Monica Holmes, City of Charlotte Corridors of Opportunity

Tiffany Johnson, City of Charlotte Community Engagement – Southeast Service Area Liaison

Bruce Jones, Charlotte Area Transit System

Mark Landon, Project 658, Family Advocate

Carolyn Millen, Eastway Park/Sheffield Park Neighborhood Association and CharlotteEAST

Justin Ritchey, City of Charlotte Urban Design Center

Tom Sorrentino, City of Charlotte Department of Transportation

Robin Stewart, Bank of America

APPENDIX C: PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES



Panel Chair **David Malcolm**

David is the vice president of planning and design for McAdams and brings over 25 years of professional experience. David's focus within the practice is improving cities and communities by bringing form to planning and design projects for public and private sector clients. He provides leadership for teams of planners, landscape architects and designers across 5 offices and helps guide the firms' strategic initiatives. His specialties range from the design and creation of vibrant public spaces to the planning of new communities within urban, mixed-use, and destination locations. He has successfully led public consensus building for small town main street revitalization projects and large brownfield redevelopment sites in metropolitan areas. Within the area of parks, recreation and greenway projects, David has used his expertise to lead and train in the development of system-wide needs assessments for small- to medium-sized cities and master plans for neighborhood to regional site-specific plans and their implementation. He has extensive project experience, including regional parks and sports complexes, recreation needs assessments, greenways, and trails. His experience also entails master planning and design development, public presentations, design workshops, municipal plan approvals and permitting, stormwater management, feasibility analysis, cost estimating, and construction documentation and observation.



Panelists **David Howard**

David serves as the Director of Business Development for the eastern half of the United States for Rekor Systems, Inc. and is the founding principal of the DL Howard Consulting Group, LLC, a consulting firm focused on providing strategic design, thought leadership and broad-ranged programming implementation expertise for government, not-for-profit, private, and public sector industries.

Previously, Howard served the state of North Carolina as the Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer for the North Carolina Pandemic Recovery Office and the Chief Deputy Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), overseeing the Division of Motor Vehicles, Civil Rights Division, the Office of HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) Outreach, Transportation Planning, Global TransPark (GTP), the Office of Logistics and Freight, and the State's multimodal divisions that included Rail, Aviation, Ferry and Integrated Mobility (formerly the Public Transportation and Bike/Ped divisions).

Howard also served as the Associate Administrator of Policy and Governmental Affairs for the Federal Highway Administration and Senior Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Fund Development for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership, the largest developer of affordable workforce housing in the region. He also was a member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission for six years before being elected in 2009 to serve as an at-large member of the Charlotte City Council.



Rachel Russell Krenz

Rachel is a real estate developer, city planner, preservationist, community advocate, New Orleans native, and resident of Charlotte, N.C. She manages and executes development opportunities for Ram Realty in the Carolinas. Ram is an affiliated group of companies and partnerships that acquire, develop, and finance retail and multifamily properties in the Southeast. Rachel's professional background in place-making includes her work at the National Trust for Historic Preservation and as Vice President of Real Estate Development for Grubb Properties and Milhaus. She is an active member of Urban Land Institute (including WLI 2019 Real Estate Champion, past national Multifamily Council, and Urban Plan volunteer).

Rachel has a master's degree in city and regional planning from the University of North Carolina with a specialization in real estate development and design. Her education also includes an undergraduate degree from Sewanee: The University of the South, a graduate-level Certificate in Historic Preservation from Goucher College, and real estate-focused coursework at Kenan-Flagler Business School.

Notable neighborhood work includes her involvement in the South End Board Committee, Founder of Montford Park Partners, North Tryon Vision Plan Steering Committee, Glen Lennox Neighborhood Conservation District and Development Agreement, and Villa Heights Neighborhood. Select projects from Rachel's development portfolio include Hub South End (Charlotte), Hawk (Charlotte), Glen Lennox (Chapel Hill), Link Montford (Charlotte), Link West End (Greenville, S.C.), and Link Innovation Quarter (Winston Salem, N.C.).



Beth Poovey

Beth is a principal at LandDesign and the firm's Director of Greenways, Parks, and Open Space. She leads a multi-discipline studio that specializes in public open space and recreation amenities. As an advocate for public and private investment in attainable green infrastructure, Beth believes the open space experience should begin the moment you step out the door, including networks of multi-modal streetscapes, neighborhood parks, and recreational amenities all within walking, biking, or scootering distance. Combining her background in sociology with landscape architecture, Beth strives to capture the spirit of a community and influence the vision of a memorable open space experience that aligns with local goals and values.



Tiffany Young, MPH, MSW

Tiffany is a public health professional with nearly 15 years of experience working on population health, chronic disease prevention and control, and health equity. With master's degrees in public health and social work and sub-specializations in maternal child health and global health, Tiffany's public health career has focused on advancing equity in communities of color, both domestically and internationally. In 2008, she was the manager of and master trainer for a national train-the-trainer initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, where she trained over 1,000 nurses and lactation consultants on how to assist employers desiring to establish lactation support programs for their employees. Since that time, Tiffany has worked extensively on policy, systems, and environmental changes to improve the built environment and give all people access to healthy choices where they live, work, and play.

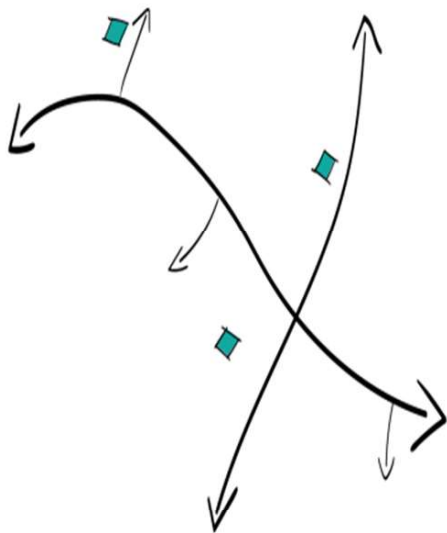
As a public health consultant with the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, Tiffany was a master trainer, engaging facilitator, and experienced project manager with skills in grant writing, budget management, and personnel oversight. She has experience leading teams and projects related to school health, health equity, and preventing chronic diseases such as diabetes and colorectal cancer. Tiffany has supported the advancement of chronic disease prevention through policy advocacy, working to educate policy makers at the state and federal level. She has worked with traditional and non-traditional partners to advance population health to support chronic disease prevention, specifically in the most underrepresented and overlooked communities.

In 2018, Tiffany co-founded and is now Chief Executive Officer of Epic Health Solutions, a consulting firm focused on Social Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within organizations and systems. Through this work, she has supported state health departments, philanthropic organizations, and national membership associations in their efforts to integrate equity concepts into their internal organizational culture and their outward facing programs, policies, and practices. She is a social reformer and passionate crusader for justice, whose mission is to elevate equity and promote health for all people. She is known for her thought-provoking insights into the social issues that adversely impact the health of racial and ethnic minorities throughout the United States and beyond. She has a profound ability to captivate and connect audiences in efforts to bridge the racial and wealth gaps that have both defined and divided our nation. She works tirelessly to engage, educate, and empower this generation to incite the kind of social change that lifts equity and upholds social justice in all ways.

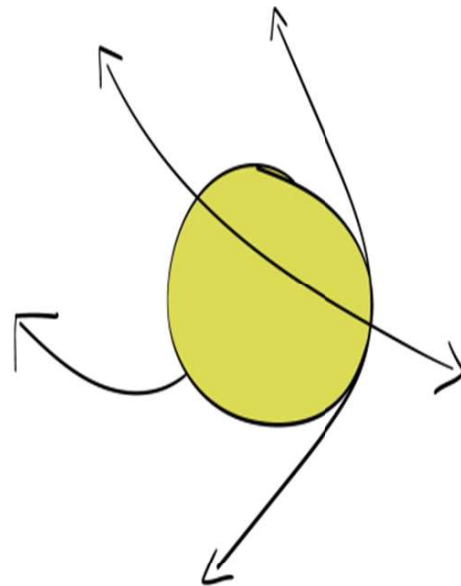
APPENDIX D: MAPS, RENDERINGS & PHOTOGRAPHS

A Plan with Options

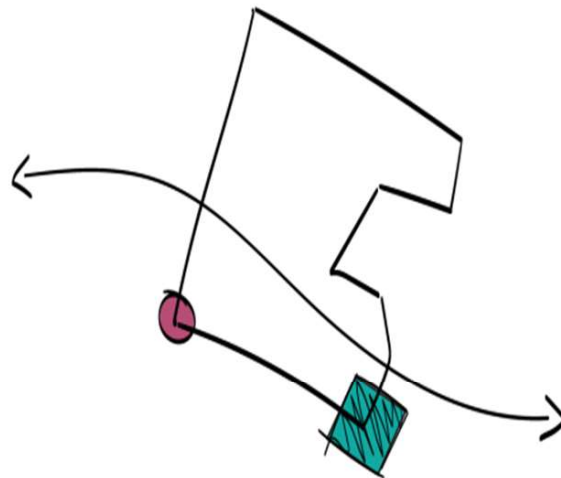
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A Spine with Fingers



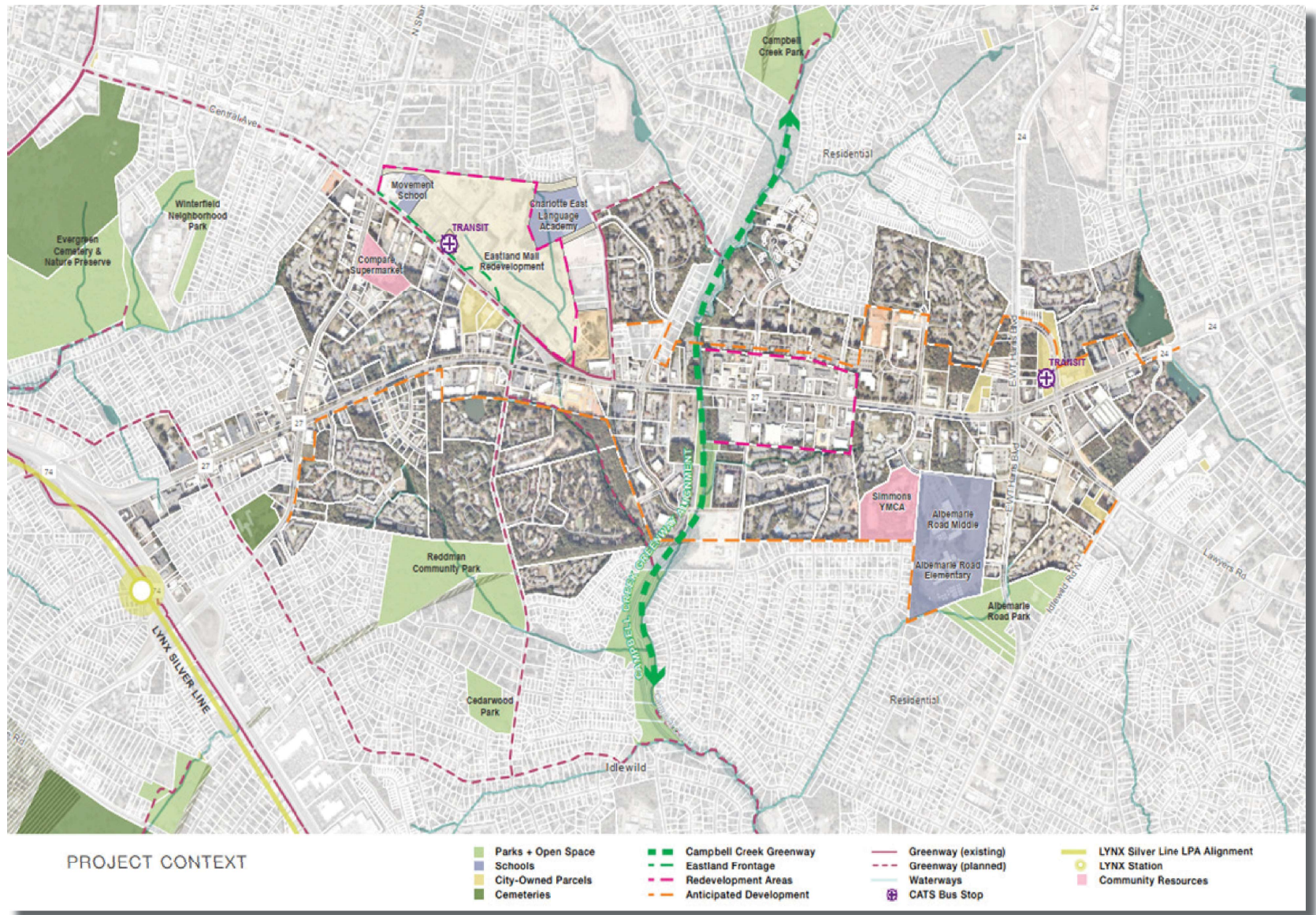
B Loop with Fingers



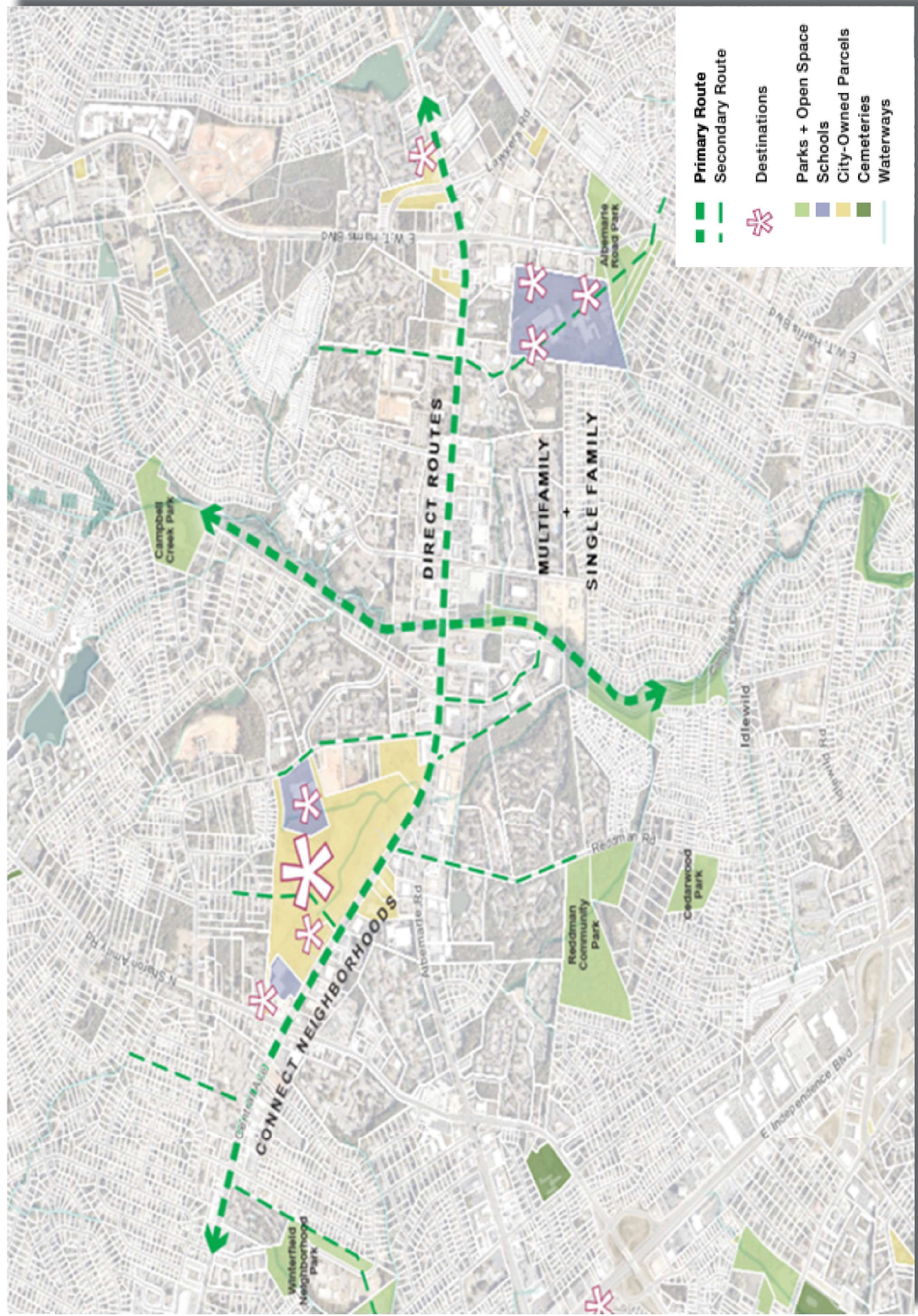
C Zig-Zag

Cultural Experience

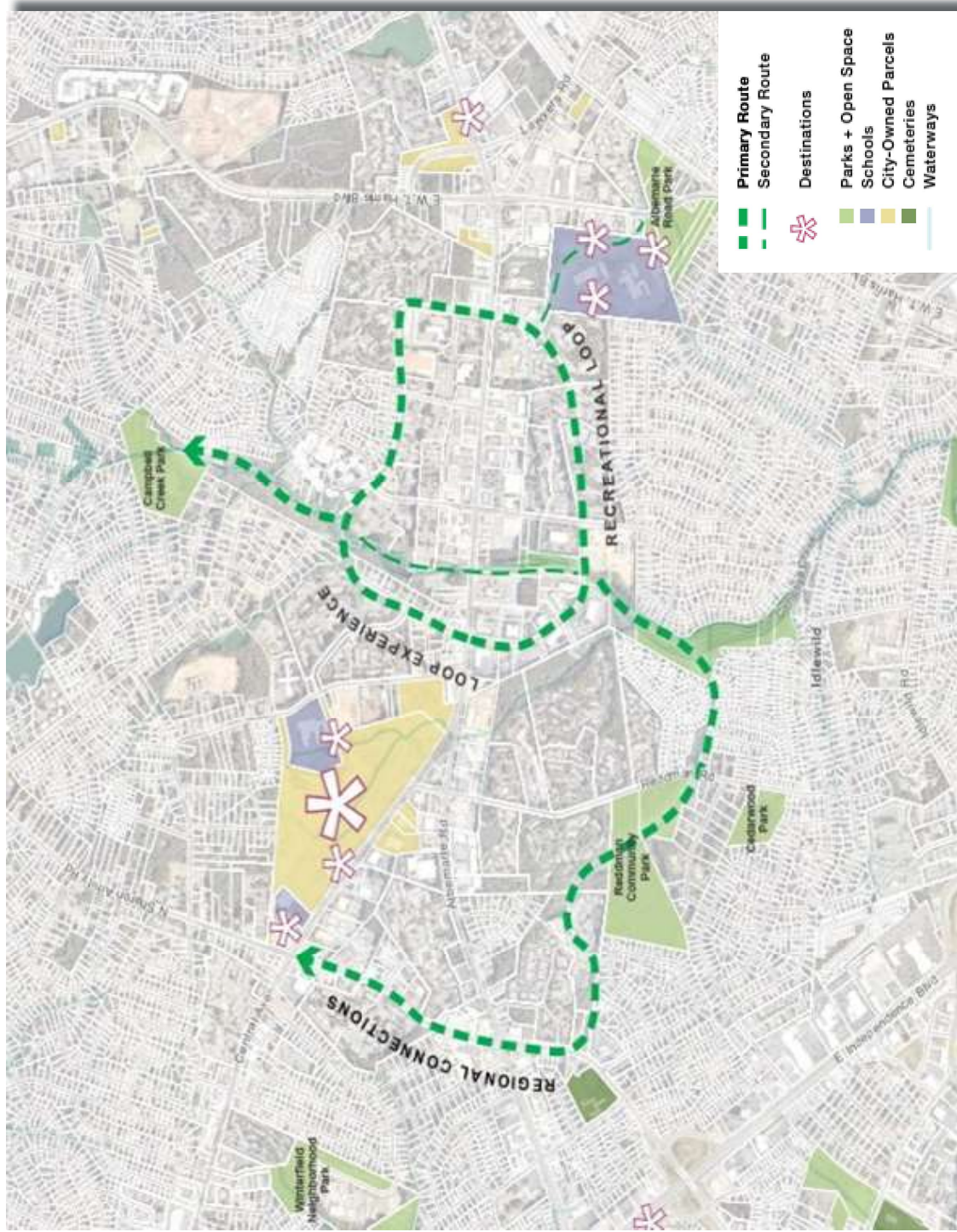
Map noted on page 21



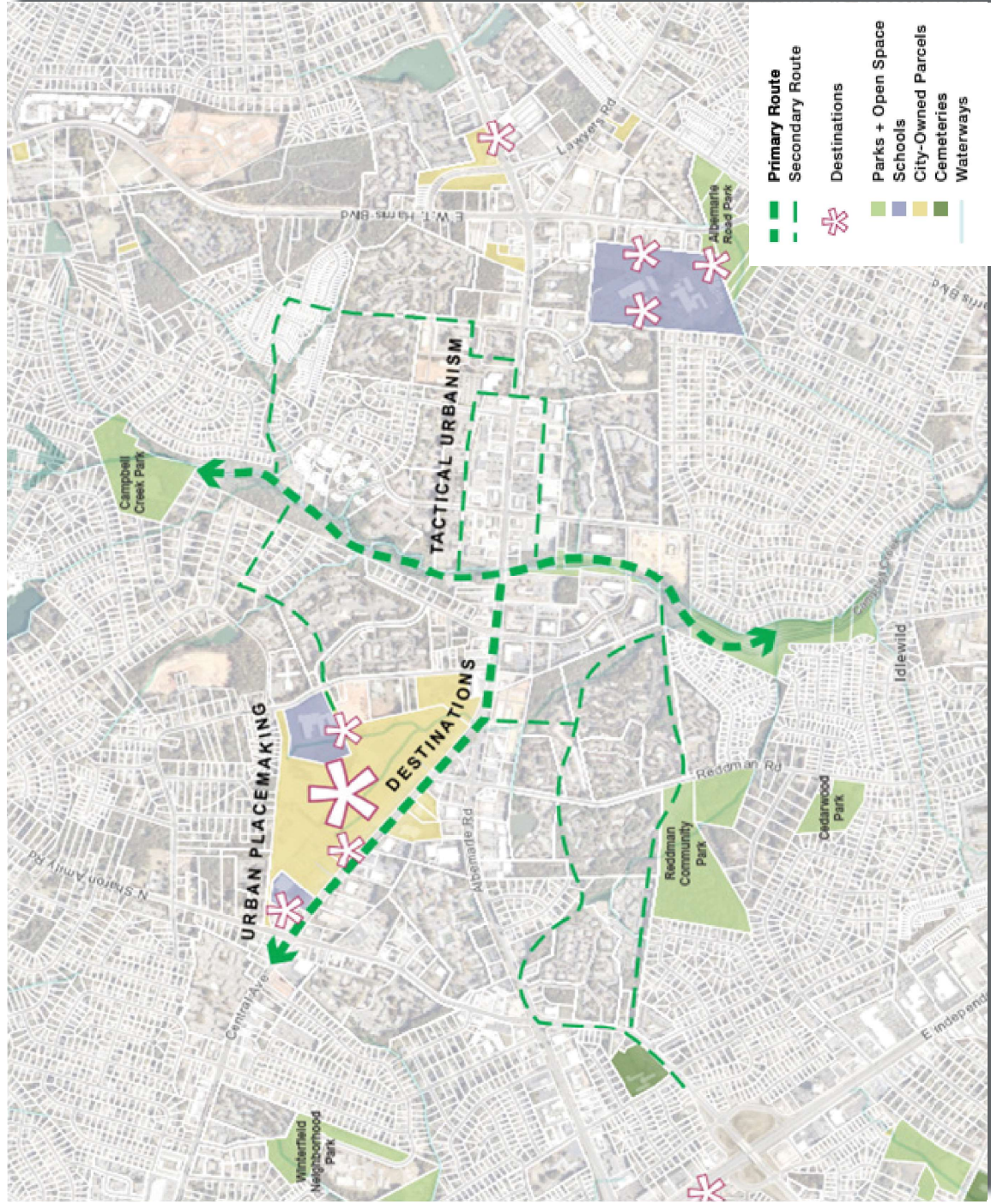
The Spine + Fingers Concept Drawing with Existing Destinations
 Map noted on page 24



The Loop and Precedents
 Map noted on page 25



Urban Retrofit Approach and Precedents
 Map noted on page 25



APPENDIX E: SELECT READINGS & LINKS

- Health Impact Assessment and Parks and Trails https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/parks_trails/default.htm
- **Definition (from ULI):** *A healthy corridor has land uses and services that allow residents and visitors to easily make healthy lifestyle choices. It reflects the culture of the community, inspires, and facilitates healthy eating and active living, provides and connects to a variety of economic opportunities as well as housing and transportation choices, and adapts to residents' needs.* -- From ULI Report "[Building Healthy Corridors](#)" (2016)
- **Video (5 min):** [Building Healthy Corridors](#)
- [Active Transportation and Real Estate: The Next Frontier](#) explores the interconnections among walking, bicycling, and real estate. Developers, owners, property managers, designers, investors, public officials, and others involved in real estate decision making can learn from the case studies described in this report to create places that both support and leverage investments in active transportation infrastructure, such as bike lanes and trails. In the process, they can create real estate value and promote economic, environmental, and public health goals.

A Healthy Corridor Has:

Design and land use patterns that support community needs.

- Buildings pulled up to sidewalks
- Improved parking strategies
- Housing options
- Vibrant retail environment
- High-quality parks and public spaces
- Healthy food options

Linkages to other parts of the city.

- Well-connected, multimodal street networks
- Safe and easily identifiable connections, including sidewalks and trails
- Transit, including enhanced bus service or rail
- Bike infrastructure

Engaged and supported people who live, work, and travel along the corridor.

- Regular programs in community gathering spaces
- Accommodations for pets
- A defined identity
- Measures to address safety and perceptions of safety
- Engaged residents and local business owners
- Organizations that facilitate long-term improvements and resident engagement

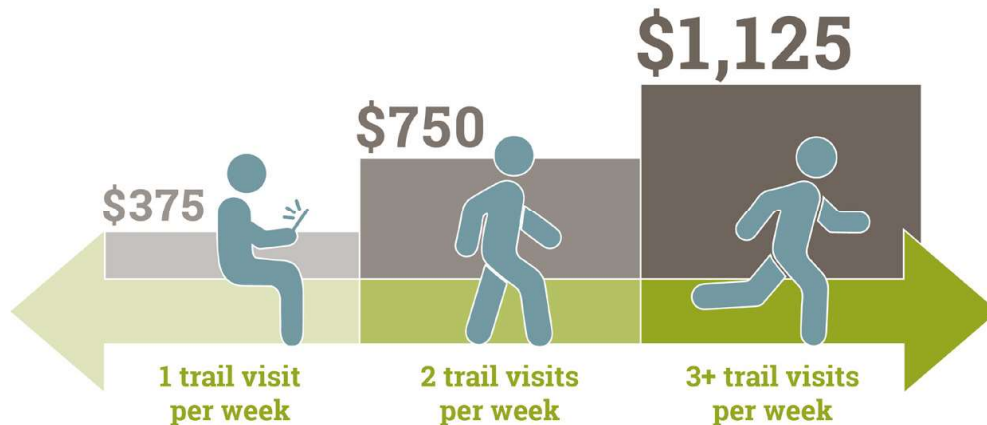
Improved infrastructure.

- Safe and well-marked pedestrian crossings
- Traffic speeds that are conducive to pedestrians and other users
- Utility lines and traffic signs and signals that are underground or that blend in
- Sidewalks wide enough for a variety of users, buffered from the street, and unobstructed
- Streetscapes that add visual interest and safety, with trees and green buffers

Trail Benefits: Evaluating the Economic, Physical Health, and Environmental Impacts of Completing Six Key Segments of the Carolina Thread Trail

[Among the findings:](#) the study trails sequester 550+ tons of carbon annually, save nearly \$4M in healthcare, and generate over \$3M in business sales. Altogether the 13 miles generate nearly \$45 million of community benefit each year.

Annual Healthcare Savings by Active Weekly Trail Visits



Health care savings resulting from trail visits. Source: ITRE. Adapted from Kittelson and Associates, 2021

Road Diets & Other Case Studies

See [Case Studies from the USDOT Federal Hwy Administration](#)

- The **Indianapolis Cultural Trail** appears to be the best example of how a road diet was used to create a public amenity and improve connectivity and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. It is now a significant economic development driver for the city and draws visitors from all over Indianapolis (see photo & page 50 in case study document).
- The city of **Tukwila, WA** [acquired a 2.5 mile section of State Route 99](#) (a busy, 6-lane highway very similar to Albemarle) that divided the city in order to take over ownership and management of the highway. They have since given the corridor an extreme makeover with additional crosswalks, wider sidewalks, medians, and other traffic calming features.

Equitable Trail Planning

- [Equitable Trail Planning Toolkit](#) (Report) – Great report outlining case studies of inclusionary trails, planning tools, and implementation strategies.
- [Equitable Trail Access Analysis](#) (Circuit Trails)
- [7 Tips for Creating a Heritage Trail](#) (National Trust for Historic Preservation)
- [List of Acquisition Funding Opportunities](#) (Rails to Trails Conservancy)