

Memphis Riverfront Concept

Studio Gang

GEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
MISSISSIPPI RIVER ALLUVIAL VALLEY
ANCIENT COURSES
MISSISSIPPI RIVER MEANDER BELLS
CAPE GIRARDEAU, MO.-DONALDSONVILLE
IN 15 SHEETS
SCALE IN MILES
SHEET
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION
VICKSBURG, MISS.
TO ACCOMPANY REPORT OF HAROLD N. RISK, PH.D. CONSULTANT
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY, BATON ROUGE, LA., DATED 1 DEC. 1944
R. H. S. H. N. E.
FILE NO. MRC/2598 SH. 93.F

Memphis Riverfront Concept

Studio Gang

**STUDIO GANG
PROJECT TEAM**

Jeanne Gang
Founder and Principal

Mark Schendel
Managing Principal

Gia Biagi
Principal of Urbanism +
Civic Impact

Chris Bennett
Project Team Leader

Akhil Badjatia
Heinz von Eckartsberg
Project Team

Alissa Anderson
Publications Director

Sarah Kramer
Senior Editor

CONSULTANT TEAM

Steve Apfelbaum
Applied Ecological Services
Ecologist

James Lima
James Lima Planning +
Development
Economic and Placemaking
Specialist

Presence Health
Data Analysis

Michael Savona
Graphic Design

© 2017 Studio Gang Architects
All rights reserved.

Studio Gang Architects
1520 W Division Street
Chicago, IL 60642
+1 773 384 1212
studiogang.com
publications@studiogang.com

**MAYOR'S RIVERFRONT
TASK FORCE**

Berlin Boyd
Jared Bulluck
Carol Coletta
Alan Crone, Chairman
John Farris
Maria Fuhrmann
Jim Holt
Kevin Kane
Rachel Knox
Mickell Lowery
Laura Morris
Bill Morrison
Terence Patterson
Ray Pohlman
Lauren Taylor
Diane Terrell
Paul Young

SPECIAL THANKS

Mayor Jim Strickland
City of Memphis

Carol Coletta
Kresge Foundation

Alan Crone
City of Memphis

Jim Holt
Memphis in May International
Festival

Barbara and Pitt Hyde
Hyde Family Foundations

Benny Lendermon
Riverfront Development
Corporation

Doug McGowen
City of Memphis

Terence Patterson
Downtown Memphis
Commission

William C. Rhodes III
AutoZone

Teresa Sloyan
Hyde Family Foundations

Dorchelle Spence
Riverfront Development
Corporation

Brian J. Stephens
Paige Walkup
Mary Frances Tanner
Caissa Public Strategy

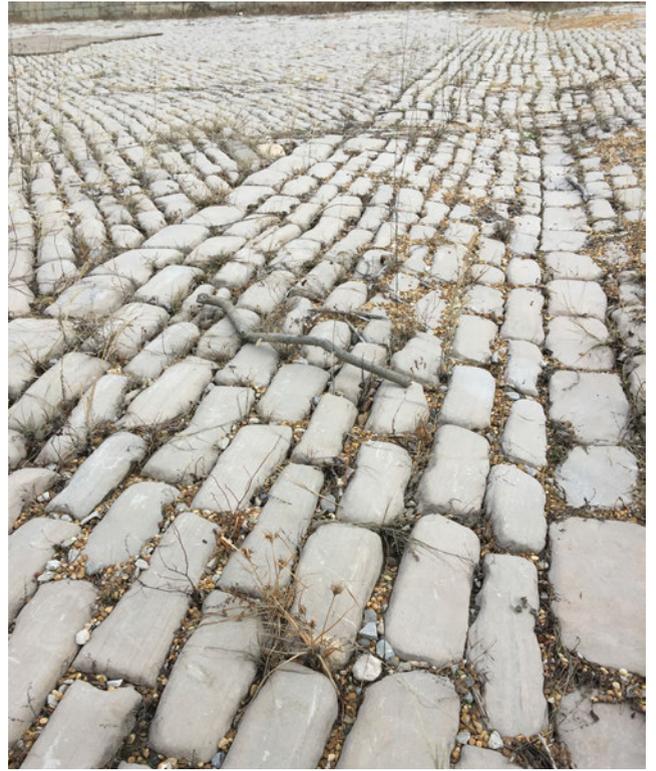
Introduction	
Preface	9
Executive Summary	15
Concept	
Overall View	21
Zones	
Fourth Bluff	28
Mud Island	40
Tom Lee Park	46
MLK Park	54
Greenbelt Park	60
Implementation	
Phasing Menu	69
Key Starting Points	71
Analysis	
Site Conditions	74
Quality of Life	94
Economic	
Opportunities	96
Community	
Engagement	100
Resources	
Precedent Studies	108
Bibliography	120



Tom Lee Park, January 2017

How can the use of this large public park, so active during May, expand year-round?

Cobblestone Landing, January 2017
How can this historic hardscape become a more comfortable and inviting place that brings people to the river's edge?



Mud Island, January 2017
Mud Island's amazing Mississippi River model is a one-of-a-kind exhibit—how can its ecological message be magnified?

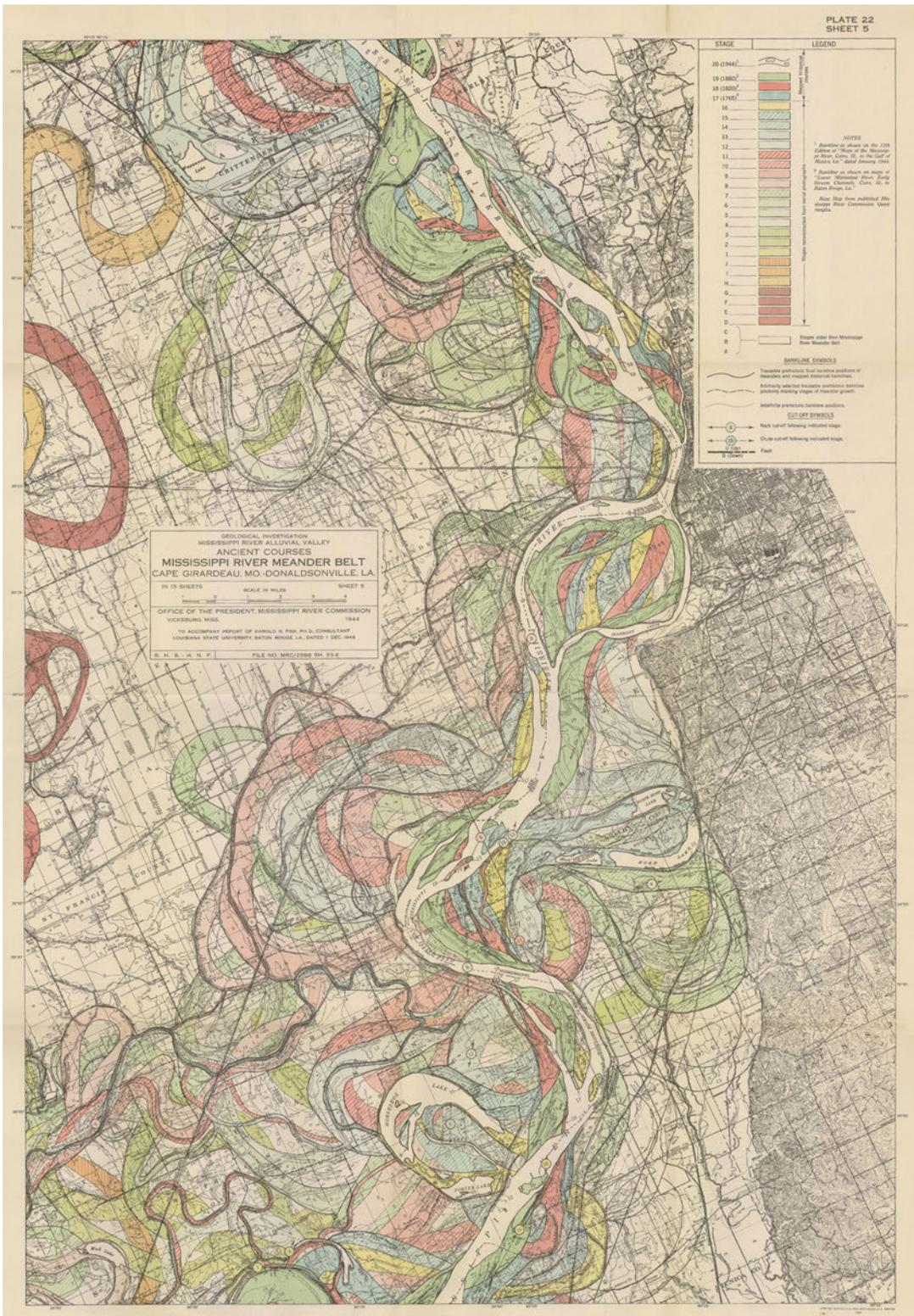
Enriching the River Experience

The Concept builds on the range of riverfront activities that Memphians already enjoy—like taking in special views of the sunset, having fun and developing teamwork in wellness programs like the GrizzFit Kids Bootcamp, and kayaking along the shores of Greenbelt Park. It also proposes many new opportunities for Memphians to engage the Mississippi, whether walking at the water's edge, studying its ecology in a laboratory or classroom, or overlooking its full sweep while enjoying a meal at a new restaurant on the Fourth Bluff.



From top, photos by Justin Fox Burks from MemphisTravel.com, Memphis Grizzlies Foundation, and WunderPhotos.com.

**Coming together
at the Mississippi—
how can Memphis’
Riverfront become
a place where
everyone can play,
relax, learn, connect,
and grow?**



Dynamic Beauty

The unspooling colors of a geologic map reveal the changing paths of the Mississippi River over tens of thousands of years. Map drawn by Dr. Harold Fisk for Louisiana State University, 1944.

Preface

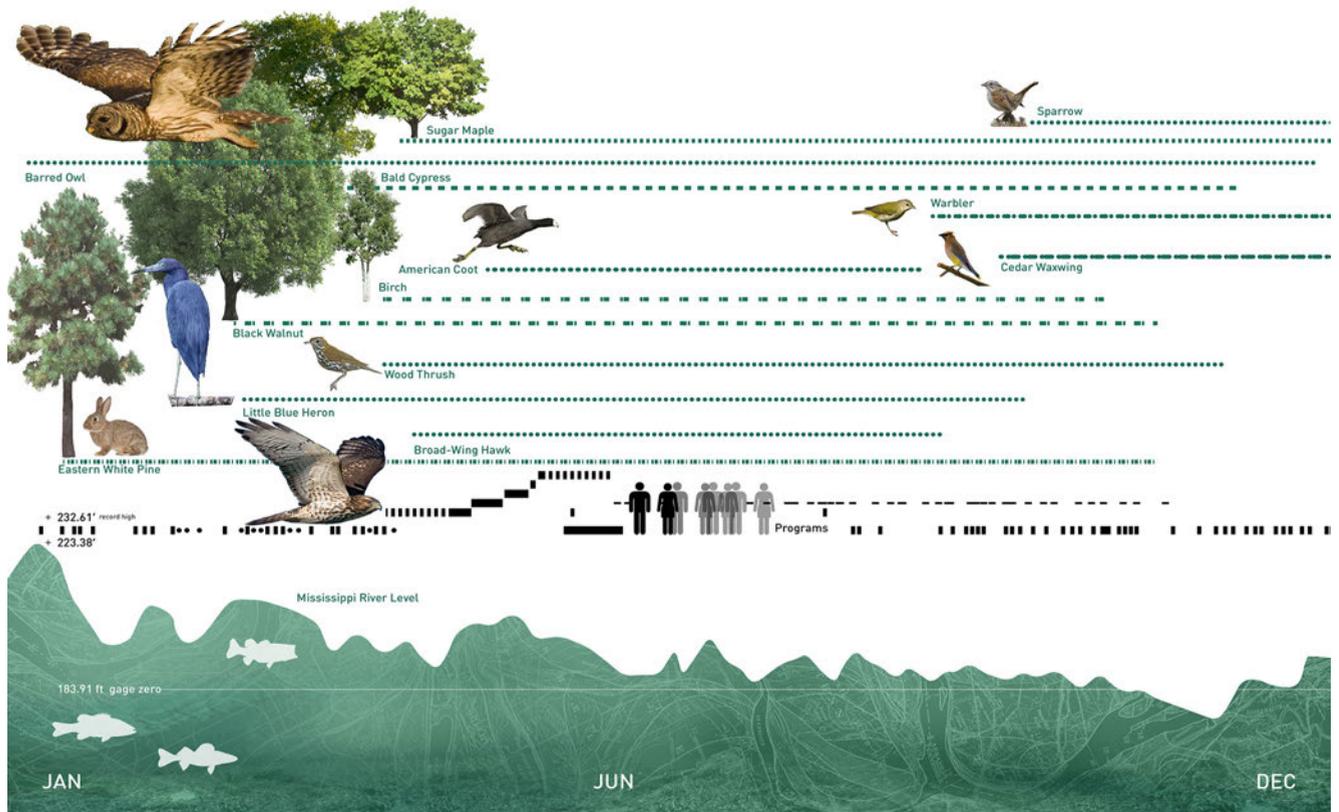
RECONNECTING WITH A VITAL SYSTEM

The Mississippi River – whose name comes from the Ojibwe “Great River” – is one of the world’s most powerful and productive natural systems. Covering nearly 40 percent of the continental United States, its watershed stretches from Canada’s Prairie States to the silty Gulf Coast, and from the green peaks of the Appalachian Mountains to the craggy crest of the Rockies. Each day this vast network of major rivers and smaller tributaries funnels more than 800,000 cubic feet of water per second into the Gulf and the Atlantic Ocean beyond.

Where water is plentiful, life is plentiful, and the Mississippi

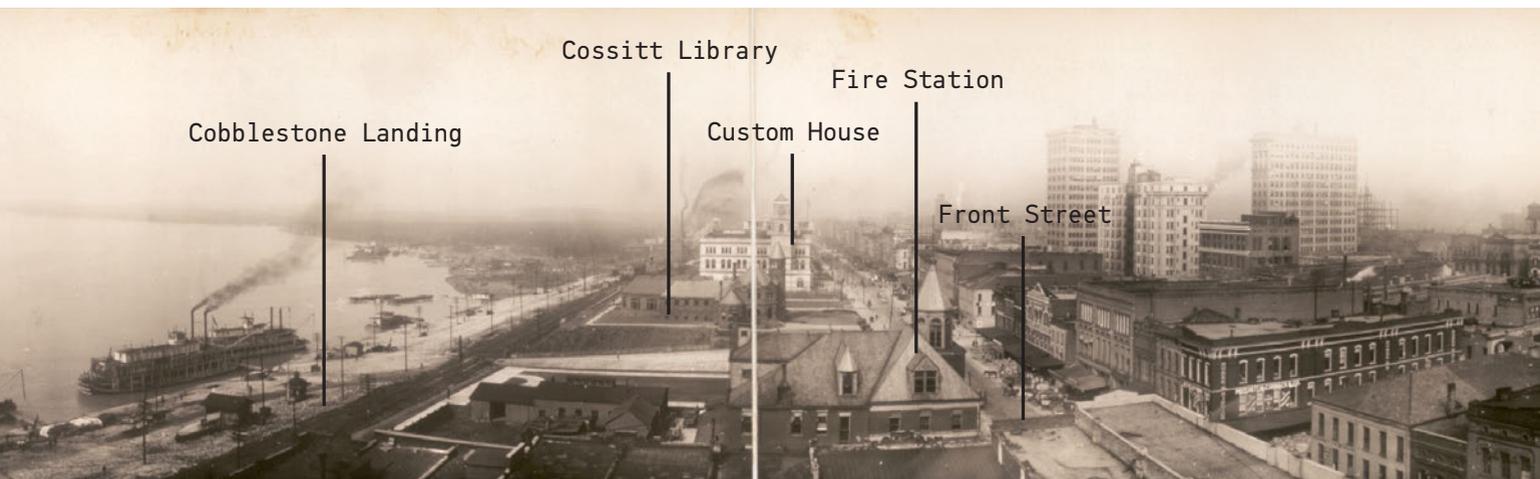
River valley supports an amazing variety of plants and animals – along with the millions of people who’ve come to inhabit the diverse range of environments found along its winding course. More than 40 percent of fish species in North America (about 260 in total) call the river home, and 60 percent of North American birds (326 species) use it as their migratory pathway. In addition to the river itself, the chain of wetlands that spreads across the Mississippi’s floodplain is also crucial habitat, and its rich soil supports a significant percentage of the nation’s agricultural production.

Bound up with the river’s dynamic ecology is its changing roles in American history and the



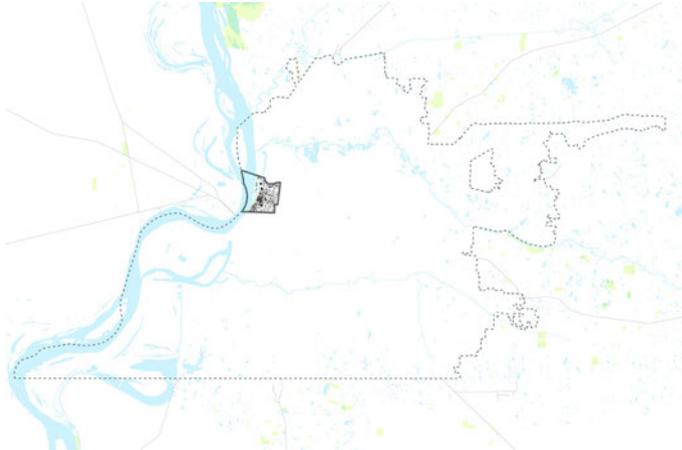
American imagination. For the many Native peoples who lived in the Mississippi region, it was an essential trade and transportation route, food and water source, and cultural and spiritual anchor. With the arrival of Europeans, it became a contested political tool and border used in the effort to expand empires. As the young nation grew, it became an important pathway facilitating the flows of materials, goods, and people that enabled the country to develop into an industrial world power. For many today, it remains a critical life source, economic driver, and recreation destination, as well as a central landmark used to mark our place in a big country.

Memphis sits at a unique, strategic location within this system – a position distilled in the nickname it keeps today: “Bluff City.” The settlement that developed at the Fourth Chickasaw Bluff in the early 19th century was centered on the river, with houses and other structures perched on the bluff and a series of wharves and landings built at the river’s edge to develop the town into the major trading center on the Lower Mississippi. Raw materials and goods were brought to Memphis on the water, and cotton and other locally produced resources were brought to the river to be shipped downstream. People were also brought to Memphis to be bought, sold, and transported down the river, as the institution of

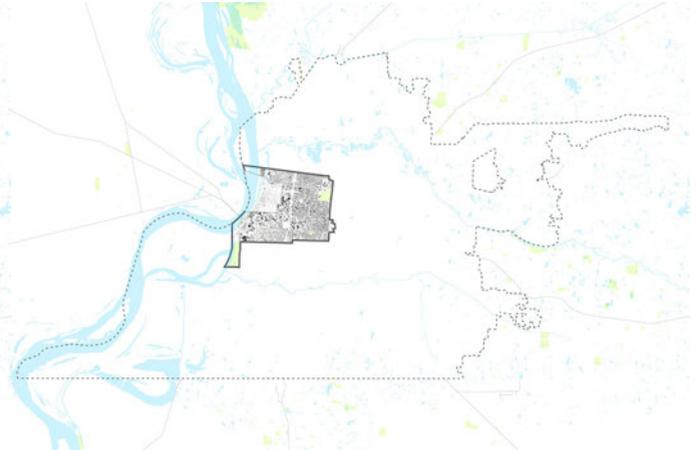


Historic Assets, New Opportunities

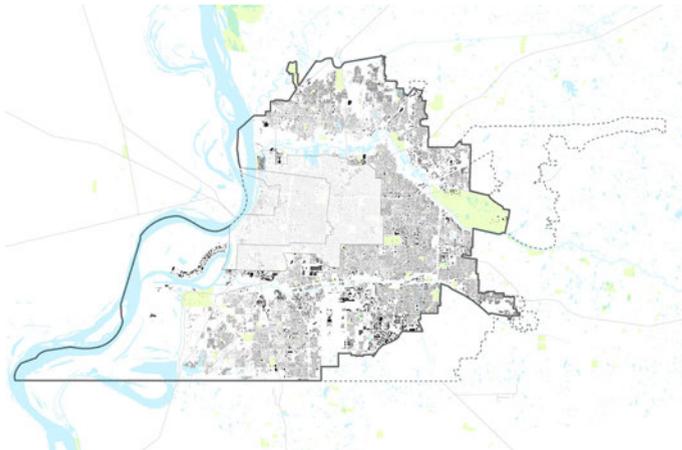
Many of the Memphis buildings and spaces shown in this photograph from 1910 still exist. The Concept describes how connecting them into a Riverfront network can help them play more active roles in the life of Memphis today. Photograph by the Haines Photo Co., from the collection of the Library of Congress.



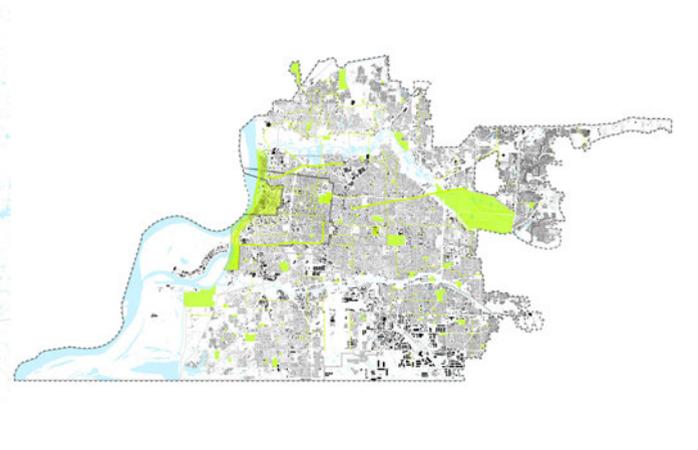
1819-1850
CITY INCORPORATION



1851-1918
19TH-CENTURY URBAN BLOCKS



1943-1989
POST-WWII URBAN SPRAWL



1990-PRESENT
REFOCUS ON THE RIVER

Expanding Away from the River

Each major chapter in its history saw Memphis expand farther outward from its origin at the Mississippi. Today, a renewed Riverfront can help pull the city's growth back toward its historic core with new spaces and amenities that engage the entire community and attract new investment.



Bringing the Best of Memphis to the Riverfront

From Mississippi River sunsets to music and barbecue, Memphians share a culture that's like no other in the world. By providing a connected network of spaces that support and enhance the best-loved aspects of Memphis life, the Riverfront can become a magnet offering all Memphians and visitors something to enjoy.

Starting with simple streetscape improvements, a Civil Rights History Loop can link the National Civil Rights Museum with Tom Lee Park. Photo by Lee Howard from *Deep South Magazine*.



The same socializing and small business support that happens at Overton Park's food truck events can take place at a new outdoor market at Wagner Place on the Fourth Bluff. Photo by Melissa McMasters.

slavery was part and parcel of the city's early growth.

As the city grew, it expanded eastward and away from the river, with the most extensive suburbanization and sprawl occurring in the decades following the Second World War. Changing transportation networks played a large role in this shift, in particular the completion

of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad in 1857 (which downgraded the Mississippi's status as the primary mode of transport), the arrival of the automobile and, eventually, the expressway system, which enabled and spurred development away from the city center.

Today, Memphians are exploring in earnest how a 21st-century



Iconic pavilions at the riverfront and on the former fairways of MLK Park can provide a place for outdoor concerts, like the Live at the Garden concert series at the Memphis Botanic Garden. Photo by *At Home Memphis Mid South Magazine*.



Outdoor youth science classes like the popular programs at the Lichterman Nature Center can find a new home at Mud Island. Photo from the Memphis Museums.

“return to the river” can pull people back to the city’s origin at the Mississippi and bluff. Building on the decades of redevelopment that has been focused on downtown, Memphians can leverage the river’s intertwined qualities – ecological, commercial, cultural, recreational – to remake its role in the life of the city and the greater natural and national system of which it is part.

In the 21st century, Memphians can transform their riverfront into a signature destination that fosters relationships among all people by offering many opportunities to engage the city’s unique culture, key institutions and initiatives,

and a wide range of community activities and events. Embracing and heightening the Mississippi’s dynamism, Memphians can also restore certain natural riverfront conditions to create memorable and meaningful outdoor experiences, position Memphis to thrive in the green economy, and address the increasing effects of climate change. Finally, by forming strong and diverse connections among the many spaces along the river, between the river and city, and with each other, Memphians can leverage their riverfront to bring new vitality to Memphis that delivers on the power and promise of the Great River.



Seizing the "Memphis Moment"

Beginning in early 2017, the Studio Gang team made multiple visits to Memphis, gathering boots-on-the-ground observations and hearing directly from a wide variety of Memphians about the riverfront they want to see. These visits included attending the Memphis in May International Festival's World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest for a first-hand experience of this signature event and its operation.



Executive Summary

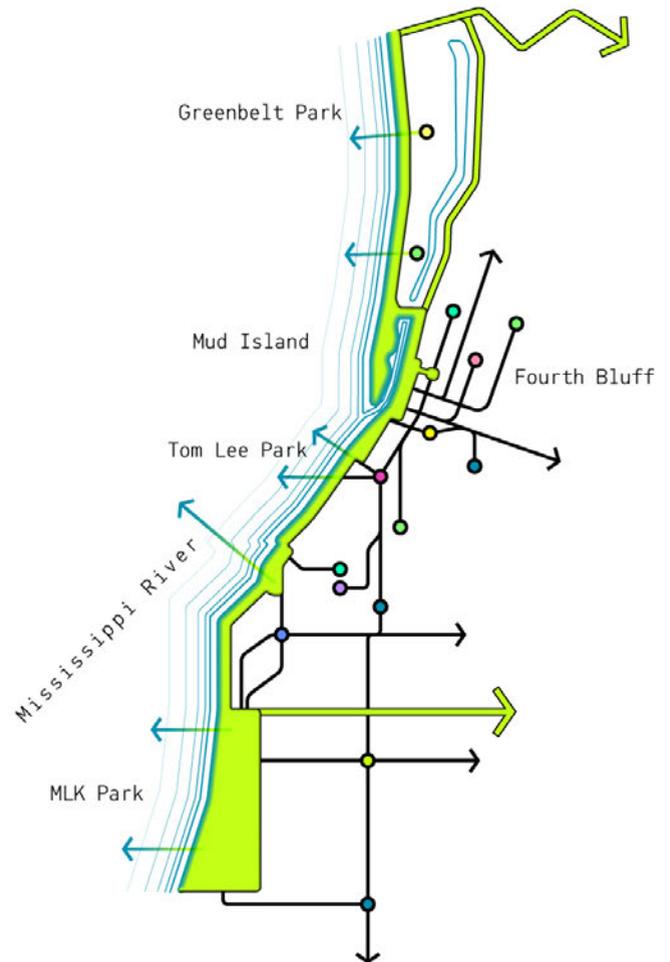
MEMPHIS RIVERFRONT CONCEPT

The Place

Momentum is building in Memphis toward a historic round of civic change. Leaders and organizations from across the city are coming together to address shared issues—from public health, to economic development, to education, and many more—in an aligned and collaborative way. They are committed to making changes that benefit all Memphians and to doing so in an inclusive manner that involves everyone who wants to take part.

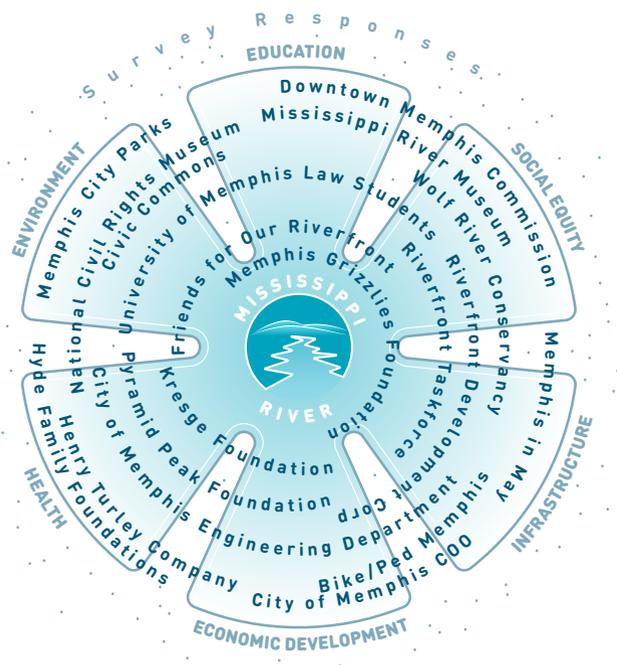
Prepared for the Mayor’s Riverfront Task Force, this Concept is designed to help catalyze today’s exciting “Memphis Moment” at the place where the city began: the edge of the Mississippi River. Covering six miles and focusing on five zones (the Fourth Bluff, Mud Island, Tom Lee Park, Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Park, and Greenbelt Park), the Concept describes how, through a sequence of actionable investments, the riverfront can become an amazing place and a transformational civic tool—a connective network of spaces and opportunities that enrich the human experience, lift the fortunes of Memphis as a whole, and reinforce its future viability and resiliency.

Toward accomplishing this, the Concept is wholly rooted in Memphis’ unique characteristics and strengths—its people, culture, and existing urban spaces, as well as its particular stretch of the Mississippi. Bringing together these essential assets in new ways, and showing how physical space can better support and enhance them, the Concept illustrates an abundance of possibilities that can unfold where river and city meet.



21st-Century Potential

The Concept envisions how Memphis’ riverfront can become a connective network that ties together people, the city, and the Mississippi River for collective benefit.



Learning from Many

The design team listened to and worked with a broad range of Memphis organizations and individuals to infuse the Concept with their insights, capabilities, and aspirations.

The Process

An integrated process of research, engagement, and analysis was used to develop the Concept’s vision. Over the course of multiple visits to Memphis, the design team gathered boots-on-the-ground observations along the length of the site and met with a wide variety of organizations, individuals, and other stakeholders to learn about their experiences with and aspirations for the riverfront. In addition to these conversations and associated workshops, the design team also worked with Caissa Public Strategy to conduct and analyze an online survey that elicited more than 4,000 responses from a broad range of Memphians about the riverfront they want to see. (For a detailed summary of these findings, please see the Community Engagement chapter on page 100.)

Simultaneous to this site analysis and engagement work, the team made a thorough study of the eleven riverfront plans published since 1987 to assess their recommendations and identify patterns across them—gleaning a number of key insights that were then incorporated into the Concept. They also became familiar with Memphis planning efforts that are currently underway in order to best align the Concept’s recommendations with those of initiatives such as Memphis 3.0. Finally, the team conducted broader background research to gather additional project context and design information. Topics of focus included the city’s history and culture; its environmental conditions, including its Mississippi River ecology and the potential future impacts of climate change; and the major socioeconomic issues at stake in Memphis today, along with the current solutions offered to address them.

To gain the specific, data-driven insights about quality of life in Memphis that were used to inform the Concept’s interventions, the design team worked with the consultancy Presence Health. Their demographic analysis allowed the Concept to be calibrated to improve the well-being of the city’s diverse population. In addition, Presence Health’s recommended indicators (included on pages 94 and 95) can be used to quantitatively assess the impact of riverfront investments on Memphians’ quality of life, demonstrating their value and guiding decision-making as the projects unfold.

To ensure the Concept is actionable and reflects the latest thinking on equitable urban development, the design team worked with James Lima, an economic development and placemaking specialist. His identification of key development opportunities—which concentrate on

forming better connections between downtown Memphis and the riverfront—informed the Concept’s spatial ideas and implementation recommendations.

The Potential

From the findings and discoveries made through this process, the team derived three design principles that guided the Concept’s development. These principles are:

Foster positive encounters, civic pride and identity, and new understanding of the Mississippi River

Restore natural conditions, native ecology, and a more dynamic relationship between people and river

Connect assets along the river, the riverfront to the city (downtown and the neighborhoods beyond), and people with each other

The following chapter shares the overall riverfront Concept that resulted from this process and principles. It also “zooms in” on its five individual zones: the Fourth Bluff, Mud Island, Tom Lee Park, MLK Park, and Greenbelt Park. Along with short narrative explanations, a variety of images illustrate the design and convey a sense of what it might feel like to be in the vibrant spaces it proposes.

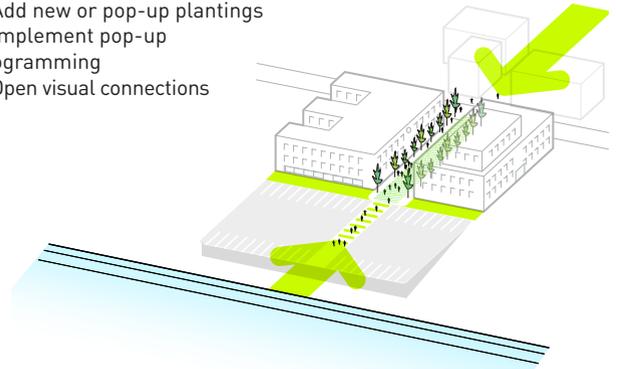
Each zone is envisioned as a distinctive place that leverages its particular relationship with the city and river. The array of activities and experiences offered across them—from “fast” uses like cycling to “slow” uses like savoring a sunset view—respond to community suggestions and are designed to appeal to people of all generations, incomes,

PHASED LAYERS OF INVESTMENT

The Concept’s interventions are designed as “layers” of short-, medium-, and long-term investments that can add up over time. Smaller, shovel-ready projects that can be quickly realized can pave the way for larger projects that build on their success.

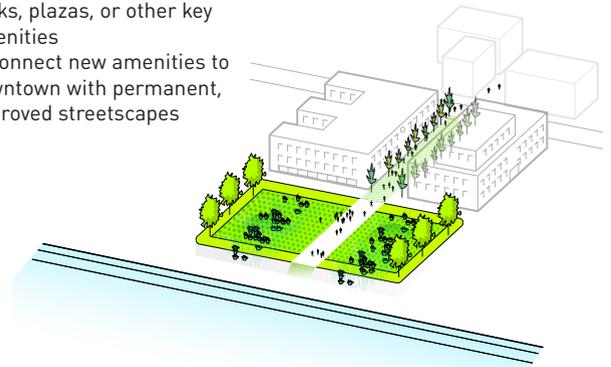
SHORT-TERM LOW INVESTMENT

- Change paving color or pattern
- Add new or pop-up plantings
- Implement pop-up programming
- Open visual connections



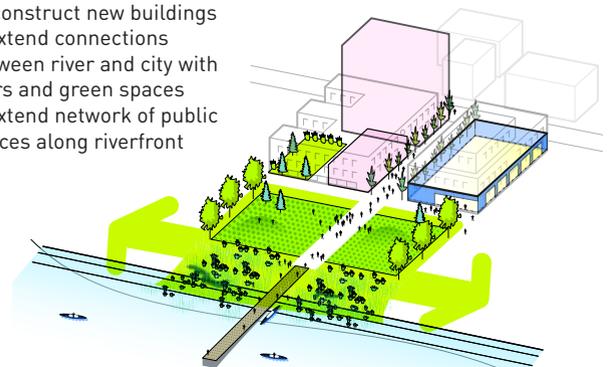
MEDIUM-TERM MODERATE INVESTMENT

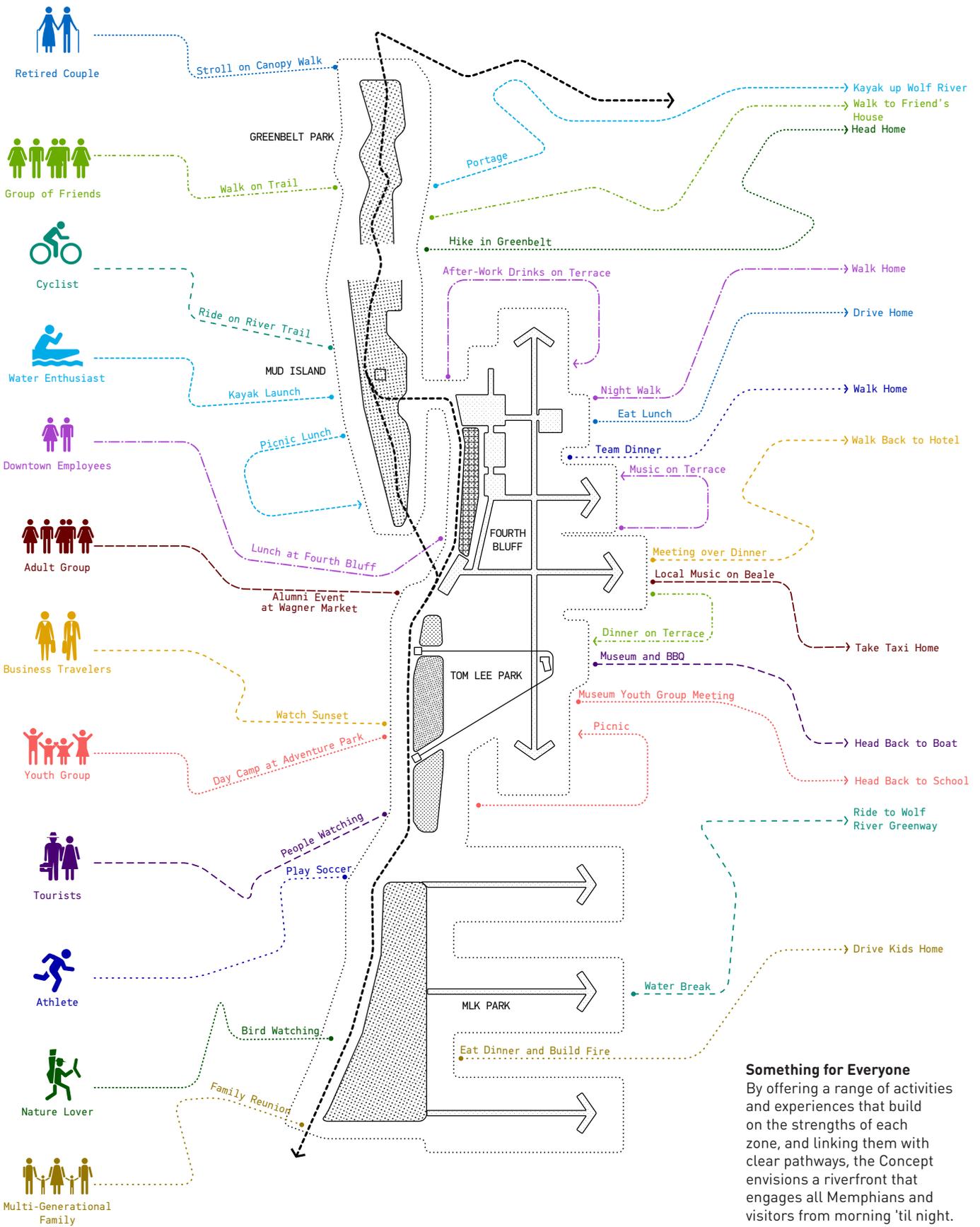
- Convert open spaces into parks, plazas, or other key amenities
- Connect new amenities to downtown with permanent, improved streetscapes



LONG-TERM LARGE INVESTMENT

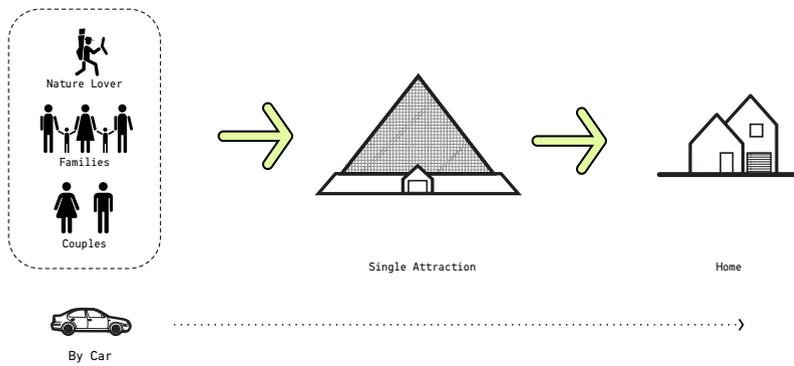
- Repurpose existing buildings or construct new buildings
- Extend connections between river and city with piers and green spaces
- Extend network of public spaces along riverfront





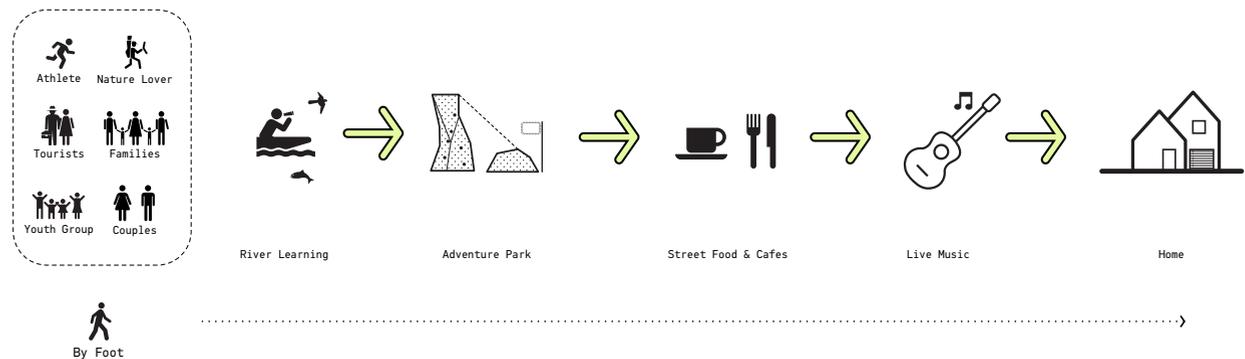
Something for Everyone
 By offering a range of activities and experiences that build on the strengths of each zone, and linking them with clear pathways, the Concept envisions a riverfront that engages all Memphians and visitors from morning 'til night.

TODAY: 2-hour experience



Expanding Engagement
 Toward increasing public enjoyment and revenue-generating potential, the Concept is designed to increase the length of a typical Memphis outing for locals and visitors alike. The new riverfront attractions it proposes are linked with existing city attractions via improved streetscapes and other pathways dotted with inviting places to eat, shop, and rest along the way. Importantly, all of these pathways can easily and safely be traversed on foot, reducing the need for parking and encouraging physical fitness.

TOMORROW: 5-hour experience



... races, and backgrounds. Further, they are designed to offer something at all times of day and year, showcasing the dynamic rhythms of Memphis and the Mississippi and encouraging extended visits, return visits, and memorable engagement.

Critically, the Concept's proposed interventions are designed as a connected set of short-, medium-, and long-term investments. These "layers" can add up over time as each completed project demonstrates success according to chosen metrics and generates further momentum and investment. Suggested funding sources and constituencies that can support certain

... projects are called out in each zone section. A chart that coordinates all interventions by level of investment and highlights key starting points can be found in the Implementation section that begins on page 67. If desired, it can be used as a "menu" that helps guide project investment according to available funds and interest.

It is hoped that all Memphians can imagine a place for themselves within the possible future this Concept lays out and that this booklet can help catalyze further conversation, decision making, and investment as a renewed riverfront becomes a reality.

Concept

“It is crucially important that we create a riverfront that reflects the community as a whole and showcases Memphis to the world.”

Mayor Jim Strickland

This Concept describes how six miles of Memphis' Mississippi Riverfront can become a signature network of spaces and opportunities, tied into the city and its assets, that benefits the entire community and lifts Memphis as a whole. It focuses on showing how five zones—the **Fourth Bluff, Mud Island, Tom Lee Park, MLK Park, and Greenbelt Park**—can leverage their particular strengths to become distinctive places offering activities and experiences that appeal to people of all generations, incomes, races, and backgrounds.

Many of the Concept's proposed uses, from an iconic adventure playground to a special overlook where you can listen to live music at sunset, come directly from community members' suggestions. Together, they are designed to offer something at all times of day and year—building on the dynamic rhythms of Memphis and the Mississippi to increase the riverfront's use, vibrancy, and economic potential.

Three design principles underlie the Concept's recommendations. Developed through an integrated process of research, community engagement, and analysis, they ensure that the Concept works from the site's specific opportunities and challenges to achieve Memphians' aspirations for their riverfront:

Foster positive encounters, civic pride and identity, and new understanding of the Mississippi River

Restore natural conditions, native ecology, and a more dynamic relationship between people and river

Connect assets along the river, the riverfront to the city (downtown and the neighborhoods beyond), and people with each other

The following section lays out the Concept and explains its design ideas. It also shows how its interventions are designed as a connected series of short-, medium-, and long-term investments. These can add up over time according to available funding and interest—demonstrating how a renewed Memphis Riverfront can not only be inclusive and inspiring, but actionable and realistic as well.



- Civic Cultural Anchor
- Bike/Pedestrian Trail
- Performance Space
- Athletic Fields
- Pavilion
- Adventure Park
- View Cone
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Urban Forestry
- Cobble Grove
- Boat Basin
- Eco Learning
- Civic Terrace
- Boathouse
- Canopy Walk
- Lookout

MLK PARK

CRUMP PARK

FRENCH FORT

MARTYRS PARK

TOM LEE PARK

MUD ISLAND

GREENBELT PARK

Riverside Gateway

Civil Rights History Loop

FOURTH BLUFF

TRIGG

S. PARKWAY

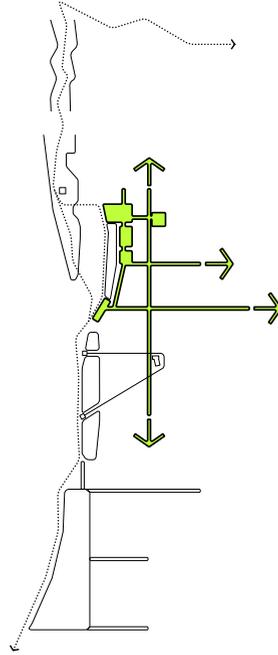
HULLING

BEALLE

MAIN SECOND

KARAHAN BRIDGE

DE SOTO BRIDGE



Fourth Bluff

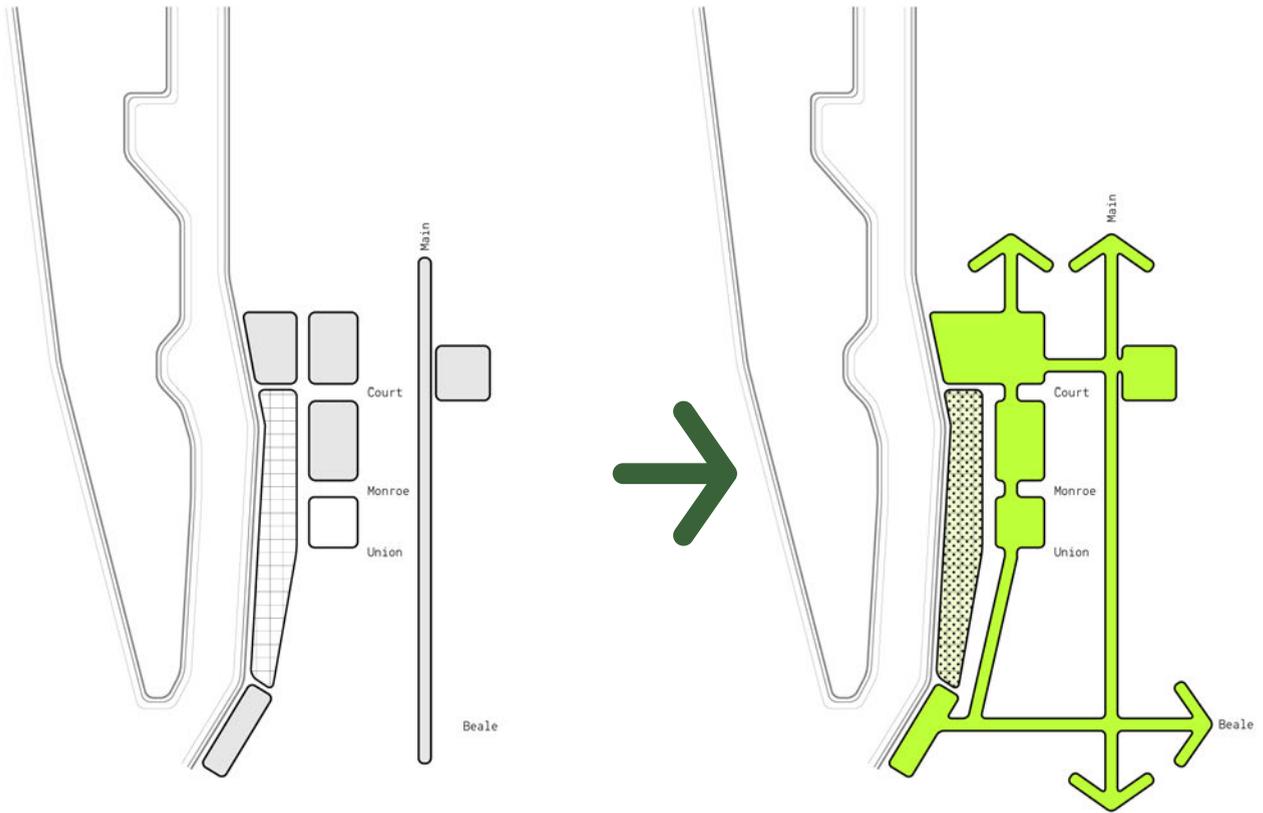
An uninviting hardscape and scattered green spaces become a unified Civic Terrace: a shady grove, planted by the community, and a vibrant public Bluff Walk woven with new places to eat, shop, play, and enjoy river views

“This is the overlooked heart of the riverfront and the hinge between the riverfront and the rest of downtown.”

CAROL COLETTA
Senior Fellow
American Cities Practice
Kresge Foundation

“The Fourth Bluff becoming a vibrant place will lead to greater exploration of the riverfront and more economic and residential activity in this area.”

MARIA FUHRMANN
Grants and Partnerships
City of Memphis



Before:
DISCONNECTED
BLOCKS

After:
CIVIC TERRACE

"The reimagining of civic spaces and pathways through Downtown Memphis has been a great demonstration of pop-up activation and creative placemaking centered on civic assets in Downtown."

JOHN PAUL SHAFFER
Executive Director
BLDG Memphis

"Please consider a 'Fun for Fathers' event that offers a safe space for dads to do art, games, etc. with their kids. Lots of dads want to spend quality time with their kids. The Riverfront would be a great venue for that."

ANONYMOUS SURVEY RESPONDENT

Located at the threshold between downtown and the Mississippi, the Fourth Bluff's riverfront presents a tremendous opportunity to leverage the area's growing opportunities and investment through placemaking. Its disparate pieces can be woven together with new connections, public amenities, and cultural and commercial hot spots to become a unified destination overlooking the river—a vibrant Civic Terrace serving as Memphis' front door, which welcomes and appeals to all.

Creating this singular Civic Terrace can begin at the Cobblestone Landing. To bring shade and softness to this historic hardscape, a variety of native trees and shrubs can be planted across the site that grow over time into a lush grove. Their planting can take place as a citywide event in which residents from each Memphis neighborhood plant one tree on the cobbles and plant its twin in their own neighborhood. Forming a living connection between the riverfront and the city's diverse communities, the trees can be planted in coordination with the US Army Corps of Engineers' Cobblestone Landing restoration project to expand on its improvements. Importantly, the final form of this intervention must be decided upon through continued conversation with the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office and others to respect the site's National Register designation.

Taking Riverside Drive from four to two lanes can allow for a wider pedestrian path and bikeway above the Cobble Grove that incorporates trees and other plantings. Adding a new access point between this path and the Cobblestones at Union Avenue and expanding the existing access at Monroe will improve circulation between both levels, allowing walkers and runners easy access to a

new boardwalk path at the river's edge. At the north, this path can connect with a modified pedestrian bridge to Mud Island and the trails beyond, as well as a new boathouse at Mississippi River Park where kayaks and other watercraft can be rented and stored. At the south, the path can extend to Beale Street Landing and along the length of Tom Lee Park.

As this network of paths and the soft Cobble Grove canopy grows along the riverbank, a series of interventions at the top of the bluff can transform the blocks between Jefferson and Beale into one distinct destination—a vibrant public Bluff Walk with new cultural assets and dining and retail amenities. Removing the parking garage at Monroe and Front and the fire station headquarters at Union and Front can open up an amazing Mississippi River vista and create space for an iconic new cultural anchor set in a green landscape. This new amenity can include a restaurant with live music that opens to the outdoors in good weather, spilling activity onto a surrounding sculpture garden that draws people to the edge of the bluff for framed views of the river.

At Wagner Place, a pop-up market with food trucks and other vendors can over time transform into a permanent market space where a variety of public and private events can take place under its iconic canopy structures. Its success can spur development across the street that includes lively ground-level retail.

A string of improved pedestrian bridge connections, plantings, and comfortable places to sit help tie together these new amenities with those of the Civic Commons, creating a vibrant loop of opportunities that pulls people between the river and downtown.



1 Plant Cobble Grove

Starting with planters on top of the cobbles, grow a lush urban grove that can bring shade and beauty to the hardscape.



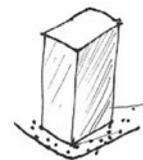
2 Test and Build Wagner Place Market

Test Wagner Place's potential as a lively market space with a pop-up market. Then, working closely with AutoZone, transform the area into a linear park with iconic market canopy structures near Beale.



3 Convert Parking to Cultural Asset

Replace the parking garage at Monroe and Front with a new cultural amenity that can anchor the corner and spill activity outdoors.



4 Develop Front Street Corners

Activate key intersections along Front Street with mixed-used commercial and public green spaces.





Union Avenue Overlook

Union Avenue Section

Vibrant Heart of Memphis

An activated Wolf River Harbor can link Mud Island and the Fourth Bluff with recreational activities, pedestrian connections, and rich ecology. From the outdoor adventures and learning opportunities on Mud Island, to the shade and respite of Cobble Grove, to rotating markets and festivals that can extend onto Riverside Drive, this vibrant heart of Memphis offers many layers of possibility.





Civic Terrace and Cobble Grove

Expanding on the improvements of the US Army Corps of Engineers' restoration project, a new boathouse, boardwalk, and shady grove planted by the community can bring new life and color to Cobblestone Landing.





New Horizons at Monroe Avenue

Removing the above-ground levels of the Monroe Avenue parking garage opens up expansive river views. An exciting new cultural amenity with an outdoor sculpture garden draws people between downtown and the bluff's edge.



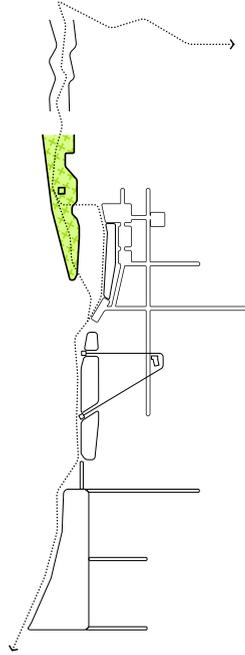


Wagner Place Market

Replacing two corner parking lots with an open-air market and lively street-level retail can activate the important connection between Beale Street and Beale Street Landing with iconic signage and an improved streetscape that draws people to the riverfront beyond.







Mud Island

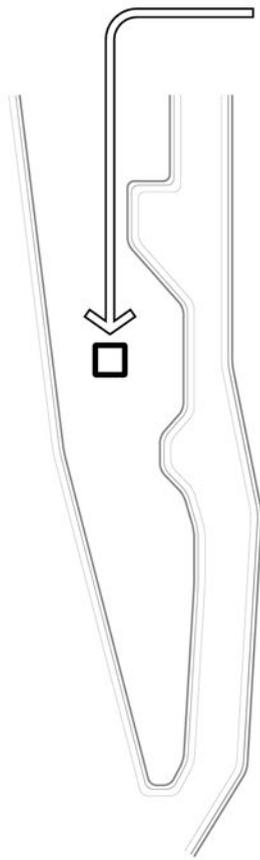
A hard-to-access peninsula with dispersed cultural assets becomes a connected Eco Hub where freshwater science education and innovation thrive through institutional partnerships

“Mud Island is an interesting part of the downtown area because it feels so far removed from the rest of the city, but feels like a good place to escape from the rest of the city.”

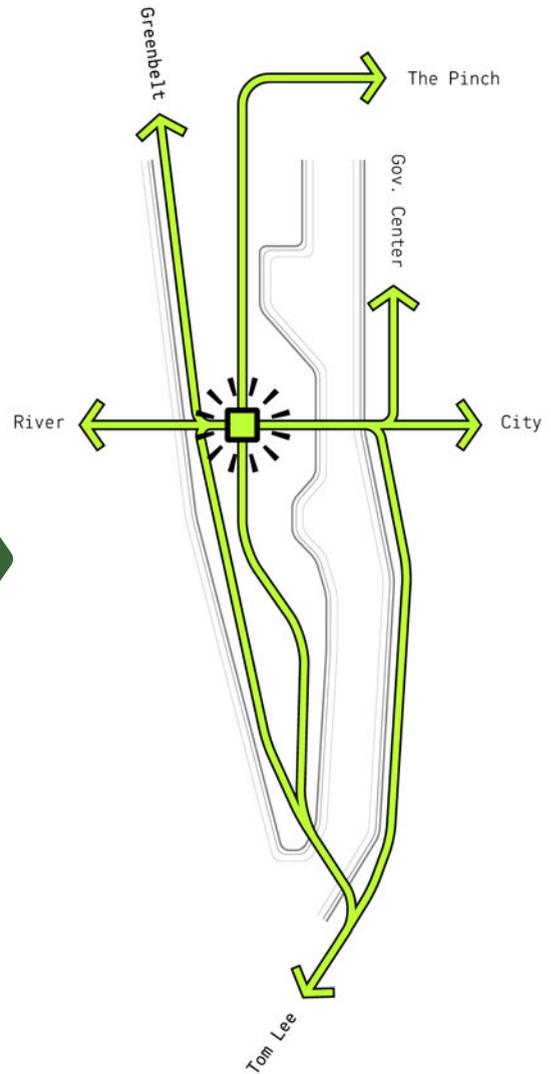
RACHEL KNOX
Program Associate
Innovate Memphis

“What I really love about the riverfront is that it is still fairly natural with trees and grasses. You can walk right down to the edge. ...It feels like a wild space.”

ANONYMOUS SURVEY RESPONDENT



Before:
SIDELINED
AMENITY



After:
ECO HUB

“We should optimize the incredible western sunset view and maintain spaces that are free and open to the public so that all Memphians can experience this space.”

LAUREN TAYLOR
Program Director for Livable Communities
Hyde Family Foundations

“Just connect the paths, parks, public spaces we already have. Respect our history and our beautiful views and plant some trees.”

ANONYMOUS SURVEY RESPONDENT

Though home to cultural assets, Mud Island has long gone underused and underdeveloped. But with its unique position—immersed in the Mississippi yet alongside downtown and its anchor institutions, including the University of Memphis Law School—this peninsula has the potential to become a leading 21st-century center for freshwater science and eco-industry.

The Island’s amazing existing model of the Mississippi River can become the seed from which an exciting, peninsula-wide learning and discovery environment can grow. Its new anchor is envisioned to be an Eco Hub where Memphis’ leading scientific institutions such as the U of M (specifically, its Ecological Research Center) and the Memphis Zoo can partner to run a center devoted to hands-on river science studies. Leveraging and expanding their educational, conservation, and research capacities, this Hub could also attract industry investment aimed at developing freshwater-focused innovations.

The Eco Hub’s program could also extend to include a one-of-a-kind public magnet school. With a curriculum centered on river science and technology, this school would give youth unique intellectual and technical training in this growing field—much like the well-known Harbor School on New York City’s Governors Island or the Public Museum School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

As the Eco Hub’s partnerships are forming, Mud Island’s ecological transformation can begin right away by creating programmed campsites and learning areas at the Island’s southern end where Memphians of all ages can enjoy nature without leaving the city. Planting the peninsula with trees, grasses, and other native vegetation able to withstand high water will create attractive habitat for wildlife and enhance its potential as an outdoor recreation destination—all while reducing maintenance.

To open up access and further increase use, adding a new loop path, converting the monorail to a pedestrian bridge open year-round, and creating a new connection to Beale Street Landing (e.g. a pontoon bridge) will strongly tie these new amenities into downtown and the rest of the riverfront system. Integrating interpretive signage into the loop path, as well as two small pavilions and an “astronomy cone” that frame special views of the river, city, and sky, extend the Island’s educational mission.

Bringing together key institutions, youth and higher education, interpretive visitor programming, recreation, and research and development activities, an eco-focused Mud Island can position Memphis to be a key player in the growing green economy.



1 Create Campsites and Learning Areas

Set up areas for camping and learning programs for all ages that offer a new way of engaging with the river and city.



2 Build Pavilions and Astronomy Cones

Construct small-scale, signature structures that frame views of the river, city, and night sky—providing great photo opportunities and educational moments.



3 Bring in the Civic Partners

Start with activities and programs led by civic institutions—expanding the Island’s uses, research opportunities, and public engagement—to pave the way for buildings to follow.



4 Build Eco Hub with U of M

Partner with the Ecological Research Center at the U of M to expand its downtown satellite campus, positioning a freshwater science program directly on the Mississippi.





Mud Island Ped Bridge

Wolf River Boathouse

Mississippi River Park

Two-Lane Riverside Drive

Wolf River Harbor Section

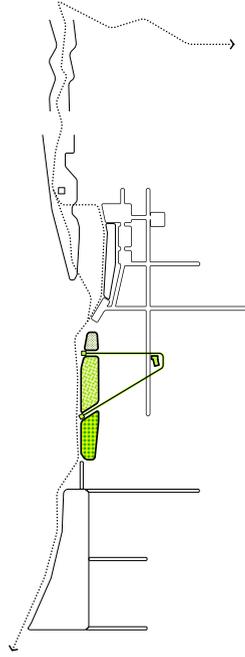
Front Street

Eco Hub

A variety of new plantings and structures that amplify Mud Island's river ecology can help transform the peninsula into an active place offering a diverse array of opportunities for learning, teaching, research, gathering, and simply enjoying the outdoors.







Tom Lee Park

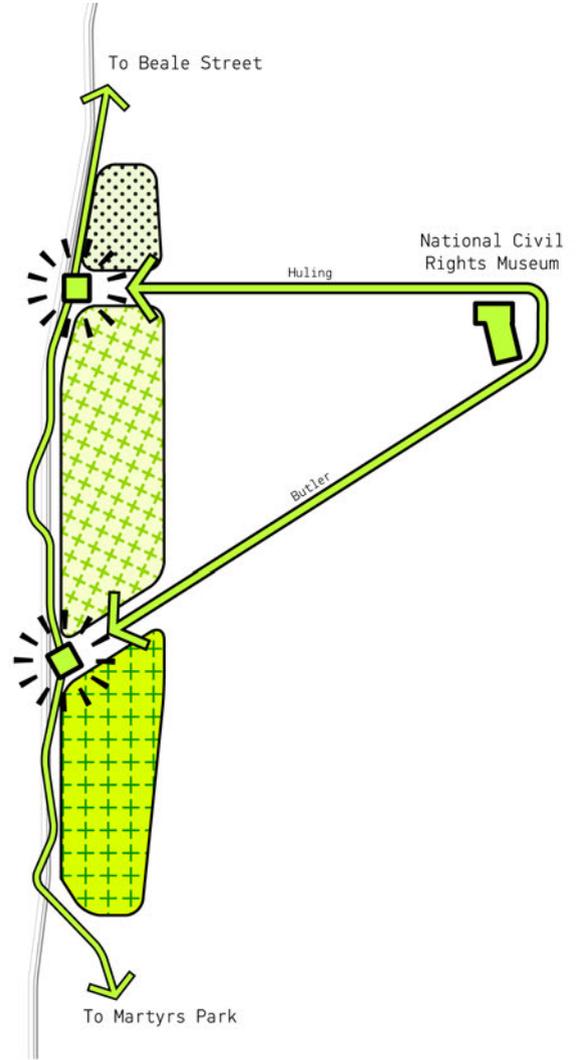
A flat field becomes a dynamic Vibrant Terrain where new topography shapes many exciting recreational opportunities and offers multiple ways to enjoy the Mississippi

“This could be the crown jewel along Memphis’ entire riverfront, instead it’s a grassy field of absent civic ambition.”

NICK OYLER
Bikeway and Pedestrian Program Manager
City of Memphis

“The river has a peaceful and calming effect after a long day at work. Just to sit and watch the sun set or logs float down the river can slow your pace down and give you peace.”

ANONYMOUS SURVEY RESPONDENT



**Before:
MONO FIELD**

**After:
VIBRANT TERRAIN**

"The park provides a great vista for citizens and visitors to review and enjoy the river."

JIM HOLT
President & CEO
Memphis in May International Festival

"Tom Lee Park is a pretty big space, and it's mostly empty. Better and easier connections for pedestrians are a must. More outdoor activities would be nice, too."

ANONYMOUS SURVEY RESPONDENT

At present, Tom Lee Park's remarkable expanse of open space along the Mississippi River is flat and almost bare, reflecting its most well-known use as a month-long fairgrounds. Reimagining the park with year-round public use as its primary purpose, rather than an afterthought, reveals the potential of this space as a vibrant landscape offering memorable riverfront experiences for everyone.

The park's evolution from "mono" to "multi" can begin by softening its river edge with trees and other native plantings, and weaving in comfortable places to sit and relax that span the park's length. Allowing people to get closer to the water, this respite edge also provides much-needed shade to help park users stay cool during Memphis' many hot months. Just south of Beale Street Landing, an exciting adventure park can mark the start of Tom Lee. With a skate park, iconic playground, and rock climbing wall, it provides a multi-generational place to play and an energetic magnet pulling people from Beale Street to the riverfront.

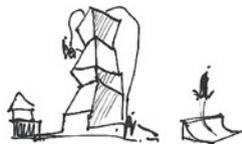
Reducing Riverside Drive from four to two lanes (with parallel parking on the west side) maintains easy park access for drivers while allowing a portion of Tom Lee's current parking lot to become a green Civic Meadow perfect for flying kites or playing catch. The Meadow's southern end morphs into a more forested landscape of gentle hills whose constructed topography creates shaded pockets for picnicking and relaxing. Further south, new athletic fields can be used by sports teams of all ages.

The park commemorates one of Memphis' best-known African-Americans. Making simple changes to the streetscapes of Huling and Butler Avenues (such as adding signage, planting trees, or painting sidewalks) can create a powerful "Civil Rights History Loop" that connects the park with the National Civil Rights Museum. Pulling visitors between the city and riverfront, and thereby increasing the use of both spaces as well as potential tourism revenue, this Loop can also become an everyday affirmation for the local community of African-Americans' contributions to Memphis and the world.

The Loop extends all the way to the Mississippi, as Huling and Butler transform into pedestrian paths that terminate at two signature pavilions that jut out over the water. Gracious and shaded, they provide a special space for taking photos, watching the water go by, or enjoying the sunset. They can also be rented for a range of special events, from weddings and professional mixers to picnics, birthdays, and family reunions. The two pavilions are linked to one another—completing the Loop—by the central portion of a kinetic boardwalk that runs along the park's full length. Rising and falling with the changing level of the Mississippi, this new path showcases the river's natural rhythms and connects Beale Street Landing with Ashburn-Coppock Park and the pedestrian bridge over Riverside Drive.



1 Plant a Shaded Respite Edge
Soften and ecologically enrich the edge of Tom Lee Park with native plantings and shady groves, which also provide shade during hot summer months.



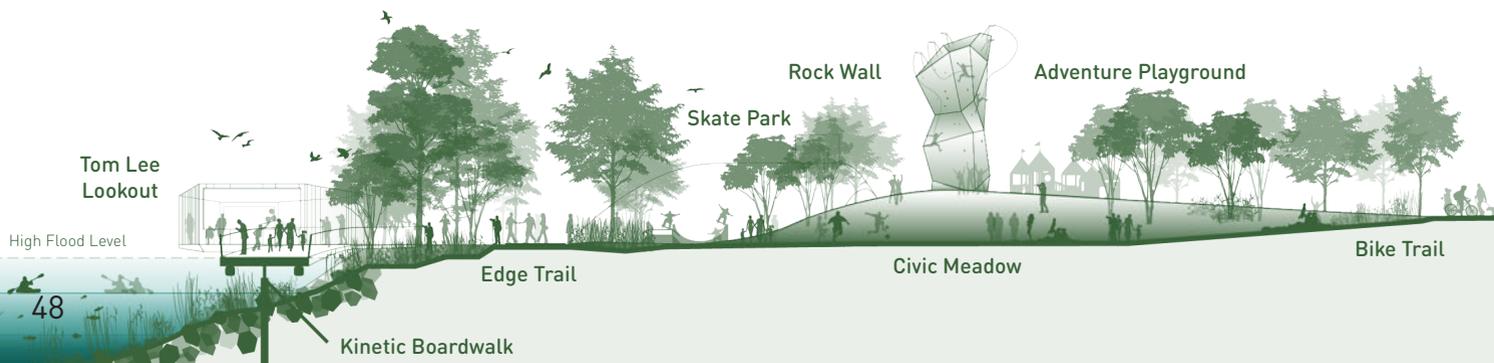
2 Build Adventure Park
Bring exciting activity to Tom Lee and help activate Beale Street Landing by building an iconic playground, skate park, and rock climbing wall.



3 Build River Edge Pavilions
Construct two signature pavilions at the river's edge that accommodate a range of events, provide special views, and stake out a Civil Rights History Loop.



4 Construct Kinetic Boardwalk
Create a curving pedestrian path that extends out of the river and rises and falls with the height of the Mississippi.





MISSISSIPPI RIVER

De Soto Bridge View

Harahan Bridge View

Arkansas Flood Plain View

Sunset Point
Sunset View

Skate Park
Playground
Rock Wall

Adventure Park

Civic Meadow

Kinetic Boardwalk

Picnic Pockets

Sports Fields

Stormwater Wetland

Bluff Terrace

Civil Rights History Loop

National Civil Rights Museum

Front

Main

Second

Huling

Butler

Bluff Trail

Bluff Terrace

Bluff Perch

Vegetated Slope

Paid Parallel Parking Two-Lane Riverside Drive Speed Table

Diverse Opportunities Year-Round

A variety of new amenities, from an adventure playground to an elegant pavilion, would provide park users with many activity options in all seasons. Different types of trails would allow for different speeds of movement through the park, while areas of respite and shade encourage everyone to relax and take in the Mississippi.



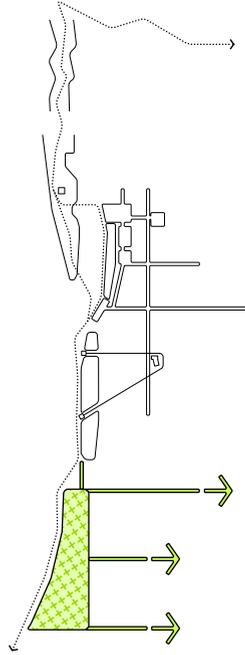


Room for Everyone

Enhancing the environment of Tom Lee Park with new plantings, topography, and amenities allows for multiple activities and events to occur simultaneously. Street festivals, fitness classes, family outings, and bike rides, for example, can all take place at Tom Lee.







MLK Park

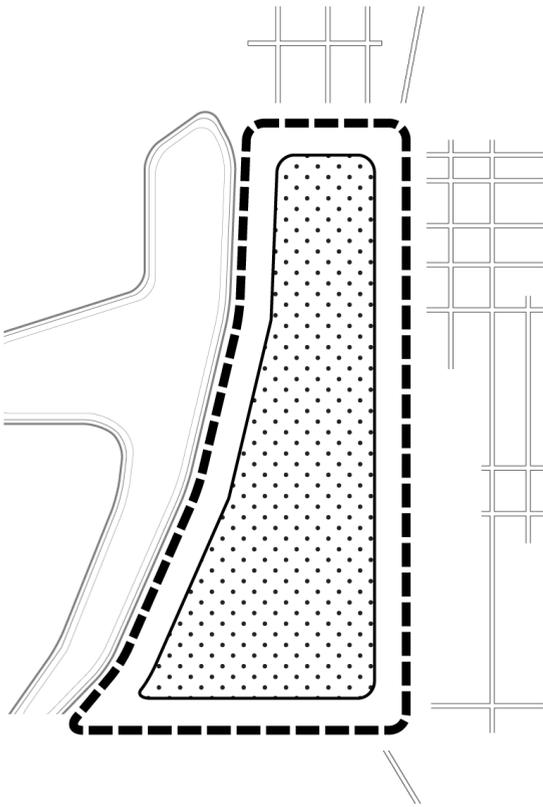
A historic park is reactivated as a New Opportunity with new connections, a softer water's edge, and structures that support festivals and community gatherings year-round

"The untapped potential of Martin Luther King Jr. Riverside Park is amazing. It's in a great location in the core of our city, it has peaceful forests, and so much history."

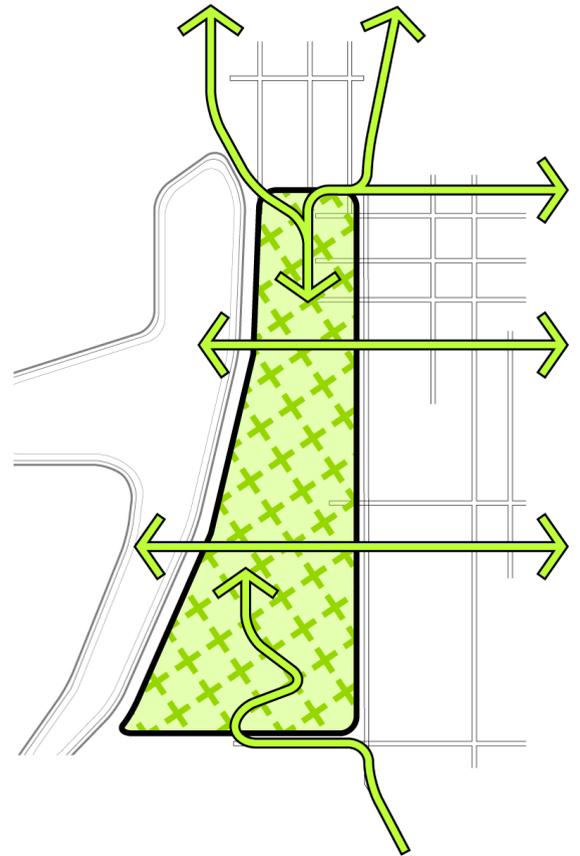
ALAN CRONE
City of Memphis

"This is a big opportunity to connect downtowners with a rare asset and South Memphians with the Harahan Bridge and downtown."

CAROL COLETTA
Senior Fellow
American Cities Practice
Kresge Foundation



Before:
ISOLATED ASSET



After:
NEW OPPORTUNITY

“Would be great to have outdoor spaces such as an outdoor exhibit in a pleasant landscaped area with access to food, benches, and picnic areas.”

ANONYMOUS SURVEY RESPONDENT

“Every improvement to this park should consider the needs and interests of the people in the South Memphis neighborhoods who live closest to it.”

LAUREN TAYLOR
Program Director for Livable Communities
Hyde Family Foundations

Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Park is one of Memphis' earliest urban anchors. Along with Overton Park and the Parkway system that was designed to connect them, it formed a frame for the city's growth at the turn of the 20th century under the 1901 Kessler Plan. Today, MLK remains Memphis' largest riverfront park, but its nearly 380 acres, much of which is old-growth forest, are markedly underused, underprogrammed, and missing from the mental map of many Memphians. Reinvesting in MLK Park by reconnecting it with the city and creating new facilities for recreation and events can help all Memphians rediscover this green gem while providing special benefit for its neighboring South Memphis community.

Reactivating the park's public use can start by adding signage along major roadways and within the city's core that provide clear directions and call it out as a Memphis destination. Locating transit stops at the park and connecting it with existing and future bike trails will further open up access. These links can connect into a new network of trails within the park that allow walkers, runners, cyclists, and hikers to enjoy the shore of McKellar Lake and its forested acres. The lake's current steep, hard edge can be softened into an accessible shoreline by moving earth and adding native plantings, and creating a dock area where boats and kayaks can pull up. Extending South Parkway to meet the lake would be a practical and meaningful crowning touch for MLK Park's reconnection—completing Kessler's Parkway system and strengthening a key corridor of the Riverside neighborhood.

The park's current 9-hole golf course is little used and costly to maintain; its fairways provide an ideal foundation for conversion into festival grounds that can be used year-round for concerts, markets, theater performances, and other large events. The fairway layout is well-suited for simultaneous events or multi-stage/multi-theme events, in which each former fairway "room" can hold a distinct program. With its huge footprint, this area can even come to host signature regional events such as hot air balloon festivals and model airplane shows that bring new audiences to Memphis.

The venues and other facilities that support these events can begin as temporary structures that are replaced over time with permanent buildings as funds become available. Whether temporary or permanent, key structures should be designed to serve double-duty as everyday amenities for parkgoers when not in use for special events. Performance pavilions, for example, can be reset to accommodate picnics and family reunions.

As these improvements within the park are made, they can stimulate redevelopment of the industrial and vacant lands to the north. Rezoning these areas and encouraging dense uses can result in a vibrant swath of development that further ties MLK Park together with the city's core. Eventually, removing the McKellar levee and reconnecting the inner harbor with the Mississippi would allow for a seamless riverfront trail system joining MLK Park with the Wolf River Greenway—creating a region-wide amenity for cyclists and pedestrians.



1 Form Stronger Transit Links

Add signage and transit connections to reconnect the park with the city, and create trails that allow everyone to enjoy its amazing forested acres.



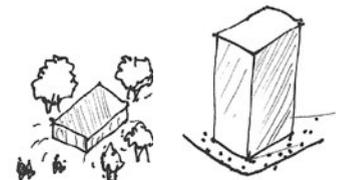
2 Convert Fairways to Fairgrounds

Adapt fairways for reuse as festival grounds that host a wide range of outdoor events year-round.



3 Dedicated Festival Site

Develop infrastructure needed for a long-term festival site. Work to leverage the scale and quality of the festival grounds to attract region-wide destination events.



4 Develop Vacant Land North of MLK Park

Rezone and encourage dense redevelopment in the area, concentrating on sites adjacent to the proposed MLK Riverside Park Bike Trail.

McKellar Lake

Wetland Marsh

Boardwalk

Lower Fairway Festival



Native Grassland

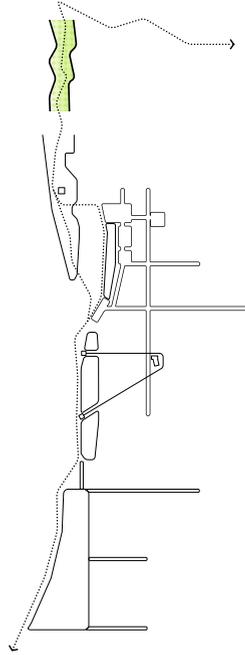
Upper Fairway Festival

Festivals on the Fairway

Converting MLK Park's underused golf course to a festival grounds can bring a wide range of events to the park. Putting up new signage, creating trails, and better connecting the park with existing roadways, trails, and bikeways can open up access to its forested acres for a host of new users from the surrounding neighborhoods and the rest of the city.







Greenbelt Park

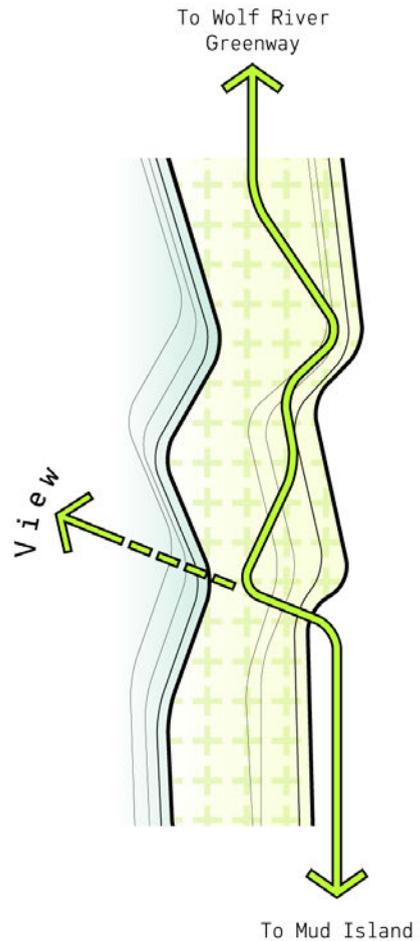
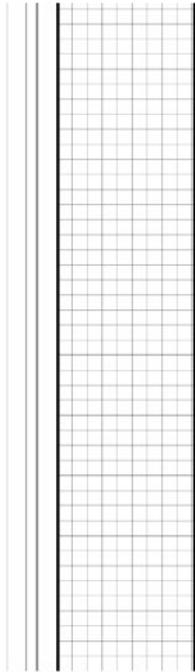
Flat paths troubled by fluctuating water become an Engaging Environment where multi-level trails, public art, and a tower lookout amplify the experience of its rich ecology

“A natural terraced setting that showcases the power of the Mississippi River.”

BENNY LENDERMON
President
Riverfront Development Corporation

“The best part of the riverfront is Greenbelt Park.”

ANONYMOUS SURVEY RESPONDENT



Before:
UNIFORM
EXPERIENCE

After:
ENGAGING
ENVIRONMENT

"It would be great to have hard or soft surface trails that allow people to get closer to the River."

LAUREN TAYLOR
Program Director for Livable Communities
Hyde Family Foundations

"Greenbelt is a quiet place to reflect and view the river."

ANONYMOUS SURVEY RESPONDENT

Long and narrow, Greenbelt Park was constructed to serve as a buffer zone protecting the Harbor Town development from the seasonal rise of the Mississippi. But the success of its trails and the flora and fauna that have spontaneously taken root here demonstrate that fully embracing its 1.5-mile stretch as a public park can make it a distinct Memphis destination—a lush, ecologically functional environment that plays up the river’s dynamic qualities and provides many ways for people to enjoy nature.

Leveraging the park’s natural conditions can begin by creating a citywide initiative in which artists work with community groups to turn the driftwood that accumulates at Greenbelt into sculptures sited along the length of the park. This outdoor exhibition can draw more people to explore this part of the riverfront. Meanwhile, a more lush landscape can begin to thrive as native trees, grasses, and other vegetation are planted throughout the park according to their ability to grow in varying water levels. Working with the Army Corps of Engineers, Greenbelt’s river edge can be reshaped into a more natural, curving condition with inlets that provide important aquatic habitat. These inlets will also catch debris, reducing maintenance by providing space for natural materials to remain and isolating problematic deposits for easier removal.

New trails that bend and curve through the park’s growing habitat can be constructed to create more

engaging experiences for pedestrians and cyclists. East-west connectors will provide easy access between the riverfront and Harbor Town, and a southern connection with the new Mud Island trails will allow people to move easily between Greenbelt, downtown, and the riverfront areas farther to the south. At Greenbelt’s northern end, the trails can merge into a single pathway that bends to the east to connect with the Wolf River Greenway. Building a landmark lookout tower at their hinge point would create a magnetic destination for the entire trail system—offering 360-degree views of the surrounding natural landscape and Memphis skyline.

The soil cut away during Greenbelt’s river edge modification can be used to create terraced “land perches” that extend the parkland farther into the Mississippi. When the river level is low, these land perches offer shaded, green edges that take pedestrians directly to the water’s edge. They can also form the foundations for elevated Lookout Jetties, connected with the trails, that bring visitors out and over the river for special views. As desired, these Jetties can become immersive “Canopy Walks” that cut through thick tunnels of treetops and offer great birdwatching opportunities. When the river level is high and the land perches are covered by feet of water, they can provide aquatic habitat, while up at the water’s surface, the Jetties become docks for kayakers and other watercraft users who want to explore the park’s meandering edge.



1 Expand Driftwood Collection into Art Fest

Invite artists to work with community groups to create an outdoor exhibition of driftwood sculptures along the length of Greenbelt’s riverfront.

2 Build Greenbelt Lookout

Construct a landmark lookout tower where the Greenbelt trails bend to meet the Wolf River Greenway.

3 Form Land Perches

Use the soil cut away from the river edge during its modification to form a series of land perches that extend the parkland and support the canopy walk jetties.

4 Construct Canopy Walk

Starting at Harbor Town Village, create an elevated walkway that brings pedestrians out over the edge of the Mississippi through a thick canopy of diverse native trees.

High Flood Level





Canopy Walk

Elevating visitors above the river, a thick arch of native trees directs their view across the Mississippi and provides great habitat for birds and other animals. Below the walkway, visitors can explore a native wetland on foot or by kayak, depending on the rise and fall of the river.

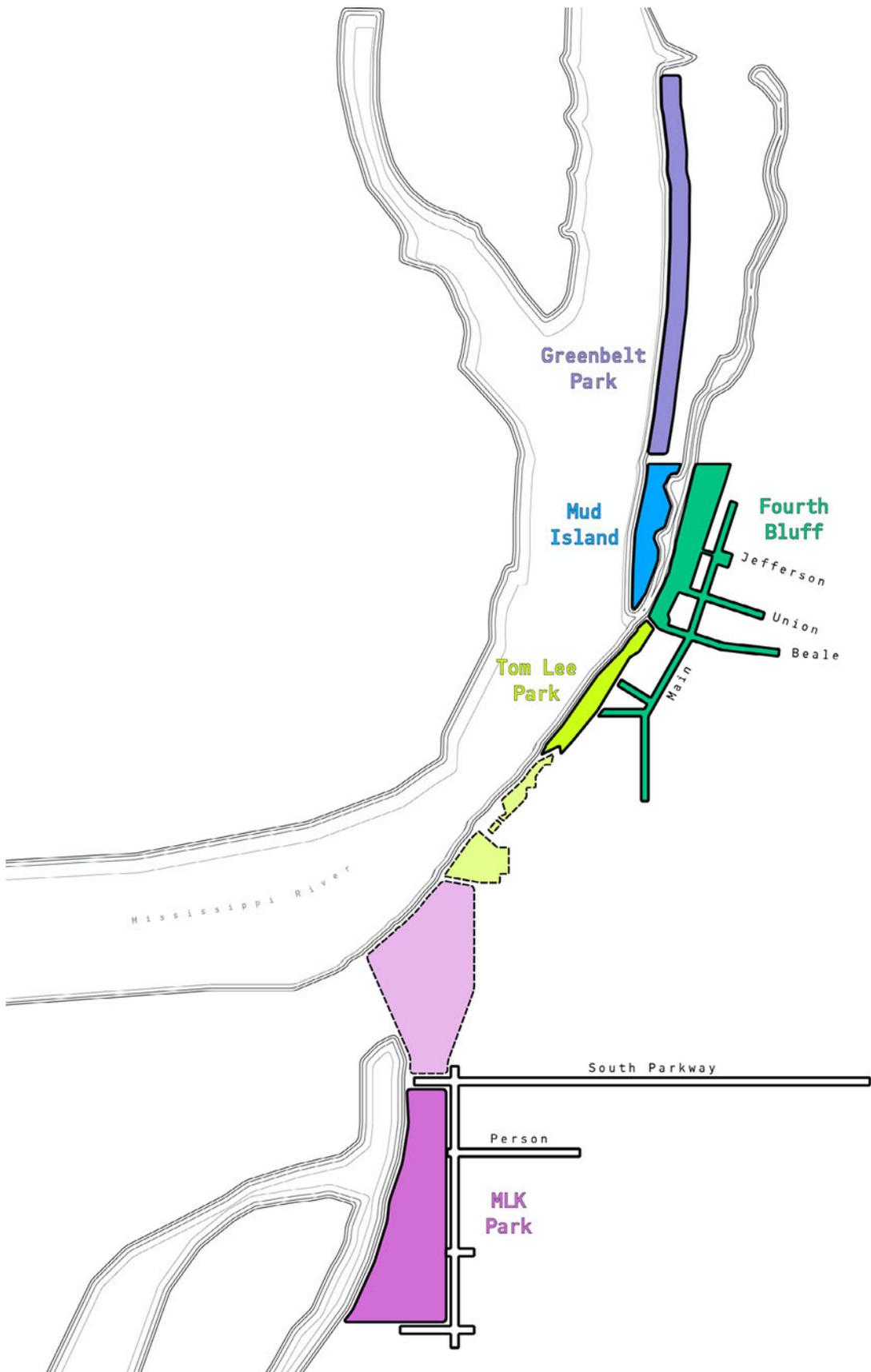




Implementation

**“The ‘Great River’
is a magical
economic, ecological,
and cultural
connector—and
Memphis is the
address on the
Lower Mississippi
waiting to be
celebrated.”**

**Steve Apfelbaum
Sr. Ecologist, Founder & Chairman
Applied Ecological Services**



S

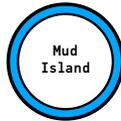
Short-Term Low Investment Projects
Can be completed in 1 to 2 years
\$0 to \$1 million (\$)



Start a driftwood art festival using driftwood found along the river's edge (\$)



Create small-scale pavilions for shade and respite (\$)



Set up outdoor science classrooms for hands-on learning (\$)



Set aside areas for campsites where people can spend the night close to the river (\$)



Create new trails connecting Mud Island into the trail network and adapt the monorail bridge as a pedestrian bridge (\$\$)



Use pop-up program of food trucks, music, and events to bring people to river (\$)



Plant trees to create softness and shade at Cobblestone Landing (\$)



Install iconic sculpture at the edge of the Bluff at Monroe to activate spaces and frame views to river (\$)



Connect corridors with gateways (\$)



Plant respite areas with shade (\$)



Build benches and seatwalks (\$)



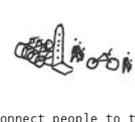
Play music at pop-up stages (\$)



Daylight MLK with new signage along roadways and in downtown (\$)



Use open space for outdoor classrooms (\$)



Connect people to the park by setting up bike share hubs (\$)



Connect existing trails along the river to new network of trails in MLK (\$)

M

Medium-Term Moderate Investment Projects
Can be completed in 2 to 5 years
\$1 to \$5 million (\$\$)



Form a new trail that connects to the rest of the river trail network (\$\$)



Build a lookout tower at the confluence of the Wolf River Greenway and Greenbelt Park (\$\$)



Create a canopy walk to give people a unique way to view the park, river, and city (\$\$)



Add kayak and canoe launch on western edge of Mud Island (\$\$)



Build small-scale pavilions that frame views and can be used for many purposes (\$\$)



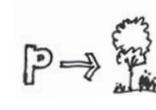
Work to bring the U of M Ecological Resource Center to a new home on Mud Island (\$\$\$)



Build permanent canopy structures to create Wagner Place Market (\$\$)



Bring people to the water by building a boathouse and dock at Mississippi River Park (\$\$)



Remove the parking garage at Monroe Avenue and convert to a green landscape (\$\$)



Give Riverside Drive a road diet from 4 lanes to 2 (\$\$)



Construct Adventure Park with playground, skate park, and rock wall (\$\$)



Build pavilion at river's edge and anchor the Civil Rights History Trail (\$\$\$)



Develop urban forestry training area (\$\$)



Convert golf course fairways to festival grounds (\$\$)



Attract diverse types of festivals (\$\$)

L

Long-Term Large Investment Projects
Can be completed in 5 or more years
\$5 million and up (\$\$\$)



Build jetty paths that frame views of bridges, sunsets, and the river (\$\$\$)



Sculpt landforms that collect natural river sediment flows and over time create a native landscape that requires little maintenance (\$\$\$)



Form Harbor Islands that provide a place for kayakers to corral (\$\$\$)



Invite the Memphis Zoo to create a new home on Mud Island - a Mississippi River Aquarium (\$\$\$)



Construct new buildings and research labs to form an Eco Hub campus (\$\$\$)



Build iconic cultural amenity on former Monroe Avenue parking garage site (\$\$\$)



Extend the Bluff Walk from Jefferson to Union (\$\$\$)



Develop key corners along Front Street and focus on extending the Beale Street corridor to the river (\$\$\$)



Construct kinetic boardwalk (\$\$\$)



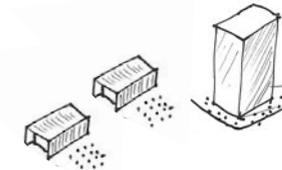
Carve into the bluff to form terraced edges and overlooks (\$\$\$)



Shape the landscape to create gathering hills and picnic areas (\$\$\$)



Form kayak corral at McKellar Lake (\$\$\$)



Develop vacant and abandoned parcels north of MLK Park (\$\$\$)

Realizing a thriving Memphis Riverfront can be accomplished via many different pathways that connect projects at various scales of investment. Smaller, shovel-ready projects can pave the way for larger projects that build on their success—like pop-up events and activities, for example, that test program ideas and draw people to spaces they may have overlooked in the past, or simple capital projects like tree planting that can transform the feeling and use of a space. Simultaneously, partnerships with major institutions can develop into specific larger-scale, permanent investments that become the anchors of a renewed riverfront.

Key Starting Points

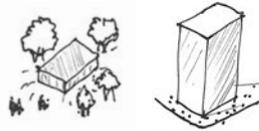


1 Plant Cobble Grove

Starting with planters on top of the cobbles, grow a lush urban grove that can bring shade and beauty to this historic SHScape. Work closely with the Tennessee SHPO and USACE to ensure the intervention respects the site’s National Register designation and expands on the Army Corps’ improvements.

2 Create Wagner Place Market

Test Wagner Place’s potential as a lively market space with a pop-up market hosting food trucks and live music. Then, working closely with AutoZone, transform the area into a permanent market and linear park with iconic canopy structures that host rotating events, like farmers markets and employee team-building activities.



3 Bring in the U of M + Memphis Zoo

Partner with the Ecological Research Center at the U of M to position a freshwater science program directly on the Mississippi—eventually housed at a new Eco Hub building. Partner with the Memphis Zoo to integrate aquarium programming into the Eco Hub and the rest of Mud Island, expanding the Island’s uses, research opportunities, and public engagement.

4 Convert Parking to Cultural Asset

Replace the parking garage at Monroe and Front with an iconic new cultural amenity, possibly including a restaurant or cafe, that can anchor the corner and spill activity outdoors. Incorporate a sculpture into its landscape that frames views of the river and draws people to the edge of the bluff.

Analysis

“We’re investing in the civic commons in Memphis in a way that strengthens the connections between downtown and our riverfront. Let’s keep building on that success!”

**Terence Patterson
President & CEO
Downtown Memphis Commission**

Site Conditions

INTRODUCTION

The entirety of the site, which spans nearly six miles of Memphis' Mississippi riverfront, is vast and varied in its experience. It is bounded at its northern edge by the confluence of the Wolf and Mississippi Rivers and to its south by the second largest park in the city, MLK Park, which abuts a working waterfront and is disconnected from the neighborhood it serves.

Greenbelt Park provides the most natural landscape along the river; however, the uniform topography of the park makes it vulnerable to seasonal flooding that renders its lower portion (roughly three quarters of its total area) temporarily unusable due to muddy conditions. The plants that have spontaneously taken root here and thrived with the rich alluvial soils left by the river demonstrate the potential of planting native species to create a lush park filled with appropriate flora.

The Mud Island River Park and Mississippi River Museum to the south are underutilized assets that feel physically and mentally disconnected from Memphis. The complex itself is inward-focused and in many cases blocks potential views out to the river. The scale model of the Mississippi River is a bright spot in the experience that should be preserved and enhanced in terms of the experience it provides to visitors.

Across the Wolf River Harbor are a series of historically significant civic park spaces and corridors that unfortunately lack strong connections. They include Mississippi River Park, the historic Cobblestone Landing, Memphis Park, the roadways leading from Riverside Drive to Front Street, and the Beale Street Corridor. To the south is Beale Street whose activity



Site Observation and Analysis

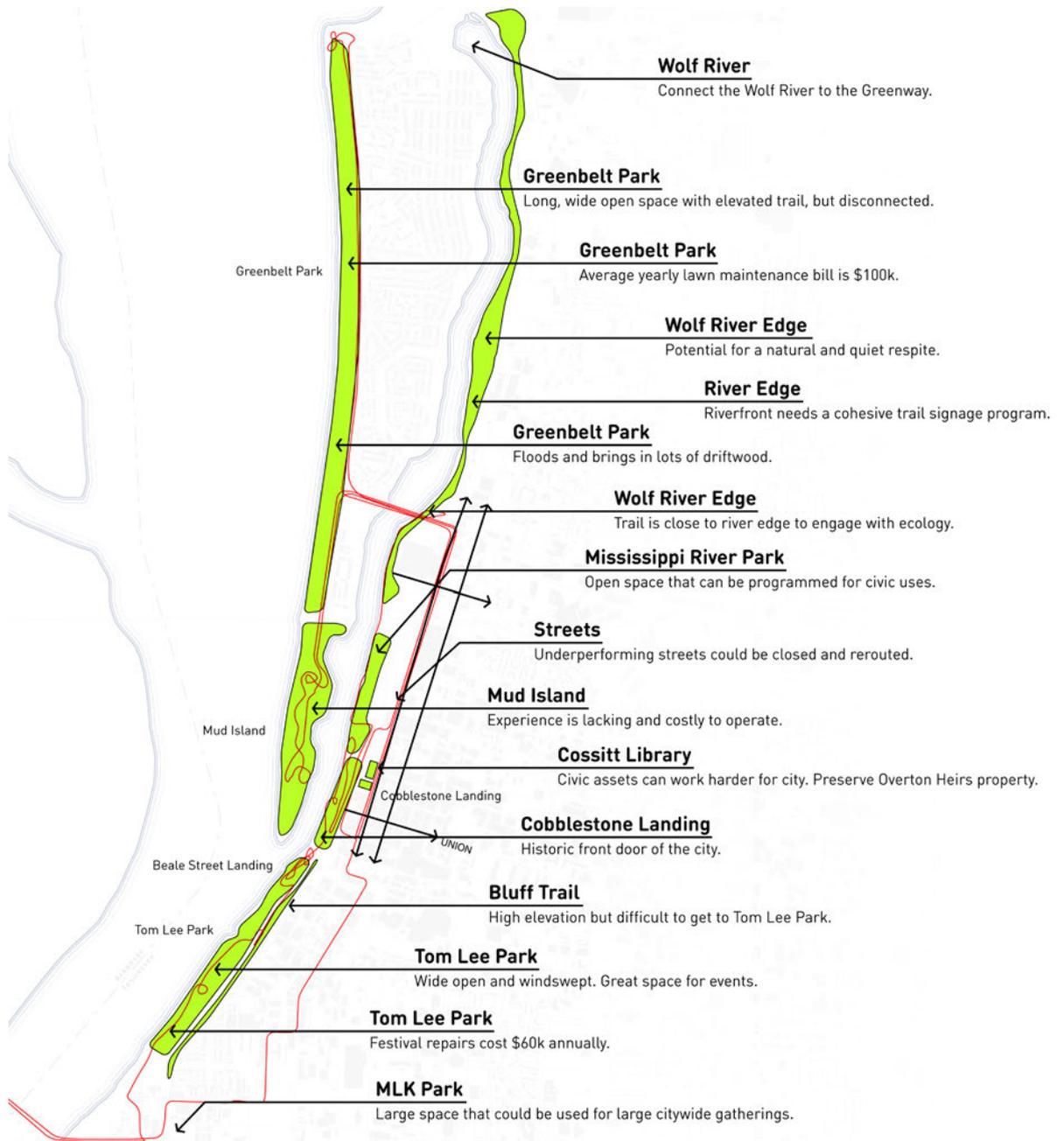
To best understand the entirety of the site, a series of visits investigated existing connections, possible linkages to the city, new programs, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, current festivals, and a wide range of other metrics.

is limited between Second and Third Streets, begging for a connection west to Beale Street Landing and the river.

Tom Lee Park is anchored at its northern end by Beale Street Landing, which feels isolated and over-designed due to the lack of public amenities in the park itself. At 30 acres, Tom Lee Park's experience feels uniform. Between 60 to 80 feet of the edge is not used and could potentially be reshaped to bring people closer to the river.

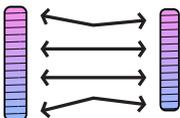
MLK Park, located nearly two miles south of the southern edge of Tom Lee Park, is by far the largest public open space within this study area, but it is also the most physically isolated. Despite the size of this nearly 380-acre park, there is no trail system winding through its thick forest, only internal roads that lead to clearings with open picnic sites and a small lake.

The following pages analyze the conditions of each of these five zones in more detail.



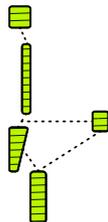
CROSS CONNECTIONS

Several East-West axes with opportunity to connect river to the city



BROKEN LINKS

Lack of cohesive physical and visual connections between key spaces



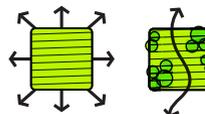
EDGES

Variety of edge conditions



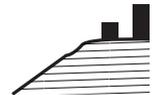
FRAMING & ENCLOSURE

Opportunity to focus and curate activity by framing unbounded open spaces



ELEVATION CHANGE

Dramatic elevation changes down to the river need to be designed and mitigated



Site Conditions

LEARNING FROM PREVIOUS PLANS

In developing the Concept, an important part of its research and analysis work involved studying past plans that the City of Memphis had undertaken to identify key elements to pull forward. With a vast array of plans available, the team focused most closely on those whose vision was most influential or expressive.

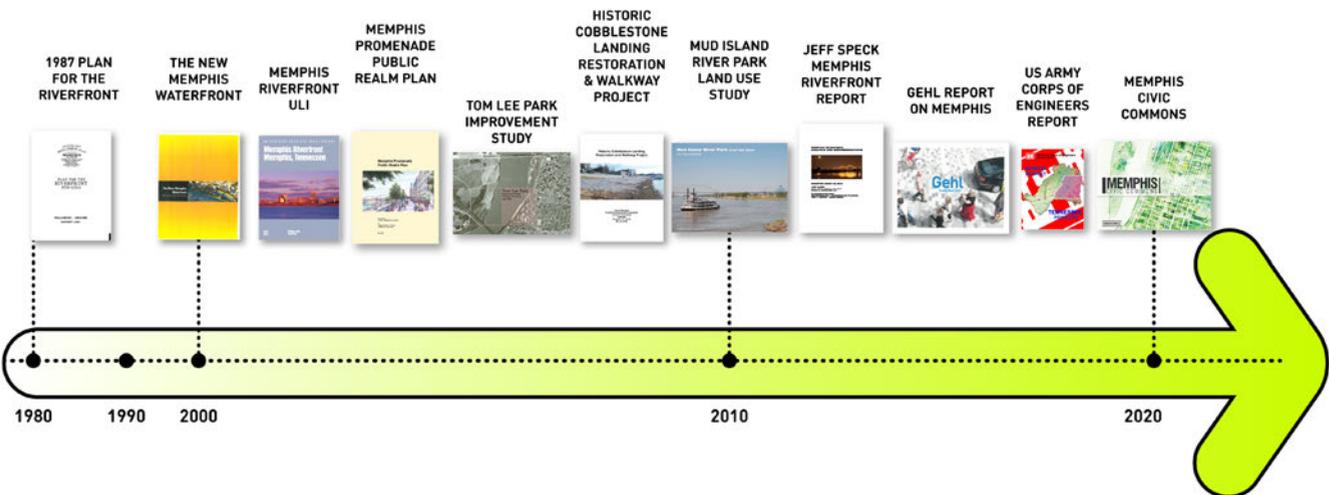
The earliest plan focused on was the 1921 plan by Harland Bartholomew, which proposed expanding and widening a series of streets to better accommodate vehicular traffic in the city. In addition, its vision included an elevated grand promenade that would overlook the river—a precursor to this Concept's Civic Terrace.

In the mid-20th century, the Shelby County Commission plan proposed a series

of highways that would increase the flow of traffic in and out of the city. Originally, there was a highway planned along the riverfront on what is now Riverside Drive.

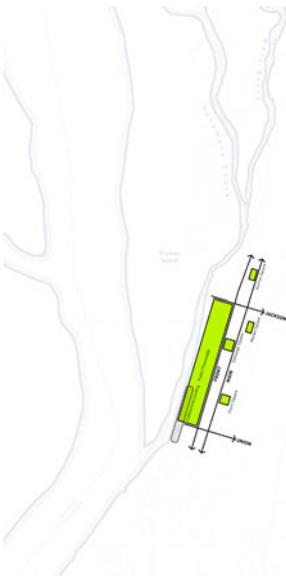
In the 1980s, the Venturi Scott Brown plan recommended that Cobblestone Landing become a new "Cobblestone Core" of programmable activity and kiosks. In addition, a proposed pedestrian span bridge would link the Cobblestones with Mud Island at the bluff level, making it easier for pedestrians to circulate between Mud Island and the core of downtown.

The Cooper Robertson plan of the 2000s was the most aggressive of all the plans, proposing a large-scale land bridge and massive economic investments along the riverfront. Shortly after it was completed, Beale Street Landing was built, which today feels disconnected from the core of Beale Street and downtown.



Previous Planning Potential

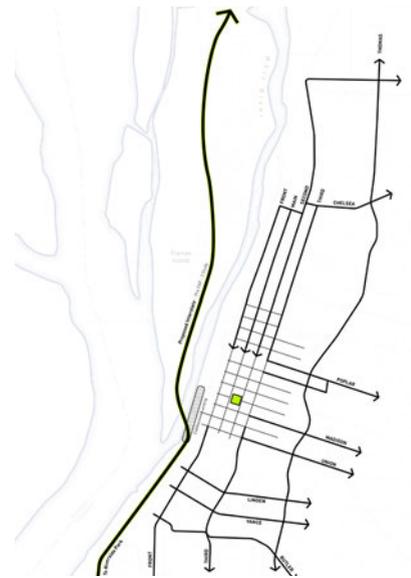
With the large number of plans that have been completed for the City of Memphis over the last thirty-plus years, it was important to identify and incorporate key elements from all of these past efforts into this Concept.



START AT THE RIVER
1827 - William Lawrence



STREETS FOR AUTOS
1921 - Harland
Bartholomew



EXPRESS-AWAY
1953 - Shelby County
Planning Commission



COBBLESTONE CORE
1987 - Venturi Scott Brown



BRIDGE TO BRIDGE
1997 - Hnedak Bobo Group

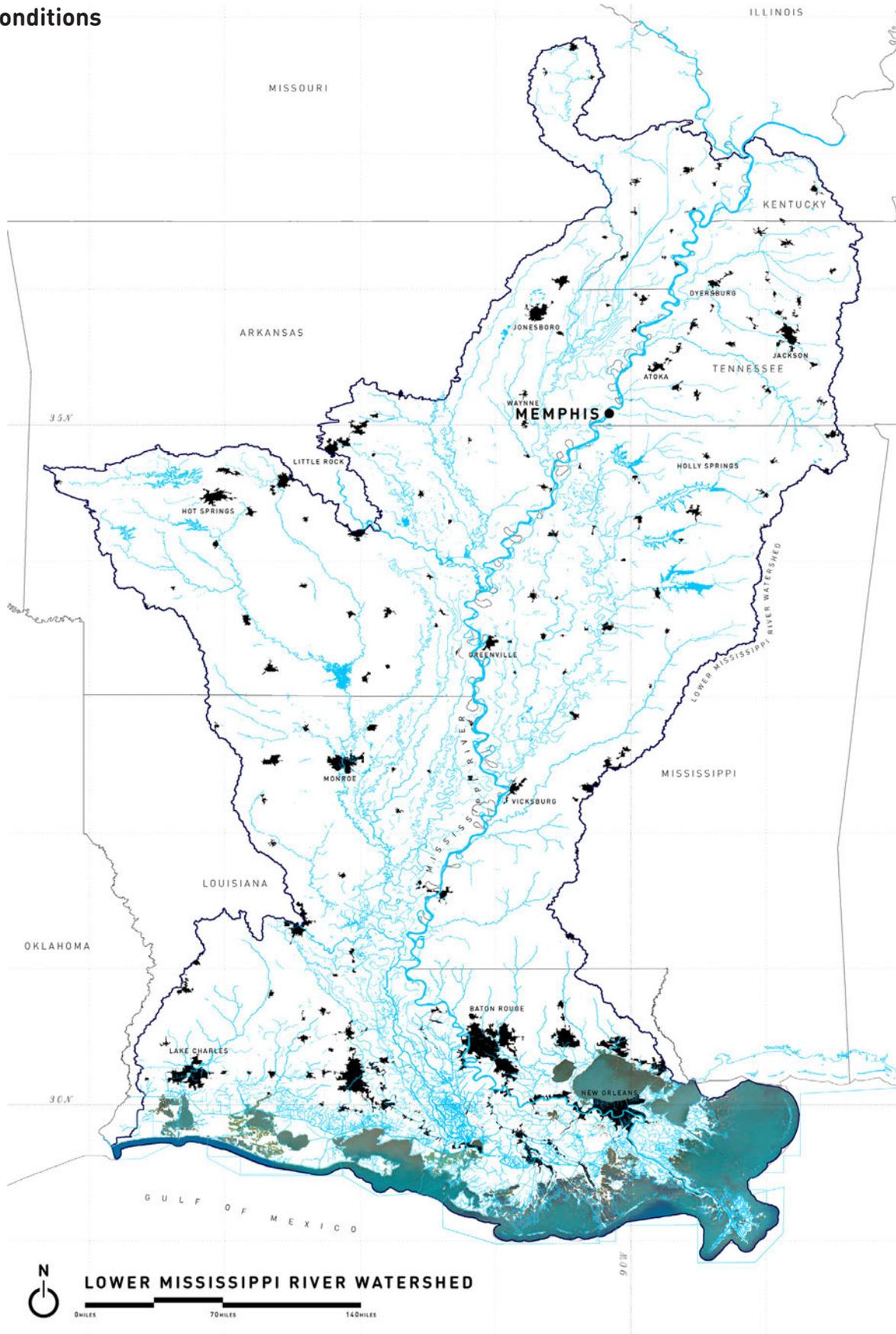


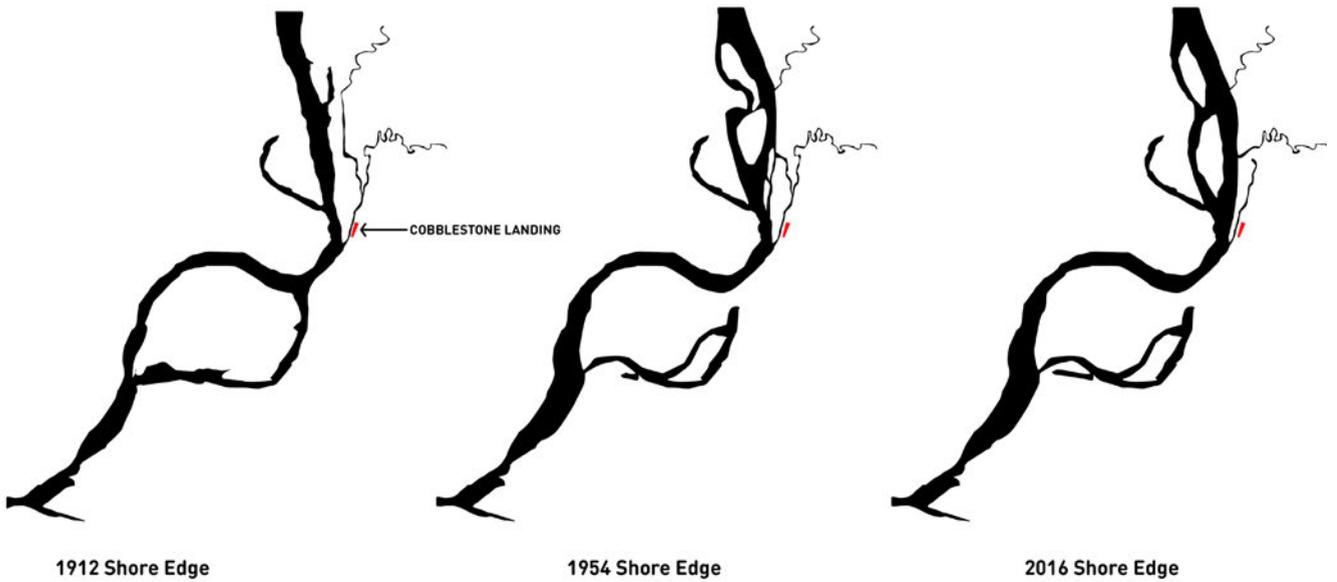
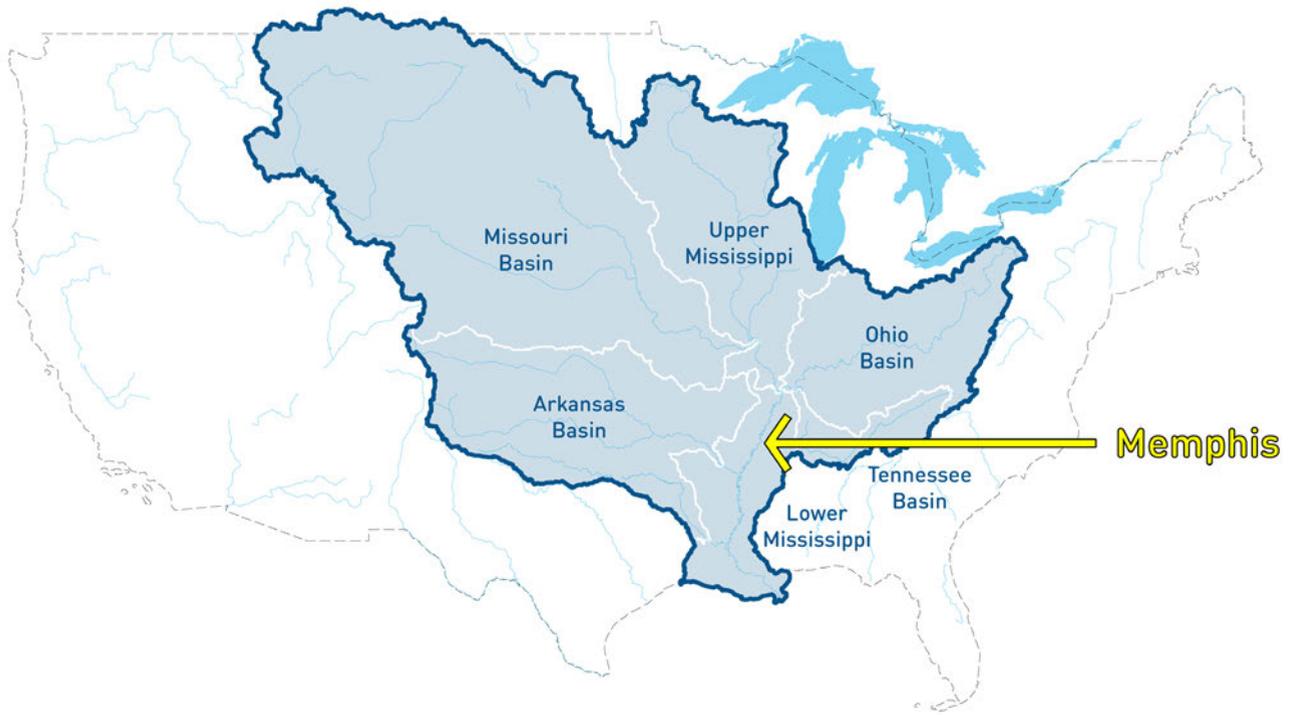
IF YOU BUILD IT...
2002 - Cooper Robertson

Evolving Urban Proposals

Examining the major urban proposals that engaged or shaped Memphis since the city's beginnings provided the foundation for developing thoughtful urban principles for today's city.

Site Conditions





Shifting Edges

Looking at the larger context of the Mississippi River puts the city of Memphis in relation to a vast ecological system that is always changing. Memphis' local Mississippi shore edge has been modified by the US Army Corps of Engineers several times over the last century, resulting in an almost wholly man-made edge.

Site Conditions

FOURTH BLUFF



History

The Fourth Bluff is where Memphis was created through commerce, exchange, and development. This was the front door to the city and its history is complex.

Existing

This zone comprises the current Mississippi River Park, the historic Cobblestone Landing, Memphis Park, the roadways leading from Riverside Drive to Front Street and the Beale Street Corridor.

Mississippi River Park and the portion of Riverside Drive fronting the park are set to be the first installation under the city's Reimagining the Civic Commons project structure. This will close Riverside Drive from Jefferson Avenue to Court Avenue to accommodate new programs, amenities, and plantings. The project is being designed by Groundswell Design Group.

Cobblestone Landing was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2011, with National Register Information System Number 11000460. Its utility has diminished since it was commissioned in the mid-1800s, with only

incidental use for tourist boat landings and privately owned boats. It has also been frequently used as a parking lot. In 2014 construction was completed on the new Beale Street Landing, which provides a modern, accessible boat dock for tourism along the Mississippi River.

Memphis Park is the only remaining park constructed as part of the original Overton Heirs parcels. It is bounded by Front Street and Riverside Drive to the east-west, and Court Street and Jefferson Avenue to the north-south. There is still a large statue of Jefferson Davis in the center of the park, which centers this public space on a problematic and divisive history.

The Beale Street Corridor runs only from Second Street through Third Street, missing a connection to the Mississippi River.

Proposed

Create a connected, continuous public place with experiences that appeal to all Memphians and tie people's shared interests together from the Cobblestones up to downtown.



MONROE AVENUE: WHAT'S THERE



MONROE AVENUE: WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Site Conditions

MUD ISLAND



History

This portion of Mud Island south of Hernando De Soto Bridge was used as the Downtown Memphis Airport from the late 1950s through the early 1970s, at which point the new interstate infrastructure and bridge split the northern and southern portions of the peninsula. By the late 1970s, in an effort to bring people back into the city's core, the peninsula was developed as Mud Island River Park, housing the Mississippi River Museum and connected to downtown via a monorail bridge spanning Wolf River Harbor.

Existing

The existing site still houses the Mississippi River Museum, along with a 5,000-seat amphitheater and assorted support facilities. There are also multiple marina slips and boat launches for recreational boaters. The existing site is only open to the public for approximately seven months each year due to the scheduled closure of the monorail transit link across the harbor.

Unique to Mud Island is its scale model of nearly 1,000 miles of the lower

Mississippi River. At a scale of thirty inches to one mile, the model spans 2,000 feet and occupies a large portion of the peninsula. The river model provides a unique experience for learning about the Mississippi River and should be a focal point for future development on Mud Island.

Proposed

Leverage the site's latent ability to become a regional and even national destination for freshwater learning, exploration, and recreation—an outdoor-indoor Eco Hub campus where multi-generational educational opportunities (including a university-level research center and K-12 school) combine with job training, industry Research & Development, and a new Mississippi River Aquarium.



MUD ISLAND: WHAT'S THERE



MUD ISLAND: WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Site Conditions

TOM LEE PARK



History

The construction of Riverside Drive in the late 1930s created a portion of land west of the Drive of approximately four acres; however, the lack of proper construction techniques required a more robust set of levees and dykes to eventually stabilize the bluff to the east of the Drive. The original four-acre remnant became a nearly 30-acre park in the late 1980s when the US Army Corps of Engineers expanded the levee and dyke systems to stabilize the Memphis side of the Mississippi.

Existing

This zone comprises an approximately 30-acre park along the Mississippi River, bounded by Riverside Drive to the east. The current design of the park is that of an open field, with very little in the way of respite and shade. Windswept and lacking topography, its vast size and ideal setting on the river nevertheless hold enormous potential to become a more engaging and meaningful public open space. The site is currently best known as the home of the Memphis in May International Festival.

More efficient space planning can allow the park to retain and enhance its use as a festival grounds while adding exciting new public amenities that activate this key section of the riverfront year-round.

The park's commemoration of Tom Lee could expand beyond its current two statues to connect it with Memphis' greater historical narrative.

Proposed

Transform this flat field into a diverse destination with a variety of experiences, from an open meadow to an active Adventure Park and from sports fields to a riverfront boardwalk, with pavilions at the river's edge that can host events such as family reunions and weddings. Connect it back to the city and its history by creating new paths and altering the streetscape to form a Civil Rights History Loop.



TOM LEE PARK: WHAT'S THERE



TOM LEE PARK: WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Site Conditions

TOM LEE PARK

FESTIVAL ORGANIZATION

Tom Lee Park's location at the river's edge makes it an extraordinary place for outdoor events, where its expansive relationship with the Mississippi can amplify any type of experience.

Examining the spatial requirements of Memphis in May events reveals several organizational efficiencies that could be utilized to leverage this space for the Festival and the public—allowing for the Festival's growth while creating new public amenities and experiences that can be used year-round.

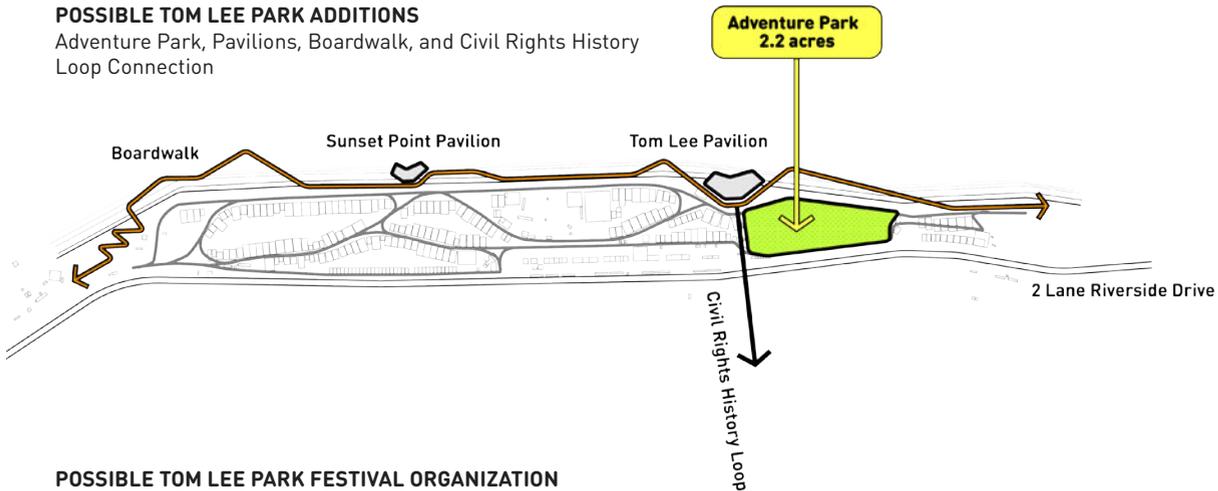
An analysis of the Memphis in May plans of the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest shows that the festival's current organization arrays 25 different stall types along the park's existing paths. As a result,

"donut holes" are created at the center of each stall cluster that add up to a total of 2.6 acres of unused space. If the stall types were reduced in type and size (based on the current stall average width of 21.5 feet and depth of 35.1 feet) and organized using a more efficient grid concept, more stalls could be fit into a tighter footprint. This layout could not only allow the Festival to grow by including more stalls, it could also allow for greater stall size variety, easier loading, better views of the river for attendees, and improved visitor comfort and circulation.

The Adventure Park this Concept proposes for the north end of Tom Lee Park comprises 2.2 acres—nearly the exact amount of unused space created by the current Barbecue Cooking Contest layout. If the festival's organization were adjusted, Tom Lee could easily remain home to Memphis in May as well as to the proposed Adventure Park and pavilion at its north end, the pavilion farther south along the river's edge, and the boardwalk that connects all of these new public amenities.

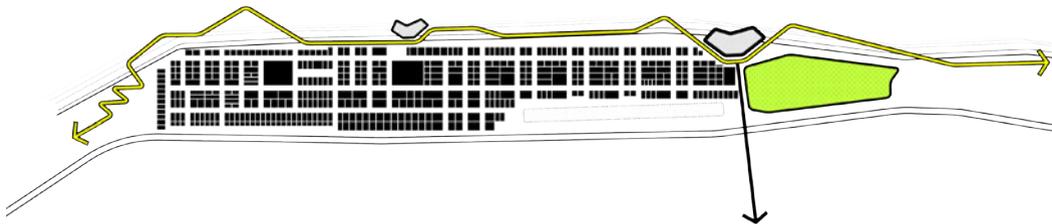
POSSIBLE TOM LEE PARK ADDITIONS

Adventure Park, Pavilions, Boardwalk, and Civil Rights History Loop Connection



POSSIBLE TOM LEE PARK FESTIVAL ORGANIZATION

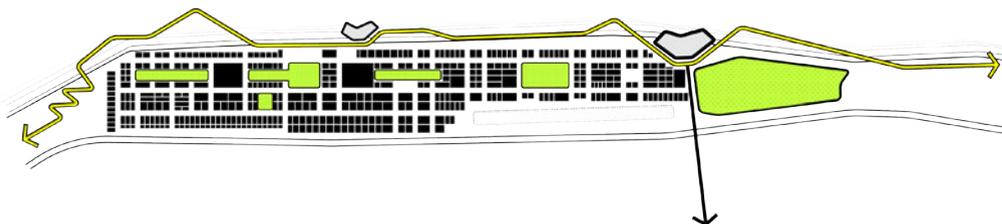
Adding 100+ Stalls using Gridded Layout with 20 ft-wide Drive Aisles



486 stalls

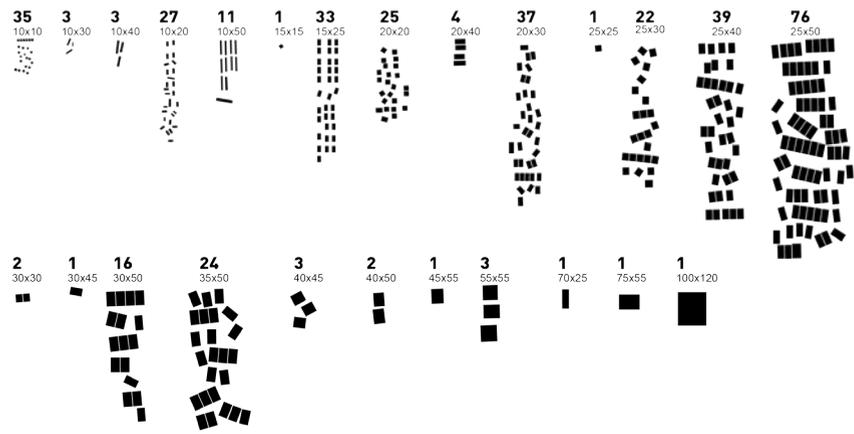
POSSIBLE TOM LEE PARK FESTIVAL ORGANIZATION

Adding 80+ Stalls and including Large Centralized Gathering Spaces



456 stalls

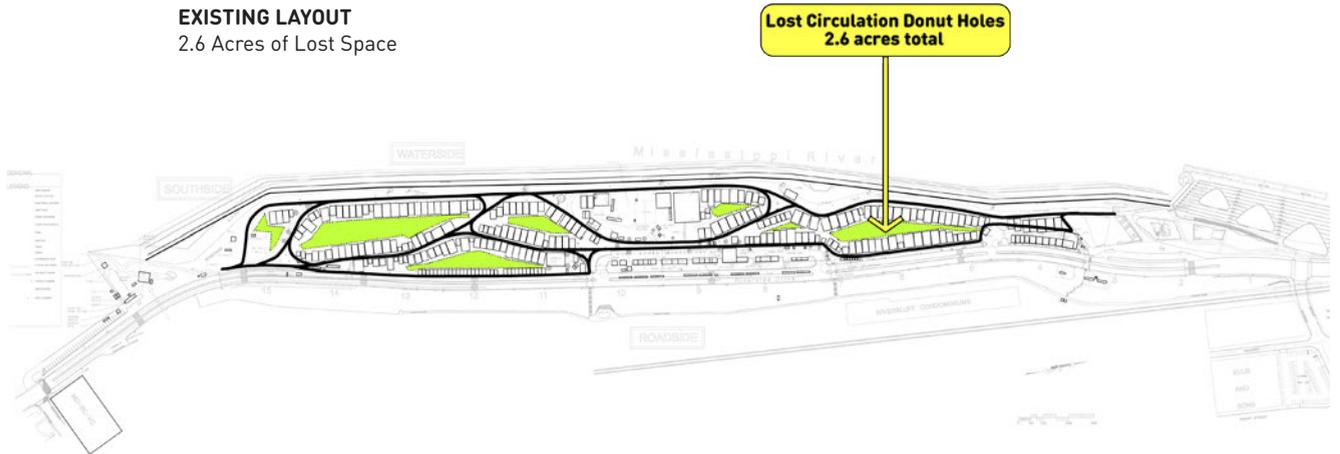
EXISTING STALL ORIENTATION



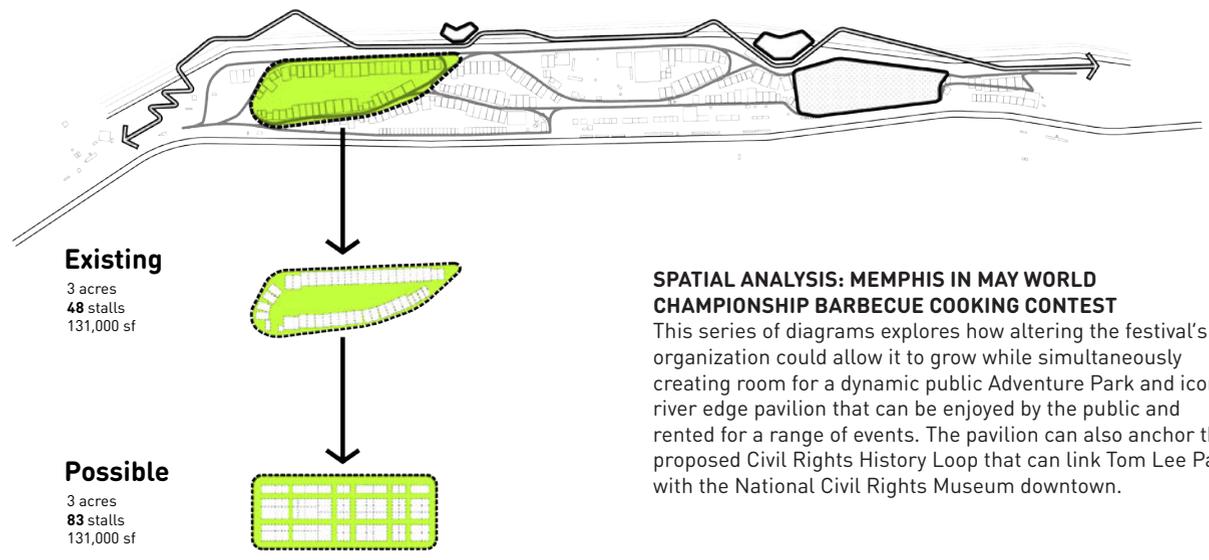
372 tents 25 types

21.5' average tent width
35.1' average tent depth

EXISTING LAYOUT
2.6 Acres of Lost Space



EXAMPLE LAYOUT IN ONE AREA
Maintaining Diversity and Increasing Efficiency with Standardized Stalls



SPATIAL ANALYSIS: MEMPHIS IN MAY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BARBECUE COOKING CONTEST
This series of diagrams explores how altering the festival's organization could allow it to grow while simultaneously creating room for a dynamic public Adventure Park and iconic river edge pavilion that can be enjoyed by the public and rented for a range of events. The pavilion can also anchor the proposed Civil Rights History Loop that can link Tom Lee Park with the National Civil Rights Museum downtown.

Site Conditions
TOM LEE PARK
ADDITIONAL FESTIVAL GROUND OPTIONS

A number of other locations in the city can host large festivals such as Memphis in May. Tiger Lane at Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium provides more than 42 acres of space with simplified loading conditions as well as stable ground surfaces for staging. In addition, as illustrated in this Concept, MLK Park could provide a permanent fairgrounds site at the northern end of the nearly 380-acre park.



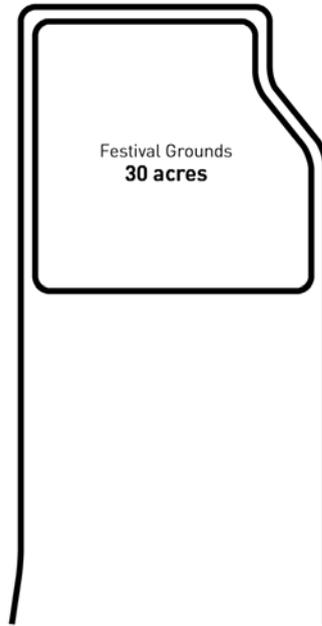
Riverfront Potential

Prior to the US Army Corps of Engineers' dredging operations that created Tom Lee Park in the late 1980s, the City of Memphis did not have a public riverfront park at this scale. Photograph by Paul Roach, 1948.

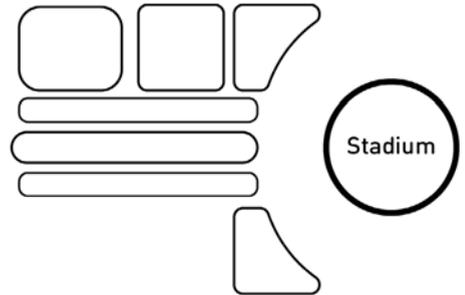
Tom Lee
30 acres



MLK Park
330 acres



Tiger Lane
42 acres



Memphis in May at Tiger Lane

The success of the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest's 2011 run at Tiger Lane demonstrates how this tailgating mecca can also serve as a vibrant festival grounds for large-scale, signature events. Photo by Lance Murphey for the *Memphis Daily News*.



Site Conditions

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. (MLK) PARK



History

Originally called Riverside Park, MLK Park was created from farmland as part of a master plan completed in 1901. This plan included Overton Park and a Parkway system that connected the two parks with the city center. The landscape design for the complete system was done by George Kessler, with assistance from the Olmsted brothers on the Parkway system.

Existing

MLK Park is by far the largest zone in this Concept's study area at approximately 380 acres. It is also the most physically isolated. It is bounded by McKellar Lake to the west, Highway 55 to the east, South Parkway to the north, and Mallory Avenue to the south. Kessler's Plan called for South Parkway to be connected to the park in 1906, but revised planning stopped three miles short of extending it to the park and waterfront.

The northern half of MLK Park is currently a 9-hole public golf course that is little used. The golf course has been on site since 1913, at which time it was an 18-hole course. The southern portion of the park

is heavily forested. It includes a marina, paved roads, parking lots, large interior lake, and a few small shade pavilions for family gatherings.

While it's the largest park adjacent to the river, the almost complete lack of signage directing people to the park reinforces its distance from the city center. Its adjacency to the highway and surrounding industrial facilities further impede it from being a desirable destination for Memphians.

Proposed

Reconnect MLK Park with all of Memphis and bring new life to its many acres by investing in signage, transit links, trails, and fairground infrastructure that allow people to easily access and enjoy it as a public amenity. In addition, restore the inner harbor edge to a more natural condition that allows people to enjoy the water on foot or in a kayak. Encourage development in the surrounding areas that benefits the South Memphis community and reclaims former industrial lands for living, working, and recreation.



MLK PARK: WHAT'S THERE



MLK PARK: WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Site Conditions

GREENBELT PARK



Historic

Greenbelt Park was created in the 1990s as part of the Harbor Town residential development. The park is fairly uniform in its river edge condition, with rip-rap barrier and a low-lying basin that slopes up to the west to Island Drive.

Existing

The current section of Greenbelt Park accommodates seasonal flooding of the Mississippi River. Its uniform topography and planting, however, create a condition in which the river's rise and fall negatively affects its public use. The park has essentially two levels: a narrow high ground, adjacent to Island Drive, and a low ground along the river, which has an informal trail.

Annual flooding causes this lower portion of the park, which comprises three-quarters of the park's total land, to be unusable due to muddy conditions, leaving just the narrow quarter of remaining park for people to enjoy during flood season. In addition, the large amounts of driftwood and debris left by receding waters creates a yearly maintenance cost of approximately

\$13,000 for the Riverfront Development Corporation.

Much of the existing plantings located along the water's edge, and even the high ground, have not been deliberately planted. Nearly all of the plantings in this immense park are volunteers that have taken root and thrived in the rich soils. This presents an opportunity to plant native species all along the water's edge and inland to create a lush park filled with appropriate flora.

Proposal

Amplify Greenbelt Park's qualities as an immersive natural destination by modifying the existing topography to create spaces that accommodate and thrive with flooding events, while expanding higher plateaus to give people larger spaces for year-round access. Connect these raised plateaus with elevated boardwalks that take people through different ecological conditions along the river edge and orient to key views.



GREENBELT PARK: WHAT'S THERE



GREENBELT PARK: WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Quality of Life

PREPARED BY PRESENCE HEALTH, A HEALTH SYSTEM BASED IN CHICAGO, IL

For the study area in Memphis, we looked at how movement, diversity, health, poverty and the built environment could contribute to or detract from quality of life. Highlights from each topic are included in the accompanying texts and maps.

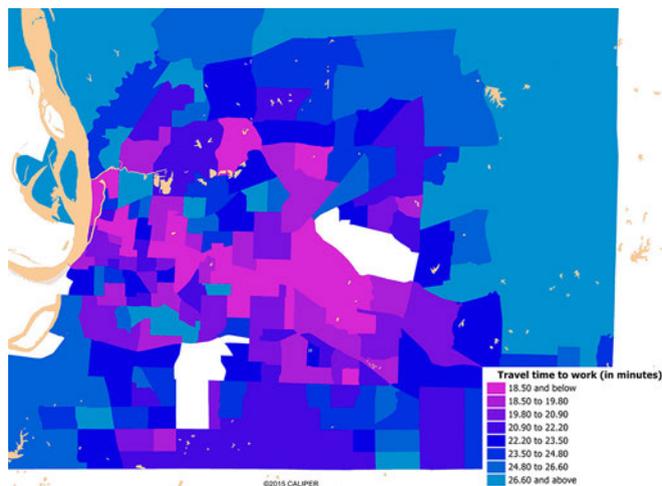
There are a number of factors that appear to discourage Memphians from being active. Over 79% of Memphians drive alone to work, and only 5% use active transportation (public transportation, biking, or walking). In addition to driving alone, a third of Memphians get no regular exercise at all, which seems to contribute to a 37% obesity rate.

Poverty is a persistent theme of quality of life in Memphis. More than half of

residents are rent-burdened (spending more than 30% of their income on rent), and a quarter of Memphians receive food stamps. While white residents of Memphis have some of the highest household incomes in the country, black residents have among the lowest. This can translate directly into poor health outcomes—in Memphis, 28% of elderly residents have lost all their teeth.

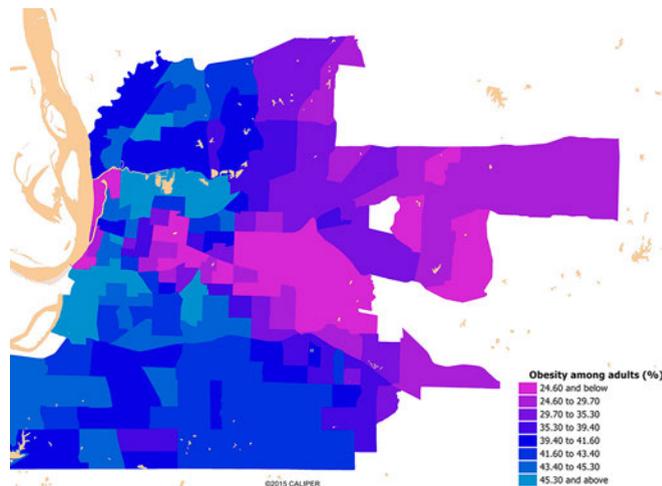
Memphis has a lower-than-average disability rate and a teen birth rate that has dropped by half in recent years. Despite economic inequality, Memphis is highly and broadly educated: 30% of Memphians have a college degree, and almost twice as many have some post-secondary education—including the majority of black Memphians.

While residents of Memphis are diverse in terms of racial/ethnic makeup, socioeconomic class, and education level, the city is highly segregated and some



Travel Time to Work

Most Memphis residents are able to travel to work within 20 minutes, but those in outer Shelby County face longer trips.



Obesity

Obesity prevalence is very high in the poorer section of Memphis, but relatively low in the eastern part of Shelby County.

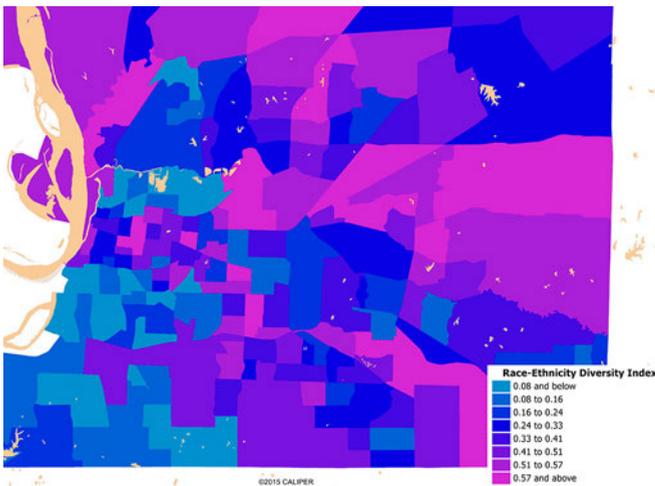
Information derived from HealthViz, a data platform developed by Presence Health. Some data points collected for Shelby County when unavailable for Memphis itself.

neighborhoods have almost no diversity. The areas around downtown and the airport have much higher diversity than the rest of the city.

Memphis' public health challenges are quite substantial and appear to be compounded by economic insecurity, the built environment, and socioeconomic segregation. Indicators that provide evidence of these challenges include the rate of premature mortality, which is 50% higher than the national average, and is exacerbated by health behaviors like smoking and lack of exercise. Mental health is also challenging: 17% of adults report poor mental health in Memphis, and more than 40% do not get enough sleep. Many of these health challenges affect the more affluent downtown areas as well, such as the rate of binge drinking and the lack of sleep. Finally, Shelby County

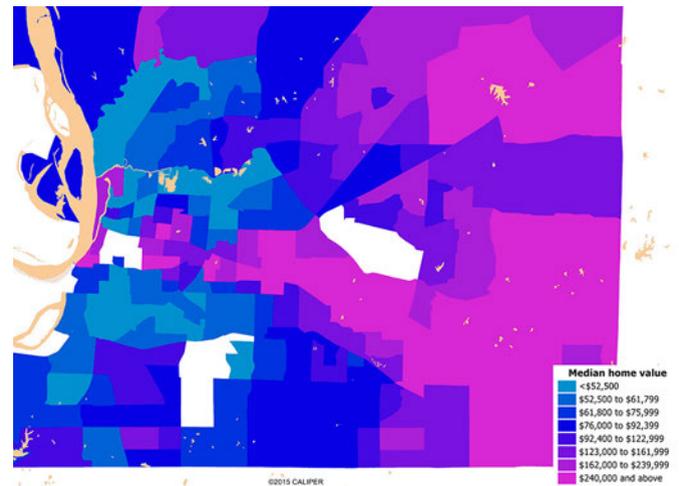
is in the top 2% of counties nationally for the prevalence of HIV and diseases like chlamydia and gonorrhea. Its mortality rate from HIV is four times the national average.

Indicators about the built environment show that economic inequality is exacerbated by housing challenges. Home prices have not recovered from the Great Recession—unlike in the rest of Tennessee—and 15% of all units stand vacant. This burden falls especially heavily on the black population living outside downtown, who live in older housing of low value. Compounding this picture is the fact that more than 9% of all households are seniors living alone, a pattern of isolation that speaks to economic insecurity and poor social health.



Racial/Ethnic Diversity

The Race-Ethnicity Diversity Index measures diversity within neighborhoods and ranges from 0 (all residents are same race) to 0.875 (residents are equally distributed among all races). In Memphis, the least diverse neighborhoods include both poor and wealthy areas.



Home Values

Home values in Memphis as a whole have not yet recovered to their pre-recession peak and there is an enormous disparity between neighborhoods.

Economic Opportunities

PREPARED BY JAMES LIMA PLANNING + DEVELOPMENT

The Economics of Placemaking

Memphis has the opportunity to realize substantial economic benefits from a thoughtfully designed and more densely programmed public park along its central riverfront. From increased property values and tourism revenues, to direct use benefits and improved health and wellness, high-quality center-city parks are a well-established part of cities' strategies for enhancing quality of life and spurring economic growth.

The Riverfront Concept overall considers the entire six-mile waterfront, concentrating on five specific zones that improve access and connectivity to the water in a variety of urban contexts. Examining the potential of this Concept to revitalize its surrounding areas requires a similar approach; this section will focus on the revitalization potential of placemaking unique to Memphis' downtown. In the Downtown Memphis Commission's own words, downtown "exemplifies our community's unique character and authenticity," and the positive effect of adjacency to parks is strongest within proximity to central business districts and increases with density—downtown parks are where you get the most bang for your buck.¹

The Downtown Memphis Commission's Strategic Plan identifies people as its primary metric. How well is Memphis currently meeting the needs and wants of its downtown and riverfront users? The cities across the US and around the world that are attracting the most new residents, workers, and visitors—and thus attracting the most economic growth and investment—are increasingly competing on the quality of life offered and the strength of their public spaces. These cities have a variety of well-connected and unique places. Residents, workers, and visitors with options are looking for vibrant neighborhoods that offer a variety of high-quality amenities, services, and experiences.

The economics of placemaking have become an increasingly important part of downtown revitalization strategies. In many of the healthiest cities across the country, city centers with high-quality public places have some of the highest property values in their regions. High-quality parks tend to add 15% to the value of proximate real estate and continue to positively affect land values for a considerable distance from the park itself.² In areas with struggling real estate value, this premium could be reasonably higher given a lower base. Other studies of high-quality placemaking have shown premiums of over 50 percent.³ In addition to these positive effects on land values, high-quality public spaces can help incentivize new development by giving neighborhoods a competitive advantage. Real estate developments adjacent to high-quality public space enjoy comparatively higher prices and faster absorption rates.

Enriching the Downtown Experience

Our experience of downtowns is defined principally by the urban design of public spaces: the streets and open spaces that we move through. The scale and character of buildings that frame this public realm and the retail and other uses at their base either contribute to or detract from the "theater" that draws us to these central gathering places. We loop our way through downtown districts, seeking the sort of place-specific rewards that we value in our other favorite urban places. These rewards include a sense of connection with community, inspiring and unique civic spaces in which we feel comfortable and welcome, appealing architecture, exciting retail merchants, public art, and cultural programming.

Downtown Memphis is already increasingly a neighborhood of choice in the region. As of 2015, more than \$430 million in new residential projects were in the works in the greater downtown area.⁴ Households with incomes greater than \$75,000 per year are the fastest growing income segment.⁵ Over 60,000 workers already come downtown every day, and creative- and technology-sector firms are moving to South Main.⁶ But much of this investment in the downtown has not yet resulted in a coherent and vibrant city center, but rather has occurred in a district where nodes of activity are disconnected from one another.

Today, walking through the core of Downtown Memphis one is hard pressed to find that series of appealing "rewards" of public places and programming, of commerce and culture. Retail storefronts underperform as animators of street life. There are too few outdoor cafes at which to pause and take in the choreography of diverse groups moving through downtown. In fact, there are too few feet on the street, in part due to too little residential occupancy of space in the core downtown.

The Downtown Memphis Commission's Strategic Plan begins:

Set high on the bluffs of the Mississippi River, Downtown is where Memphis was born, and it remains the heart and soul of our city. To have a successful city, we must have a vibrant Downtown. ... When people around the world visualize Memphis, they think of Downtown—the river, our skyline, Beale Street ...

This introduction is instructive. Memphis' impressive bluffs are both an asset and a challenge. Ideally, vibrant urban districts allow for easy and convenient movement between destinations. Memphis' unique topography makes this challenging. The three attributes perhaps most identified with downtown Memphis—the river, the skyline, and Beale Street—are each impressive and appealing assets. Yet they remain too disconnected from one another. It is fortuitous that it is possible to have a memorable experience of the Mississippi River in Downtown Memphis without having to be at the river's edge. But currently, the edge of downtown at the height of the bluffs functions as a barrier to the riverfront. The downtown user is denied the experience of the waterfront.

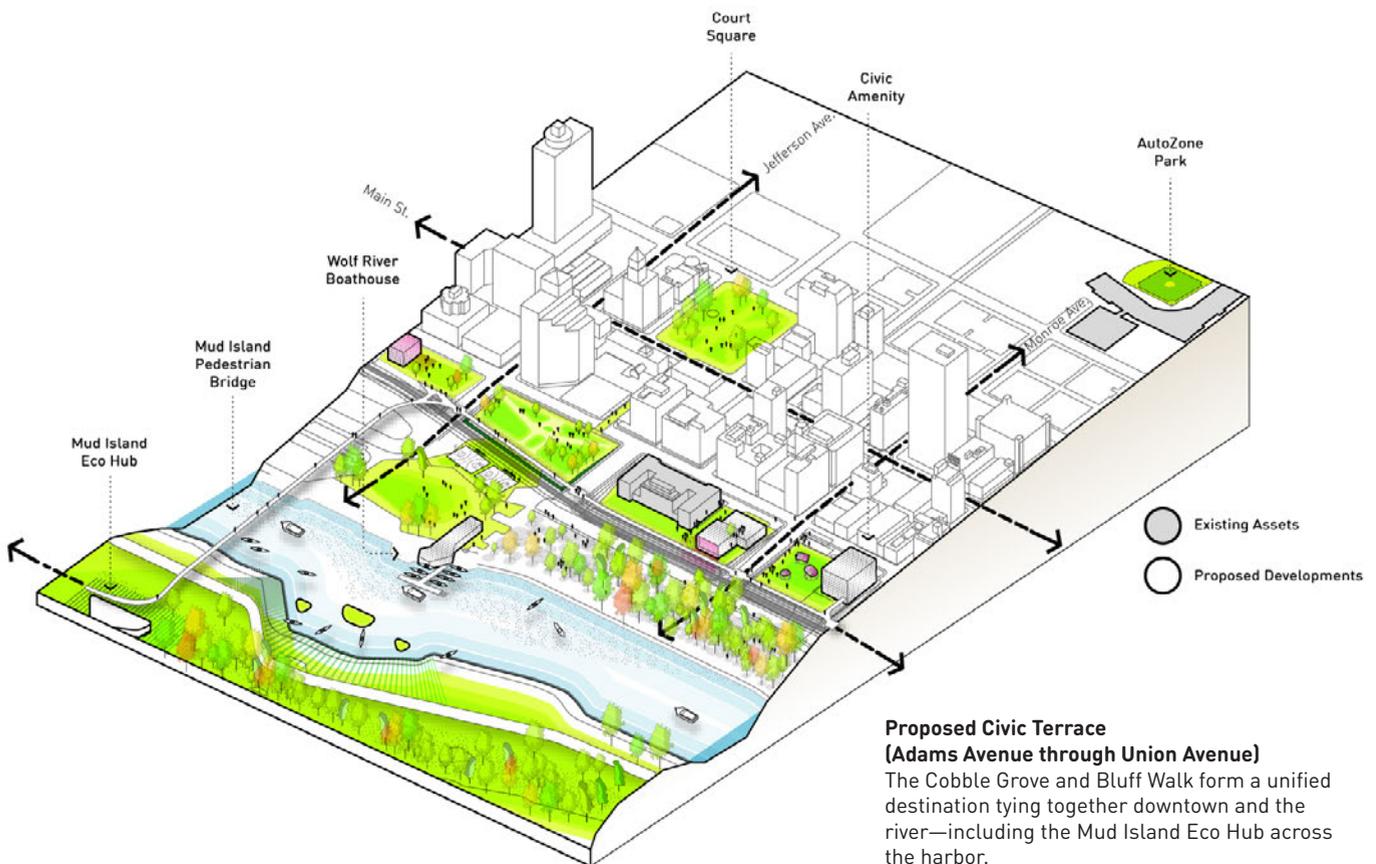
Memphis has competitive advantages to leverage—a historic downtown, a sweeping and magnificent riverfront, and the unique, world-famous destination for leisure and entertainment of Beale Street. Investment in high-quality parks, attractive and clear wayfinding, and other public space treatments can connect these assets to each other and encourage movement through what feels like a unified and well-managed district. Creating this more cohesive district—building off of Memphis’ unique assets and reflecting the unique and authentic character of the city—can help attract more people downtown and, with increased market demand, additional real estate investment. Signature parks and public spaces can have a large role in the perception of a place and quality of life in a neighborhood.

Connecting downtown to a river experience can be uniquely impactful to the revitalization strategy and improvement of the downtown experience. This land was originally envisioned by Memphis’ founders as the city’s great Mississippi River overlook. This goal was revived in recent plans by Cooper Robertson & Partners.⁷ **The Studio Gang proposal for a new Civic Terrace directly responds to the long-held desire to have an experience of the majestic Mississippi River while you are still in the downtown proper and acknowledges the unique topographical barriers that exist as one moves closer to the riverfront.**

The Civic Terrace would create a new river-oriented linear public place, a new “front door” that connects Memphis’ strongest assets—the river and its downtown.

In doing so, Memphis would be enhancing the downtown experience with a vibrant and memorable new public place animated morning, noon, and night. The Civic Terrace would create a new series of appealing Downtown experiences that become an important part of what Downtown residents, workers and visitors see and do. Adding a civic gathering place that is so uniquely and distinctly of this place can create a new gateway into downtown to help attract net new visitors, and make Downtown Memphis an increasingly attractive and thus more competitive community of choice for residents and workers. In attracting more people and vibrancy, the Civic Terrace can also help strengthen Main Street and activate additional side streets in downtown. In addition, the core Downtown district warrants considerable new investment in enhanced public realm improvements, including streetscape, lighting and wayfinding improvements.

Signature parks and public spaces can help redefine a neighborhood. Houston’s Discovery Green converted a series of parking lots on the edge of Downtown Houston into a new destination park. Since opening in 2008, the project has helped to catalyze \$625 million in downtown development including office, residential, and hotel projects (including a new convention hotel)—with an estimated \$1 billion in future mixed-use development planned. The park has helped to transform an entire district of former parking lots into a destination neighborhood—and has helped significantly increase convention revenue at the adjacent convention center.⁸



Case Studies

There are many examples of the strong positive effects of investments in parks and public space in downtown revitalization; here we highlight a few. Each example highlighted here addressed a certain need, took advantage of a different asset, or provided a needed connection unique to their places.

While Memphis is distinct from these other larger urban centers in some respects, it is reasonable to assume that if implemented properly, quality public placemaking in Memphis could have a demonstrably positive effect on downtown revitalization and property values just as these previous projects have had across the country.

Waterfront Park, Louisville

Since its inception 25 years ago, Louisville's Waterfront Park has been (and continues to be) developed and expanded in multiple phases. To date, the park has helped spark an estimated \$1.3 billion in investments in residential, recreational, and entertainment projects along the city's waterfront. To date, employment in the surrounding district has increased from approximately 400 to 8,000 workers, an increase of 2,000 percent. Nearly 2 million individuals visit the park annually, and just three of the park's biggest events have a combined annual economic impact of more than \$140 million.⁹

The Commons, Denver

One year after Denver's 23-acre Commons park opened in the blighted Bottoms neighborhood, developers had built or planned 1 million square feet of office space, 350,000 square feet of retail establishments, 575 hotel rooms, and over 1,500 residential units.¹⁰

Klyde Warren Park, Dallas

In Dallas, the 5.2-acre Klyde Warren Park connected Dallas' Downtown and Uptown districts and generated a real estate boom. Since the parks' completion in 2012, rents for office buildings near the park rose as much as 60 percent.¹¹ With little office construction seen in Dallas since the 1980s, over 750,000 square feet of office space are now under construction along Pearl Street adjacent to the park.¹² Additionally, nearby residential projects continue to enhance the vibrant, mixed-use character of the neighborhood surrounding the park. Parks also contribute to real estate values across the Dallas/Fort Worth region. Texas A&M professor John L. Crompton has measured a 20% property premium for lots within 100 feet of parks and a 10% property premium for lots within 300 feet.¹³

Millennium Park, Chicago

\$1.4 billion in new residential development has been created by Millennium Park since its opening in 2004. Additionally, studies of the positive effects of the park projected \$1.9 billion in Gross Sales Revenue from Visitor Spending in the city over ten years.¹⁴

The High Line, New York

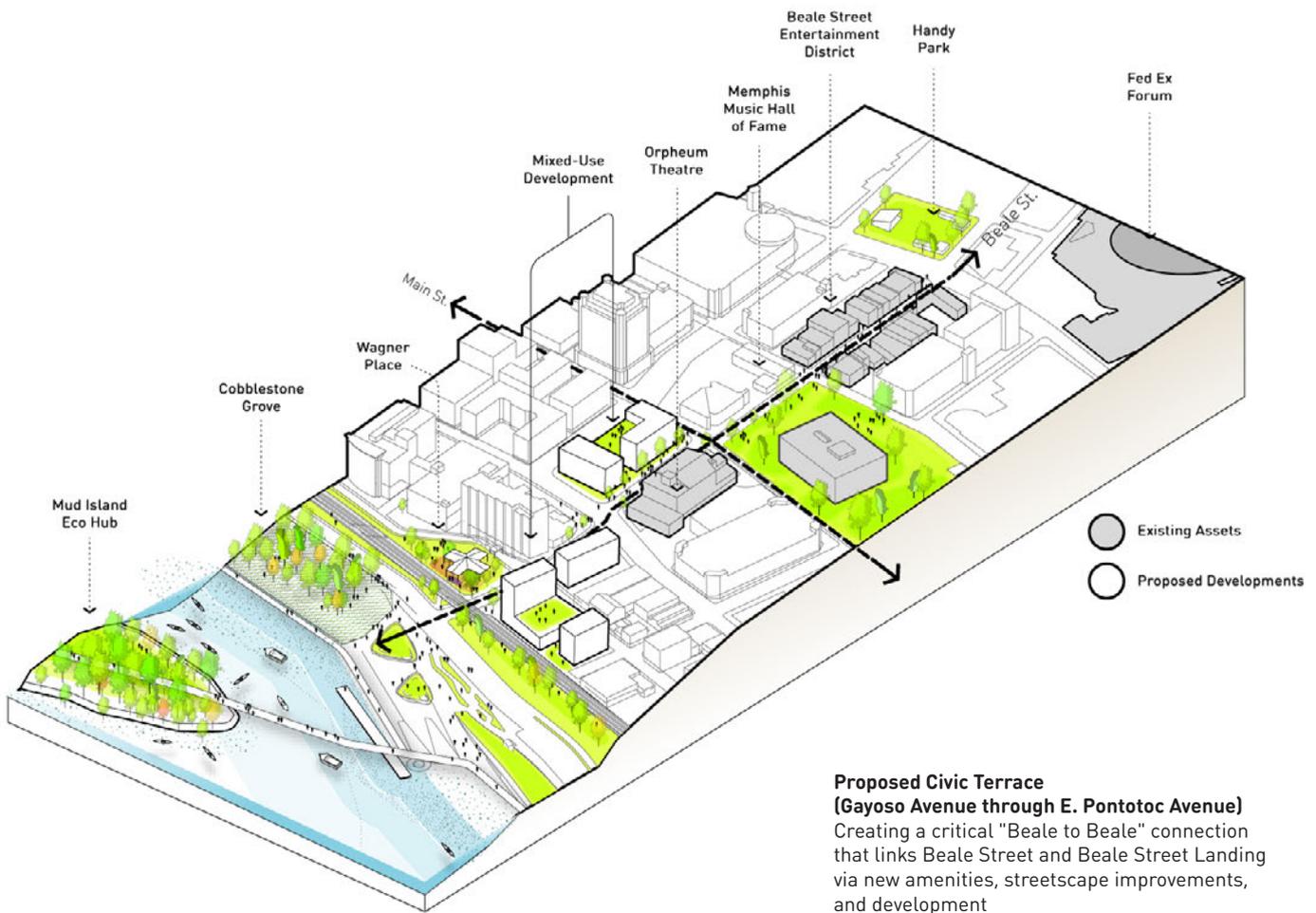
The City of New York invested approximately \$115 million of capital funding to build the first phases of Manhattan's High Line park. The return on public investment to the city is more than 800 percent.

Significant real estate development and investments have occurred along the route of the High Line, which became a highly desirable "front door" address for residential, hotel, retail, restaurant, and cultural development. Pre-existing residential units proximate to the High Line gained between 5 and 6% more value each year from 2007 to 2010 than comparable residential properties elsewhere in Manhattan. The effect of proximity to a high-quality public park was even more pronounced with housing units built after the High Line opened. The value of newly constructed units in close proximity to the High Line increased approximately 20% more each year from 2007 to 2010 compared to other comparable Manhattan neighborhoods.

The increase in real estate value attributable to the premium of adjacency to the High Line has generated more than \$970 million in property tax revenue (on a present value basis) to the City of New York. Including the estimated net increase in tax revenues from visitor spending brings projected net revenue gains to the city to over \$1 billion in present value terms. After accounting for the City's \$115 million investment, the City's net benefit over 20 years is projected at more than \$900 million—a return of over 800% on patient capital public investment in civic space.¹⁵

Sources

1. Sarah E. West and Soren T. Anderson, "Open Space, Residential Property Values, and Spatial Context," *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 36, no. 6 (Nov 2006): 773-789.
2. Peter Harnik and Ben Welle, *Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System* (San Francisco: The Trust for Public Land, 2009).
3. Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), *Placemaking and Value*, 1st ed. (London: Feb 2016).
4. Downtown Memphis Commission, *2015 State of Downtown Memphis* (2015).
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Urban Land Institute, *An Advisory Services Panel Report: Memphis Riverfront, Memphis, Tennessee* (Washington, DC: 2003).
8. Discovery Green Conservancy, *History of Discovery Green*, <http://www.discoverygreen.com/history-of-discovery-green>.
9. Waterfront Development Corporation, *Louisville Waterfront Park's Economic Impact on Louisville and Kentucky* (2016), <http://louisvillewaterfront.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2016-econ-impact-doc.pdf>.
10. The City Parks Forum, *How Cities Use Parks for Community Revitalization* (Chicago: American Planning Association, 2002).
11. Ralph Bivins, "Downtown Dallas: A Turnaround Built on Parks, Arts, and People," *Urban Land*, Oct 10, 2016.
12. Ibid.
13. Howard Kozloff, "The Payoff from Parks," *Urban Land*, Aug 29, 2012.
14. Goodman Williams Group and URS Corporation, *Millennium Park Economic Impact Study* (prepared for City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, April 21, 2005).
15. James Lima Planning + Development Analysis.



Community Engagement

Over the course of multiple visits to Memphis, the design team met with a wide variety of organizations, individuals, and other stakeholders to learn about their experiences with and aspirations for the riverfront. In addition to these conversations and associated workshops, the design team also worked with Caissa Public Strategy to conduct and analyze an online survey that elicited more than 4,000 responses from a broad range of Memphians about the riverfront they want to see.

Realizing the possibilities laid out in this Concept will require the support of a wide variety of partners. Many of the organizations that the design team has thus far become acquainted with could make great collaborators.

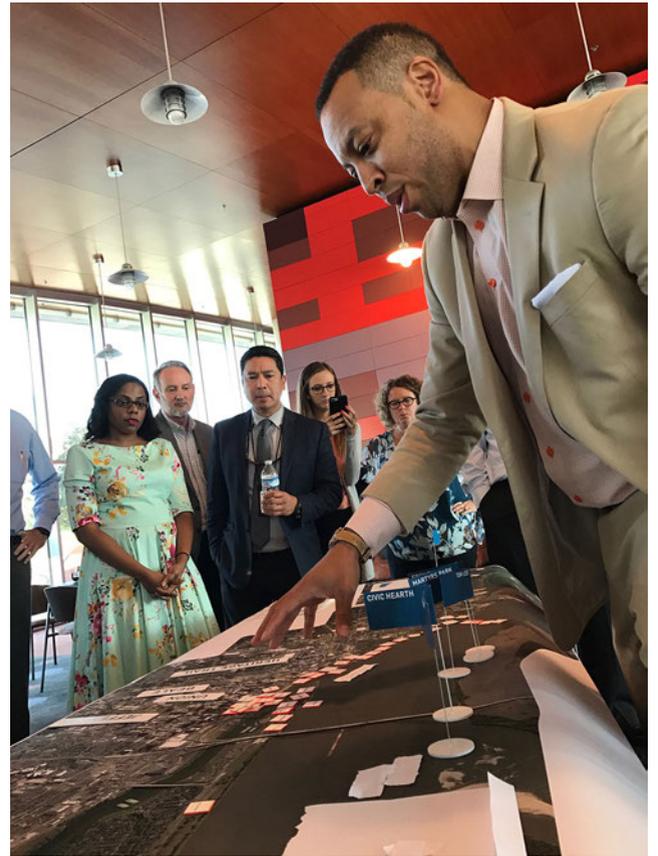
Key stakeholders engaged during the design process include, but are not limited to: the Downtown Memphis Commission; Memphis in May International Festival; Bike/Ped Memphis; Hyde Family Foundations; City of Memphis Division of Parks and Neighborhoods; National Civil Rights Museum; Mississippi River Museum; Wolf River Conservancy; Riverfront Development Corporation; City of Memphis Engineering Division; Pyramid Peak Foundation; Kresge Foundation; Memphis Grizzlies Foundation; Henry Turley Company; AutoZone; Friends for Our Riverfront; University of Memphis Law students; and the Mayor's Riverfront Task Force.

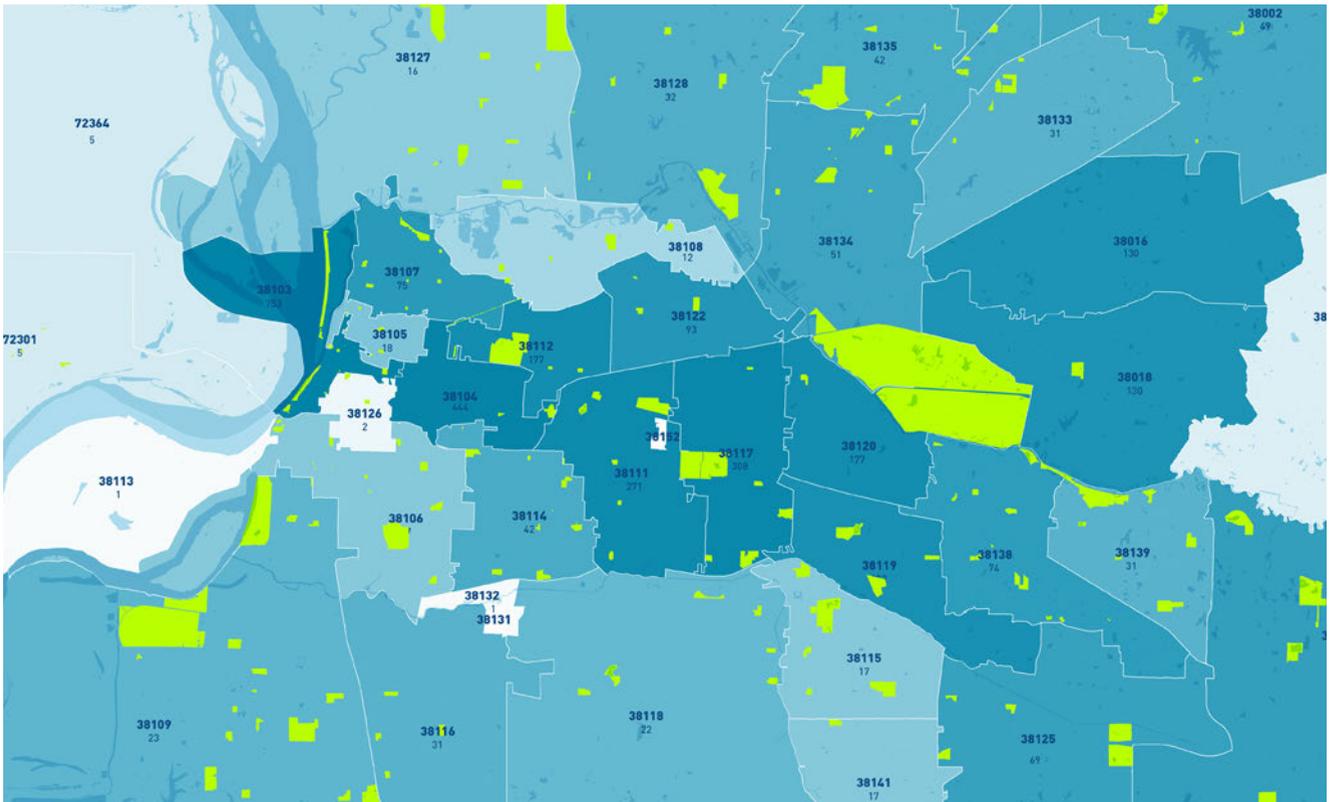
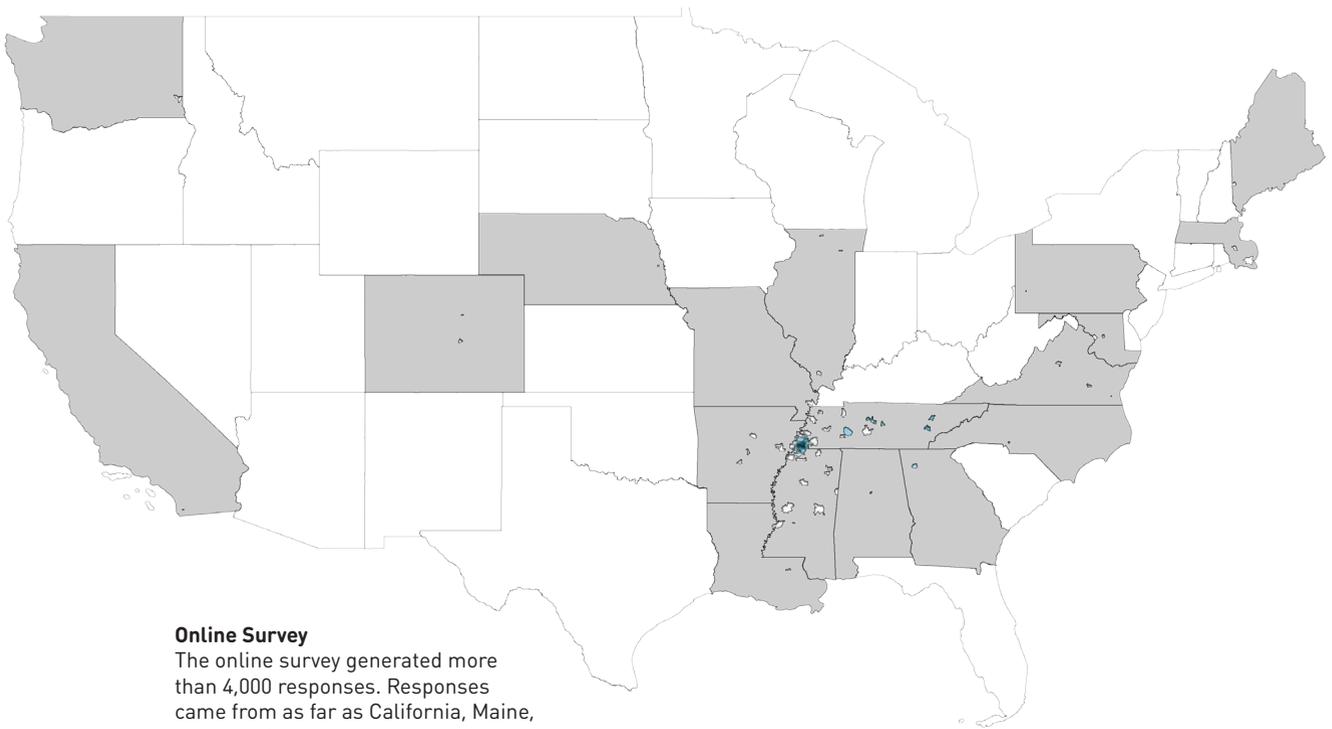




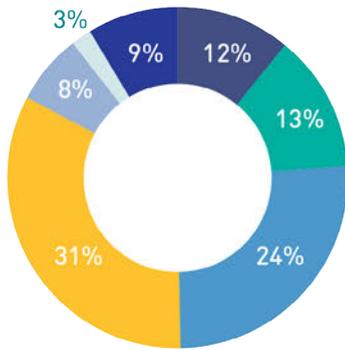
Hearing Directly from Memphians

To ensure the Concept incorporates a broad spectrum of Memphians' perspectives and aspirations for the riverfront, the design team used a variety of community engagement formats. These included (clockwise, from left to right) an Open House meeting; a "riverfront gameboard" workshop with the Mayor's Riverfront Task Force at Beale Street Landing; and a public survey booth at a Grizzlies game.





Intensity of Responses
 Darker shades of blue indicate greater numbers of responses to the online survey



How often do you visit the riverfront ?

- 2-3 times a year
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a week
- Once a week
- Everyday
- Never been
- Once per year

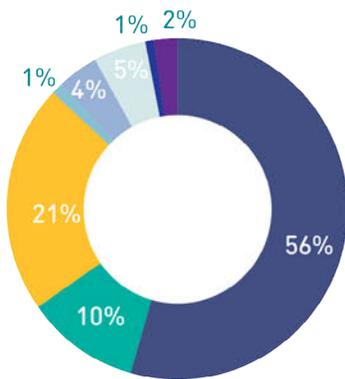
What do you like most about the Riverfront today?

37% Open Green Space & the Mississippi River

What would bring you to the Riverfront more often?

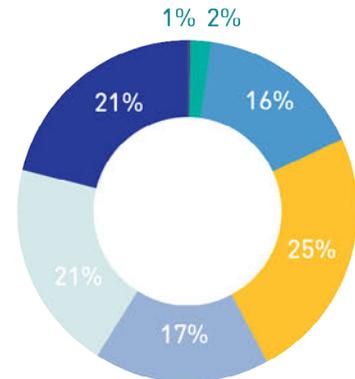
58% Food and Drink

31% Of visitors bike or walk to the Riverfront



What type of transportation do you use to get to the riverfront?

- Walk
- Bicycle
- Car
- Other
- Bus
- Taxi / Uber
- Trolley
- Motorcycle



What is your age ?

- 17 or younger
- 18-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-49
- 60+

ON the Riverfront



Hi, I am (name), and I represent the Mayor's Riverfront Task Force.

May I have a few moments to question you about your views of our downtown riverfront?

The reason we're asking is because the Mayor has convened a Task Force to envision the future of our riverfront and its development.

If you'd like to share any additional thoughts, visit our website at www.memphisriverfronttf.com. You may also email us at RiverfrontTaskForce@gmail.com.

Can you please share your zipcode? If you'd like to share any additional thoughts, visit our website at www.memphisriverfronttf.com. You may also email us at RiverfrontTaskForce@gmail.com.

1 What are you doing here today at the riverfront?

.....
.....

2 Where are you from?

.....

3 What is your favorite thing about the riverfront?

.....
.....

4 What do you think could be improved at the riverfront?

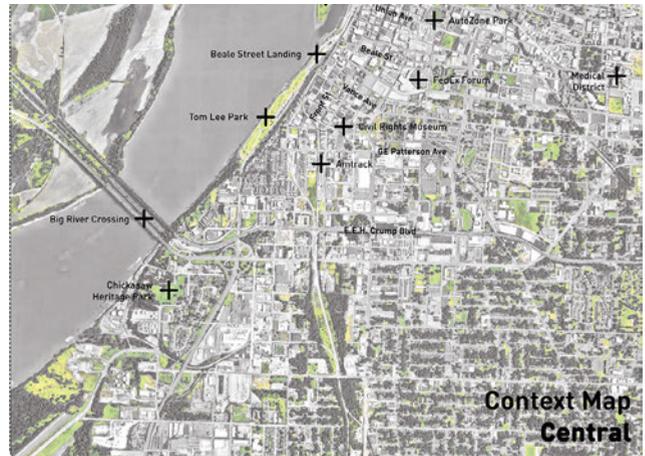
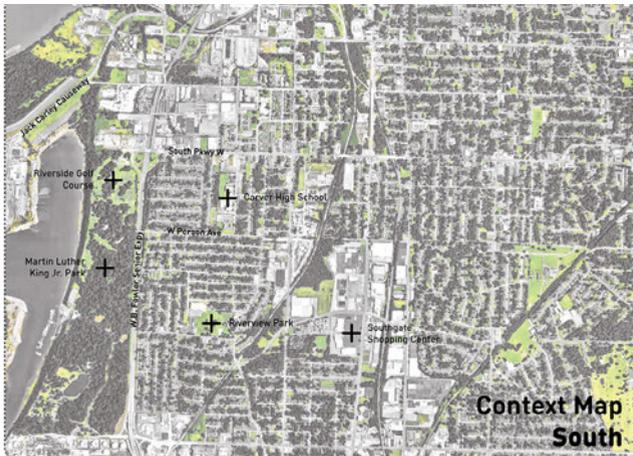
.....
.....

5 How often do you come here? Is this your first time?

.....
.....

6 Can you please share your zipcode?

.....



Mayor's Task Force Engagement Pack
Members of the Mayor's Riverfront Task Force conducted in-person interviews using an "Engagement Pack" template to help facilitate their conversations with the community. A list of questions and maps were part of the pack.

Resources

"I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky
rivers.

My soul has
grown deep like
the rivers."

Langston Hughes, 1921

Precedent Studies
LAND ART



Stick Art, Various Locations
Patrick Dougherty



Land Art, Various Locations
Andy Goldsworthy

Precedent Studies
CANOPY



**Urban Canopy, Rose Kennedy Greenway,
Boston, MA**
Janet Echelman



Metropol Parasol, Seville, Spain
J. Mayer H. Architects

Precedent Studies ADVENTURE PARK



Adventure Park at Maggie Daley Park, Chicago, IL
Richter Spielgeräte and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates

Precedent Studies
LOOKOUT TOWER



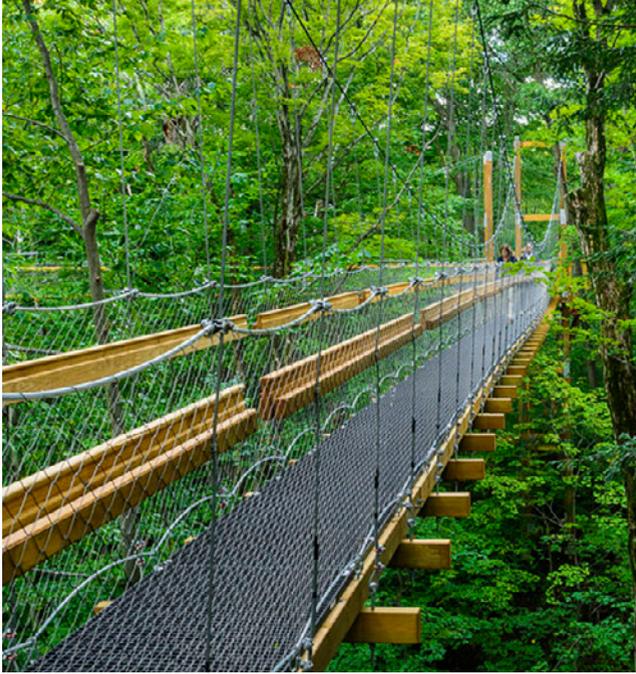
Seljord Lookout Points,
Seljord, Norway
Rintala Eggertsson Architects



Vlooyberg Tower, Tielts-Winge, Belgium
Close to Bone

Precedent Studies

CANOPY WALK



Murch Canopy Walk, Kirtland, OH
Holden Arboretum



East Point Park Bird Sanctuary, Toronto, Canada
PLANT Architect

Precedent Studies BOARDWALK



Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk, Philadelphia, PA
URS, Pennoni Associates, and CH Planning



Hudson River Park, New York, NY
Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects

Precedent Studies

OPEN PARK



Penn Park, Philadelphia, PA
Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates



Long Dock Park, Beacon, NY
Reed Hilderbrand

Precedent Studies
ROAD DIET



**Allen and Pike Streets Pedestrian and
Bicycle Improvement Project, New York, NY**
NYC DOT

Precedent Studies
PARK PAVILION



**Nature Boardwalk Pavilion at Lincoln Park Zoo,
Chicago, IL**
Studio Gang



Harbor Islands Pavilion, Boston, MA
Utile Design



Tongva Park, Santa Monica, CA
James Corner Field Operations

Precedent Studies
BOATHOUSE



Kayak Pavilion, Beacon NY
Architecture Research Office



WMS Boathouse at Clark Park, Chicago, IL
Studio Gang

Precedent Studies
POP-UP



Granary Row Pop-Up Market, Salt Lake City, UT
Kentlands Initiative



Better Block Brunswick, Melbourne Australia
Better Block/Jason Roberts

Bibliography

Bicentennial Gateway Project. City of Memphis Housing and Community Development, 2017.

Blinder, Alan. "For a Blues Birthplace in Memphis, Challenging Next Steps." *New York Times*, June 20, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/us/for-a-blues-birthplace-in-memphis-challenging-next-steps.html>.

City Center Development Plan. Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, 1987.

Cobbins, Darrell. "Op-ed: Economic Justice Means Loving Memphis in the Public Eye." *High Ground News*, February 22, 2017, <http://www.highgroundnews.com/features/DarrellCobbinsGuestPost.aspx>.

Come Heat and High Water: Climate Risk in the Southeastern U.S. and Texas. Risky Business, July 2015, <https://riskybusiness.org/site/assets/uploads/2015/09/Climate-Risk-in-Southeast-and-Texas.pdf>.

Creamer, Colleen. "36 Hours in Memphis: Weekend Guide." *New York Times*, January 14, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/18/travel/what-to-do-in-36-hours-memphis.html>.

Delavega, Elena. "2015 Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet." University of Memphis and Mid-South Family and Community Empowerment Institute, <http://www.memphis.edu/socialwork/pdfs/20152povertyfactsheetwebversion.pdf>.

Dowdy, G. Wayne. *A Brief History of Memphis*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011.

Downtown Memphis Commission Strategic Plan. The Downtown Memphis Commission, 2013.

First Annual Report. City Planning Commission, City of Memphis, Harland Bartholomew, 1921.

Greenprint 2015/2040. Shelby County, 2015.

Heritage Trail Community Redevelopment Plan. City of Memphis, September 2012.

Herrington, Chris. "The 9:01: RiverPlay, Great Streets give Downtown a summer makeover." *The Commercial Appeal*, May 5, 2017, <http://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/local/the-901/2017/05/05/901-riverplay-great-streets-give-downtown-summer-makeover/101316892>.

Historic Cobblestone Landing Restoration and Walkway Project. Riverfront Development Corporation, 2006.

"History of Memphis Parks." The City of Memphis, <http://www.memphistn.gov/Government/ParksNeighborhoods/HistoryofMemphisParks.aspx>.

Hopkins, John Linn and Marsha R. Oates. "Memphis Park and Parkway System." *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, January 1, 2010, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=897>.

Hughes, Langston. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." Read by the author. Academy of American Poets, <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/negro-speaks-rivers>.

Jones, Tom. "Finding The Park That Martin Luther King Riverside Park Wants To Be." *Smart City Memphis*, May 25, 2016, <http://www.smartcitymemphis.com/2016/05/17428>.

Jones, Tom. "Turning Tom Lee Park Into a Memphis Icon." *Smart City Memphis*, March 17, 2017, <http://www.smartcitymemphis.com/2017/03/turning-tom-lee-park-into-a-memphis-icon>.

Lantrip, Patrick. "Memphis Looks to Detroit's Riverfront for Inspiration." *Memphis Daily News*, April 17, 2017, <https://www.memphisdailynews.com/news/2017/apr/17/memphis-looks-to-detroits-riverfront-for-inspiration>.

Lauterbach, Preston. "Memphis Burning." *Places Journal*, March 2016, <https://doi.org/10.22269/160307>.

Major Road Plan. Memphis and Shelby County Planning Commissions, 1920.

Memphis Civic Commons. Groundswell, 2017.

The Memphis Landing Cultural Resources Assessment and Preservation Plan, City of Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee. Garrow & Associates, Inc., January 1996.

Memphis Promenade Public Realm Plan. Cooper Robertson & Partners, 2004.

Memphis Riverfront Analysis and Recommendations. Jeff Speck, Speck & Associates LLC, 2013.

Memphis Riverfront: An Advisory Services Panel Report. Urban Land Institute, 2003.

Memphis Riverfront Concept Plan. Gehl, 2016.

Mud Island River Park Land Use Study. Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, 2010.

New Memphis Waterfront, Bringing you closer to the river. Cooper Robertson & Partners, 2002.

Pinch District: District Concept Study. Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, November 2016.

"Planning Studies." Riverfront Development Corporation, <http://memphisriverfront.com/in-the-works/planning-studies>.

Rolph, Amy. "Going to school in a museum: Does learning have to happen in a school?" *USA Today*, May 2, 2017, <http://usat.ly/2ptOD7D>.

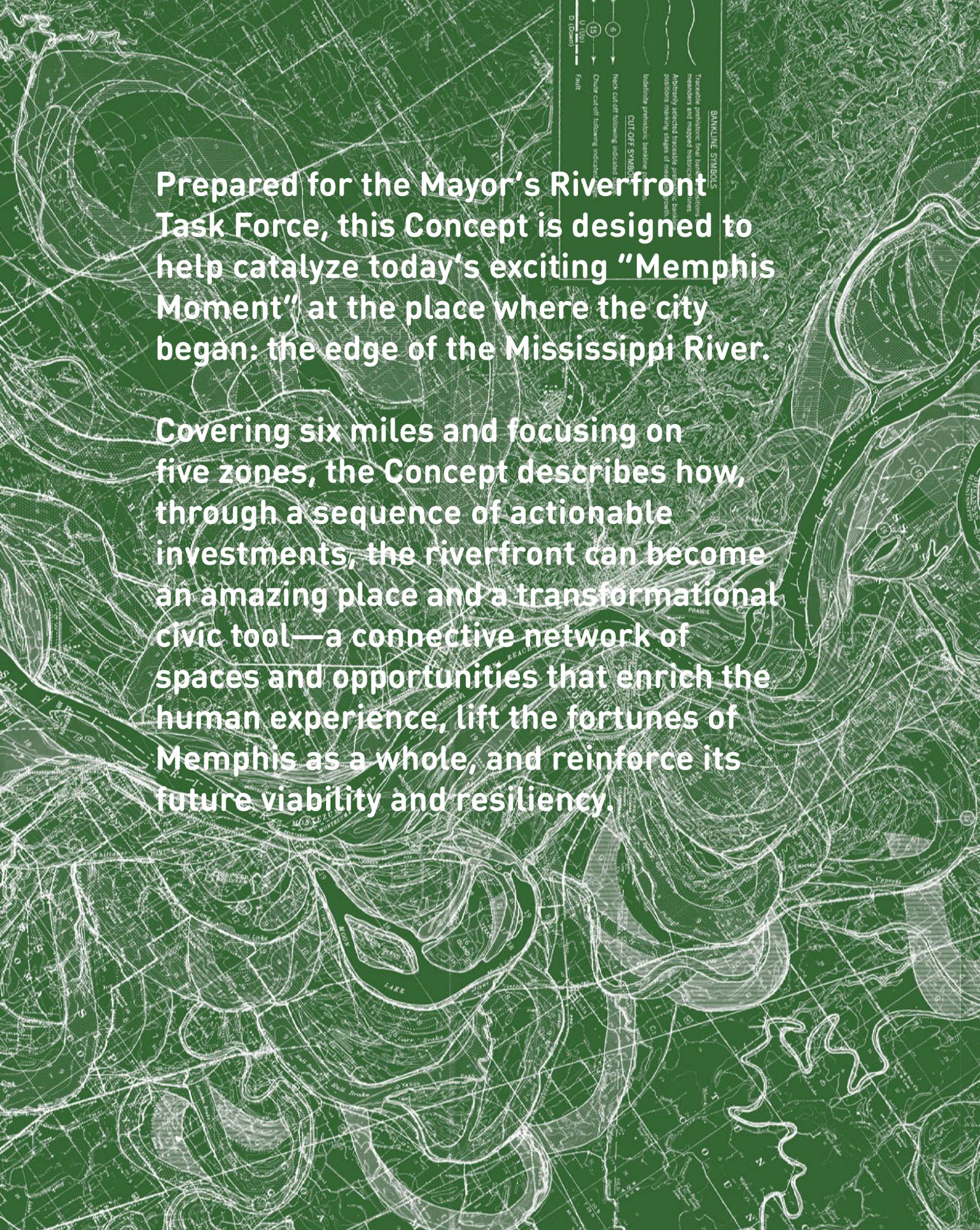
Sadler, Marilyn. "Harbor Town." *Memphis Magazine*, October 8, 2014, <http://memphismagazine.com/features/harbor-town>.

Sadler, Marilyn. "The Poor Side of Town." *Memphis Magazine*, September 1, 2006, <http://memphismagazine.com/features/the-poor-side-of-town>.

Sells, Toby. "Embracing the Big Muddy: There's more to the Mississippi River than sunsets." *Memphis Flyer*, June 18, 2015, <http://www.memphisflyer.com/memphis/embracing-the-big-muddy/Content?oid=3963218>.

Tom Lee Park Improvement Study. Civitas Inc., 2005.

"View of Our City and Riverfront." Friends for Our Riverfront, February 14, 2017.



Prepared for the Mayor's Riverfront Task Force, this Concept is designed to help catalyze today's exciting "Memphis Moment" at the place where the city began: the edge of the Mississippi River.

Covering six miles and focusing on five zones, the Concept describes how, through a sequence of actionable investments, the riverfront can become an amazing place and a transformational civic tool—a connective network of spaces and opportunities that enrich the human experience, lift the fortunes of Memphis as a whole, and reinforce its future viability and resiliency.