



Placemaking on the Merrimack

# Centralville River Path and Trailheads



## Conceptual Design Proposal July 1, 2022



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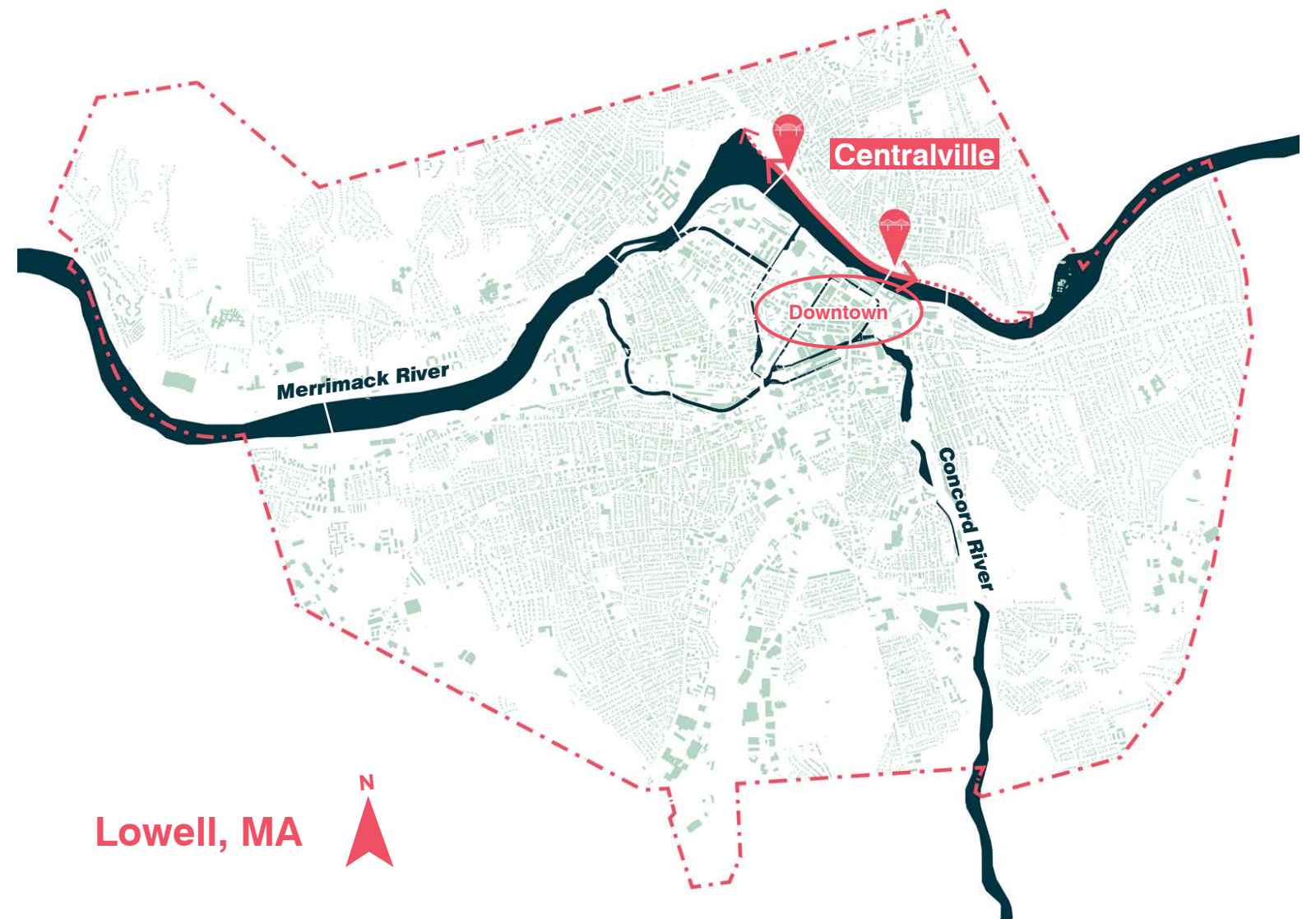


# Introduction

In Spring, 2020, DIY Lowell applied for a Complete Streets grant from the Solomon Foundation. The goal of this grant was to enhance underused spaces to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. DIY Lowell undertook a three-month process with Solomon Foundation and the City of Lowell to determine the best location for enhancement.

The “Centralville River Path” was chosen due to broad community support and prominence in long-term plans. It also had the potential, if enhanced, to become a new way for an under-served community to commute and recreate.

Over 2021, DIY Lowell advanced several community outreach efforts, including working with “Stitching Urban Fabric” for pro-bono landscape design services, to envision a welcoming, safe, and fun pedestrian and bicycle path. The vision was phased, with the intent that DIY Lowell would undertake short-term pop-up improvements in 2022, and larger interventions would start in 2023. This report details both the short-term and long-term proposals.



## What is DIY Lowell?

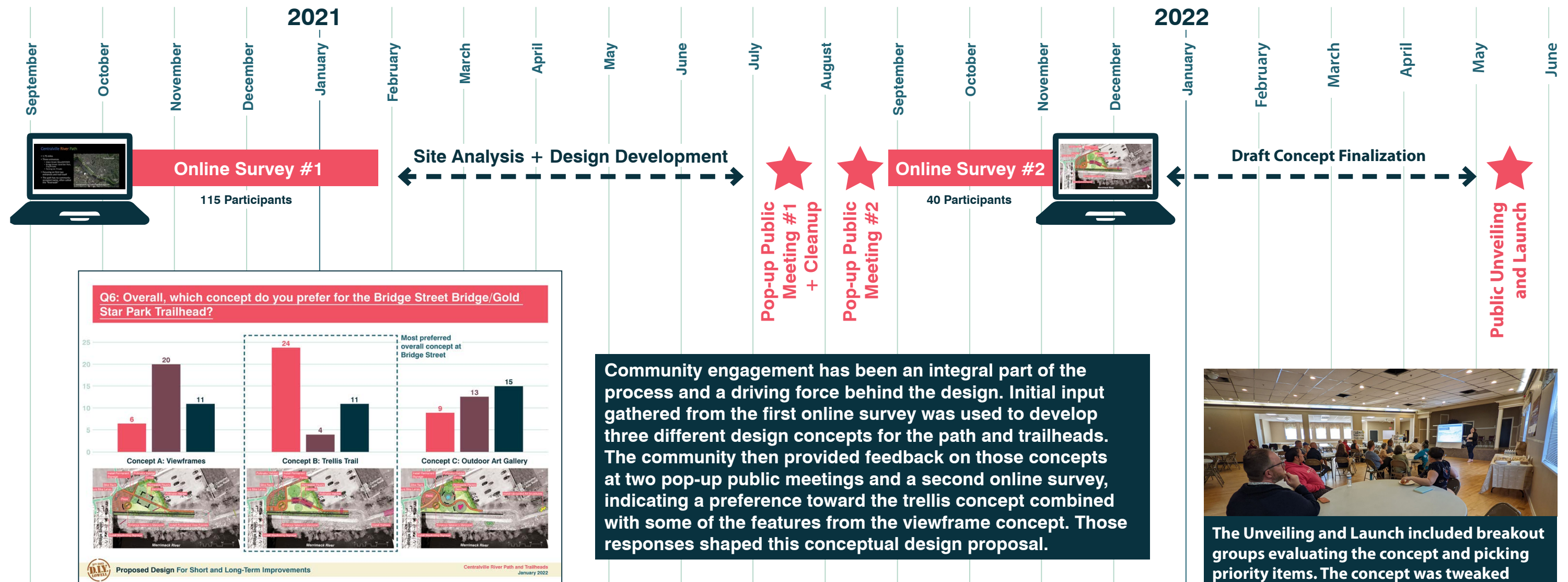
Do-it-Yourself (DIY) Lowell is a grassroots group dedicated to helping youth and adults make community projects happen together.





# Community Engagement

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## What's in a Name?

During the public outreach, DIY Lowell asked what the path should be named. Although most currently call it the "Riverwalk," many people indicated they wanted an identity that would show the path's uniqueness to other riverwalks in Lowell. In addition, the use of the path for bicycles should also be highlighted, as the Merrimack Riverwalk on the south bank is not designed for bicycles.

Through an iterative process including survey and in-person discussion, "Centralville River Path" was chosen to show that the path was special to Centralville and that it is for more than just walking!





# Community Engagement

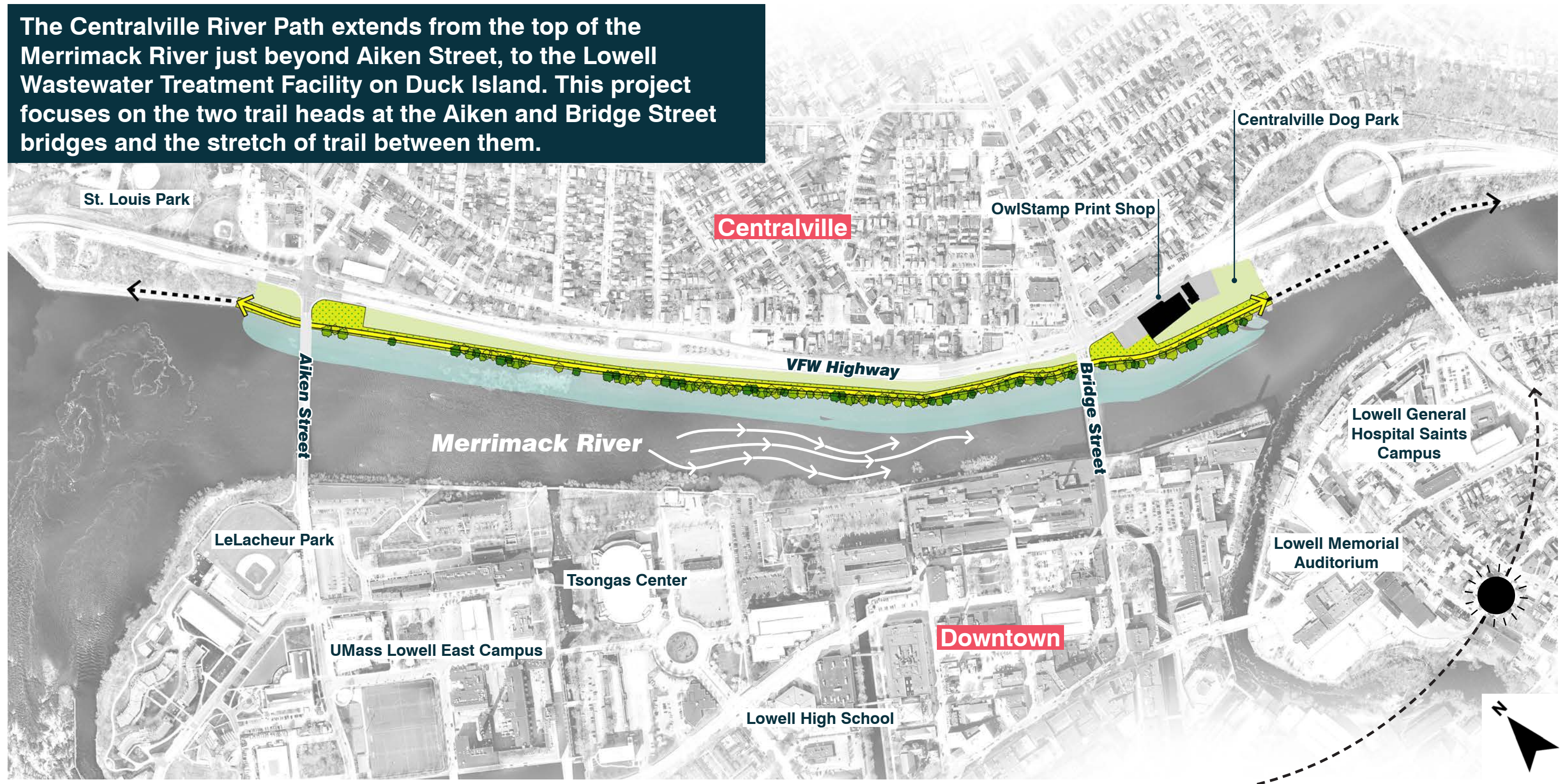
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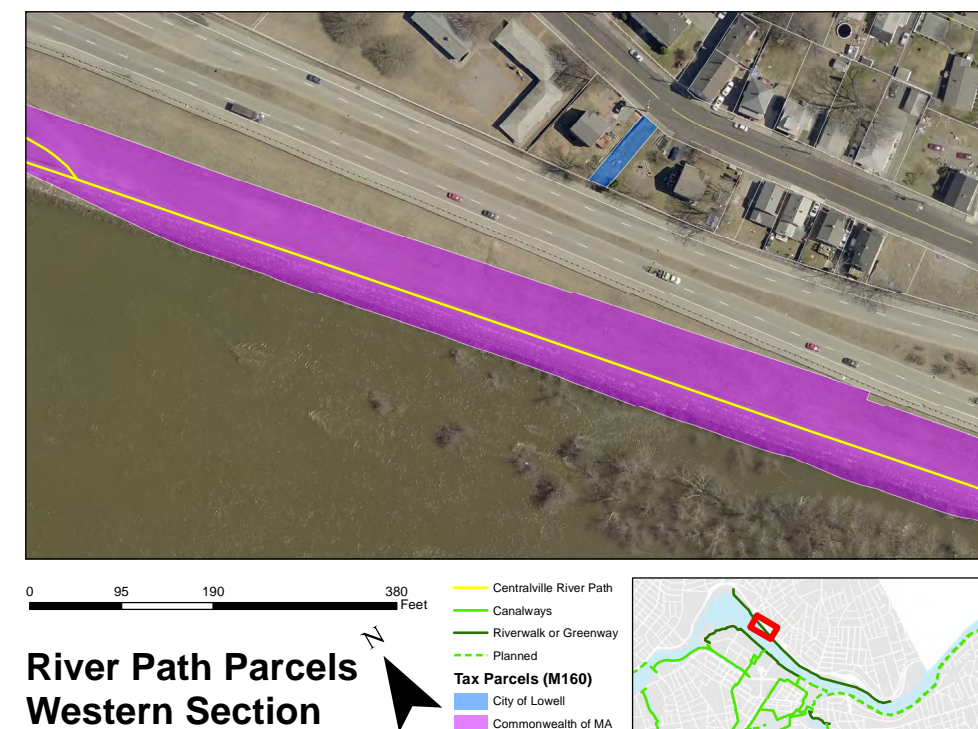
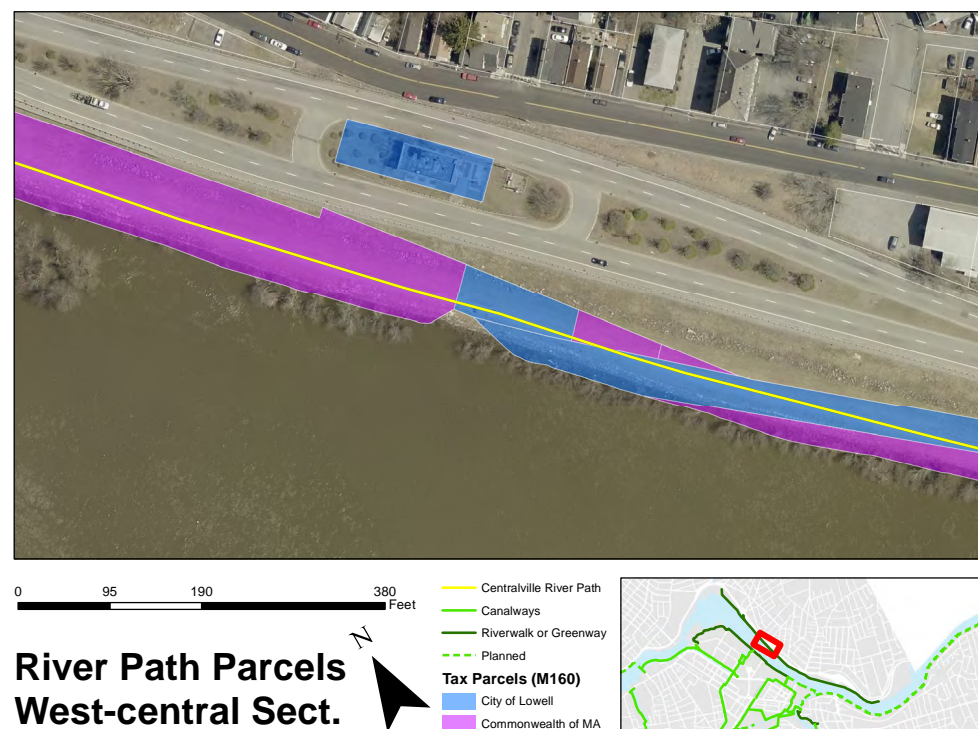
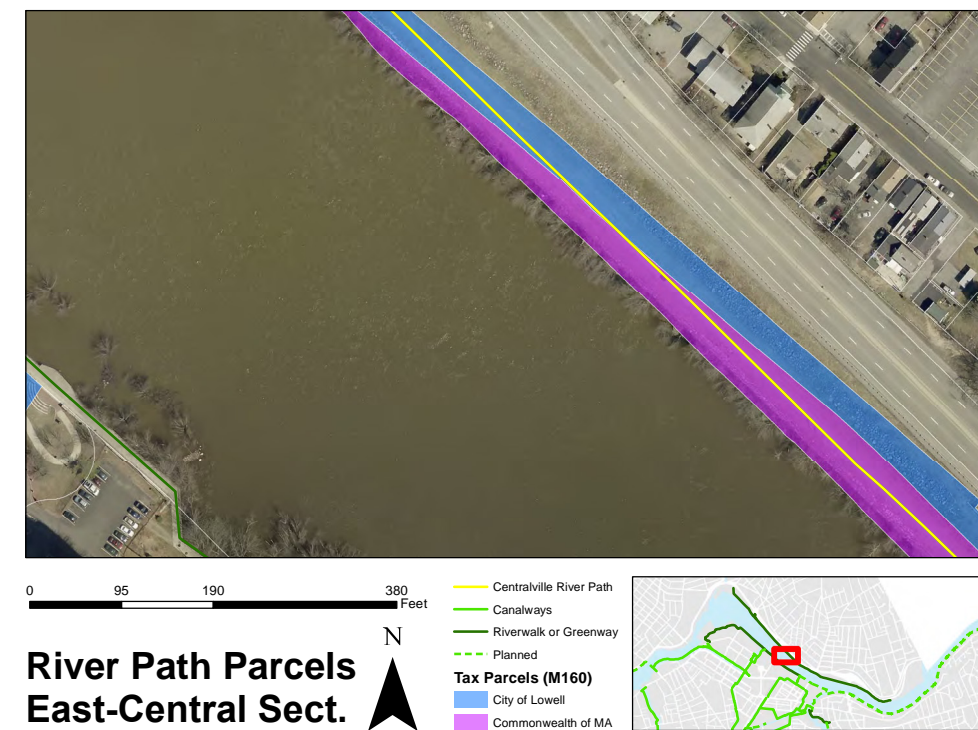
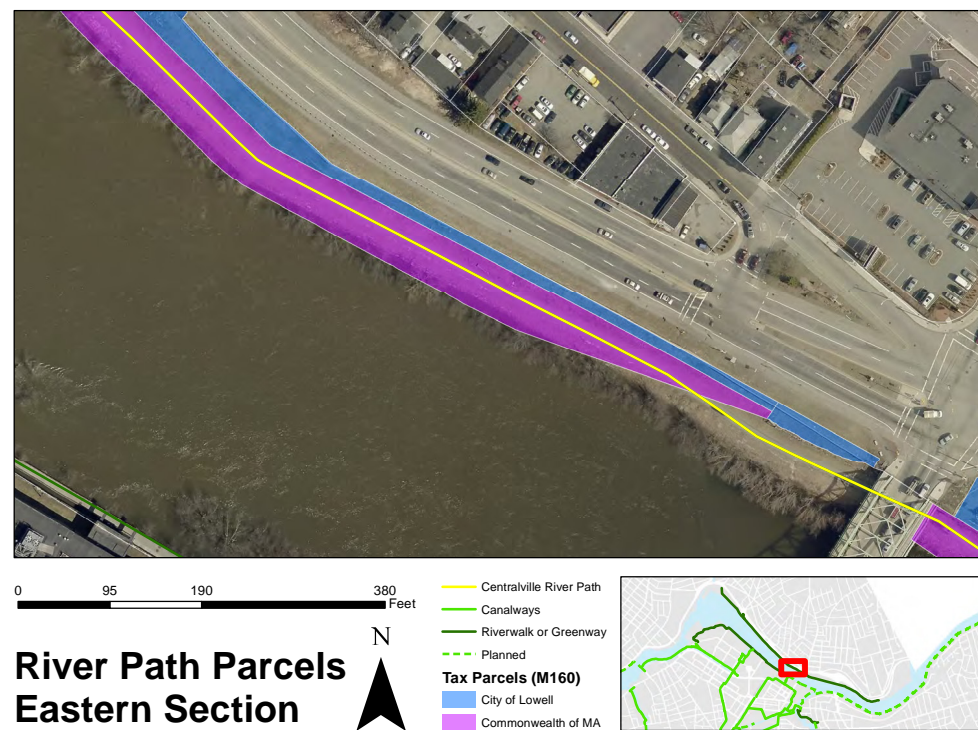
# Context

The Centralville River Path extends from the top of the Merrimack River just beyond Aiken Street, to the Lowell Wastewater Treatment Facility on Duck Island. This project focuses on the two trail heads at the Aiken and Bridge Street bridges and the stretch of trail between them.





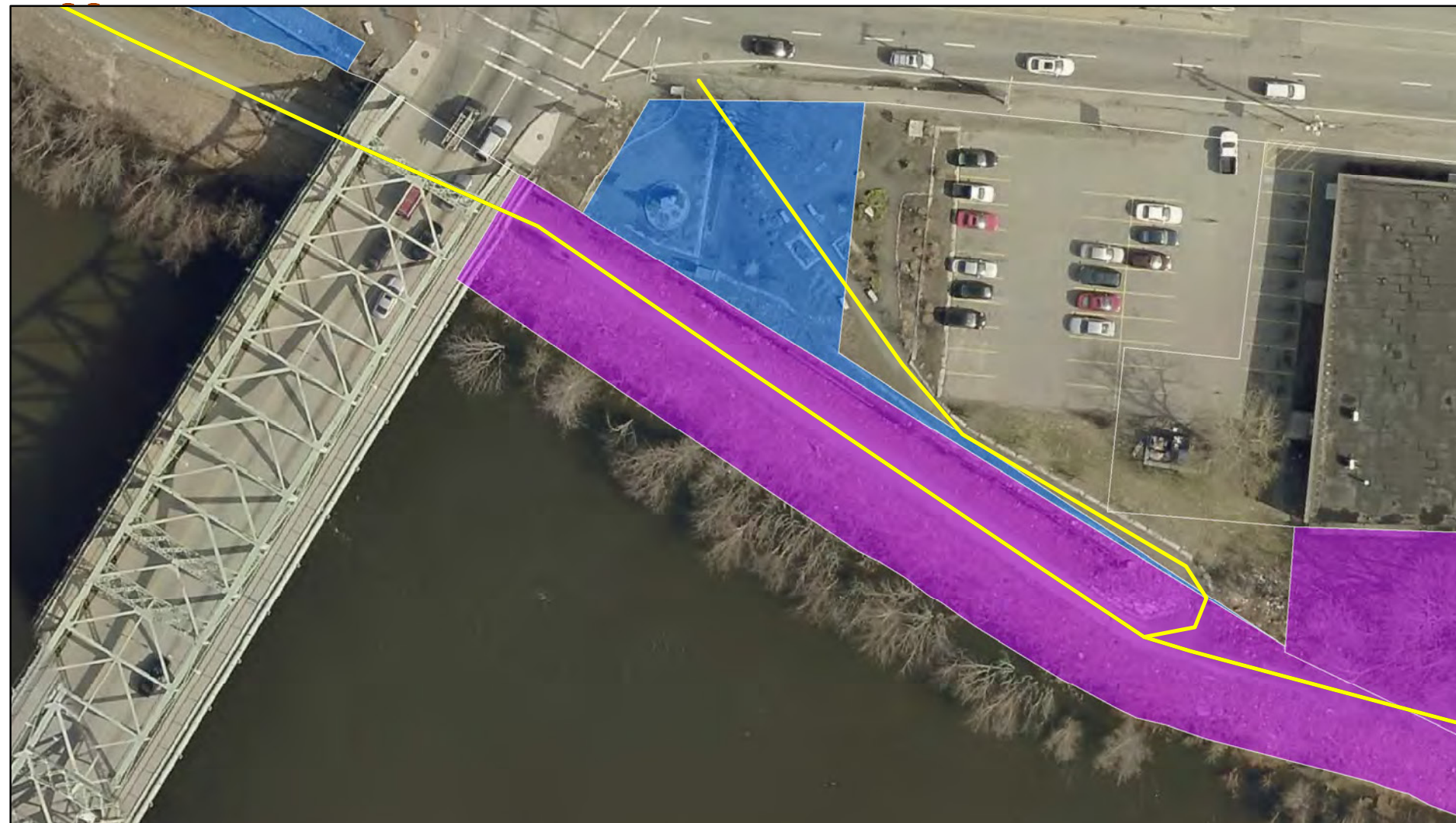
# Existing Conditions: The Path





# Existing Conditions: Gold Star Park Trailhead

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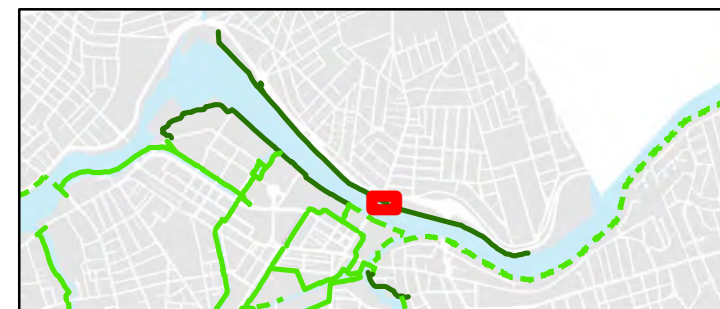


0 50 100 200 Feet

## River Path Parcels Gold Star Park



- Centralville River Path
- Canalways
- Riverwalk or Greenway
- Planned
- Tax Parcels (M160)**
- City of Lowell
- Commonwealth of MA



Map by: Christopher Glenn Hayes, Jan. 25, 2022  
Projection: Lambert\_Conformal\_Conic  
Coordinate: NAD\_1983\_StatePlane\_Massachusetts\_Mainland\_FIPS\_2001  
Sources: City of Lowell (2016/2019 Aerial), MassGIS (Parcel), DIY Lowell (Trail)  
Disclaimer: DIY Lowell makes no claims, representations or warranties, express or implied, concerning the timeliness, validity, reliability or accuracy of the GIS Data and/or data products furnished by the City. Each user of this data is responsible for determining its suitability for the purpose it is being applied to, and must inquire of the relevant City Departments for applicable requirements. The City shall have no liability for the Data (or lack thereof), or any decisions made or action taken on the basis and reliance of this Data.



Proposed Design for Short and Long-Term Improvements

Centralville River Path and Trailheads  
July 2022



# Existing Conditions: Aiken Street Trailhead

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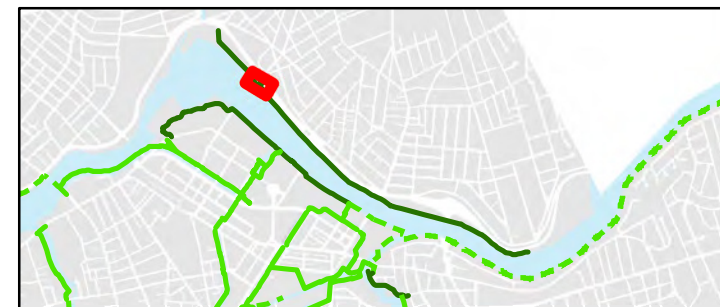


0 50 100 200 Feet

## River Path Parcels Aiken Trailhead



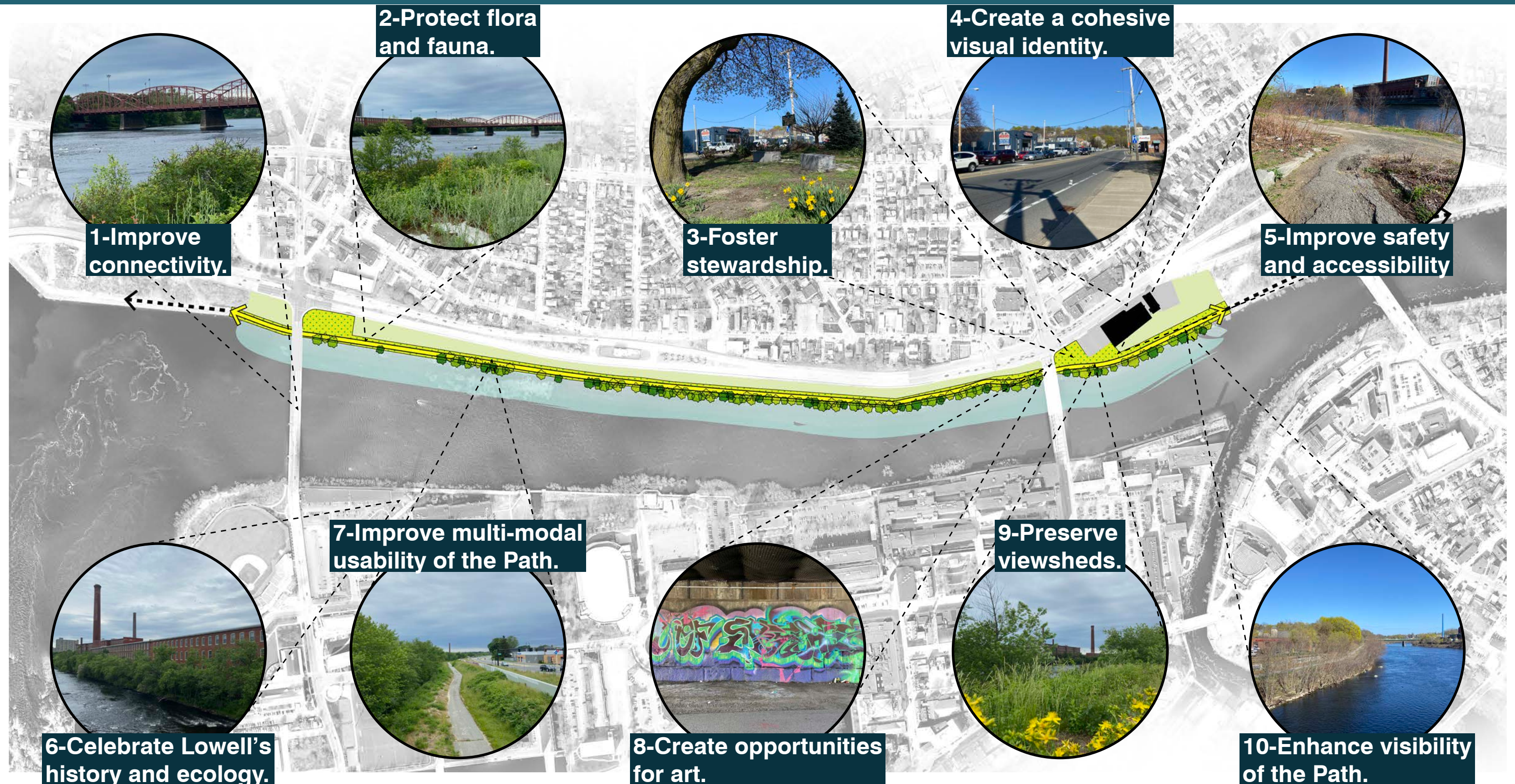
- Centralville River Path
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# Project Goals

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Proposed Design for Short and Long-Term Improvements

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# Project Goals

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## 1-Improve connectivity.

Improve connectivity between existing open spaces and trails and the surrounding neighborhoods.

## 2-Protect flora and fauna.

Protect the existing habitats of the diverse plant and animal species that call the Merrimack River home.

## 3-Foster stewardship.

Foster community stewardship of the River Path and trailheads to ensure that it will be looked after for generations to come.

## 4-Create a cohesive visual identity.

Create a cohesive visual identity and sense of place through bold design.

## 5-Improve safety and accessibility.

Improve safety and accessibility by re-grading and repaving the Path as needed.

## 6-Celebrate Lowell's history and ecology.

Celebrate Lowell's history and ecology through educational signage and local art.

## 7-Improve multi-modal usability of the Path.

Improve the usability of the path for walkers, joggers, and bikers of all ages and abilities.

## 8-Create opportunities for art.

Provide a platform for local artists to display public art.

## 9-Preserve viewsheds.

Preserve and enhance existing viewsheds of the River and historic mill buildings.

## 10-Enhance visibility of the Path.

Enhance the path's visibility and identity so that it can be seen from a distance and draw users in.





# Short-Term Concept

The short-term concept includes interventions that are temporary or are low-cost and won't interfere with the implementation of the long-term concept.

The centerpiece of the short-term concept will be two pop-up sign structures. These will bring much-needed visibility to the trail and include small trail maps to show how the Centralville River Path is connected to the larger "Greater Lowell Emerald Network". These are anticipated to last one to two years and will be replaced by permanent pedestal signs when the long-term concept is implemented.

These signs will guide users from both trailheads down to the path. As feeling of safety and security is paramount, additional interventions will include removing brush and vegetation that interferes with sightlines, a temporary light installation under the Cox (Bridge Street) Bridge to brighten that area, and a Blue Light Emergency Phone near the area as a "pilot" project to determine whether the installation increases feelings of safety for the community utilizing it.

Finally, two pop-up interventions along the path itself will draw interest and color: a pilot pollinator garden to provide wildlife habitat and a series of artistic "feather banners" between the bridges. The feather banners will be removed for winter, while the pollinator garden, if successful, will be replicated in two additional spots. Concurrently, the team will investigate a mural intervention on the wall.



Cleared and trimmed vegetation, river path sign, and annual plantings at Gold Star Park trailhead.



Annual plantings and river path sign.

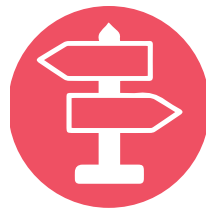


Invasive species removal, pollinator garden, and bench along the path (note: bench is currently envisioned to be a simple granite block).



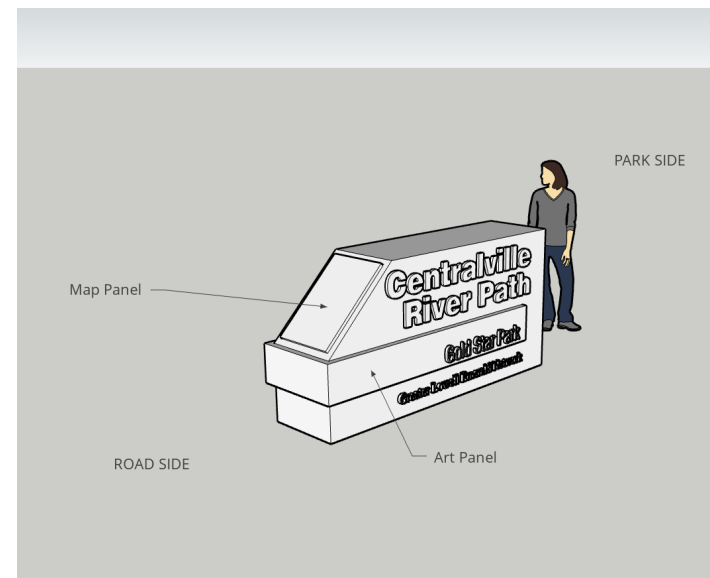
# Short-Term Concept

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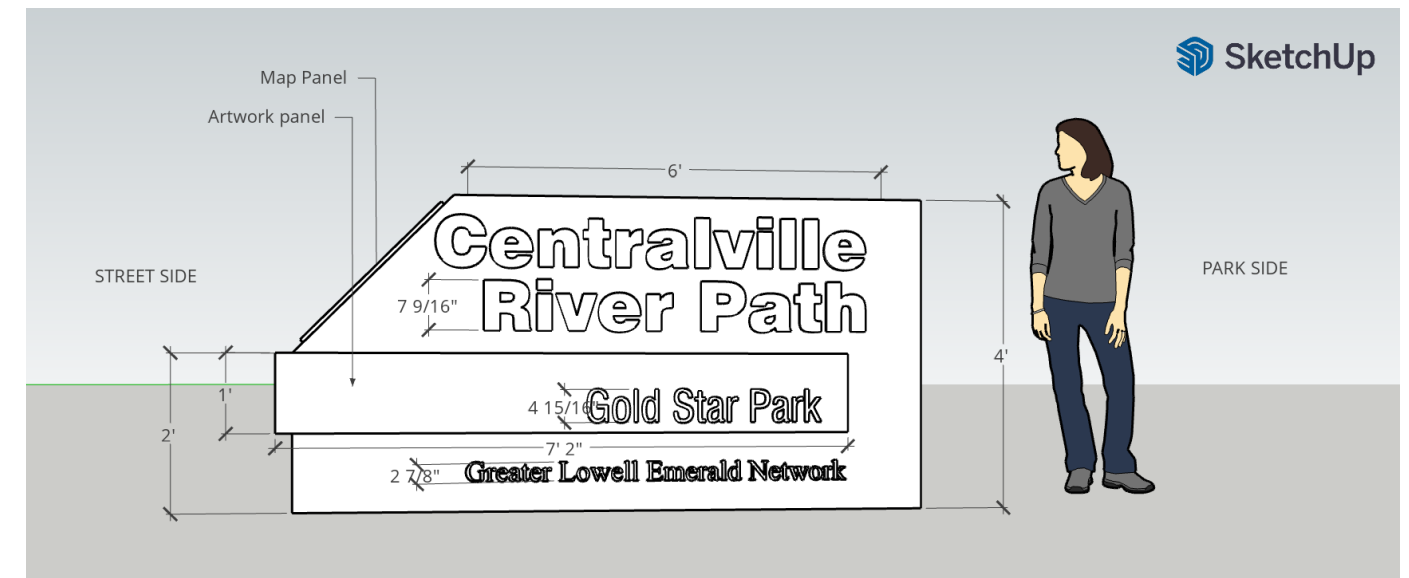


## Temporary Signs

Sign base will be made of painted wood anchored by weight. Map and art panels displaying local art solicited by DIY Lowell will be included. Graphics, including lettering and these panels, to be printed at Owl Stamp. Intended to last 1-2 years until replaced by permanent signs.

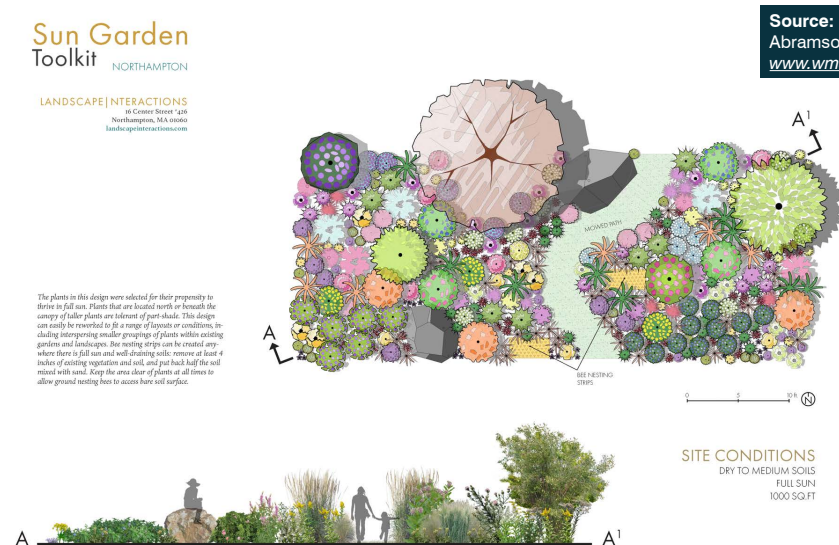


Model of proposed temporary signage



## Pollinator Gardens

The community voiced a strong desire for native species providing habitat for pollinating insects. One pilot pollinator garden will be installed in cooperation with Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, providing expertise on location, species selection, and care. The garden will need to be watered and weeded regularly until established, then will be self-sustaining with annual maintenance.



Source: "Pollinate Northampton" by Evan Abramson, Landscape Interactions. <https://www.wmassbees.org/toolkits>



Boston Harborwalk near UMass Boston







## Under Bridge Light

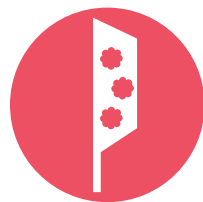
DIY Lowell will install one or more solar-powered color wash LEDs under the Cox Bridge in order to highlight art underneath the bridge, encourage passage underneath, and foster a sense of security. Although this won't be as detailed as the example, we hope to work toward it in the long-term.



*Lumenpulse LED wash light under consideration for underpass*



*Example from Craiglinn Underpass in Scotland. Short-term proposal would not include this level of detailed artistic lighting, but we hope to achieve these effects in longer-term.*



## Feather Banner Art

DIY Lowell will install seven artistic feather banners, each with a different piece of art from a local or regional artist. These would create visibility and activity and can be anchored into the ground with simple staking. They would be removed prior to winter but could be re-installed in 2023.



*Source: ozfeathers.com.au*



*Source: Bald Eagle Industries*





## Invasive Management

Lowell Litter Krewe will trim the two hedges near the memorial, lead in a clean-up to remove overgrown vegetation at both trailheads, and provide professional invasive species management along the trail to create better visibility. They are currently developing a plan to be approved by state authorities.



*Volunteers will work on overgrowth, while Lowell Litter Krewe will lead a professional-level invasive management along the path*



## Mural Investigation

DIY Lowell is investigating ways to support or sanction murals on the wall, including potentially commissioning new works. During 2022, we will be working with partners to determine the ownership and licensing requirements.



## Blue Light Phone

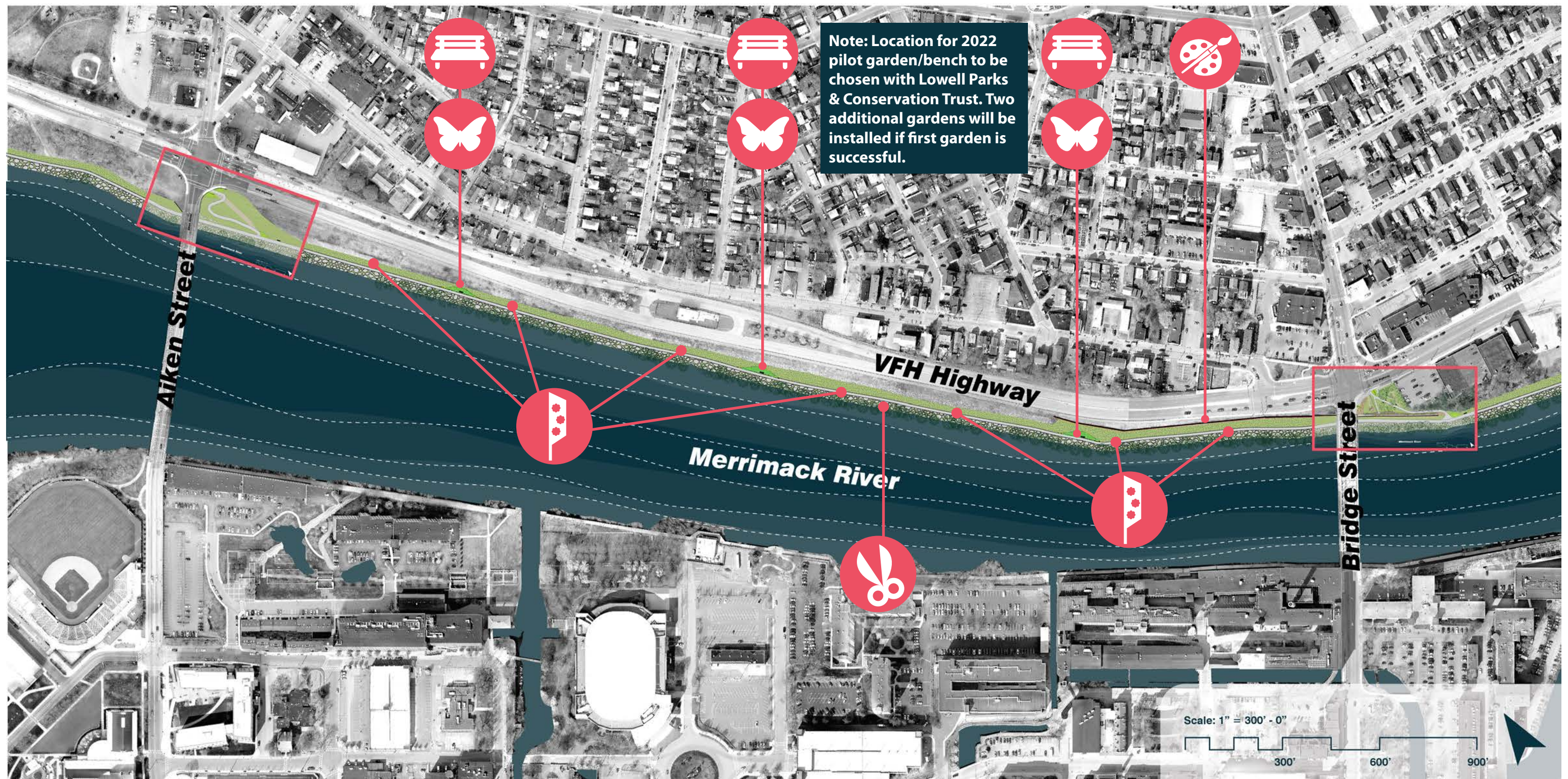
Cellular/solar blue light phone to be installed as a pilot. DIY is currently working with City and UMass Lowell to determine whether existing phone network could be used. Blue Light Phones have worked well at UMass Lowell campus.



*Boston Harborwalk near UMass Boston*



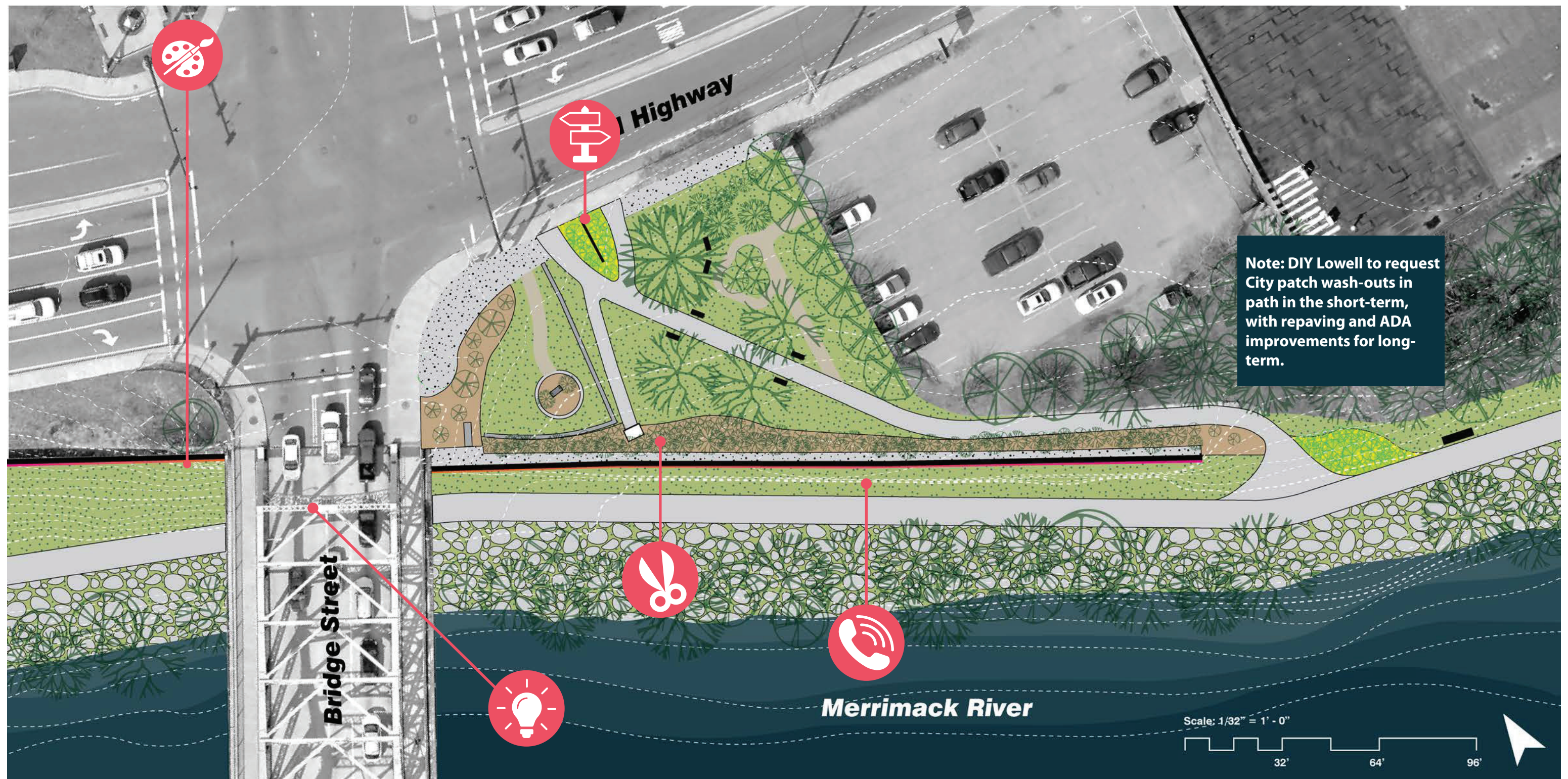
# Short-Term Concept: The Path





# Short-Term Concept: Gold Star Park Trailhead

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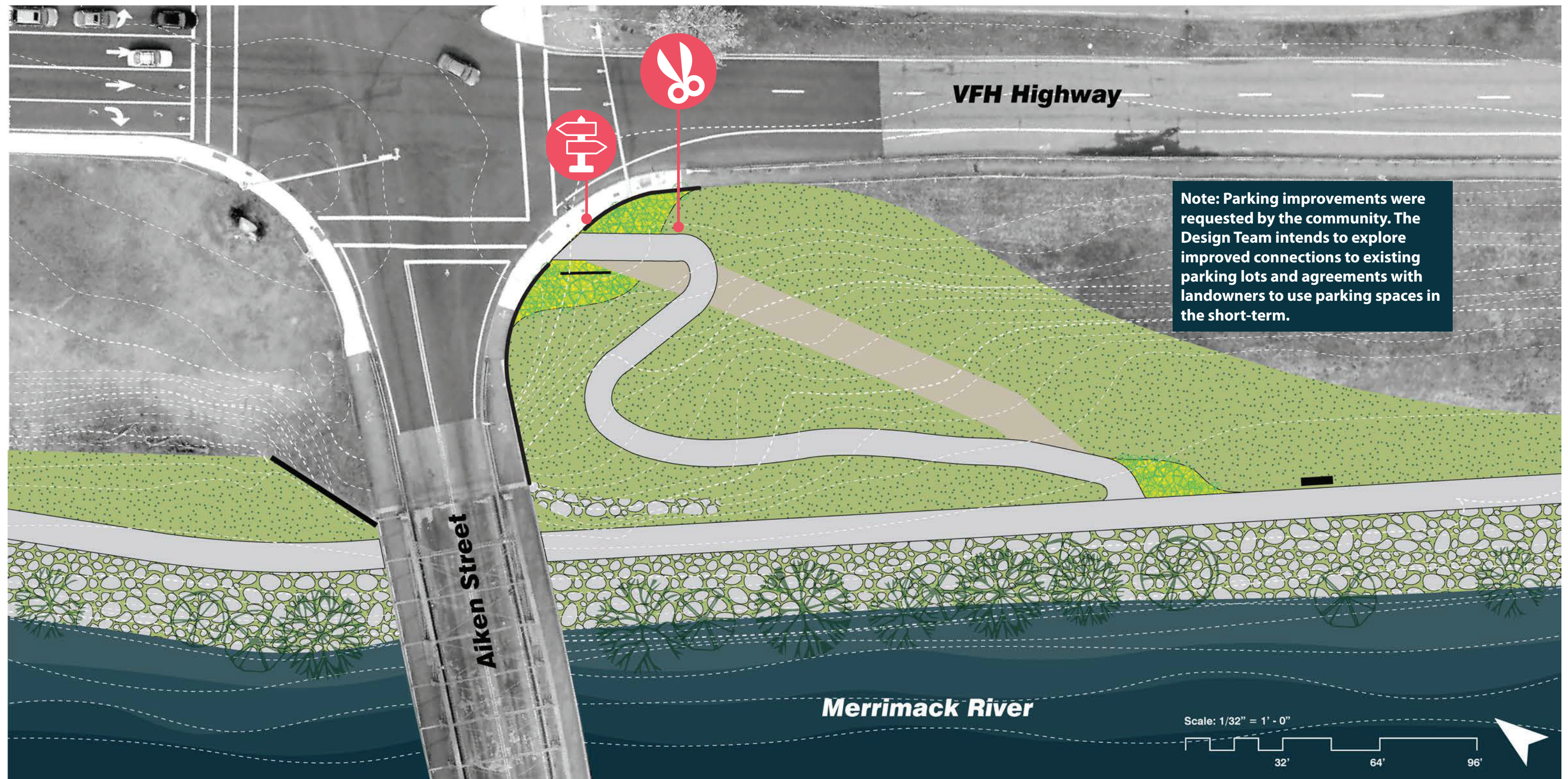
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# Short-Term Concept: Aiken Street Trailhead

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# Short-Term Concept: Budget

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Item	No.	Unit		Cost per Unit	Total Cost
<b>Signs</b>					
Structure (Material and Labor)	2	Lump Sum	@	\$1,500.00	\$3,000.00
Graphics Printing	2	Lump Sum	@	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00
Art	2	Pieces	@	\$800.00	\$1,600.00
Coming Soon Signs for Full Project	4	Sign	@	\$40.00	\$160.00
<b>Other Art</b>					
Feather Banner Printing	7	Banner	@	\$200.00	\$1,400.00
Feather Banner Art	7	Pieces	@	\$150.00	\$1,050.00
Mural	1	Piece	@	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
<b>Light Under Bridge</b>					
LED Multicolor Light install	1	Lump Sum	@	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00
<b>Blue Light Phone</b>					
Blue Light Phone	1	Lump Sum	@	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
<b>Pollinator Garden</b>					
Plantings (Plan, Selection, Labor, Maintenance)	1	Lump Sum	@	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00
Edging	1	Lump Sum	@	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Daily Watering/Maintenance	88	Hours	@	\$23.00	\$2,024.00
Granite Block Bench	1	Lump Sum	@	\$200.00	\$200.00
<b>Total Costs</b>					<b>\$41,434.00</b>





# Long-Term Concept

The long-term concept is envisioned to take place in phases over many years, the first phase of which starting design in 2022. Pergolas that provide shade and respite, while not hindering emergency vehicular access or visibility, would frame key views toward the path, creating an instantly-recognizable signature element. Improvements to the park would create more visibility to the path and places for respite and gathering. Permanent signs filled with artwork would create instantly-recognizable branding and opportunity for locally-sourced art to brighten the path.

In addition to the interventions piloted in the short-term concept, such as blue-light phones, security lighting under bridges, and pollinator gardens; the concept includes repaving both trail access points to American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. This requires minor regrading of these entrances, and the design team is currently discussing these impacts with landowners. Exercise equipment stations add activity nodes along the path.

Other elements that will be explored during the design and permitting process will include solar lighting along the pathway, tree plantings near the pathway, and extension of blue light phones. Although not all elements may be permitted by the status of the path as an Army Corps of Engineers levee, the design team is dedicated to working with these agencies to find unique and appropriate solutions that could be permitted. This may include a midpoint stepped seating intervention over the floodwall to create a new access point without sacrificing the area's ability to control and store floodwaters.



A signature pergola (not pictured: benches to be placed under pergola) that provides both shade respite and a signature theme for the river path.



Expanding upon the pollinator garden respite zones, there is a long-term vision to work with stakeholders to install a seating area that would double as a staircase to traverse over the flood wall to the sidewalk as a mid-point access.

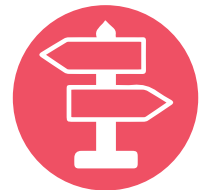


The pergola theme would be replicated at both trailheads, with this rendering showing the path from Aiken Street (not pictured: bench.) Note that pergolas would be designed to not hinder emergency and maintenance vehicle traffic on the path itself.

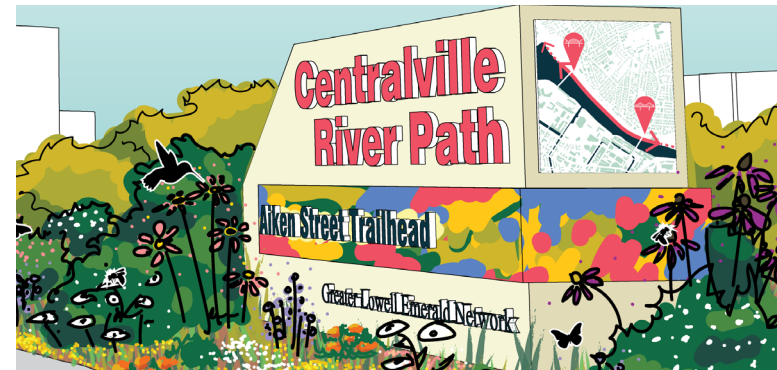


# Long-Term Concept

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**Signage**



**Benches**



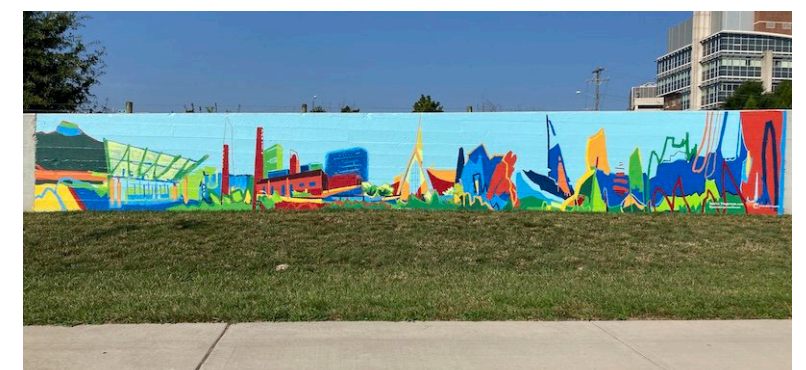
**Shade Pergolas**



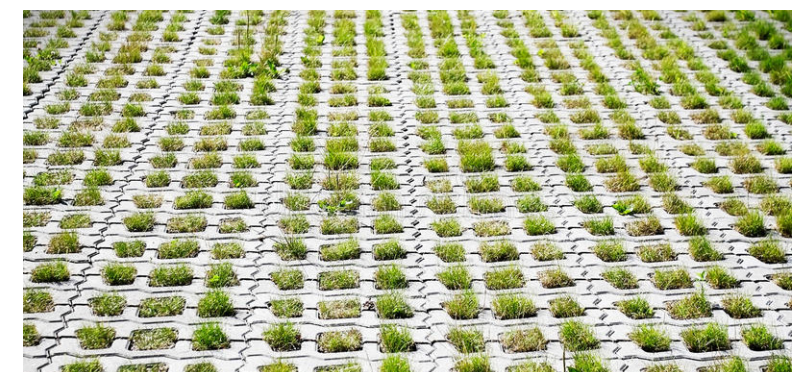
**Pollinator Gardens**



**Art**



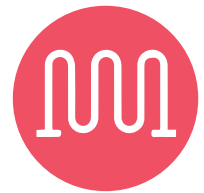
**Permeable Paving**





# Long-Term Concept

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**Bike  
Racks**



**Bike  
Repair  
Stations**



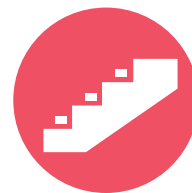
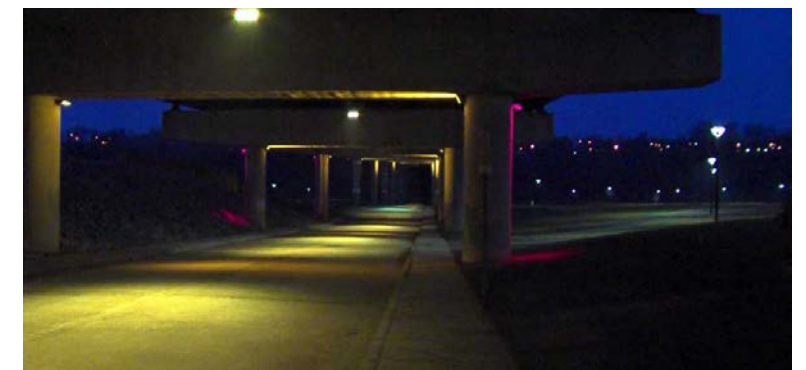
**Fitness  
Stations**



**Regraded/  
Repaved  
Paths**



**Lighting**



**Stepped  
Seating**



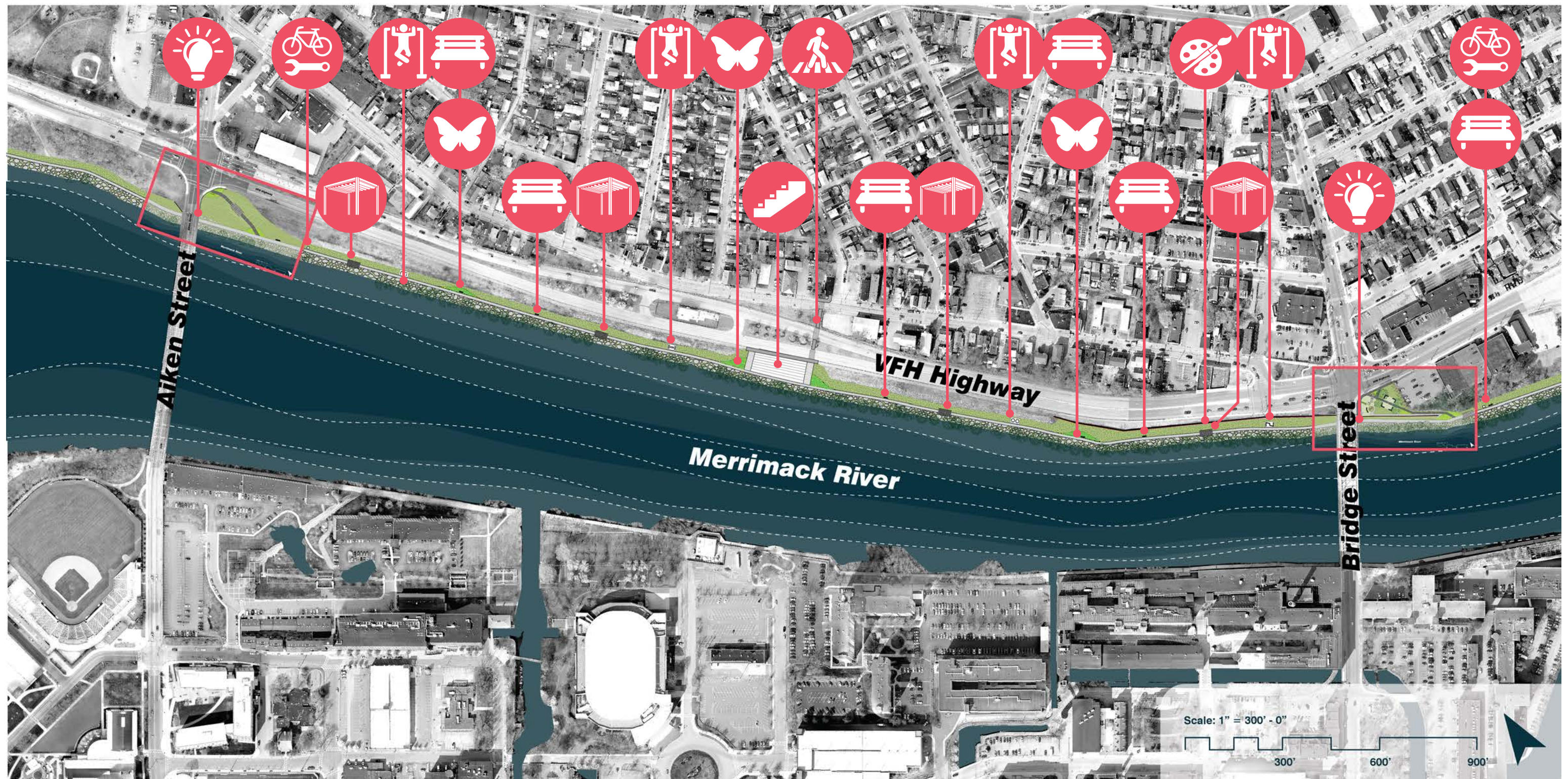
**Improved  
Pedestrian  
Access**





# Long-Term Concept: The Path

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# Long-Term Concept: Aiken Street Trailhead

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