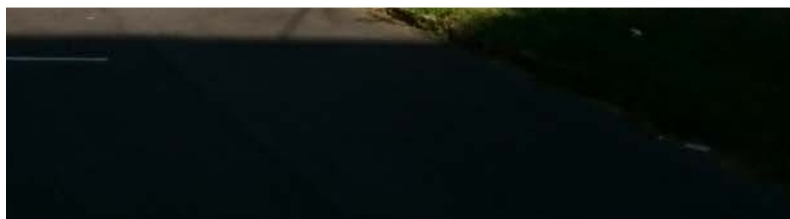




SITE 
COLLABORATIVE

Danville River District
Green Space Plan
October 2017



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Prepared For

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements p. i

Project Background & Summary p. 4

Inventory & Analysis p. 5

 Public Lands p. 6

 Roadways p. 7

 Buildings p. 8

 Surface Parking Lots p. 9

 Impervious Surfaces p. 10

 Vacant/Undeveloped Lands p. 11

 Public Green Spaces p. 12

 Topography/Drainage p. 13

 Transit Systems p. 14

 Bicycle Routes p. 15

 Land Use p. 16

 Potential Green Space Development p. 17

Vision p. 19

Focus Corridors p. 20

 Entire District p. 20

 River Corridor p. 22

 Ecological Corridor p. 26

 Cultural Corridor p. 28

 Midway Corridor p. 30

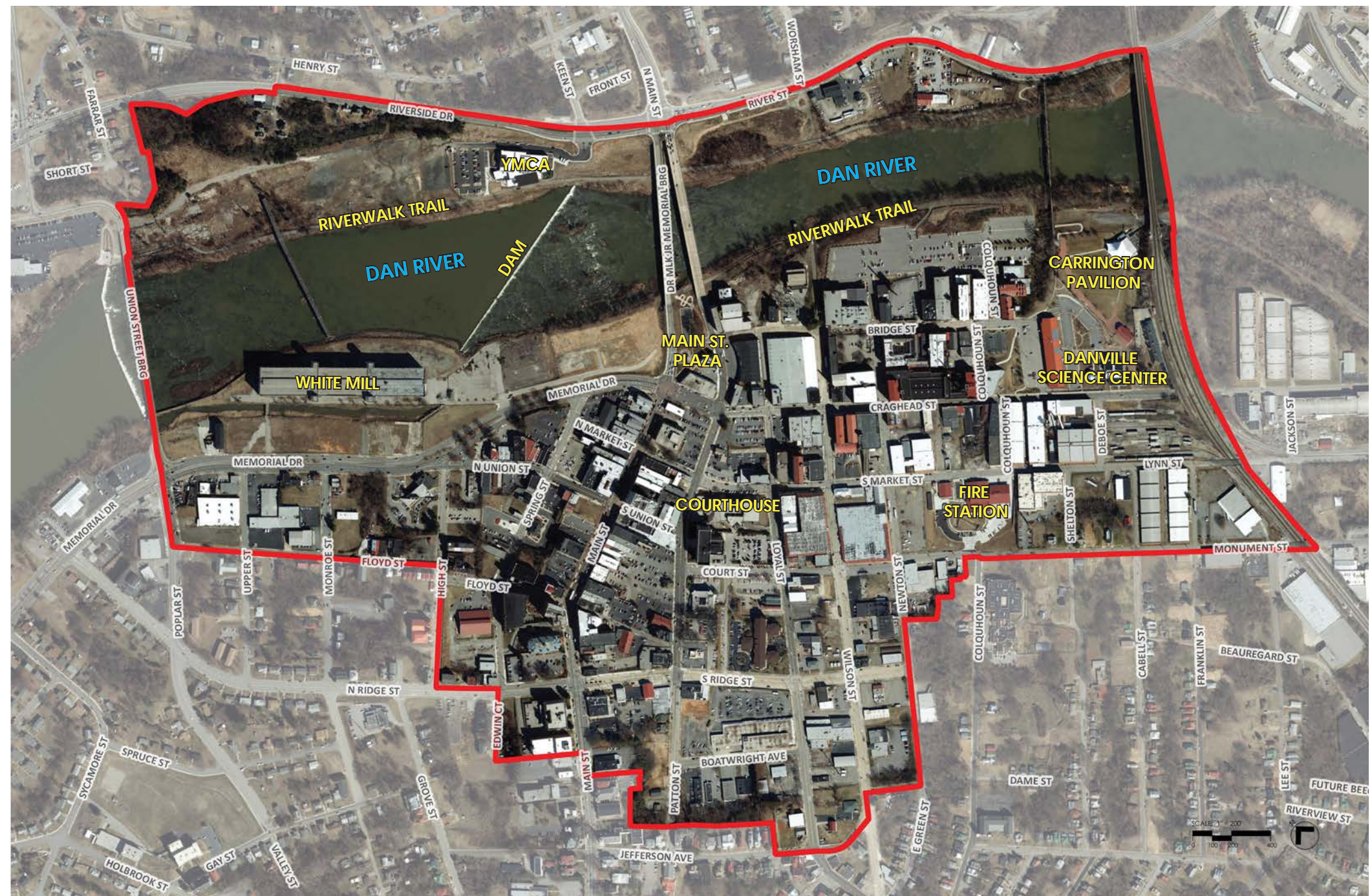
Recommendations p. 32

PROJECT BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

In 2016, as Danville began conceptualizing the 4-acre Riverfront Park, it also began to re-imagine the entirety of the green spaces within and adjacent to the River District. The existing River District Redevelopment Plan created a road map for economic growth and focused revitalization efforts within the area. The River District Green Space Plan outlines a foundational vision for the future of parks and green spaces within the River District. This project inventories and analyzes the existing conditions and resources, shaping a vision, and testing several key focus areas for redevelopment. Ultimately, this report will show the guiding role that green spaces can have in creating economic growth and increasing livability within the City.

The consultant team began by interviewing local community leaders, city staff, and elected officials. The team then conducted a field walk through the entire River District, hosted by the Office of Economic Development and Department of Parks and Recreation. Throughout compiling the report, additional follow up meetings and discussions have been held with those above-mentioned departments, as well as the Department of Community Development and Public Works Department.

This report presents the team's analysis of the River District assets and opportunities. The inventorying and analysis process involved detailed mapping using City-supplied information in the form of discussions/field visits and GIS data, and information discerned from desktop analysis by the consultants. As the data was analyzed and compared to the community sentiment collected during the Riverfront Park community engagement, feedback from City staff, and local community leaders, the Green Space Plan vision began to crystallize. This vision for green space within the River District pulls together several overarching themes to guide the green spaces connected with the River District. That vision directly guides the physical focus corridor delineations that are put forth within the end of document. These focus corridors ensure that the Dan River is the predominant recreation resource within the River District and the City while also physically organizing the District around several integrated recreation opportunities, interpretive opportunities, and economic development opportunities.



It should be noted that the team decided to focus on areas that are not only within the River District, but also spaces that are adjacent to and/or linked by the common themes noted above. This approach leads to a richer connection for the community by linking spaces within the District to the surrounding neighborhoods for a more comprehensive approach to green space-focused redevelopment.

The report ends with a Next Steps section. This is put forth as a guidebook to keep up the work that has already been started by the City and as jumping-off point for next steps. It is the hope that the ideas put forth within this report are not 'answers' yet should more likely be considered as 'possibilities'.

PROJECT GOALS

- To provide guidance for the redevelopment of the Danville River District that balances green spaces with economic benefits to ensure that the District is a healthy and sustainable place to live, work, and play
- To create a green space road map for City and community leaders to thoughtfully connect citizens to green spaces and the opportunities they offer
- To dive deeper into an understanding of green space opportunities by using recent developments, studies, reports, and recommendations within the River District as a jumping off point
- To promote Danville and its River District as a regional and national thought leader in integrated community-focused redevelopment



INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

The maps on the following pages show multiple ways that our team inventoried analyzed the existing land use development patterns, land forms, community context, and opportunities associated with creating a Green Space Plan for the River District.

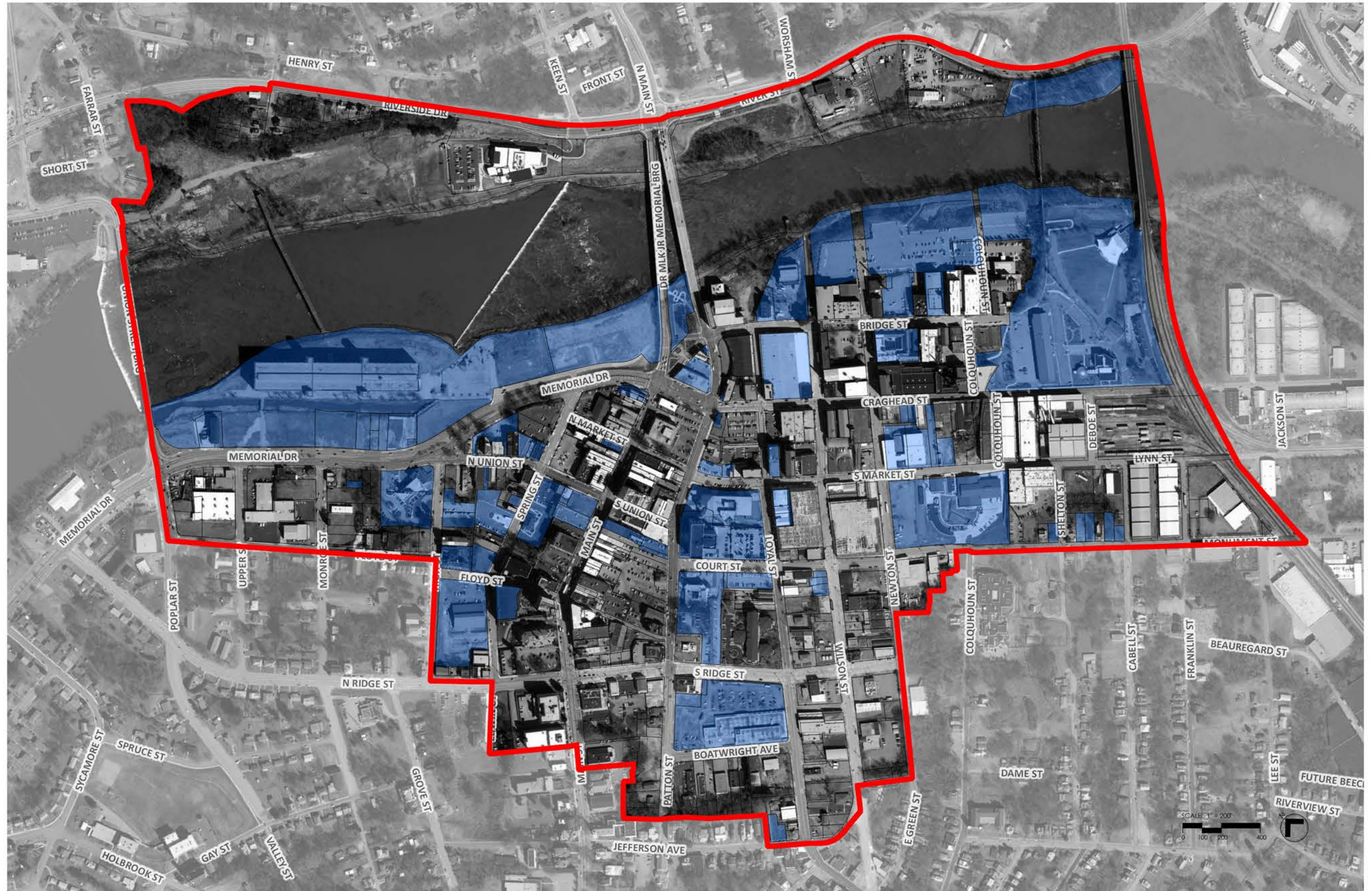
As a baseline measurement, the River District encompasses approximately **362 acres** in total (60 acres being the Dan River) which supports the city's total population of approximately **42,000 people**. A comparison of downtown districts of similar-sized cities can be found below:

- *Danville, VA* - 362 acres (302 land) / 42,000 people
- *Greensboro, NC* - 375 acres / 285,000 people
- *Burlington, VT* - 300 acres / 42,500 people
- *Lynchburg, VA* - 280 acres / 75,000 people
- *Greenville, SC* - 300 acres / 67,000 people

Public Lands

Public Lands

Within the River District, there are approximately **84 acres** of publicly owned land, not including public rights-of-way. Significant publicly owned land includes the City Hall/Police blocks, the fire station block, and numerous areas along the south bank of the Dan River, including the White Mill property, Riverfront Park parcel, Main Street Plaza, and the Carrington Pavilion area. There are approximately **50 acres** of public lands that 'touch' the banks of the Dan River



Roadways

Within the River District, there are approximately **65 acres** of public rights of way, equating to **33 acres** of paved roadways/streetscapes. Average road widths throughout much of the River District are very wide in comparison to other regional downtowns and urban areas. Historically this was needed to accommodate the large trucks required for the warehouse and manufacturing areas of the district. However, recent growth in the technology and service sectors may allow for road diets in certain areas to occur which frees up space for streetscape improvements and possible green spaces.



Buildings

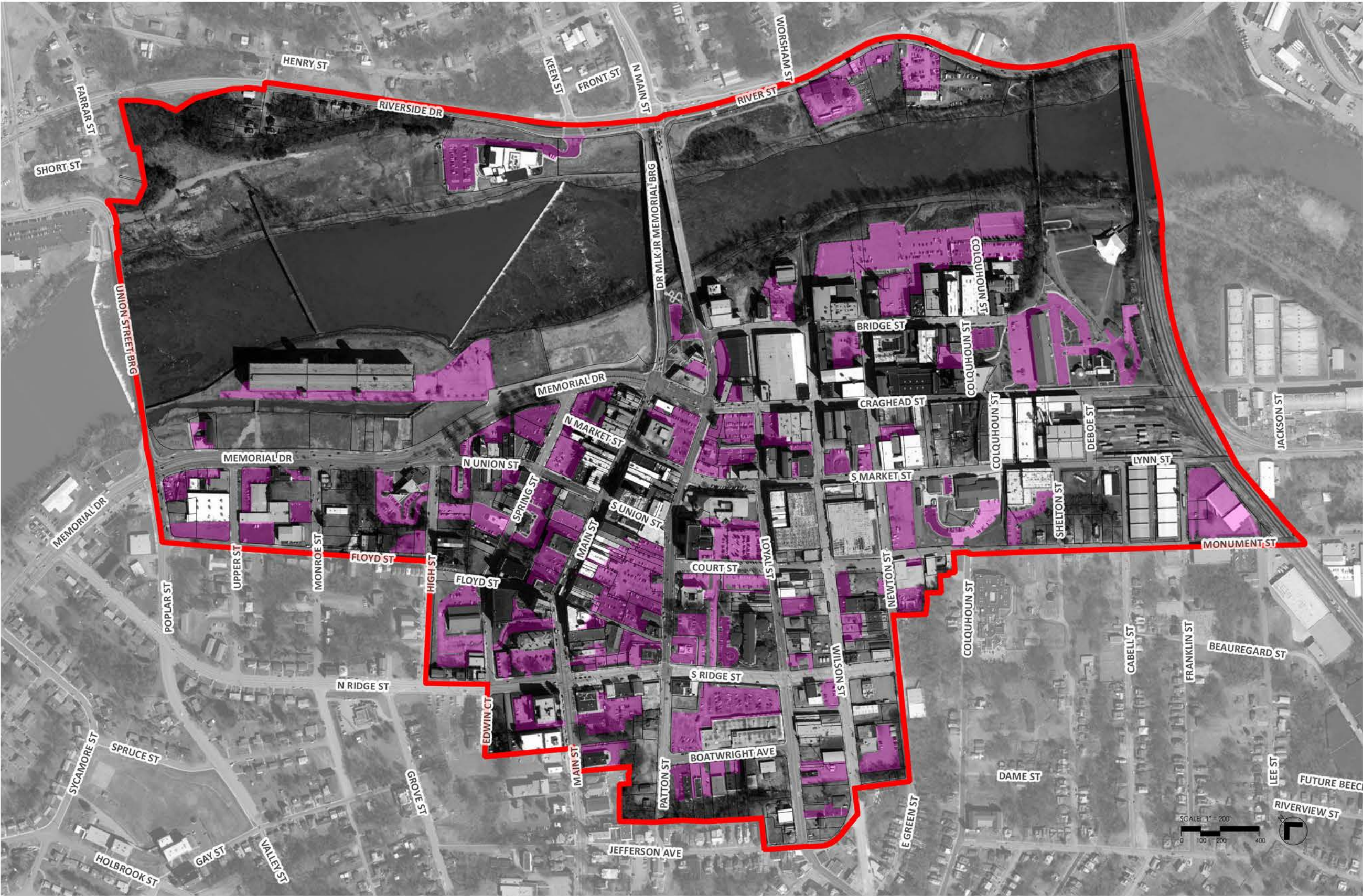
Buildings

Within the River District, there are approximately **58 acres** of buildings, split as **43.5 acres** of privately owned and **14.5 acres** of publicly owned.



Surface Parking Lots

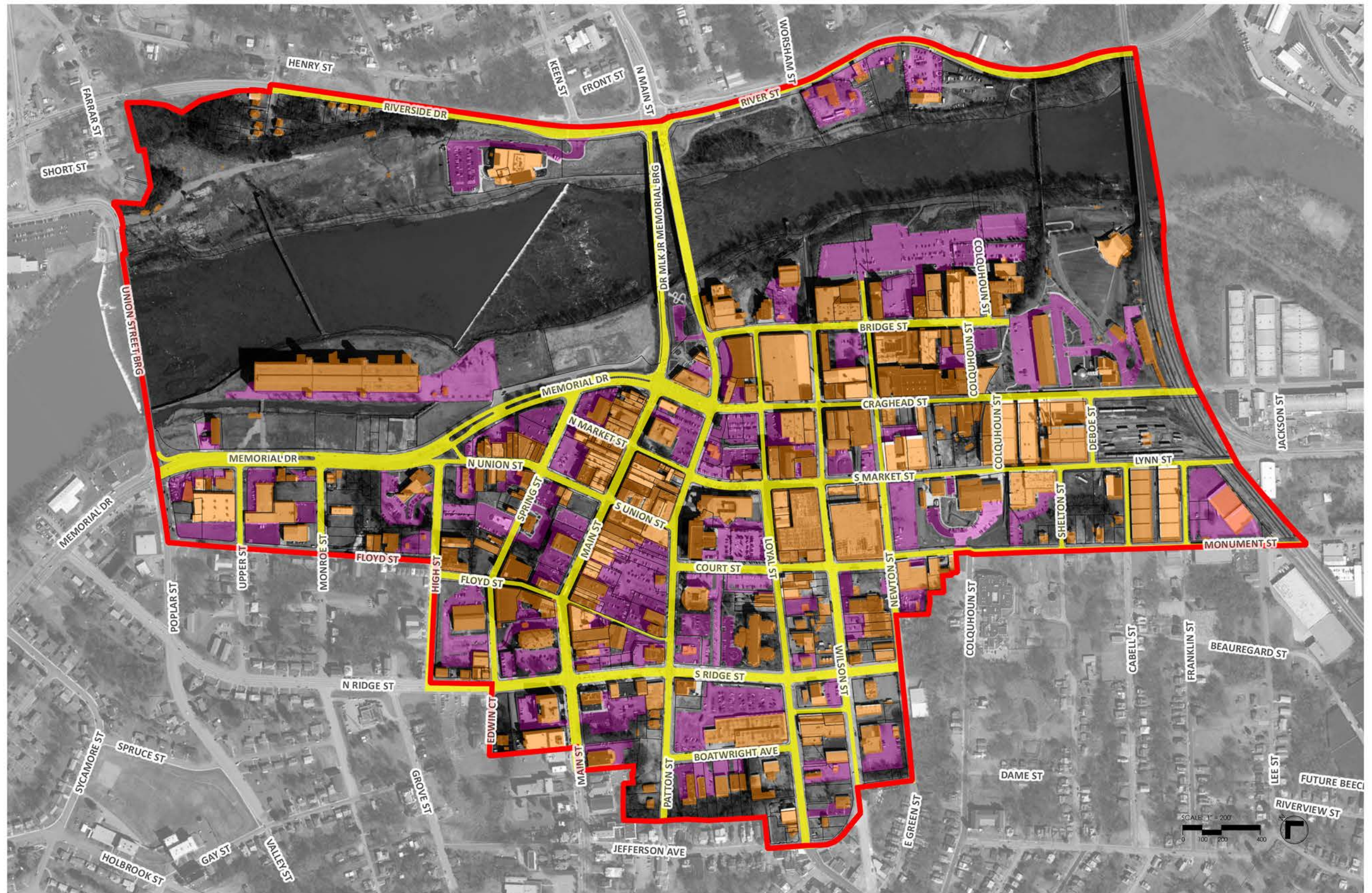
Within the River District, there are approximately **50 acres** of surface parking lots, split as **28 acres** privately owned and **22 acres** publicly owned.



Impervious Surfaces

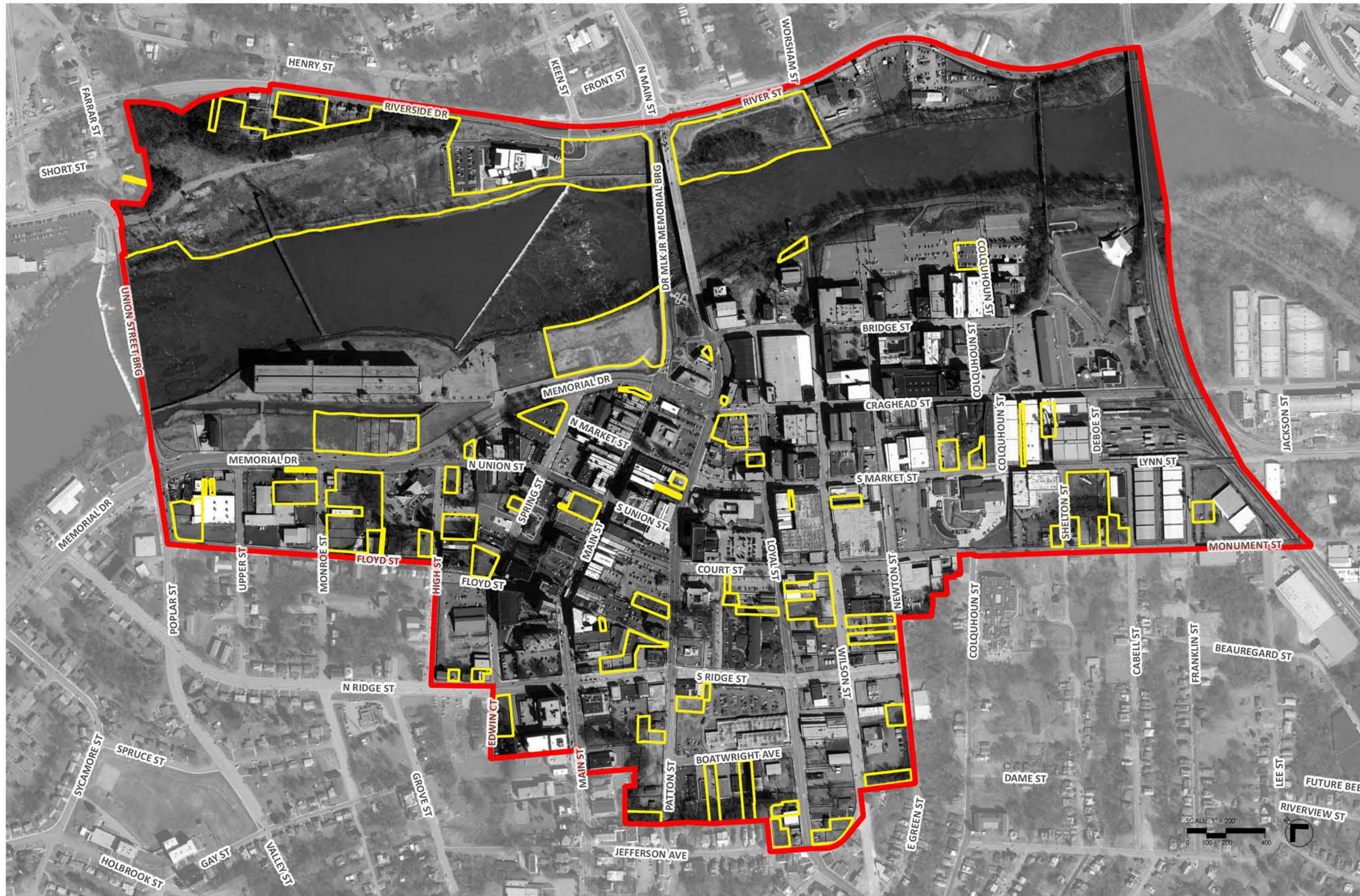
Impervious Surfaces

Within the River District, there are approximately **141 acres** of impervious (not able to infiltrate rain/storm water) surfaces, comprised of roadways, buildings, and parking lot, thus also equating to approximately **221 acres** of pervious (soft) surfaces.



Vacant/Undeveloped Lands

Within the River District, there are approximately **52 acres** of undeveloped lands and/or noted as vacant on the tax records. It should be noted that there is also a significant amount of vacant property (formerly single family homes/lots) south and west of the River District within the Mechanicsville neighborhood.

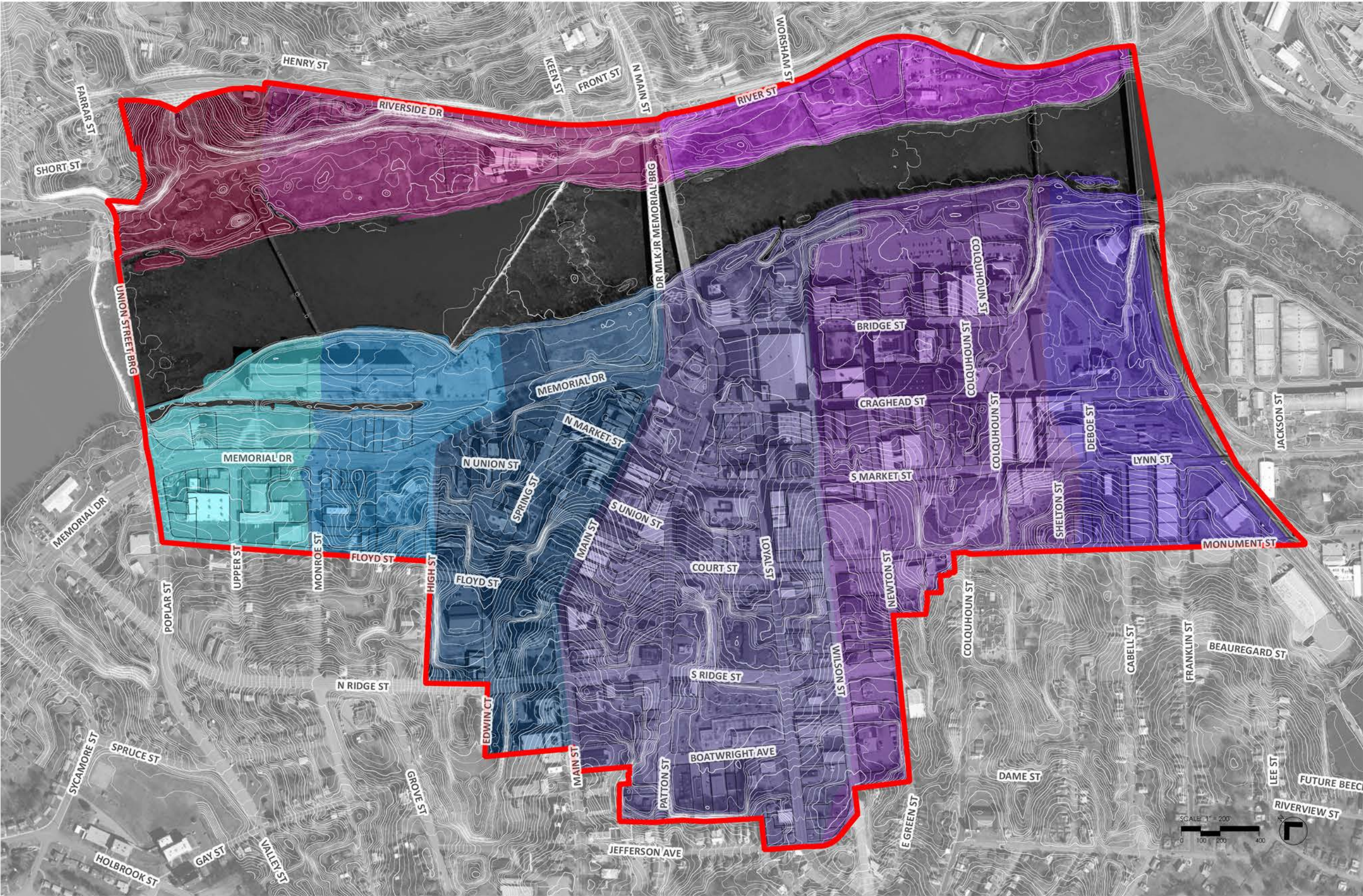


Public Green Spaces

Public Green Spaces

Within the River District, there are approximately **26 acres** of designated public green space, with majority of land located on/near the Dan River.





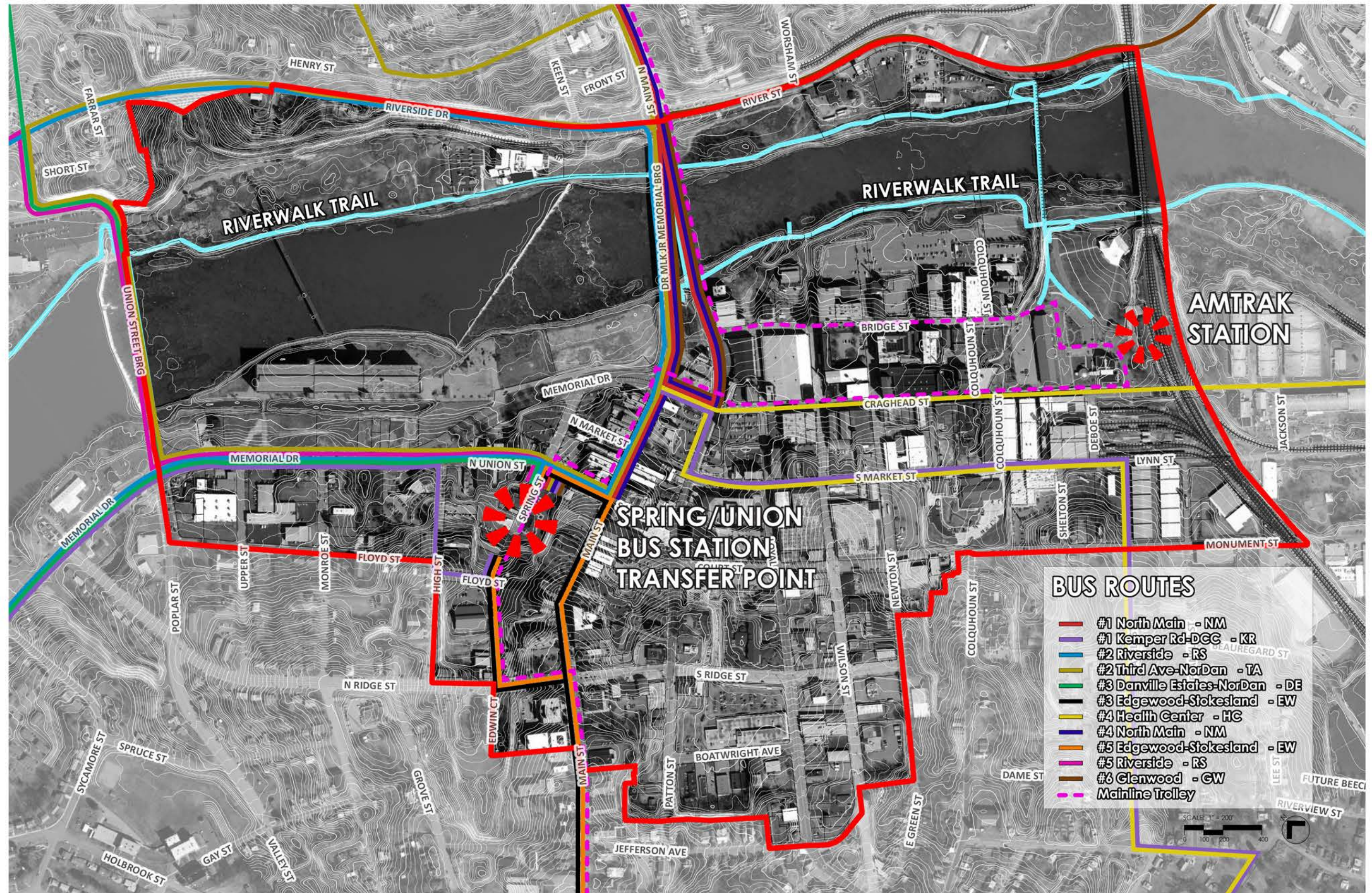
Topography/Drainage

Within the River District, the topography ranges from flat (0% slope) to severely sloping properties (over 40% slope). The topography generally all slopes to the Dan River; however, there are several distinct drainage basins.

Transit Systems

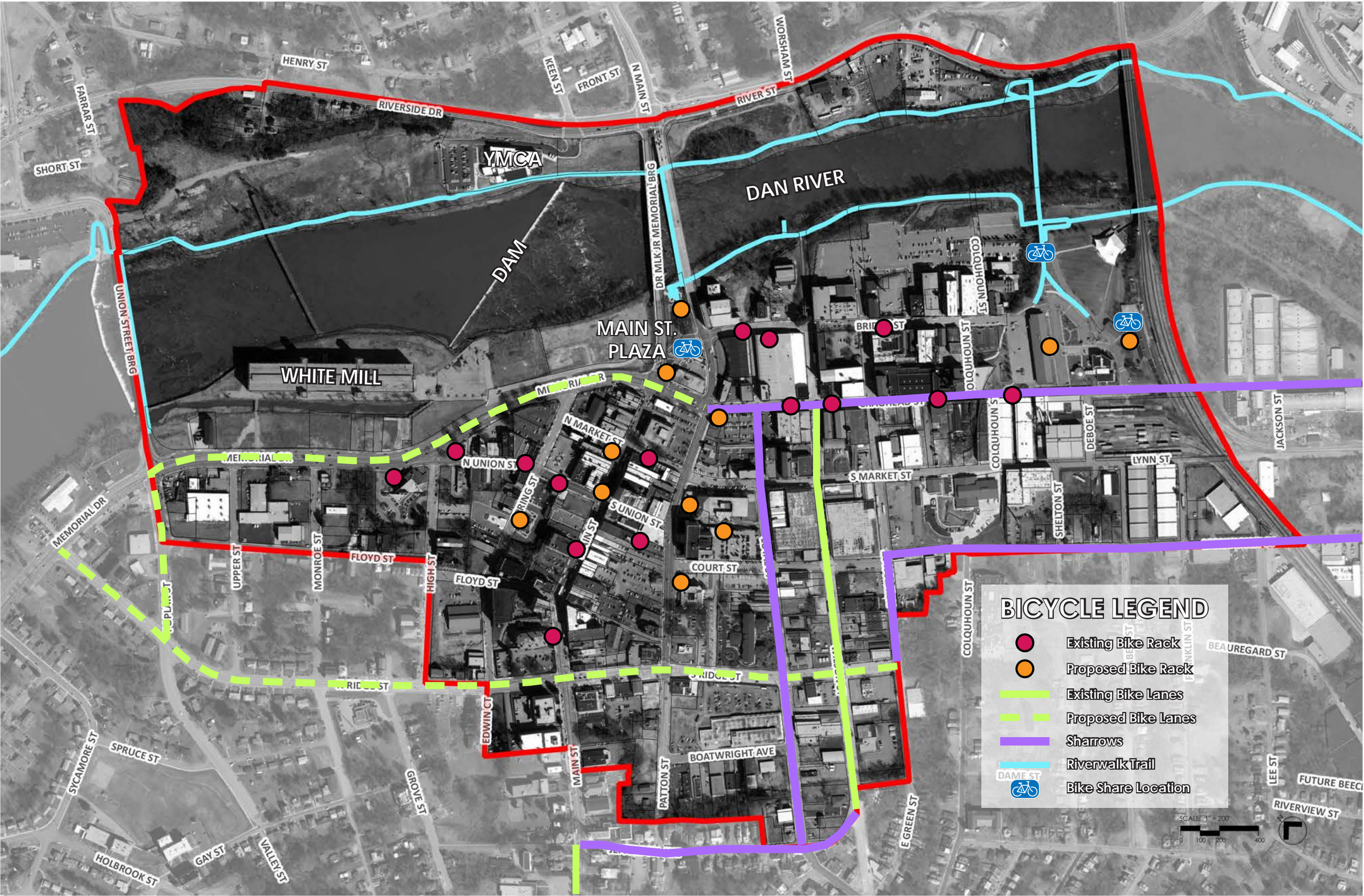
Transit Systems

Within the River District, there are several current or proposed modes of transit, in addition to the single-occupancy vehicle. The District has paved sidewalks along many of the streets yet crossings at intersections need to be updated for ADA compliance to improved the pedestrian experience. The Riverwalk Trail exists along the Dan River and an updated bicycle route is currently proposed to be created within the District as part of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Study. Bus service currently serves several primary corridors into the city and a proposed Main Street Trolley (rubber wheeled) is currently being planned for a loop through the retail core of the District linking 'up the hill' with the Dan River.



Bicycle Routes

In Spring 2017, the City of Danville approved a Bicycle and Pedestrian Study for the River District, which includes recommendations for existing and proposed bicycle routes, as indicated on this map.



Land Use

Land Use

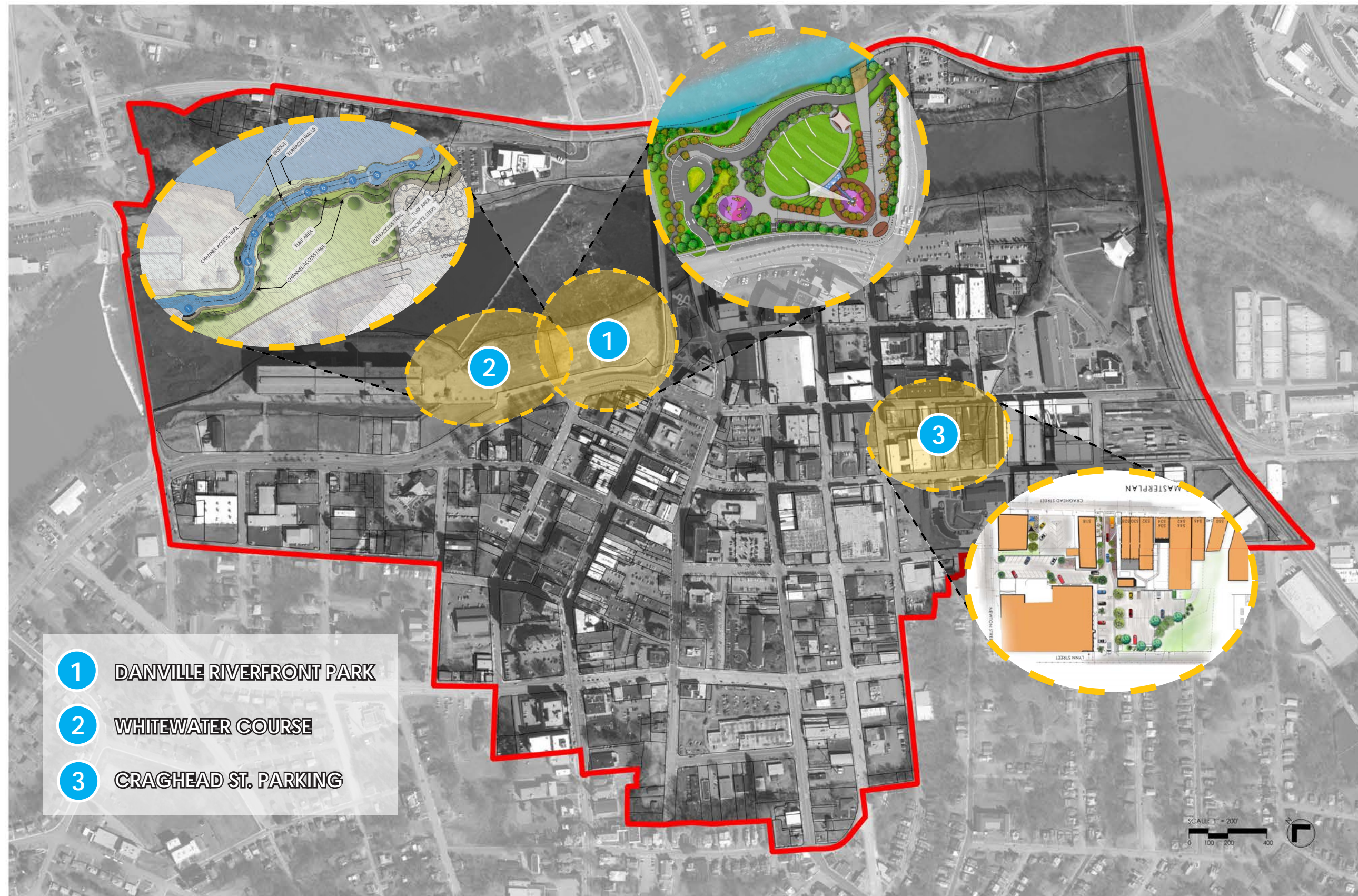
Within the River District, there are various types of land use. In working with the Department of Economic Development, the uses were identified and highlighted in the map.



Potential Green Space Development

Potential Green Space

Within the River District, there are several areas undergoing significant development or redevelopment that directly relate to the concept of Green Space. They are outlined on the map.



Inventory & Analysis

Concluding Observations

The River District is large (at 362 acres) in comparison to the scale of Danville and also in comparison to precedent downtown districts for cities this scale.

The River District has several current focus corridors for possible redevelopment, (River, Cultural, Ecological, Midway) which spreads out the possible catalytic project sites, but may also distract from focusing on 'an area' to achieve immediate results. At this time, 'organic' redevelopment is beginning to take root along parts of the Main Street corridor and within the Craghead Street area primarily through reuse of existing buildings.

The natural topography of the River District (flat paralleling and close to the Dan River and steep uphill away from the river along Main Street) along with the visual cues of seeing the river intermittently works to subconsciously direct people to the river as the overarching green space corridor within the River District.

The River District appears to have an adequate amount of proportional green space in relation to the overall size of the District – specifically with Carrington Pavilion area, the forthcoming Riverfront Park, and the Riverwalk Trail. Yet, at this time, the Riverfront Park is just being developed. The Carrington Pavilion area is off to the edge, used mostly for events, and is more disconnected from core areas of the District.

The River District does not have coherent or comfortable system of green spaces nor multi-modal routes connecting green spaces. This leads to a lack of comprehension about opportunities for recreation or gathering within the River District.

There are underlying histories within the River District that may be useful in organizing the green spaces, namely ecological systems, African-American history, and the Dan River.





Connect to the River: The Green Space Plan must connect people, places, and things to the Dan River. The Dan River is the most iconic recreational opportunity within Danville and the River District. The Green Space Plan must connect people and places to the Dan River.



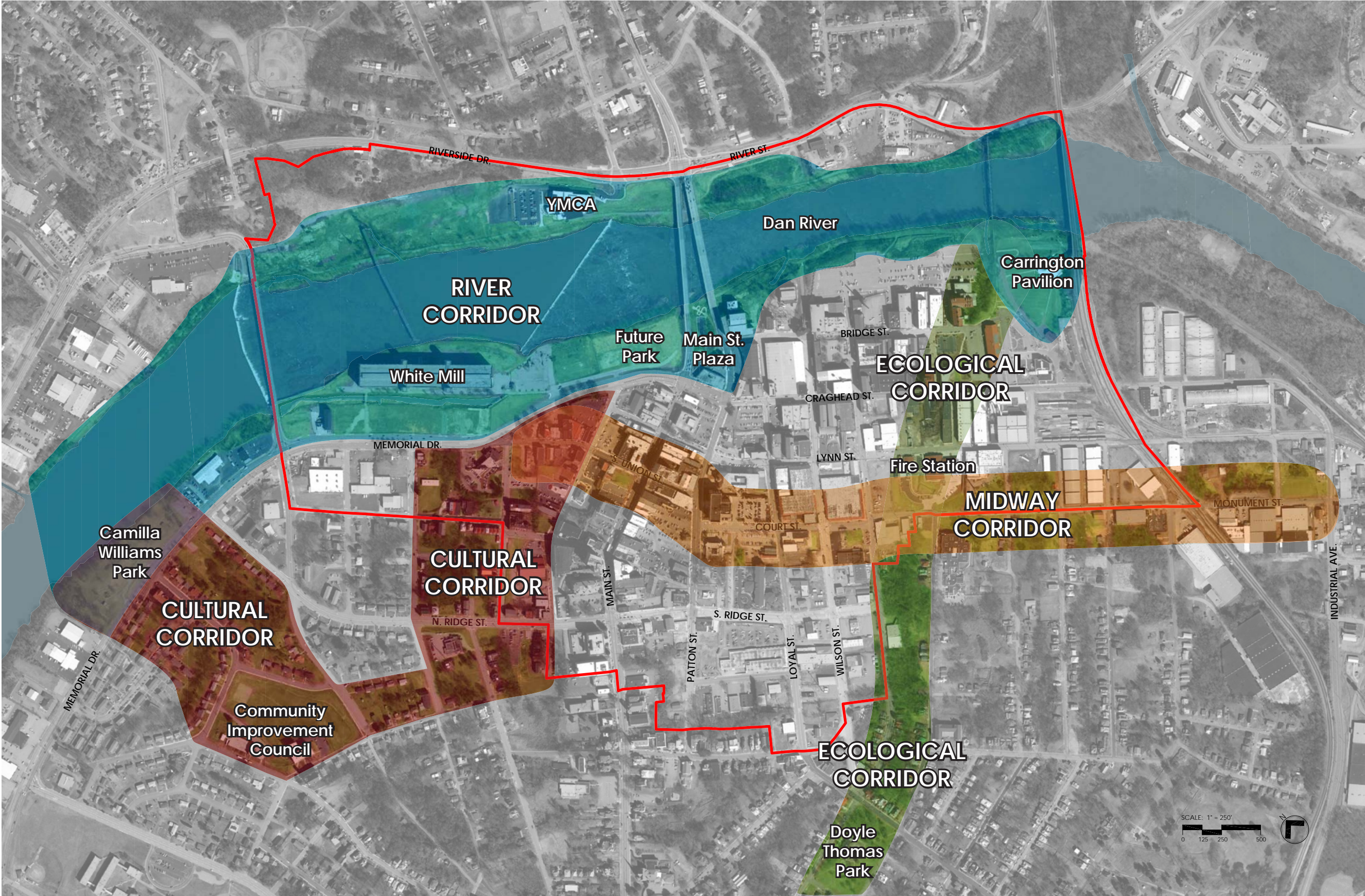
Tell the Stories: Danville is rich in history, cultural resources, natural resources, and future opportunities. By telling the stories, the community and visitors alike are brought into the recreational system through a celebration of the multiple stories of Danville.



Connect Communities: Those communities within the River District and those communities surrounding the River District are strengthened when boundaries are undefined and links are created. Physical, emotional, and visual links are key to ensuring positive connections throughout all communities.



Focus Corridors - Entire District



Focus Corridors

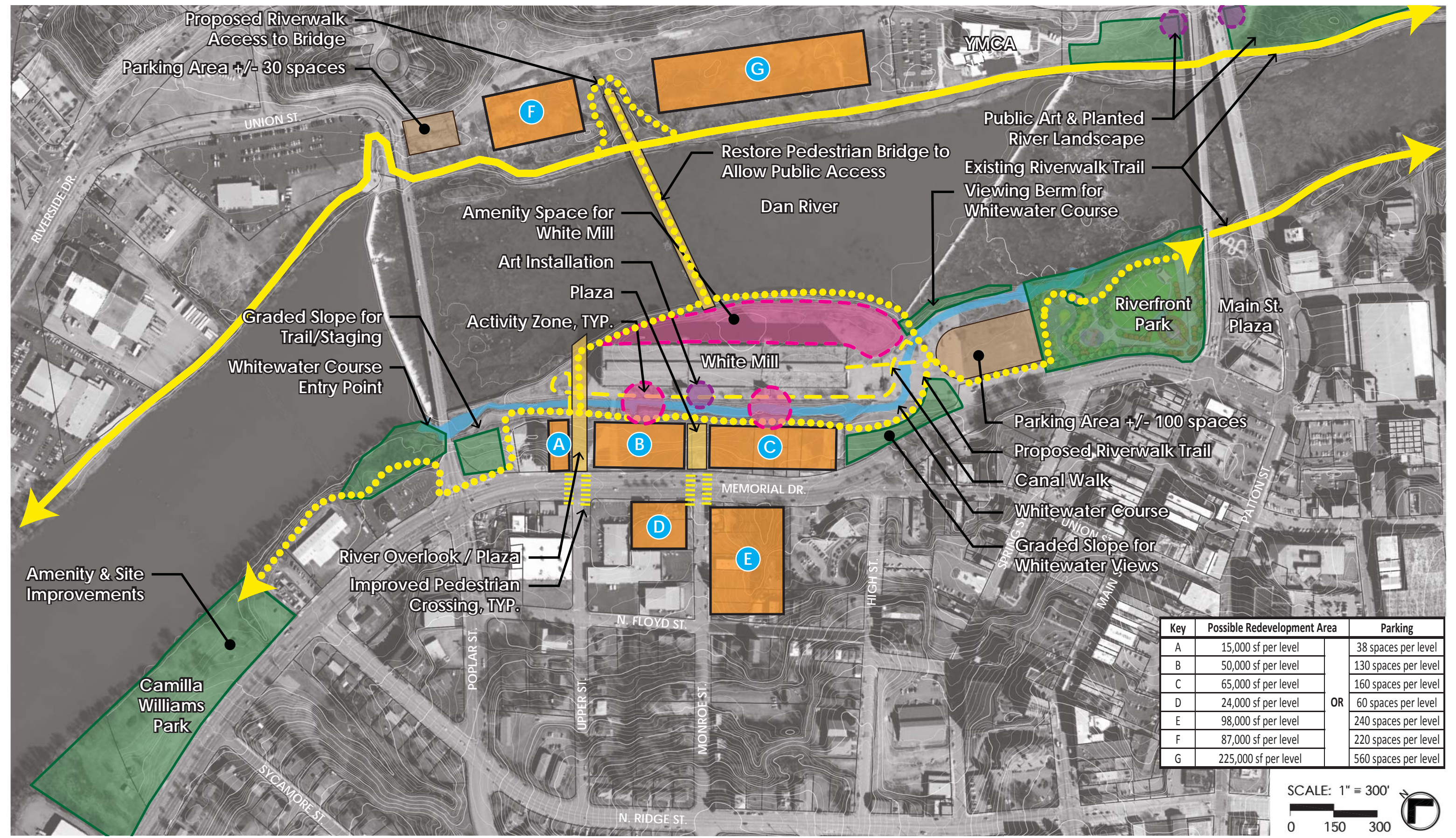


FOCUS CORRIDORS

The team determined that the best way to organize green space development and/or protection through the River District was through the concept of Focus Corridors. The corridors create a green print within the River District to guide future planning efforts so that green spaces will be most beneficial and relatable to the City's history and economic growth patterns. These corridors are as follows:

- **River Corridor:** This is the River District's primary focus corridor with the intent to drive citizens and visitors to the City's main attraction – the Dan River. The City has focused most of its urban green space dollars up to this point on this corridor. This plan asks the City to continue focusing on this corridor with the proposed implementation of new spaces, the continued upkeep of the existing spaces, and the possible renovation of several spaces along the corridor.
- **Ecological Corridor:** This corridor provides an opportunity for green infrastructure and water quality measures to be integrated within community open spaces. The goal is to implement this corridor to benefit the health of Danville's citizens and the Dan River ecosystem concurrently. With its basin-level approach to water quality measures, it is hopeful that large scale grant funding could be sought while allowing for an extensive educational and programming element to be provided for the greater Dan River community.
- **Culture Corridor:** This corridor links Camilla Williams Park with the Union Street business district. The rich history and culture of Danville is to be celebrated and explored within this corridor. Interpretive markers, a community garden, a seniors-focused park, a cultural arts center, and a cultural heritage park are all imagined as being possibilities within this corridor.
- **Midway Corridor:** This corridor links several of the corridors with Main Street and various neighborhoods. With the exception of the east-end Urban Adventure Park that will hopefully become a destination recreation resource within the District, this corridor is primarily focused on providing green space opportunities for the expanding residential population and supporting new economic development opportunities.

River Corridor - West



Focus Corridors

Corridor Landmarks



Camilla Williams Park



White Mill & Canal



YMCA



Future Riverfront Park

Precedent Images



Visitor Amenities



Urban Whitewater Opportunities

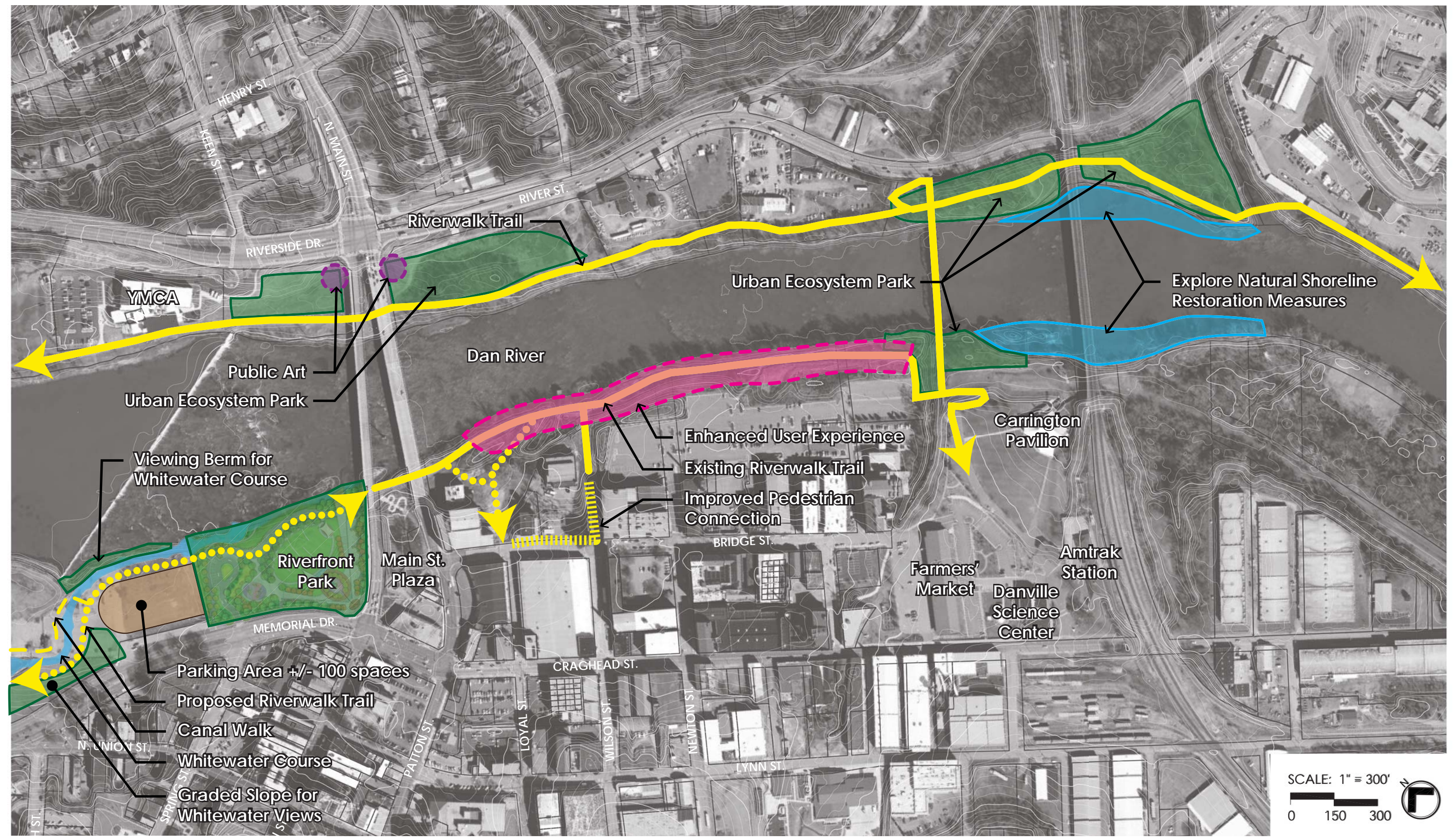


River Overlooks



Visitor Amenities

River Corridor - East



Focus Corridors

Corridor Landmarks



Main Street Plaza



Riverwalk Trail Bridge



Carrington Pavilion

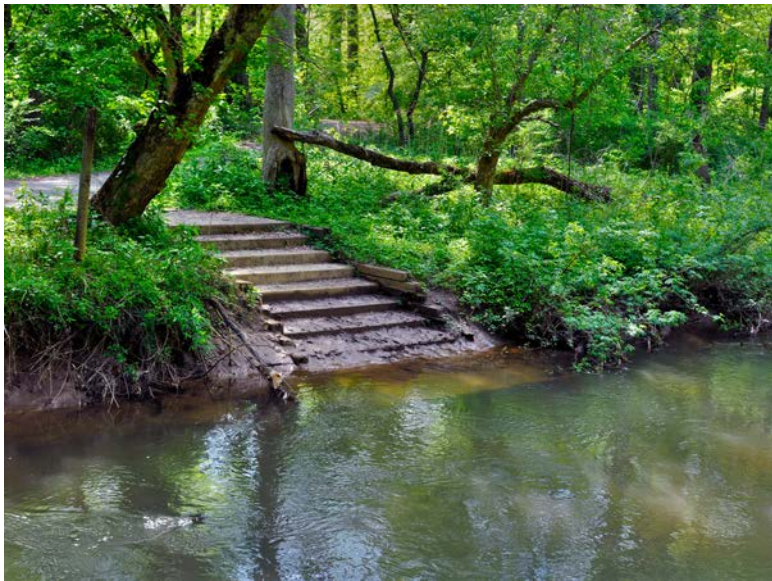


Riverwalk Trail Boardwalk Overlook

Precedent Images



River Edge User Edge Enhancements



River Edge User Edge Enhancements

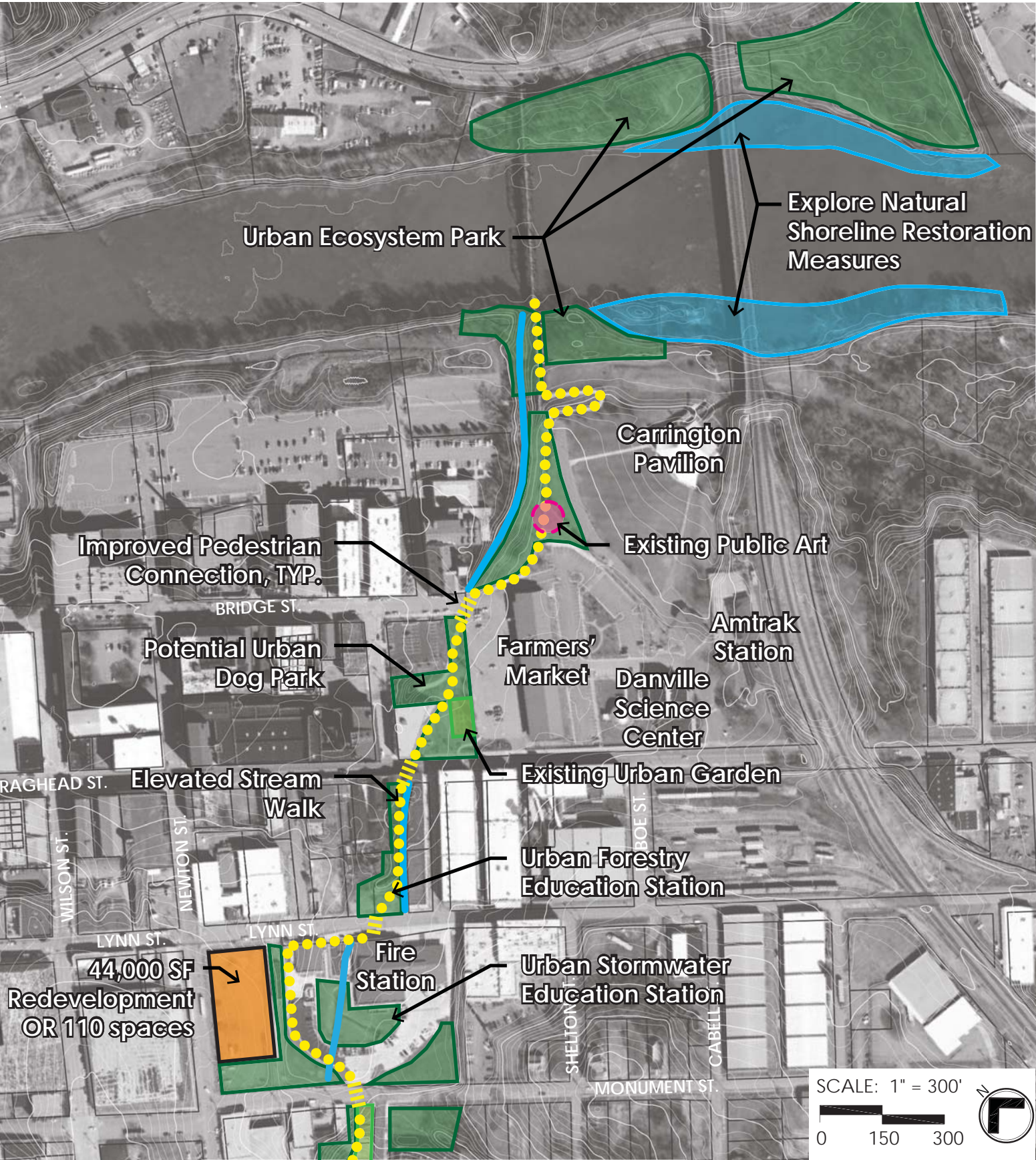


Lighted Bridge



Integrated Public Art + Trail

Ecological Corridor



Ecological Corridor - North



Ecological Corridor - South

Focus Corridors

Corridor Landmarks



Stormwater Device at Fire Station



Doyle Thomas Park



Urban Stream Corridor at Craghead Street



Public Art near Carrington Pavilion

Precedent Images



Educational Opportunities



Integrated Stormwater Treatment with Visitor Engagement Opportunities

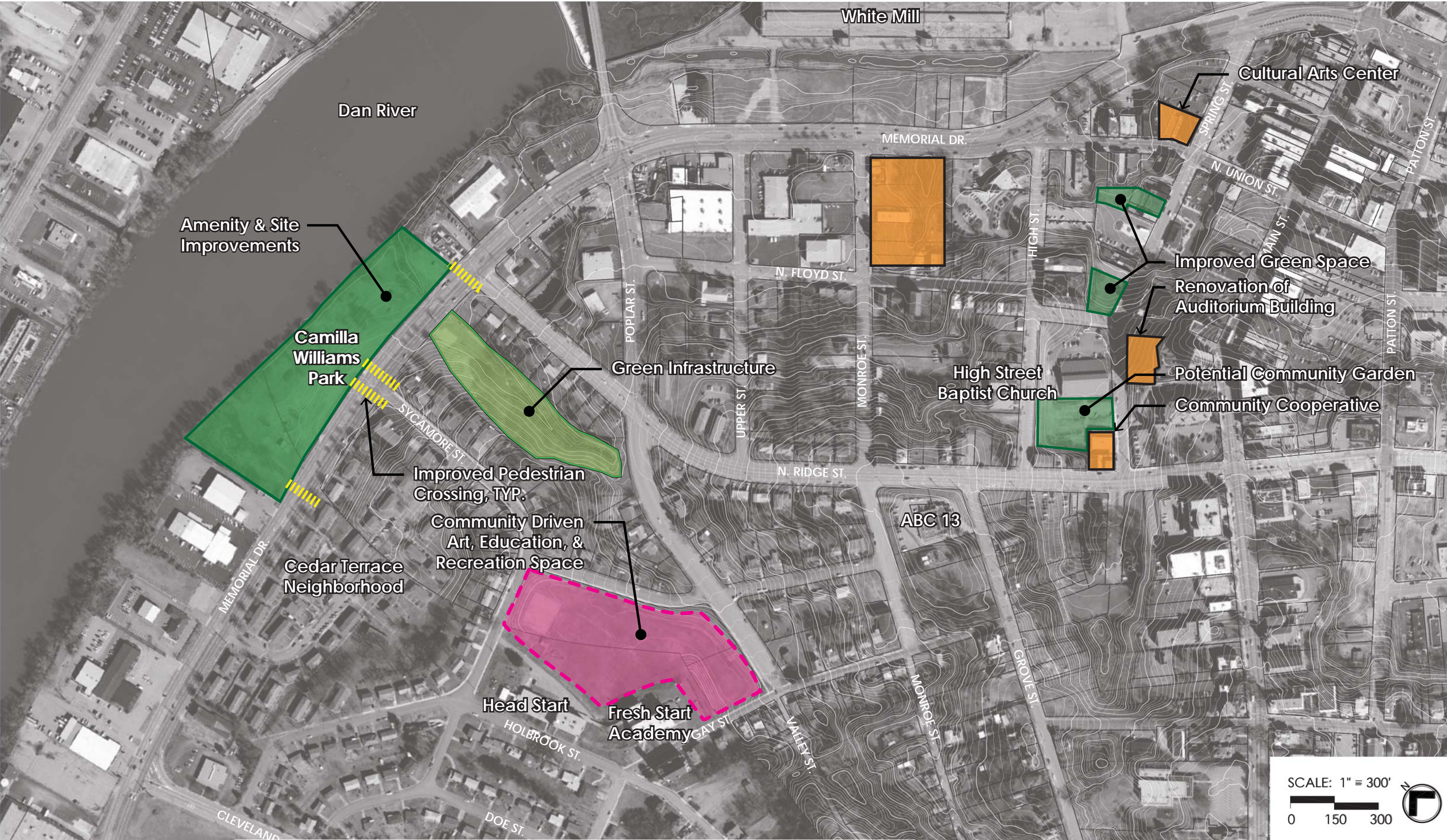


Integrated Stormwater Treatment with Visitor Engagement Opportunities



Water Quality Improvement Opportunities

Culture Corridor



Focus Corridors

Corridor Landmarks



High Street Baptist Church



Union Street



Danville Transit Center



Camilla Williams Park

Precedent Images



Flexible Urban Park Space



Urban Community Garden

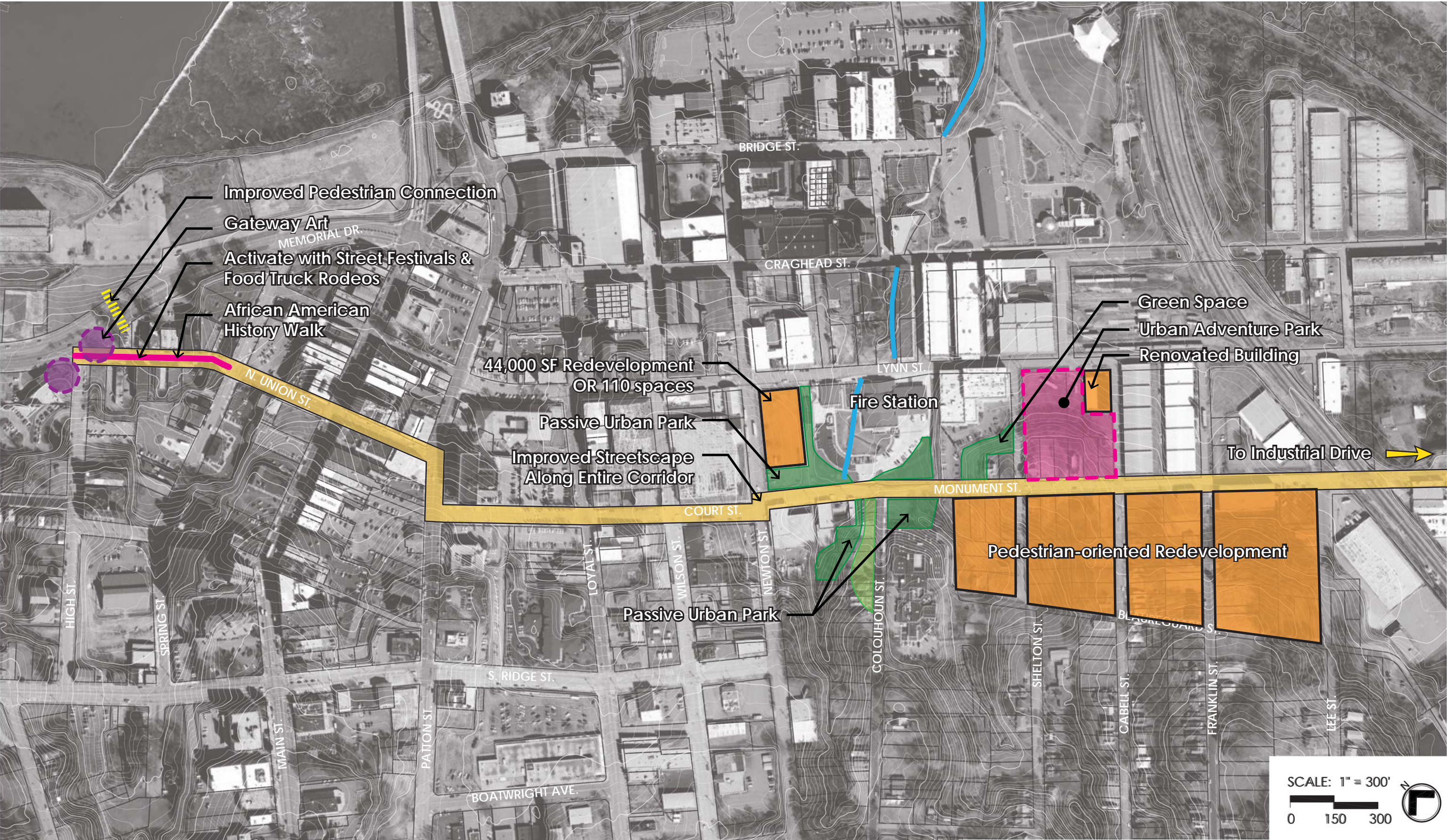


Historical Marker



Fitness Activities

Midway Corridor



Focus Corridors

Corridor Landmarks



Monument Street



Danville Municipal Building



Existing Green Space



Union Street

Precedent Images



Adventure Park Tubing Hill



Community Gathering Spaces



Community Resting Areas



Urban Skate Park

RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary Recommendations

- Continue to prioritize significant green space development along the River Corridor
- Follow Green Space Plan when evaluating development and redevelopment opportunities throughout the River District
- Use Green Space Plan to seek grants to enhance livability, resiliency, sustainability, and healthy living in Danville
- Engage Danville! Sell the story of the River District and that its possible green space corridors = better livability, healthier living, and increased economic activity
- Work through the Priority Recommendations noted below as a probable road map for implementation



River Priority Recommendations

Do It Now *(within the next two years)*

- Develop the Riverfront Park
- Continue to program activities at Carrington Pavilion, Main Street Plaza, Farmers Market, Science Center, etc.
- Enhance the pedestrian experience (lighting, visitor amenities, interpretative elements, etc) on both sides of the Dan River along the Riverwalk Trail – with particular focus on the south side behind the ‘brownfield parking’ area
- Identify and interpret storm water outfalls along the river to educate where the water ‘comes’ from

Plan It Now *(within the next five years)*

- Implement an ‘update’ of Camilla Williams Park (integration with Riverwalk Trail, visitor enhancements, etc)
- Develop the Urban Whitewater Park (seek possible grants)
- Create green spaces in conjunction with the White Mill redevelopment
- Pursue iconic public art installations for north side river approach (kinetic, lighted, gateway, integrated with bridge/river, etc)
- Partner with local higher education institutions to begin environmental assessments of Urban Ecosystem Parks along the river’s edge

Ecological Priority Recommendations

Do It Now *(within the next two years)*

- Identify and tag large/specimen trees within corridor and the benefits they provide (shade, evapotranspiration, etc)
- Conduct volunteer/staff clean up and awareness events along the corridor – cleaning up debris, vegetation, while showing connection possibilities from Doyle Thomas Park to Dan River

Plan It Now *(within the next five years)*

- Look for available sites/buildings that would accelerate Green Space plan development and foster healthy community redevelopment
- Partner with local higher education institutions to begin environmental assessments of Urban Ecosystem Parks
- Seek grants to fund design, permitting, and construction of urban ecosystem enhancements – small or large
- Seek opportunities for community engagement sessions centered around ecological education

Culture Priority Recommendations

Do It Now *(within the next two years)*

- Host Community Visioning Workshop/ Create Community Engagement Approach for Union Street area
- Support Community Visioning/ Redevelopment work with Westmoreland parcel/area
- Create a small pocket park somewhere along either High Street or Spring Street (swinging bench/seat, trash can, shade, etc.)

Plan It Now *(within the next five years)*

- Implement an ‘update’ of Camilla Williams Park (integration with Riverwalk Trail, visitor enhancements, interpretive discussion,etc)
- Implement a wayfinding/branding/ community identity of the Union Street corridor to celebrate the rich history of the business district
- Seek grants to fund design, permitting, and construction of cultural resource enhancements
- Seek opportunities for community engagement sessions centered around cultural resources/education, senior living, and healthy living

Midway Priority Recommendations

Do It Now *(within the next two years)*

- Conduct Community Visioning Workshop for Monument Street section
- Create a small pocket park somewhere along the corridor (swinging bench/seat, trash can, shade, etc.)

Plan It Now *(within the next five years)*

- Fully develop at least one Passive Urban Park within the corridor – with particular focus on the Monument Street section
- Look for available sites/buildings that would accelerate Green Space plan development and foster healthy community redevelopment
- Seek grants to fund design, permitting, and construction of road diets/transportation system enhancements
- Seek developers to explore pedestrian oriented redevelopment opportunities south of Monument Street
- Progress the concept of an Urban Adventure Park with possible activities such as ropes courses, zipline, tubing hill, bmx track, etc.



Danville River District

Green Space Plan

