



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## South River in the City: Establishing the Upper South River Water Trail

### SCOPE OF SERVICES

The following is a proposed outline of steps for the development of an activation report for greenspaces along the Upper South River and its headwater tributaries, through the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP). ARC will provide staff assistance from ARC's Community Development Department to complete this study.

#### Project Purpose

The overall purpose of this project is to extend the South River Water Trail to the Upper South River headwaters and tributaries, to activate and enhance the surrounding communities' relationship with the river. This trail extension will involve mapping all publicly and privately owned greenspaces throughout the Upper South River Watershed (also referred to as "the watershed" or "study area") within the City of Atlanta and unincorporated DeKalb County. ARC staff will then work with the Project Management Team (PMT) and Steering Committee (see descriptions below) to identify three (3) high-level greenspace typologies (e.g., pocket park, neighborhood park, playground, etc.), each with distinguishable characteristics, for categorizing each greenspace within the watershed.

The goal will be to select one (1) demonstration greenspace for each typology to identify and illustrate potential active and/or passive recreation opportunities through imagery and conceptual renderings, for a total of three (3) demonstration sites. To enhance connections to each demonstration site, placemaking opportunities such as context-sensitive wayfinding signage, interpretive/educational signage, and/or public art will be explored and documented. By identifying these demonstration sites and placemaking opportunities, the South River Watershed Alliance and its partners may continue additional efforts to extend the South River Water Trail beyond the scope limits of this project.

#### Project Timeline

The following scope of services is anticipated to be completed in approximately ten (10) months. However, the timeline can change as the project progresses. The remainder of this document describes the schedule and timeline in detail.

#### Project Management Team (PMT)

ARC recommends that a PMT or similar oversight group be created to provide guidance, feedback, and support to ARC staff throughout the study process. At a minimum, this group will include the ARC project manager and project staff, and a representative of American Rivers and the South River Watershed Alliance (SRWA). ARC, American Rivers, and SRWA staff will determine the exact makeup of this group early in the planning process. The PMT will meet monthly over the course of the project (Months 1-10).

#### Steering Committee

ARC recommends that a 12 – 15 member Steering Committee or similar oversight group be created to provide guidance, feedback, and support to ARC staff throughout the project. The following groups will be considered for representation on the Committee, including:

- South River Gardens Community



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- Lakewood Heights
- Chosewood Park
- Friends of Empire and Harper Parks
- Friends of Skyhaven
- Friends of Constitution Lakes
- Friends of Intrenchment Creek Park
- Starlight Heights
- Perkerson Park
- Leila Valley
- DeKalb Board of Education
- Atlanta Public Schools
- NPUs Z, W
- City of Atlanta elected official, Parks & Recreation leadership, and/or City Planning staff
- DeKalb County elected official and/or Parks & Recreation leadership
- The Nature Conservancy of Georgia
- The Conservation Fund (Georgia)

ARC will host three (3) meetings over the course of the project (approximately during months 3, 6, and 8).

## Deliverables

The final deliverable will be a comprehensive greenspace map of the study area and a brief report document that provides maps, graphics, and supporting text to help guide the implementation of actionable community-oriented steps to promote connectivity, wayfinding, and placemaking within the study area. The actions will be informed by the following prior engagement and study efforts: Existing South River Water Trail within the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area; Explore South River Forest (2023 CDAP project); South River Forest Vision (Perkins + Will, 2021); Atlanta City Design: Nature (2020); Atlanta City Design (2017). ARC will conduct limited additional research and data analysis during this study process to further inform these recommendations from Explore South River Forest.

The report will consider potential options and/or locations for the following placemaking recommendations: directional/wayfinding signage; interpretive/educational signage; and public art installations. Signage types and/or art may be combined as appropriate and necessary to accommodate space restrictions along the corridor within the study area. Precedent imagery of these recommendations will be included in the final report.

## Proposed Tasks

### Pre-Kickoff Work

- ARC will provide the scope of services to American Rivers and SRWA, who will provide comments in a combined document. ARC will make one (1) round of modifications based on comments and edits from both organizations before considering the scope final.
- A PMT or similar oversight group will be formed. The membership of the PMT will be determined through discussions between ARC, American Rivers, and SRWA before the project begins.
- A Steering Committee will be formed. The membership of the Steering Committee will be determined through discussions among ARC, American Rivers, and SRWA before the project begins, and limited to no more than 12 – 15 members. PMT members will be included in the Steering Committee.



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- The activities above will necessitate at least one (1) virtual meeting between ARC, American Rivers, and SRWA as well as other communication via email and/or phone during the period immediately before project initiation.

## Task 1 – Project Initiation

- Initial PMT meeting: The PMT will be introduced to the project objectives and process. Project outcomes will be explained, and any minor modifications made, based on the discussion (Month 1).
- Steering Committee: American Rivers and SRWA will finalize the list of Steering Committee members and provide it to ARC for review (Month 2). Engagement strategies and activities will be presented by ARC and discussed with the PMT prior to the initial committee meeting.
- Initial Steering Committee meeting: The Steering Committee will be introduced to the study objectives, their role, and project outcomes created in coordination with the PMT (Month 3).

## Task 2 – Existing Conditions Analysis

The purpose of the existing conditions analysis is to identify and map publicly and privately owned greenspaces within the study area, determine whether they provide active and/or passive recreation, how the space accesses/relates to the river, and whether it is daylighted. ARC staff will review existing studies and plans for previous recommendations that are applicable to this study effort. Analysis will be completed using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data and other necessary tools (i.e., site visits) including but not limited to:

- Existing assets located on greenspaces, including buildings, playgrounds, fields, etc.
- If it is an active or passive recreational space
- How it accesses the South River or tributaries
- Whether the river/tributary is daylighted or piped within the greenspace
- Identify three (3) existing greenspaces that are representative of various existing conditions throughout the watershed and categorize each of them as a high-level greenspace typology. This will assist in engagement activities for the Steering Committee (Task 3).

This analysis will help to identify options for greenspace activation, wayfinding, and incorporating placemaking elements within the study area. Prior to the first steering committee meeting (Task 3), the PMT will have the opportunity to review the draft existing conditions report. It is important to note that this is a working document, and work completed in future tasks may require additional updates to this existing analysis report based on committee feedback and knowledge of the watershed.

*Deliverable: An existing conditions report which includes charts, maps, and other graphics to support the text description of the topics listed above. It is a stand-alone product which will be included in the final report.*

## Task 3 – Steering Committee Engagement Strategy

ARC develops a detailed outreach strategy document for each project and will implement our “Creative Community Engagement Guide.” For this study, outreach is limited to a steering committee made up of a maximum of 12 – 15 key stakeholders. A primary goal of all ARC projects is to elevate community engagement in planning – particularly focusing on engaging populations that might have been underrepresented in previous initiatives. The steering committee’s full participation in this study process is vital to the success of the project.



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- Steering Committee Meetings: ARC will host three (3) steering committee meetings during this project (approximately during months 3, 6, and 8). In-person or virtual format will be used and determined based on the goals and content of each meeting. ARC will develop meeting materials and facilitate the meetings with input from American Rivers and SRWA. For in-person meetings, American Rivers and SRWA will be responsible for identifying and securing/reserving a venue within or close to the study area and provide meeting notices and reminders for each meeting to the committee members via email.
- The proposed purpose and content of each meeting may follow this approach but is not limited to:
  - First Meeting:
    - Introduce the study objectives, the Steering Committee's role, and expected project outcomes.
    - Share a comprehensive map of the study area that identifies greenspaces (Task 2).
    - Work with the Steering Committee to identify the typology of each greenspace. The three possible typologies will be determined during the Existing Conditions Analysis (Task 2).
    - Ask Steering Committee Members to prioritize one of each greenspace typology that ARC staff should look at in more detail to create concepts and provide imagery for active and passive recreation opportunities.
  - Second Meeting:
    - Identify options for active and passive recreation opportunities within the three (3) prioritized greenspaces.
      - ARC will provide several examples of active and passive recreation options for the committee to select for each space.
    - Collect feedback on ways to activate the river corridor within each of the three greenspaces.
    - Through precedent imagery, provide examples of different types and styles of wayfinding, interpretive, and other signage to be used within and to direct people to each greenspace.
  - Third Meeting:
    - Share two (2) conceptual renderings incorporating the preferred recreational opportunities for each of the three prioritized greenspaces to spur conversation amongst committee members.
    - Discussion at this meeting will provide direction to produce one final 3-D rendering for each greenspace, to be incorporated into the final report (Task 5).

*Deliverable: A summary of the Steering Committee Meetings to be included in the final report, conceptual renderings, and final 3-D renderings.*

## **Task 4 – Preliminary Recommendations**

ARC will develop preliminary recommendations for the extension of the South River Water Trail through greenspace activation, wayfinding, and placemaking opportunities, and identify funding and implementation steps, based on findings from the existing conditions analysis and input from the steering committee (Task 3). These recommendations will be presented to the PMT. ARC will revise the recommendations based on comments from the PMT.

*Deliverable: A memo or summary report summarizing key recommendations for extension of the Upper South River Water Trail. This will be an internal working document containing initial ideas and is not meant for public distribution.*

## **Task 5 – Preparation of the Final Deliverable**

A final report will be created outlining the study process, outcomes, and key recommendations for action, with support from graphics and maps. It will also include language concerning implementation, including descriptions of actions that



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should be taken within the next two (2) years to advance its recommendations. The draft report will be sent to the steering committee and PMT for one (1) round of review and comment, and ARC will update the report accordingly.

*Deliverable: A final report titled, "South River in the City: Establishing the Upper South River Water Trail"*

## **Task 6 – Presentations**

ARC will present its final report at one (1) DeKalb County Board of Commissioners meeting and one (1) City of Atlanta council meeting if requested or needed. The exact order and timing of this step will vary depending on the Sponsor and ARC schedules.