

Reconnecting Knoxville Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program

Reconnecting Knoxville is a civic infrastructure plan to restore connections to emerging economic growth centers among formerly displaced populations. Once implemented, residents will gain urban greenspace and transportation pathways, having the freedom to move safely within the community to reach jobs, schools, businesses, and parks.

Section A: Overview

Between the 1960s – 1980s, urban renewal in Knoxville demolished predominantly Black neighborhoods to allow for expanded public infrastructure that left Black families physically isolated and disconnected from economic opportunity. Today, the scars of that displacement are still visible. One sees the impact of urban renewal not only in the physical landscape surrounding Knoxville's downtown, but also in disproportionately high poverty rates for Black residents, low Black-owned business ownership levels, and a persistent sense of both physical and cultural segregation between historically Black neighborhoods and the thriving downtown and economic redevelopment areas nearby. Nearly half of Knoxville's Black communities live below the poverty line, according to the latest census data. In 2020, Knoxville's Black poverty rate was 32.4%, more than three times the national poverty rate and higher than the city's overall white poverty rate of 10.9%.

Fortunately, in Knoxville, there is a commitment to heal those wounds – a commitment shared by institutions and grassroots organizations alike. In 2020, Knoxville City Council, with the support of Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon, unanimously supported a resolution apologizing for carrying out an Urban Renewal program and acknowledging its many generational consequences on Black businesses and Black communities. The Council then created the Knoxville African American Equity Restoration Task Force to identify strategic solutions to



Figure 2 Prior to the construction of James White Parkway, citizens to the east of downtown could easily move by foot between downtown and East Knoxville.

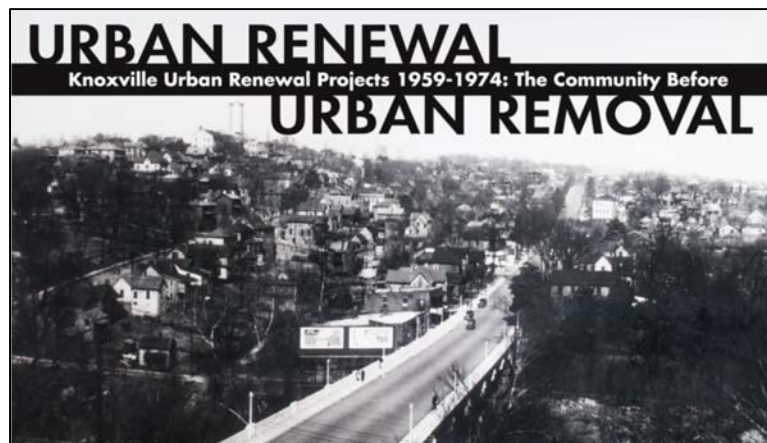


Figure 2 Beck Cultural Center Report Cover Image shows the area prior to the construction of James White Parkway, Howard Baker Drive, and Hall of Fame Drive. The Beck Cultural Center in Knoxville, TN, has been working to catalog the stories of Urban Renewal in Knoxville.

improve areas of disparity and disenfranchisement in the Black community and seek investments of \$100 million to support those strategies.

Reconnecting Knoxville is a part of that mission. If funded, this grant will create clear pathways to physically reconnect the neighborhoods directly impacted by urban renewal with public amenities and economic opportunities that are currently difficult to access without a car. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, households across Knox County with no vehicle were 5.9%. Within our seven target census tracts, however, the vehicle-less households were more than triple at 19.9%. If we look at only the three core census tracts this proposal will reconnect to economic centers within the downtown area, 33.2% of households have no vehicle available. As described by members of the African American Equity Restoration Task Force, this type of connectivity would advance its goals/mission by increasing mobility & access to opportunity, promoting active/healthy living, and promoting economic investment in an area that has historically seen disinvestment.

These goals can be achieved through the creation of new multimodal transportation paths that will reconnect underserved communities with highly sought amenities as well as established and emerging development centers within the heart of the City of Knoxville. Reconnecting Knoxville will establish a primary circulation corridor to mitigate the barriers posed by eligible facilities and connect East Knoxville, Morningside Park and downtown Knoxville to the Urban Wilderness, Baker Creek Preserve and the neighborhoods of South Knoxville that were bifurcated by the construction of James White Parkway. By increasing these connections, we will eliminate the intentional segregation caused through multiple Urban Renewal projects and the construction of the parkway. Alongside the physical infrastructure, Reconnecting Knoxville also will bring to life a long-discussed concept of a “cultural corridor” that celebrates and showcases elements of Black history that were destroyed during Knoxville’s urban renewal period.

When completed, this much needed project will reconnect the historically underserved East Knoxville and downtown communities with multiple economic opportunity areas, social services, public amenities, parks, jobs, and improved access to major bus and trolley routes. Residents will benefit from these new healthy and safe navigation paths through increased access to parks, schools, churches, KAT bus transfer station, a YMCA, a YWCA, a Boys & Girls Club, Knoxville Botanical Gardens, the downtown Knoxville area, access to the Tennessee River, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville’s Urban Wilderness, a multi-use stadium, shopping, entertainment, and multiple neighborhoods. The downtown and South Knoxville areas will benefit from the creation of a multi-dimensional environment with thriving business, living, learning, arts, and social interaction that is physically accessible to all Knoxville residents. This project will mitigate the barriers posed by several existing transportation facilities that were constructed between the 1960s – 1980s as part of HUD’s Urban Renewal program and transected the African American communities that existed east of downtown Knoxville. These facilities include: the James White Parkway, Hill Avenue, Howard Baker Jr. Drive, Hall of Fame Drive, Summit Hill Drive, and Willow Avenue (the Redevelopment Highway).

Section B: Location & Map

Our RCN request is located in the historically disadvantaged communities of East Knoxville and the growing communities of South Knoxville. This valuable project will reduce barriers to safe pedestrian movement along Summit Hill Drive and throughout the James White Parkway

corridor, ultimately helping to reconnect historically African American communities with the downtown amenities that they were cut off from during urban renewal.

As shown in the Figure 3 Map below, Reconnecting Knoxville will strengthen and create non-vehicular connections for residents to access economic and recreational development areas. Specifically, it creates intentional connections to increase safe pathways by which residents of historically disadvantaged neighborhoods east of downtown may access jobs, schools, parks, and numerous cultural, recreational, and educational amenities.



Figure 3 Map of Reconnecting Knoxville: Proposed Multi-Modal Pathway Project

The project will benefit an economically and racially diverse population that lives, learns, and works in the impacted community. Characteristics of the census tracts directly impacted by the

eligible facilities are outlined below (as taken from the 2020 U.S. Census and the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer).

	Percentage of persons below 150% poverty estimate	Unemployment Rate estimate	Percentage of households with no vehicle available estimate	Transportation Cost Burden - The average household in this tract spends X% of their household income on transportation.
Knox County Overall	22%	4.2%	5.7%	N/A (National average is 16%)
Tract 8 (OZ)	57.4%	12.6%	9.3%	56.16%
Tract 20	53.2%	12.0%	20.5%	35.93%
Tract 21	51.5%	4.6%	10.3%	34.40%
Tract 22	26.7%	4.3%	5.1%	19.46%
Tract 23	32.5%	2.5%	9.3%	25.58%
Tract 67 (OZ)	49.2%	10.1%	29.9%	26.65%
Tract 68 (OZ)	65.5%	6.3%	49.2%	26.14%

*OZ = Opportunity Zone

Section C: Response to Merit Criteria

Merit Criteria #1: Equity and Environmental Justice

Using the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer and recent business data, we know there is limited access to grocery and medical services. The term ‘grocery store’ is loosely applied, as in one census tract (68) the only food sources within a 15-minute walk are a



Figure 4 The citizens of South Knoxville were not immune to the destruction James White Parkway caused as shown in this 1969 and 2019 comparison.

Family Dollar store and a corner convenience store. Census Tracts 22 & 23 were not within a 15-minute walk from any of the highlighted services - Adult Education, Grocery Stores, Medical Facilities, or Parks. From the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool all but Tract 22 are considered disadvantaged because they meet more than one burden threshold AND the associated socioeconomic threshold. Using the FHWA’s Screening Tool for Equity and Analysis of Projects (STEAP), we find that 40% of households in our collective proposed area are estimated to have zero vehicles. Additional demographics include 57% Black/African-American, 40% white, 25% have an associate’s degree or higher, 69% earn less than \$35,000 per year, and 31% have no internet connection. Census Tracts 8, 67, and 68 are considered Qualified Opportunity Zones. Not providing these improved connections will continue to isolate these communities and further reduce their access to new jobs, greenspace, and improved economic opportunity.

Historical documents from this period of Urban Renewal highlight a prioritization of vehicle traffic over the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. As an example, Summit Hill Drive was created from reconstruction of Vine Avenue and raised to unofficially provide a division between the formerly segregated public housing with the newly cleared area. As was documented in a 1958 Riverfront-Willow Street Redevelopment Project addendum about that project, "...[Downtown] Loop will



Figure 5 Red lining map from the New Deal Era shows the unfavorable lending practices we propose reconnecting

tend to create a barrier between the central business district and the Redevelopment Project and negates in many ways the merit of considering the Project as a continuation of the central business district.” The addendum goes on to state “Although the eastern portion of the Loop would tend to create a barrier between the City’s commercial core and the Project [for commercial uses], a significant degree of interdependence ...would exist if an adequate circulation system was provided [for] easy vehicular access between the two functional areas.”

Unfortunately, at the time, the needs of pedestrians, particularly within low income, minority populations living in the adjacent neighborhood, were not a consideration—a failure felt acutely by those who today seek to move through this corridor safely without the benefit of a vehicle. The changes in roads and landscape divided and destroyed the community and the connectivity to other parts of town, goods, services, and jobs. Our proposal will restore community connectivity, enabling pedestrian access by removing the barriers to mobility, access and economic development, while also empowering community voices.

Impacted Communities

The area east of downtown Knoxville was once a vibrant community for African Americans. The area was populated by African American owned stores, schools, and churches. Between 1964 and 1974, however, urban renewal disrupted this community with the construction of James White Parkway, as well as numerous roadways and a variety of public facilities such as the Knoxville Civic Coliseum and Auditorium. Per historian Bob Booker and local NPR station WUOT, “Forty-six of the 107 storefront businesses forced to move by urban renewal had been operating for at least ten years. Most of their customers lived within walking distance.” All 107 of the demolished businesses were Black-owned. Our proposal focuses on areas of the city harmed through the construction of transportation facilities during the 1960s, 70s and 80s that created a physical division of Knoxville, bisecting and destroying neighborhoods, and continuing the practice of economic segregation on both sides of the Tennessee River. Only two of the businesses uprooted during Urban Renewal were still in existence at the time of publication, according to Black historian Dr. Robert Booker in his 2017 book, *An Encyclopedia: Experiences of Black People in Knoxville, Tennessee 1844-1974*.

From 1959 to 1974, Knoxville implemented projects to reshape the landscape of the city, demolishing both residential and commercial buildings in the downtown area and building the

interstate loop of James White Parkway. Three urban renewal projects were responsible for the demolition of most of the area: The Willow Street Project, The Mountain View Project, and the Morningside Project. Our proposal for Reconnecting Knoxville includes reconnecting areas of all three projects to each other and to the outdoor amenities other Knoxville residents enjoy. As part of the Mountain View Project, the roads around the Austin Homes Housing Project were reconfigured and raised, creating physical barriers where there were previously none. A thriving community was transected through the creation of the new roadways and our proposal focuses on reconnecting the displaced residents to the amenities Knoxville has to offer. The scars of urban renewal are not neat or linear. Many streets were demolished or rerouted, making cuts at the existing tight-knit African American community. The addition of James White Parkway further segregated the distinct African American communities and cemented a permanent access barrier between the oldest African American communities in Knoxville and Black businesses known to have been present by 1870, possibly earlier. Tennessee State Route 71 extended James White Parkway southeast from SR 158 across the Tennessee River to Moody Avenue.



Figure 6 1935 and 2022 Ariel East of downtown showing addition of current highways, streets and the raising of Summit Hill Drive.

There will be no construction-related displacement in this proposal. The majority of our plan will connect residential to commercial areas. There will be limited work in residential areas where sidewalks will need to be widened or installed, while the bulk of the work will take place in commercial areas or the Right-of-Way for James White Parkway. Temporary lane closures will be needed in some areas; however current vehicular and service disruptions are not expected.

Merit Criteria #2: Access

Reconnecting Knoxville is a community-inspired approach to increasing safe mobility and connectivity for all, including for people with disabilities. Improving facilities for safe, convenient, and active travel, including walking, bicycling, and transit aligns with several of the City of Knoxville's policy priorities, with a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050 and a "Vision Zero" goal to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on Knoxville's roadways.

Creating multi-modal pathways will support the creation of thriving communities where individuals may move freely while also welcoming new individuals to the communities. Our proposal connects the Knoxville Botanical Gardens and Arboretum, a highly trafficked free tourist attraction, through the largely African American areas of East Knoxville, to a large new economic development area, to downtown, and then across the river to a second burgeoning economic development area. The start and finish of our plan are both funded projects and RCN

funds will complete the physical and financial connections in-between these projects to ensure all residents have equitable and safe access to park, jobs, healthcare, and schools.

Our pathway starts at the Knoxville Botanical Gardens and Arboretum and moves east towards the downtown area to a terminus at Harriet Tubman Park. This pathway will open East Knoxville up for residents traveling toward downtown and residents seeking bike and pedestrian paths to the Botanical Gardens. This segment is fully funded.

From Harriet Tubman the path moves through First Creek at Austin, Knoxville's first mixed-income housing community consisting of subsidized housing, tax credit housing, project-based vouchers, housing choice vouchers, Section 202 elderly housing and workforce housing. Incomes for the development range from 0% up to 120% of Area Median Income (AMI). Austin Homes was the original segregated public housing in Knoxville,

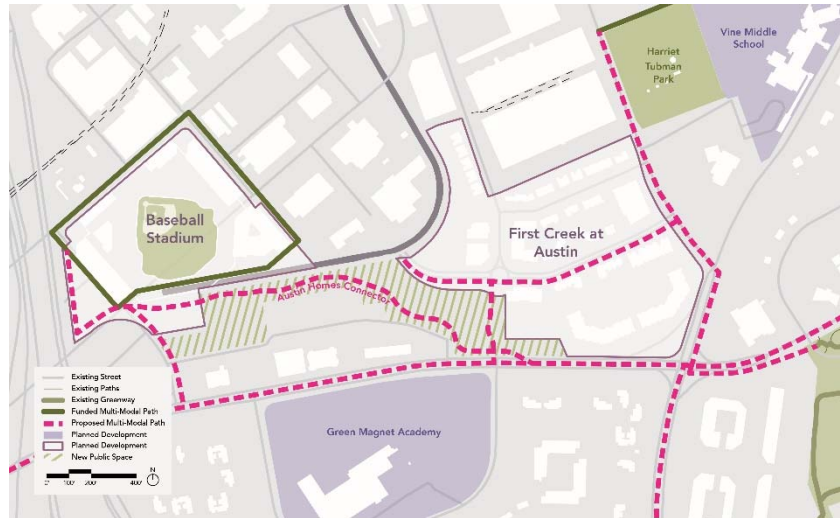


Figure 7 First Creek at Austin Bridge & Connector

before being redeveloped and expanded into a mixed-income community. All residents were given a right-to-return to ensure no residents were displaced and to be certain current residents benefited from the redevelopment. New multi-modal pathways will connect First Creek at Austin to economic centers around downtown, the Old City area, and the new multi-use stadium currently under construction. The pathways will traverse the First Creek at Austin site, branching

off to the new stadium and ballpark district, heading toward the downtown corridor and over James White Parkway (Summit Hill Avenue), on Dandridge Avenue toward the Beck Cultural Center, into Morningside Park, and down Hill Avenue. The intersection of Hill Avenue/Summit Hill/Dandridge, once the center of the African-American business community, is widely used by vehicles but avoided by pedestrians and bicyclists. The intersection at Summit Hill and

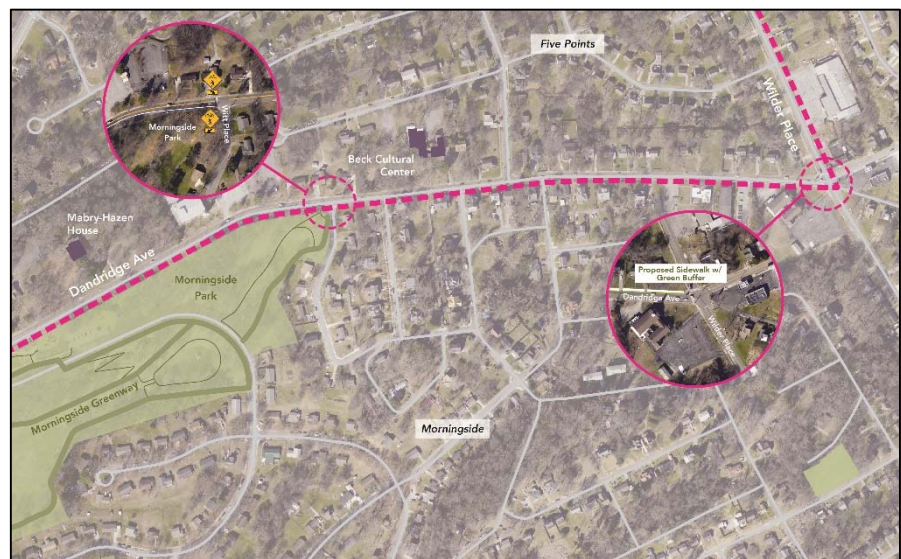


Figure 8 Dandridge Avenue Improvements

The intersection at Summit Hill and

Hill Avenue will be reworked using the Complete Streets model and will include sidewalks and crossings to improve school access for public elementary and middle school students. This intersection is also home to four affordable housing sites - First Creek at Austin, The Vista, Studio 1100, and Pinnacle Park, guaranteeing long-term affordability stays in the area and mitigating negative effects of gentrification. Dandridge will receive completed sidewalks, ADA access to Morningside Park and the Alex Haley statue, and signalized crossing to the Beck Cultural Center, Knoxville’s African American museum and research center. This section of Dandridge Avenue is home to the oldest African American neighborhood in the city. Park areas will be added along the pathways to ensure seamless integration with the surrounding apartments and businesses and allowing residents the benefits of greenspace in the downtown urban area. Each of these pathways is essential in ensuring connectivity to nearby elements key to residents’ access, health, and well-being. These pathways are partially funded but further funding is needed from RCN to complete the plan.

Through the installation of a small bridge over First Creek, the pathway will connect to the new downtown ballpark district through the proposed Cultural Corridor. This pathway will allow for pedestrian and visual connectivity between downtown and East Knoxville. It will create a connection for East Knoxville to a new economic center with jobs, shopping, and entertainment, all safely accessible without automobiles. Formerly abandoned warehouses, this site has been reimagined to house the multi-use stadium hosting minor league baseball, semi-professional soccer, and concerts and events. The area around the stadium will include a new shopping district, three mixed-use apartment buildings, three public outdoor plaza areas, including a pedestrian plaza and artifacts of the history of the Knoxville Giants Negro League Baseball team. The current plan includes more than \$100 million in private investment to build apartments, condos, restaurants, offices and space for a potential grocery in East Knoxville, all in an area that was residential prior to urban renewal and the construction of James White Parkway, then became a busy warehouse district from 1970 – 2000, and was mostly vacant by 2010. Construction is expected to be completed in 2025 and will be Knoxville’s next center for jobs and opportunity. This segment is fully funded.



Figure 9 Plans for downtown Knoxville stadium, housing, and retail



Figure 10 Empty warehouses and lack of access due to James White Parkway and other roadways will be replaced by a multi-use stadium and are proposed connectivity within this grant application

At the terminus of the new downtown ballpark district, we propose the addition of the Jackson Avenue Park under the 12-lanes of traffic created through the addition of James White Parkway (TN-158) and Hall of Fame Boulevard. The construction of TN-158 through now displaced residential areas created pockets of unused land with elevated bridges transecting the downtown area. Currently the area under the 12-lanes of traffic is a flat parking lot and is a barrier between the Old City area of downtown and the new ballpark district. We would use RCN funds to build a park area to reconnect and reclaim underutilized space under the 8-lane state highway and the elevated 4-lane Hall of Fame Drive dividing Knoxville's downtown area. This new park area will also connect the multi-modal pathway to the Old City area where existing retail and restaurants offer employment opportunities. We are requesting funding for this connection.

We must connect residents to the recently revitalized South Waterfront and burgeoning center of job opportunities by creatively utilizing the South Knoxville Bridge. The South Knoxville Bridge connects the five-lane James White Parkway from East Knoxville to the South Waterfront and Urban Wilderness, and includes no sidewalks or bike lanes. This pathway would connect Census Tracts 68 and 8 and mitigate the James White Parkway bridge through a retrofit creating dedicated, barricaded pedestrian and biking opportunities which would provide non-vehicular access to jobs and recreation. To date, the city has invested \$61 million and has seen \$400 million in private investment. Investment in affordable housing has been significant. Four new market-rate apartment buildings with workforce housing components have been built, as well as one affordable rental development, two low-income renter rehab projects, and scores of new business within South Knoxville Waterfront or the Urban Wilderness. A 2015 report from The Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy states to date, "expenditures generated by the presence of the Urban Wilderness, output (measured by GDP) increased by \$14.7 million," through direct, indirect and multiplier effects. Once completed, the total



Figure 11 South Knoxville Bridge connection highlighting closure of one lane to improve connectivity for those without a vehicle

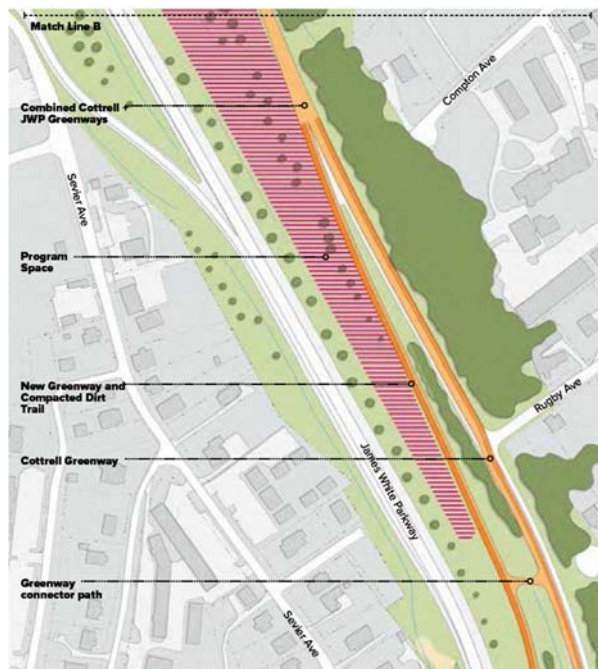


Figure 12 New park includes amenities such as a landscaped access point and gathering space at Baker Creek Preserve and the James White Parkway terminus, parking, pedestrian and bike pathways/trails, bike park, additional children's nature play areas.

projected impact is \$51.2 million with over \$800,000 in state and local tax revenue. We are requesting partial funding for this connection.

The Cottrell Connector is shown on the map in Figure 3 and will transform 0.9 miles of paved roadway into hardscape yielding a gain of permeable area. This will further add connection from the South Knoxville Bridge to the Urban Wilderness and back towards Sevier Avenue where many new businesses are locating. This element is fully funded.

The terminus of our multi-modal pathway will be the Urban Wilderness Gateway Park. In order to reach the Gateway Park, we will need to add the James White Parkway Linear Park connection as the final piece of the project to connect the residents of East and South Knoxville with downtown jobs, South Knoxville jobs, and natural areas of the region. Households without a vehicle have lower safe access to the increasing number of service jobs along the South Waterfront. This section will incorporate the roadway improvements, linear parks, and a multi-use path. The City of Knoxville has already completed the first phase of the Urban Wilderness Gateway Park and is working on the next phase. The intersection of James White Parkway will be realigned with Sevierville Pike and incorporate pedestrian and cyclist movements. This segment is partially funded and RCN funding is needed to complete this space. If funding during the RCN competition is limited, this element can be retained for a future competition without significant impacts to the overall connectivity but will leave a gap in the vitality and programmability of the space until completed.

Merit Criteria #3: Facility Suitability

Built during urban renewal, the James White Parkway cut through existing, low-income communities. Entire neighborhoods were removed and roads were realigned. Families were pushed further from the downtown area without non-vehicular connections or infrastructure to support access to the economic center of the city. Our proposal will reconnect these neighborhoods and access points most directly impacted by the addition of James White Parkway and reconfiguration of arterial streets. Infrastructure during this period was designed to support the anticipated growth in automobiles, and as such our infrastructure has an overreliance on automobiles for accessing downtown and the South Waterfront area/Urban Wilderness. The reconfiguration of the streets requires an automobile to traverse topography and distance, a current impairment detrimental to lower-income citizens and negatively affecting social determinants of health. Reconnecting Knoxville aims to increase the ability of all residents to experience our tourism board’s slogan “we’re a-nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kinda-town.” We propose this network for multi-modal connections to increase non-vehicular access for the residents in census tracts 67 & 68 who currently experience no vehicle in the household at rates of 36.9% and 46.8%, respectively. The average across the city is 11.1%, showing these two tracts have a disproportionate number of individuals in need of non-vehicular connectivity.

Census Tract	8	20	21	22	23	67	68
Social Vulnerability Score 2018	0.67	0.89	0.98	0.48	0.46	0.94	0.98

During the 2022 Heat Mapping Campaign supported by NOAA, researchers from the University of Tennessee mapped heat inequities in Knoxville and found higher temperatures in lower-income areas (<https://tinyurl.com/kbuvej78>). Using NOAA's <https://www.heat.gov/>, we see Urban Heat Islands occurring in Census Tracts 8, 20, 67, 68 – all disadvantaged areas. ESRI has developed a map around future heat events and social vulnerability, assigning possible scores to census tracts ranging from 0 (lowest vulnerability) to 1 (highest vulnerability). The majority of Census Tracts within Reconnecting Communities score in the high vulnerability category, and have the goal of connecting residents to Census Tracts 22 & 23 which scored within moderate vulnerability. There is high concern these vulnerabilities will only grow if left unaddressed.

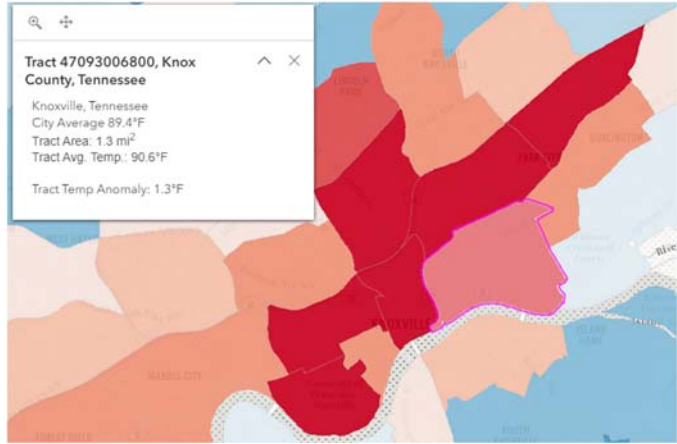


Figure 13 Heat.gov Urban Heat Islands map showing Census Tracts in increasing danger of heat islands.

In 2021, the City of Knoxville and Knox County commissioned an Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) Assessment and studied the tree canopy between 2008-2018. During this 10-year period, the City of Knoxville lost 732 acres (1%) of UTC. A 1% loss of UTC in the City of Knoxville equates to an estimated loss of about \$115,000 of annual benefits to the community. Knoxville has 38% existing UTC, potential plantable area of 38%, and 24% unsuitable for UTC. Census Tracts with high minority populations saw the greatest decrease in UTC, as seen in Figure 14. This Reconnecting Knoxville proposal will add trees and green pathways to areas with the lowest UTC in the city and which face the highest continued losses in order to mitigate current and future environmental burden within these communities already facing severe economic disparities. Reducing Urban Heat Islands through increasing the urban tree canopy will contribute to the passive heating and cooling of buildings (decreasing resident utility cost), provide UV protection, lower ambient air temperatures, reduce air pollution, sequester carbon, and provide aesthetic and myriad public health benefits to the community.

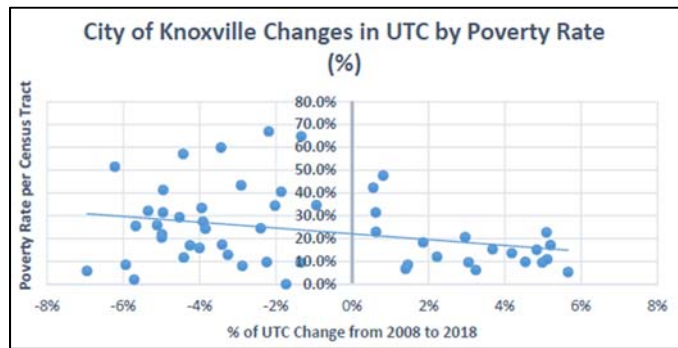


Figure 14 Census Tracts with high minority populations saw the greatest decrease in Urban Tree Canopy

The Tennessee School for the Deaf utilizes James White Parkway to deliver students. The parkway also sees heavy industrial use, and petroleum products are trucked in this corridor. Freight traffic will not be impacted by the loss of a lane, yet providing a dedicated safe route decreases potential conflict for cyclists and pedestrians.

Merit Criteria #4: Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships

Our approach is founded on community feedback received through various public input sessions and from partners in the proposal. Our reconnection solution is grounded in community input to redress the inequities created, and to provide greater access for Knoxville’s economically disadvantaged communities. Partnership and support letters are included in the appendix.

Our Community Partners will be engaged to ensure our work focuses on the community developed priorities included in this proposal. These partners will form the initial members of a community advisory group to support our planned construction and community development activities to redress the transportation created disparities.

Community Engagement is at the heart of our proposed plan. We have intentionally developed the plan to reflect decades of community input about the need to reconnect the African American community to the heart of

downtown and amenities intended to serve all Knoxville residents. To understand Knoxville’s past and desire to move forward, we began by assessing what work has already been done and is already happening in the community. This intentionality included communities scattered by urban renewal and transportation projects from past decades, focusing on their removed and weakened access to vibrant downtown Knoxville. (Details in Appendix) Community input has been gathered from numerous agencies’ plans within the footprint of the proposed project. A summary of the community input types is included in the green table above. Specific to this Reconnecting Communities proposal, conversations with the Beck Cultural Exchange Center, a nonprofit organization established in 1975 as a result of Knoxville’s urban renewal with the mission to preserve, nurture, and teach Black history and culture, helped give voice to more

Partner	Partnership Type	Type	Federal Match Provided	Non-Federal Match Provided
KCDC	Co-applicant	State/Local Gov't	\$0	\$4.37 M
City of Knoxville	Co-applicant	Local Gov't	\$0	\$15.48 M
State of TN	Co-applicant	State Gov't	\$4.76 M	\$950,000
Sports Authority Board	Key Partner	Public Entity	\$0	\$21 M
Bike Walk Knoxville	Community Partner	Philanthropic	\$0	\$0
African American Equity Task Force	Community Partner	Public Entity	\$0	\$0
Beck Cultural Exchange Center	Community Partner	Community-based	\$0	\$0
Knoxville Area Urban League	Community Partner	Community-based	\$0	\$0
Legacy Parks	Community Partner	Philanthropic	\$0	\$0
Botanical Gardens and Arboretum	Community Partner	Community-based	\$0	\$0
The Change Center	Community Partner	Community-based	\$0	\$0
Knoxville-Knox County Planning	Community Partner	Public Entity	\$0	\$0

Input Type	Year	Who	Project Lead
Greene Magnet School Student Park Design project	2022	Elementary students at Greene Magnet School	KCDC
KAT Reimagined Planning Process	2022	City of Knoxville Residents, with intentionality to include low-income residents	Knoxville Area Transit
Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Design Study	2022	Local residents and community members	East Tennessee Design Center
Stadium Development	2021-2022	City of Knoxville Residents through Public Input	Sports Authority Board
KCDC Resident Community Needs Assessment	2021	Residents of all KCDC housing sites	KCDC
Austin Homes Master Planning process	2019	Residents of Austin Homes, community members, neighborhood stakeholders	KCDC
Urban Wilderness Planning Sessions	2018-2022	City of Knoxville Residents through Public Input	City of Knoxville
Greenway Corridor Feasibility & Assessment Study	2016	City of Knoxville Residents through Public Input	City of Knoxville
Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Corridor Plan	2006	City of Knoxville Residents through Public Input	Metropolitan Planning Commissions

“silent partners” who acutely remember the wounds of urban renewal on people, businesses, and culture within Knoxville’s Black community.

Need Analysis

Over the years, residents and community-based organizations have provided a rich amount of input as to their desires for improved connectivity for the residents of East Knoxville. Residents have continually highlighted the need for better non-vehicular connectivity from their neighborhoods to shopping, jobs, and entertainment. Due to space limitations, we have included excerpts from two Community Engagement activities here with full reports in the Attachments. During the most recent Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Design Study, the East Tennessee Design Center conducted a survey on needed changes to the area’s infrastructure. Residents living near MLK Jr. Avenue liked most the location in relation to downtown. Other key factors included the historic homes and the diversity of the area, as well as the sense of community. The things people cited as most needed to improve quality of life were more greenways, parks, and police. Other items included more sidewalks and street lights, businesses (like a grocery store), and improvements to existing facades & buildings.

Residents within the KCDC communities responded to a needs assessment in 2021 with a 31% response rate across the properties. From those properties inside the urban renewal area, the greatest majority asked for more open grass and greenspaces along with picnic areas and the addition of nature trails and greenway connectors. (Austin Homes, now First Creek at Austin, was in redevelopment and vacant at the time.)

Community engagement was a central theme during the 2019 Master Planning process for the redevelopment of the Austin Homes site, one of the original public housing sites in Knoxville and located within the urban renewal area. Despite its proximity to adjacent parks, downtown Knoxville, and the University of Tennessee, the topography of the Austin Homes site and its neighboring warehouses have isolated the development from its surrounding context. Historic factors such as urban renewal and construction of public infrastructure have further contributed to the isolation of the site. A round of 27 stakeholder interviews, three resident meetings, three

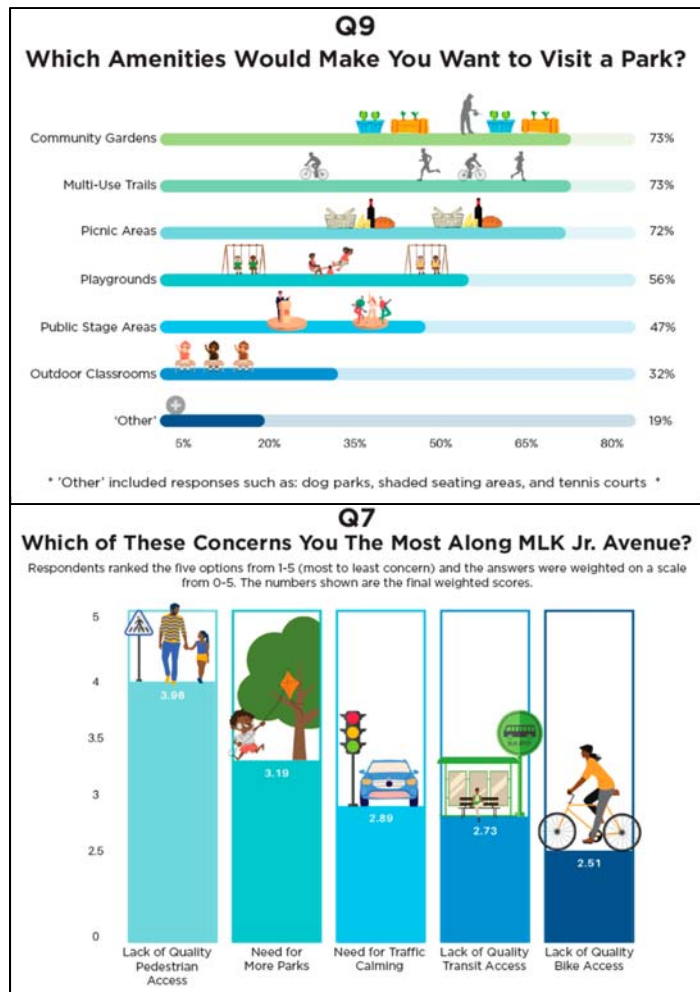


Figure 15 Results of East Tennessee Design Center survey around needed changes to the area infrastructure East of downtown

(Austin Homes, now First Creek at Austin, was in redevelopment and vacant at the time.)

stakeholder meetings, and four Open Houses were conducted to give every community member an equal voice and to facilitate one-on-one conversations between the planning team and all interested parties.

	Five Points Community	Five Points Elderly	The Vista at Summit Hill	Isabella Towers
Total Households	353	105	175	236
Response Rate	32%	48%	21%	28%
Nature Trails/Greenway Connector	28.8%	29.5%	13.8%	20.6%
Picnic Areas	56.2%	59.1%	27.6%	55.9%
Open Grass & Green Spaces	15.1%	15.9%	20.7%	23.5%

Through the process, residents and stakeholders identified a number of opportunities for the area across five categories of community, culture, connection, open space and trust. Within connection and open space themes emerged around better walkability and pedestrian connections, enhanced transit stops, revitalizing the creek, more public streets, trails, and open spaces. In response to community feedback, approximately 8.9 acres of open space was included in the plan. DOT funds would be used to program the open space, create and connect a trail network to the surrounding neighborhood and provide a safe route to schools and parks. This trail network will play a critical role in connecting downtown and the Old City to existing greenways at First Creek and Morningside. Excerpts from the Austin Homes Master Plan specifically addressing connectivity and open spaces are included in the Appendix.

We do not anticipate any substantial negative community impacts or need for displacement from the proposed project. All land is currently owned by the project partners and no displacement of households will be necessary. Some neighbors may experience limited noise during construction of sidewalks and pathways near residential areas, however, construction crews will contain the project to reasonable daylight hours.

Merit Criteria #5: Equitable Development

The foundation of our comprehensive plan is in community vision and priorities that focus on increasing the mobility and connectivity of residents in lower-income census tracts to desirable amenities currently accessible predominately by vehicle. Our goal is to reconnect and create cohesive links between impoverished census tracts in East Knoxville to the two economic development engines of the South Knoxville waterfront and the downtown areas. KCDC and the City of Knoxville have intentionally focused on revitalization without gentrification, ensuring affordable housing is preserved or added in areas around downtown and will continue to do this in areas benefiting from the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant.

Our plan includes community restoration, stabilization, and anti-displacement strategies through the expansion of location-efficient affordable housing and mixed-income, mixed-use development, desirable neighborhood creation through new connectivity, and development of public amenities.

Throughout this proposal, there are several components focused on celebrating local history and culture with public art, greenspace, and recreational spaces for residents and visitors. Some of these include the creation of a cultural corridor focused on remembering the lost African American heritage of the area, a Knoxville Giants Negro League Baseball team plaza,

playgrounds, green spaces for gatherings and small events, dog parks, and spaces to walk, cycle, and ride safely. KCDC is committing to develop a third phase of housing at the First Creek at Austin site which will include affordable and mixed-income housing, including a HUD Section 202 component that will bring multi-generational affordable housing to the site. Added multi-modal pathways to provide access to areas around the neighborhood will be important in attracting a mixed-income demographic.

Beck Cultural Corridor – Creative Placemaking

Prior to 1963, almost 100% of the African American population lived within a 5-minute walk of downtown Knoxville. Before the three urban renewal projects, there were no Blacks in East Knoxville. Urban renewal broke apart the cohesive African American community and pushed the population further east. Churches, businesses, schools, and houses were lost, and community connectivity was destroyed.

To that end, we are partnering with Beck Cultural Exchange Center to develop intentionality around inclusivity and belonging to build an asset-based framework for Knoxville that recognizes and celebrates the African American history that was lost. As part of Reconnecting Knoxville, we will work alongside the Beck to extend their Cultural Corridor concept that rediscovers and honors the historical narrative. The Beck Cultural Corridor is an interactive excursion where people will learn, discover and experience the rich legacy of African Americans along a vibrant path.

The proposed multi-modal pathway will include markers, maps, and digital assets to illustrate the African American history that once stood along or near the pathway. We will partner with Beck, with support from the University of Tennessee, to develop the Corridor and the digital assets. Students in the UT Project Excellence Program and graduates of Austin-East High School, located within the project boundary, will be given preference to participate in the digital asset creation. The Beck Cultural Corridor will include stopping points with benches, gardens, and markers allowing users to sit, experience being in that spot, and reflect. There will be intentionality in mirroring what once was and to experiencing what had been. The markers, paired with digital assets such as virtual images, holograms, voices, and sound, will allow visitors to “Take a walk around the Bottom” or experience the former E. Vine Street, bustling with patrons frequenting dozens of African American businesses. The buildings have been lost, but the experiences and the history can be reclaimed for future generations. We propose the inclusion of 10 sites to launch the Beck Cultural Corridor in Knoxville, with the full list available in the Appendix.

As referenced in the introduction, Knoxville City Council created the African American Equity Restoration Task Force to identify strategic solutions to improve areas of disparity and disenfranchisement in the Black community. Reconnecting Knoxville will contribute toward this equitable development effort.



Figure 16 Beck Cultural Corridor Park example

There is current conversation proposing zoning changes to the city code to allow for more housing types and increase overall supply. Mayor Kincannon has put forth a proposal specifically around the allowance of seven types of missing middle housing in new construction and conversion of existing homes. These include duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, small townhomes, and small multiplexes. The proposal is slated for vote on October 5th by the planning commission.

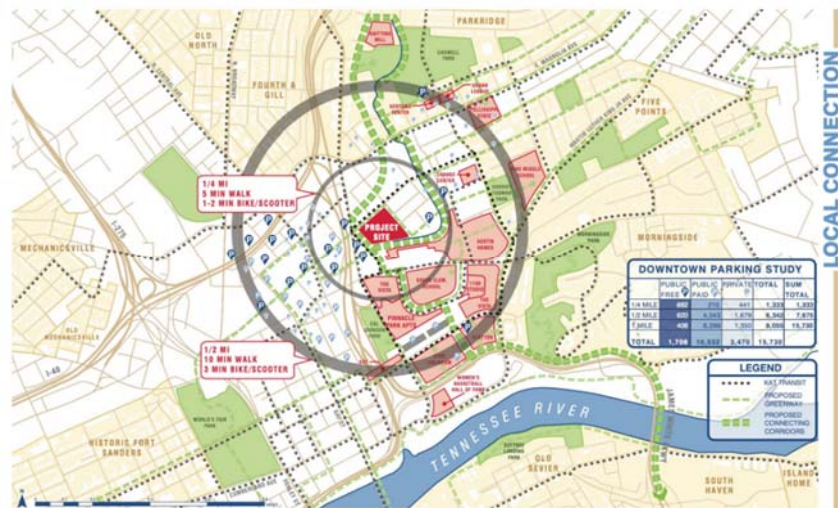


Figure 17 Investments within the community are beginning. We now need walkable neighborhoods and access to amenities by mitigating infrastructure built between 1960-1980 and reconnecting formerly displaced residents.

Merit Criteria #6: Climate and Environment

According to the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer, the selected tracts for the project span areas of severe disadvantage across transportation, environmental, health, social, and climate and disaster indicators. The proposed multi-modal greenway will run across areas impacted by severe environmental burden, ranking from the 73rd to 94th percentile in environmental disadvantage compared to all other census tracts in Tennessee. Not surprisingly, this environmental disadvantage maps onto other disparities, including those of health and social vulnerability. Environmental indicators show increased exposure to air pollution in the selected areas, which in turn impacts health (especially in people with asthma). The greenway will help reduce this pollution by reducing vehicular density and increasing healthier, lower-carbon travel alternatives through biking and walking.

Reconnecting Knoxville directly supports the City’s Energy & Sustainability Work Plan goal. Transportation emissions make up 60% of the City of Knoxville’s emissions. This is a figure that continues to rise, similar to most communities across the nation. Observed increased emissions related to transportation have increased the sector share of community emissions over the past decade. The increase in traffic volume is a byproduct of population growth and a strong economy (GDP +46.8%). Unfortunately, average vehicle fuel economy has not significantly increased since 2012. Emissions attributed to transportation have become a larger share of emissions profiles as building codes have led to increased energy efficiency, and utilities increasingly invest in lower carbon renewable electricity. The proposed project specifically supports the following transportation priority: “Expand and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities, connectivity, convenience, and/or safety in a manner that significantly increases the number of trips taken by walking or biking.”

A large majority of tracts in the proposed project ranked among the most highly disadvantaged (among their counterparts across the state) in terms of impervious surfaces, which absorb and retain heat throughout the day. This heat retention is linked to other indicators of disadvantage that impact the selected tracts, including increased ground-level ozone, asthma prevalence, and financial burdens due to the extra energy needed to cool homes (EPA, Heat Islands & Equity). Discriminatory policies, like redlining, caused communities of color to bear the disproportionate impact of the aforementioned health, environmental, and socioeconomic disadvantages. The proposed multi-modal greenway coincides with areas disproportionately impacted by the negative effects of heat, as illustrated in Knoxville's Heat Watch Report (2022). The project will add tree coverage and less impervious surfaces along the route, helping mitigate the negative effects of high heat in the area, thereby advancing heat, health and social equity. Recapturing surface parking lots and under roadway areas will address large impervious surfaces and return them to more natural infrastructure elements through the addition of new park areas. This project advances equity by connecting a high percentile of disadvantage in impervious surfaces & asthma prevalence, ozone pollution, and poverty (EPA). Through this project we will remove 6.2 acres of paved roadway, replacing it with approximately 1.4 acres of hardscape yielding a net gain of 4.8 acres of permeable area. The newly programmed spaces will be engineered to help with infiltration through rain garden areas, better drainage areas, etc.

There will be no adverse impacts to air and water quality, wetlands, or endangered species. This is a critical consideration, given that persistent problems with air quality exist across all tracts (as indicated by relatively high levels of ozone, PM 2.5, & diesel PM – enough to be considered an indicator of environmental disadvantage across all tracts).

Merit Criteria #7: Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity

KCDC, the City of Knoxville, and the Sports Authority Board maintain partnerships with the Knoxville Area Urban League (KAUL). Since 1968, KAUL has assisted disadvantaged people attain social and economic stability and self-sufficiency through direct services and advocacy. The League works to provide a skilled and diverse workforce; to increase homeownership; to support economic and small business development; and to enhance education efforts for our youth. The Knoxville Area Urban League is a United Way partner agency and affiliate of the National Urban League. We will utilize this partnership and the diversity procurement services at KCDC and the City of Knoxville to increase utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Minority-owned Businesses, Women-owned Businesses, or 8(a) firms.

KCDC is committed to contracting with quality firms representative of the community. To disseminate notice of opportunities to the greatest number of businesses, KCDC shares its open bids to other agencies that further disseminate them for us. These include Associated Construction Women, Associated General Contractors of Tennessee, Atlanta Chapter National Association of Black Women in Construction, Black Contractors Association, Centro Hispano de East Tennessee, HUD's Section 3 Opportunity Portal, Knox County's Supplier Diversity Office, Knoxville Area Urban League, Knoxville Builder's Exchange, Knoxville Equity Partnership, Knoxville's Diversity Business Access Committee, National Association of Black Women in Construction, Small Business Administration, Tennessee Minority Supplier Development Council, Tennessee Small Business Development Center, U.S. Department of Commerce

Minority Business Development Agency and WJBE Radio (a minority-owned firm). KCDC's Procurement staff conducts "How to Do Business" workshops and seminars whenever feasible and as requested. Each year, KCDC's Procurement staff participate in the City of Knoxville's Budget Rollout Breakfast for businesses and details upcoming major procurements in the new fiscal year. KCDC's Procurement staff is instrumental in the yearly public procurement reverse tradeshow for small/minority/women-owned businesses. KCDC also serves on the City of Knoxville's Diversity Business Committee. Finally, KCDC's Procurement Staff serves on the Diversity Outreach Committee of the East Tennessee Purchasing Association (ETPA). Within the bid documents, KCDC will specify that firms offer requirements as outlined in the Reconnecting Communities NOFO, such as good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union, the incorporation of strong labor standards, pro-active anti-discrimination and anti-harassment plans, project labor agreements, workplace rights notices, training and placement programs, and local hiring and procurement preferences, particularly for underrepresented workers and individuals with convictions.

ECONOMIC IMPACT SUMMARY

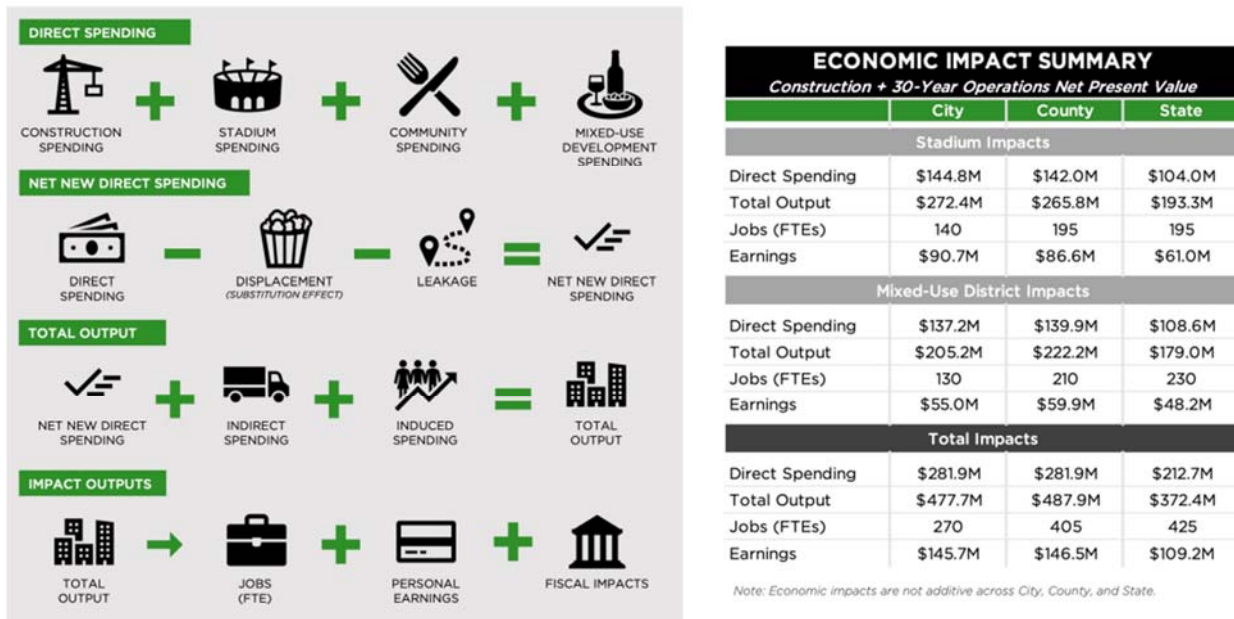


Figure 18 Economic Impact of Stadium Development taken from 2021 TAX REVENUE & ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT by CSL International

Reconnecting Knoxville will provide pathways for bikes and pedestrians to safely access to new economic centers in downtown Knoxville. An independent analysis estimated that the total economic impact of the publicly-owned stadium and surrounding private development in East Knoxville will be \$480 million over 30 years, with more than 400 full-time jobs created. Residents need safe pathways to access these jobs and the new businesses coming to this area. The South Waterfront is a long-term improvement strategy for approximately 750 acres fronting three miles of the Tennessee River, directly south of downtown and the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Improvements have included more than \$61 million in public investment and \$400 million in private investment to date and more is on the horizon. The retail and restaurant investment continue to grow with a food hall planned in late 2023. Private developers have been

pleased to support mixed-use development that supports a vibrant urban environment and attracts people to their spaces. No current business will be displaced as part of this RCN grant.

Section D: Project Readiness

Technical Risk

Reconnecting Knoxville is a shovel ready project. Once Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program funding is committed, final design will commence on each segment, bids will be secured, and work will commence with full completion of all segments by 2027. Matching funds have already been committed and allocated from each partner, no additional approvals are needed. KCDC and the City of Knoxville have ample experience in delivering high dollar transportation and housing projects. KCDC currently has over \$200 million in active housing and infrastructure construction projects, including a \$40 million HUD Choice Neighborhoods Implementation project.

Financial Risk

All matching funds have been allocated and fully committed by the respective partners (letters included in attachments), cost estimates are current, and the project will be completed within budget.

Environmental Risk

The improvements needed to reconnect the community divided by the urban renewal construction projects will not only restore the connectivity of East Knoxville, but do so in an efficient manner that utilizes existing infrastructure and right-of-way (ROW) when available. This approach tackles environmental risk by limiting exposure to environmental features and streamlining regulatory processes. This project will construct new multi-use paths, upgrade existing pedestrian crossings, transform inefficient vehicular facilities into complete streets and create linear parks and plazas to embrace the history of the area. Not only are most of these improvements inside or immediately adjacent to existing transportation corridors, but by improving the walking and biking options and providing access to transit they will reduce vehicular trips and emissions to help meet the city's climate goals.

Our strategy for limiting environmental risk includes screening alternate routes and selecting preferred alignments that accomplish the goal of connectivity while avoiding areas that will require extensive permitting, mitigation, or ROW acquisitions. The result is a pedestrian and bicycle network that is achievable and ultimately reduces vehicular trips resulting in improved air and water quality and reducing noise. The project planning and community involvement previously completed empowers us to quickly finalize design, project permitting, and, where necessary, begin the ROW acquisition process.

The NEPA process is underway for the East Knoxville Greenway and South Knoxville Bridge Connector. The NEPA for First Creek at Austin is complete. The Jackson Avenue Park (within the Stadium/Old City Connector), Cultural Corridor and Connectors, Cottrell Connector, and Urban Wilderness Gateway Park all assume a C-List Categorical Exclusion for the NEPA document. A comprehensive pre-screening for all other projects is included in the appendix.

The community engagement process provided direction for our planners to focus on placing new facilities inside existing ROW and on KCDC property. Following this direction, we will limit ROW acquisitions and strive to eliminate the need for any relocations of residences or businesses. All segments of the project that are part of the transportation network and are required to be on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will be by the deadline of obligation of funds. A summary of the project schedule, funding status, and current phasing is included with the budget document.

Section E: Benefit-Cost Analysis

A detailed BCA was performed on the Reconnecting Knoxville project and is available as an attachment. The Benefit-Cost Analysis and a detailed BCA Narrative is located on the project webpage. The benefit cost ratio for the project is 2.36 with a 20-Year net present value of benefits totaling \$ 151.7 million (2021\$) and Total Capital Costs of \$ 64.2 million (2021\$) or \$ 90.8 million (YOES\$).

After quantifying the expected net benefits expected under the Build case and taking into account the residual cost benefits of the project for years beyond the analysis period, the BCR for the project suggests that the projects benefits over the analysis period would exceed the expected costs associated with project implementation.

The BCA analysis estimates the economic value that the proposed project will create from the following benefits:

- **Equity:** An estimated 1,176 households will gain new access to healthy recreation and greatly expanded commuting options.
- **Mobility:** Proximity of the trails and connections will attract more pedestrians, bike commuters, and recreational users.
- **Safety:** The trails and connections will reduce the exposure of pedestrians and bicyclists to crash risk.
- **Health:** A physically active population equates to lower health costs.
- **Operational:** High potential for growth in bicycling and savings for the distant future.

Significant benefits such as Equity and Mobility will have an immediate effect on the quality of life for those disadvantaged populations that live near this project. This Benefit-Cost Analysis project will provide each of these nearby households a safe and effective connection to recreation and job opportunities. We have included benefits that visitors to the Urban Wilderness and the multi-use stadium will have because of increased connectivity, safety, and comfort of the Knoxville Reconnection project. Visitors to the multi-use stadium will utilize components of this project to access parking and provide improved journeys from the nearby neighborhoods to community and festival events held at the stadium. Visitors to the Urban Wilderness will travel on the Reconnecting Knoxville project to access the stadium, downtown shopping, restaurants, and recreation. The Reconnecting Knoxville project is also expected to accumulate benefits in tourism and increased property values; however, these are not included due to the difficulty in quantifying their benefits in a BCA.