Thelma Boltin Trailhead & Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail Alignment Project

September 29, 2026 | Community Workshop #2



City of Gainesville

NV5

Agenda

1. Project Overview
2. Public Engagement
3. Preliminary Plans + Feedback
4. Next Steps





Overview

Project Introduction

The City Commission directed staff **“to reimagine the site as a trailhead** along the Sweetwater Trail Loop system, connecting Depot Park, the Matheson History Museum, Tom Petty Park, and the 6th Street Trail.”



https://dos.fl.gov/cultural/programs/florida-folklife-program/folk-heritage-awards/list-of-past-recipients/thelma-boltin/

This project includes **conceptual design** for three main components:

1. **Reimagine the Thelma Boltin Site**
   $2M Construction Budget

2. **Conceptual Alignment for Sweetwater Trail Loop System**
   Study will develop a Construction Budget

3. **Stormwater Improvements**
   Study will develop a Construction Budget



Project Introduction

The Commission directive gave 5 key project objectives:

1. **Honor Thelma Boltin: Folk Art + Music History**
2. **Recognize site's WWII History**
3. **Create usable outdoor community space**
4. **Provide stormwater improvements**
5. **Retain community garden element**





Public Engagement

Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

ACCESS TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INFORMATION

Project Website: **GainesvilleFL.gov/thelmaboltin**

Public Engagement information:

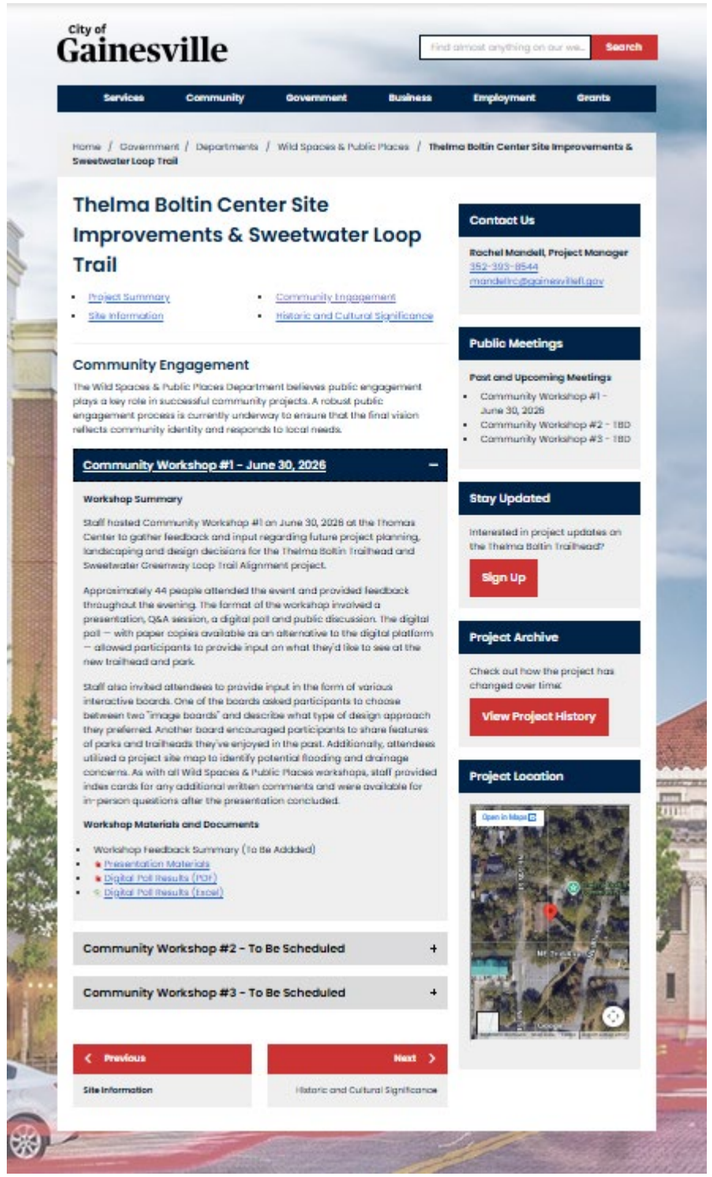
- Public Meeting Materials
- Public Meeting Feedback Summaries
- Upcoming Public Meeting Information

Also available:

- Project Site Information & Archives
- “Sign Up” Link to Join Email List



Presentation at Community Workshop #1 on June 30, 2026



Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

1

Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

- Conducted 4 Stakeholder Meetings
- Community Workshop #1

2

Share Draft Designs + Verify Understanding

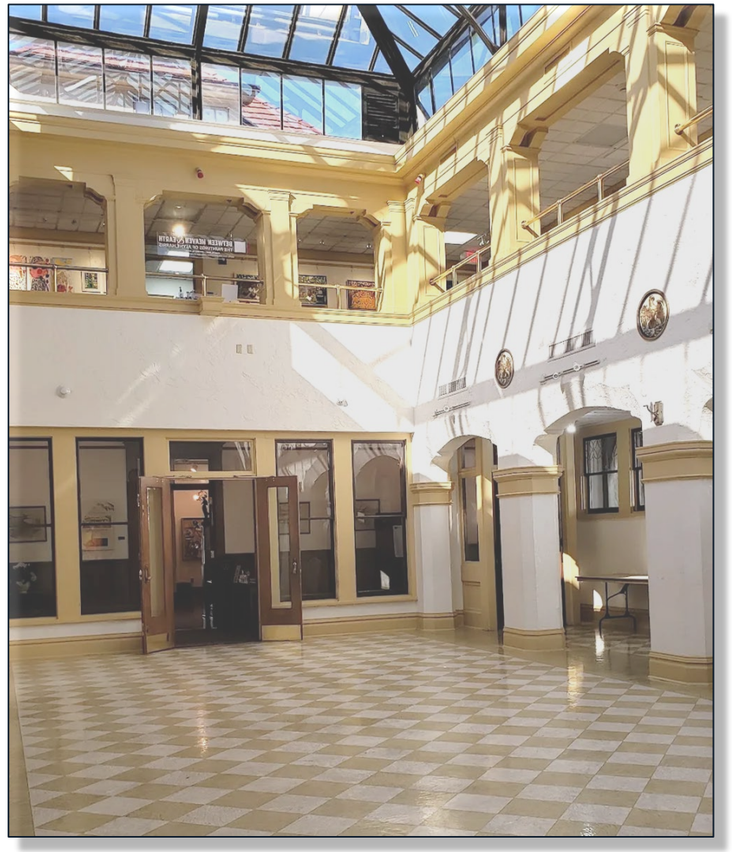
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Community Workshop #2
- City Commission Update Presentation

WE ARE HERE!

3

Refine Plans + Finalize Recommendations

- Stakeholder Meetings
- Community Workshop #3
- City Commission Approval Presentation



Spanish Court in the Thomas Center
Location of Community Workshop #1

Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

PHASE 1 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

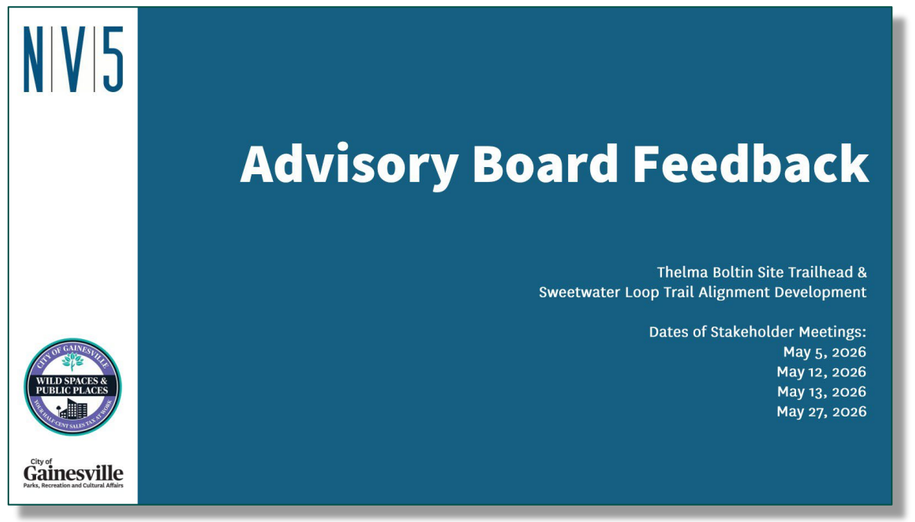
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Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

May 2026

<u>Phase 1 Stakeholder Meetings:</u>

1. Gainesville Art in Public Places Trust (APPT)
2. Duckpond Neighborhood Association (DNA)
3. Public Recreation & Parks Board
4. Cultural Affairs Board (CAB)



Advisory Board/Stakeholder Feedback Summary Document. Available on Project Website: GainesvilleFL.gov/thelmaboltin

Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

PHASE 1 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

1

Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

Stakeholder Themes + Priorities:

Historical + Cultural Context

- Honors History and Cultural Identity
- Integrates Art, Interpretation, and Education

Community Focused

- Creates Community Gathering Space
- Improves Connectivity & Trail Experience
- Balances Parking & Access Needs

Environmentally Responsible

- Preserves the Natural Character of the Site



Example of Outdoor Sculpture



Example of Outdoor Pavilion



Example of Community Gardens



Example of Trailhead Signage

Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 FEEDBACK

1

Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

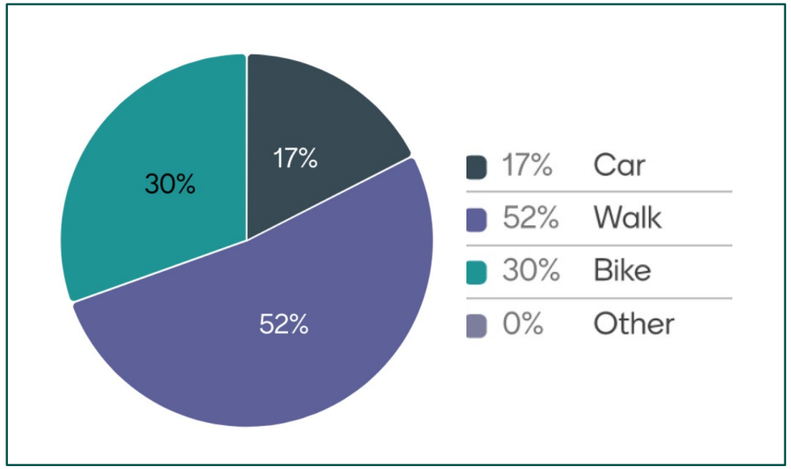
Workshop #1 Format

- Presentation w/ Q&A
- Menti Poll
- Interactive Feedback Boards
- Index Cards/Written Feedback

Topics/Questions Asked included:

- How do visitors travel to the site?
- What is the “spirit of the park”?
- How best to honor the history of the Thelma Boltin Center and WWII Servicemen’s Center?

Workshop feedback included perspectives from attendees who had previously advocated for the preservation of the Thelma Boltin Center. They expressed disappointment and frustration about the demolition of the building. Replacing the historic marker and replicating previous elements of the site were identified by attendees as potential ways to honor the legacy of the site. These discussions will continue throughout the community engagement process.



Pie Chart from Menti Poll showing that 52% of Workshop #1 respondents currently “Walk” to the site.

Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

1

Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 MENTI POLL SUMMARY:

"A community-focused park that honors Thelma Boltin and WWII/Servicemen's Center with art & sculpture"

48% preferred to recognize WWII history:

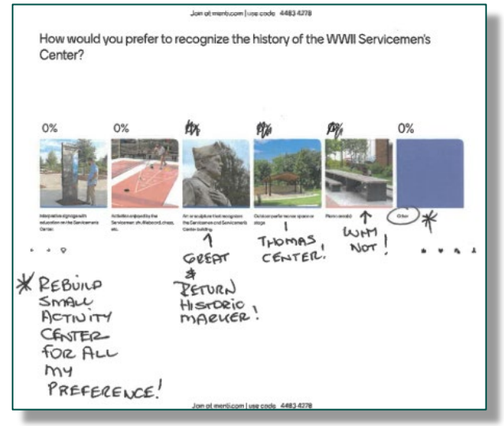
- With Art or Sculpture that recognizes the Servicemen and Servicemen's Center building

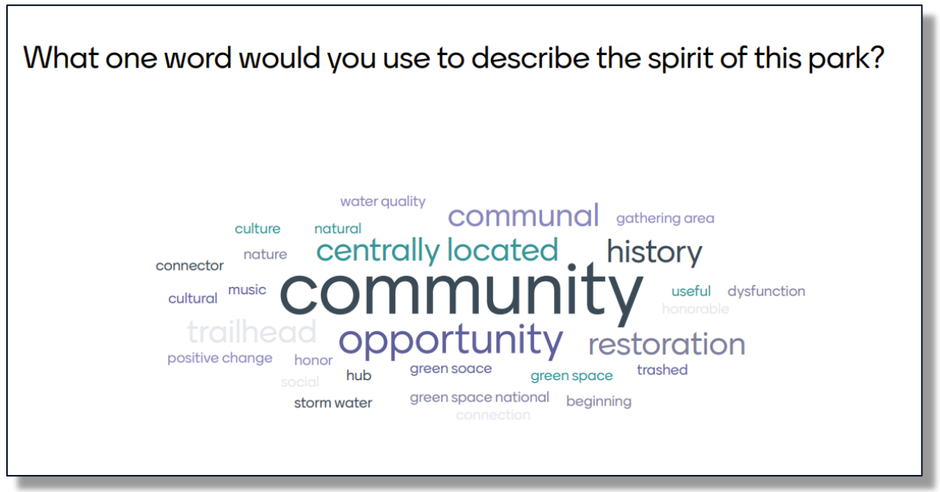
62% preferred to recognize Thelma Boltin's legacy:

- Through Art and Sculpture

Among 22-24% of respondents "Other" suggestions:

- Large covered pavilion for music, dance, and eating
- Replicas of historic elements (shuffleboard)
- Plaque about Thelma Boltin & Stephen Foster Museum
- Replace the historical marker
- Interpretive art
- Storytelling, rocking chairs





Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

1

Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 FEEDBACK BOARDS

"Spirit of the Park"

- Image Board A: Memorial, reflective, passive
- Image Board B: Celebratory, colorful, active

Image Board A

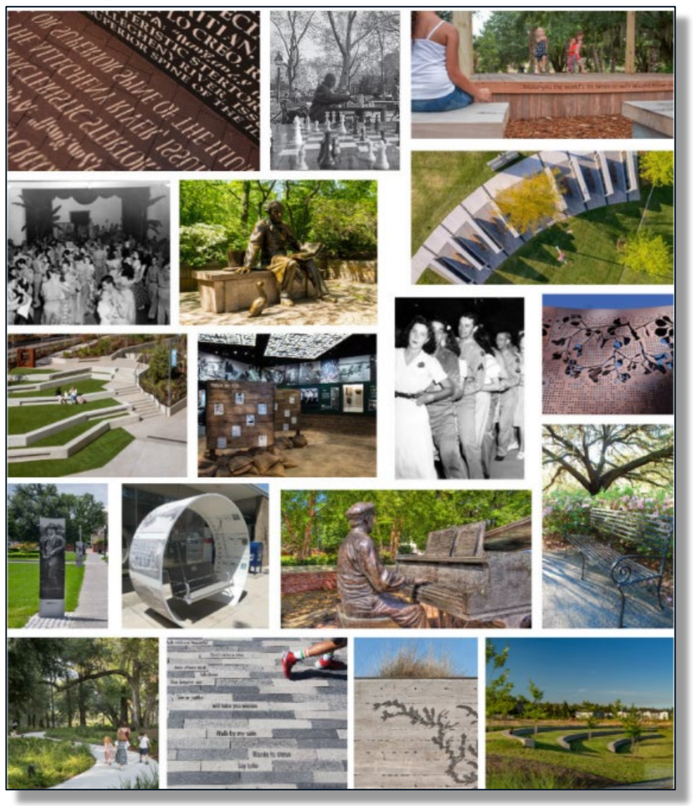


Image Board B

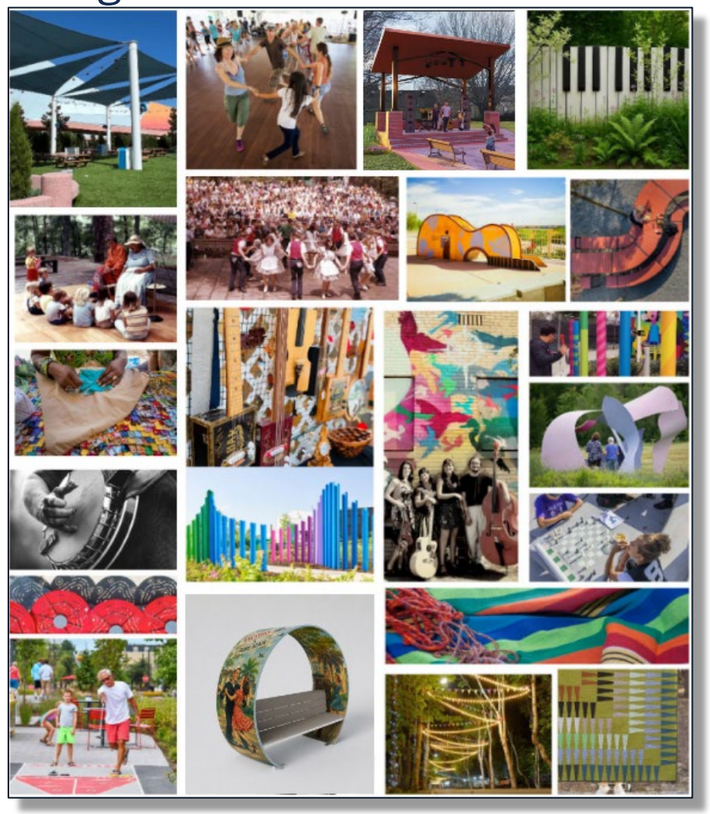
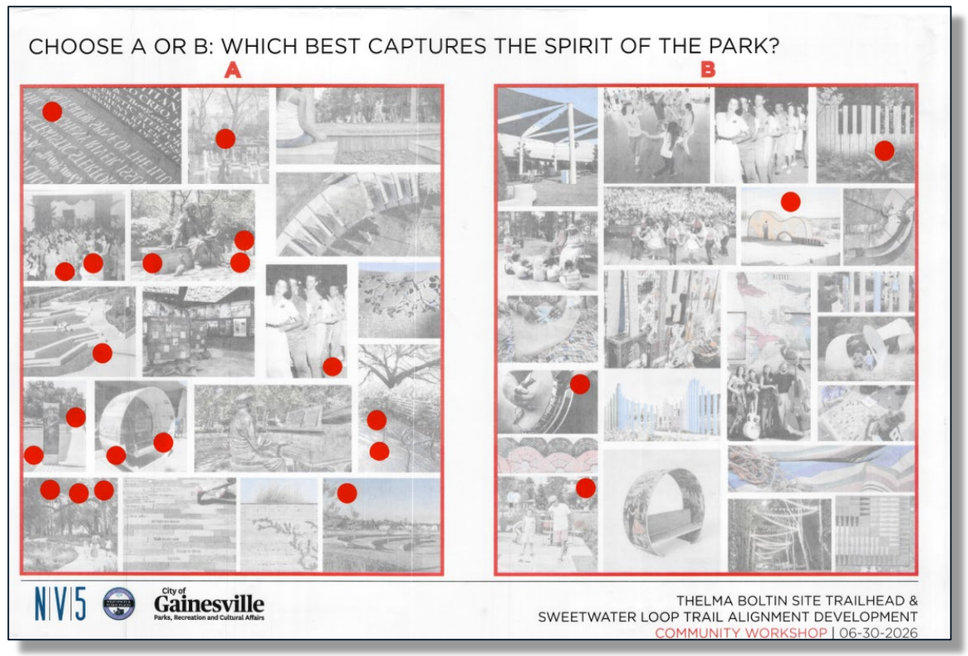


Image Board A preferred



Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

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Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

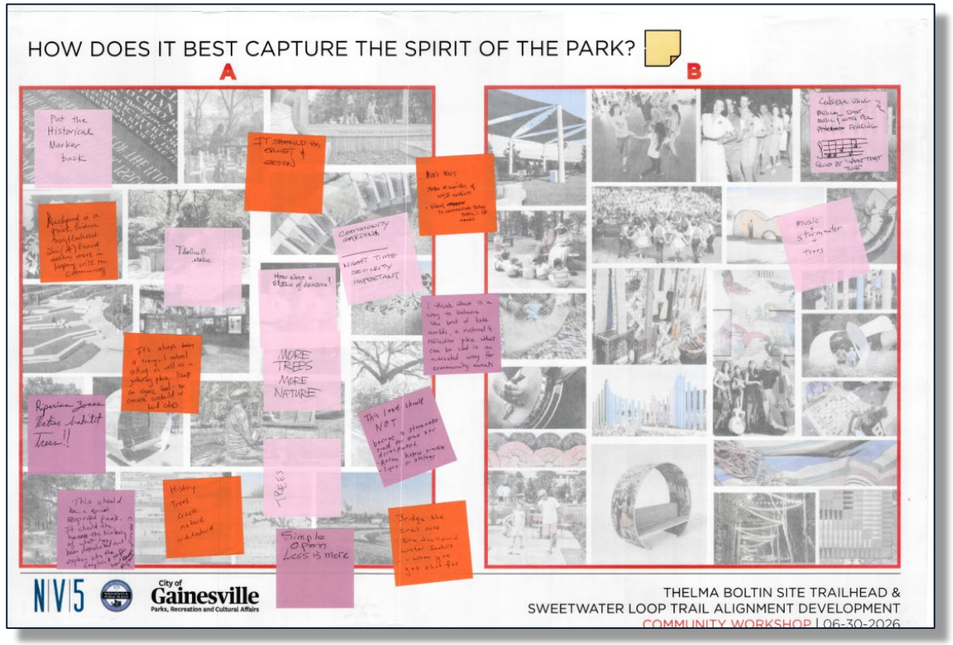
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 FEEDBACK BOARDS

"Capturing the Spirit of the Park"

- Nature (green, trees, natural, native, habitat, creek, tranquil, organic)
- Honoring History (quiet, respectful, statue, commemoration, historic)

"A Park You Enjoyed"

- Diversity of Trees, Shaded Areas, Covered Picnic Pavilions, Water Fountains & Bottle Filling Stations
- "Third Space," Great Connectivity to Other Trails, Simple and Open, More Trees, Riverwalk in Tampa, Atlanta Beltline





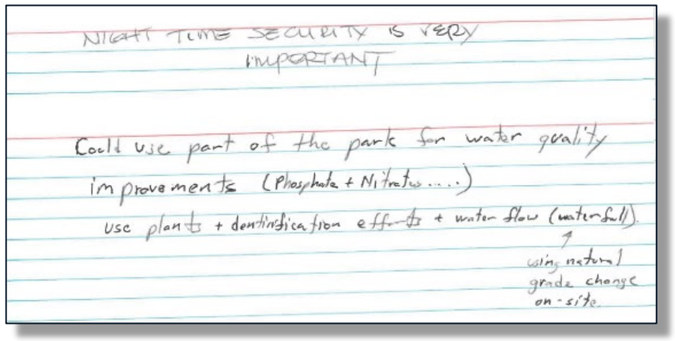
Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

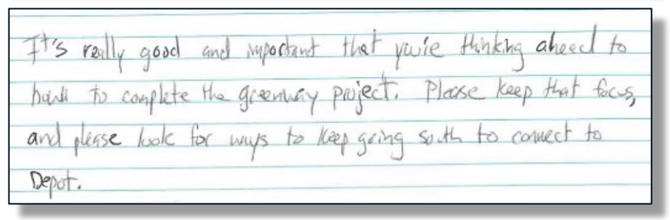
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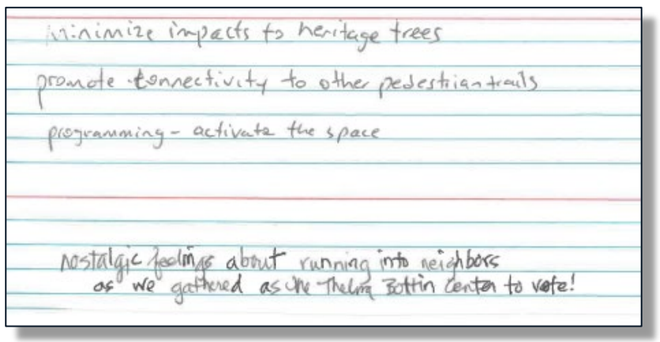
Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 FEEDBACK – INDEX CARDS

- **Creek-related information/suggestions** (riparian zones, water quality, native species, otters in the creek)
- **Questions about the project** (historical marker replacement?, cost of project?, amenities at the park?)
- **Suggestions regarding design approach** (a quiet community gathering place)
- **Comments/questions on removal of the former Thelma Boltin Center and associated outdoor features**
- **Requests** (minimize impacts to heritage trees, promote connectivity to other pedestrian trails, activate the space with programming)
- **Offers of help** (licensed landscape architect)
- **Memories** (nostalgic feeling running into neighbors as we gathered at the Thelma Boltin Center to vote)
- **Encouragement to keep focus on completion of the greenway project**
- **Community gardens:** how to preserve and expand the community gardens
- **Other Comments:** nighttime security is very important







Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 FEEDBACK

Workshop Themes + Priorities:

Historical + Cultural Context

- Honors & Interprets History & Cultural Legacy
- Favors Reflective, Context-Sensitive Design

Community Focused

- Creates Community Gathering Space + Supports Occasional Programming
- Provides a Connected & Functional Trailhead Experience
- Balances Access, Safety, and User Amenities (including Community Gardens)

Environmentally Responsible

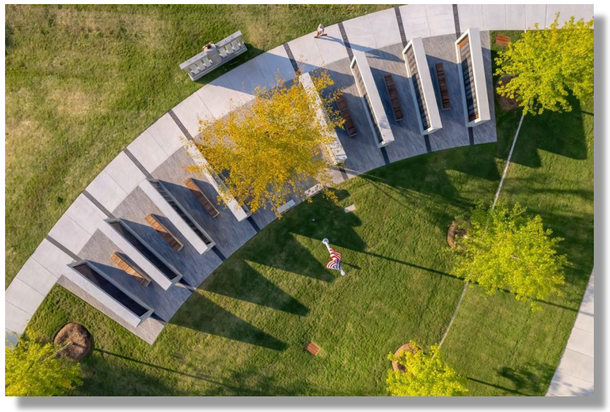
- Protects & Enhances Natural Features of the Site (Sweetwater Creek, Heritage Trees)

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Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities



Example of Interpretive Signage Bench



Example of Memorial Park Sculpture

Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

2

Share draft designs + verify understanding

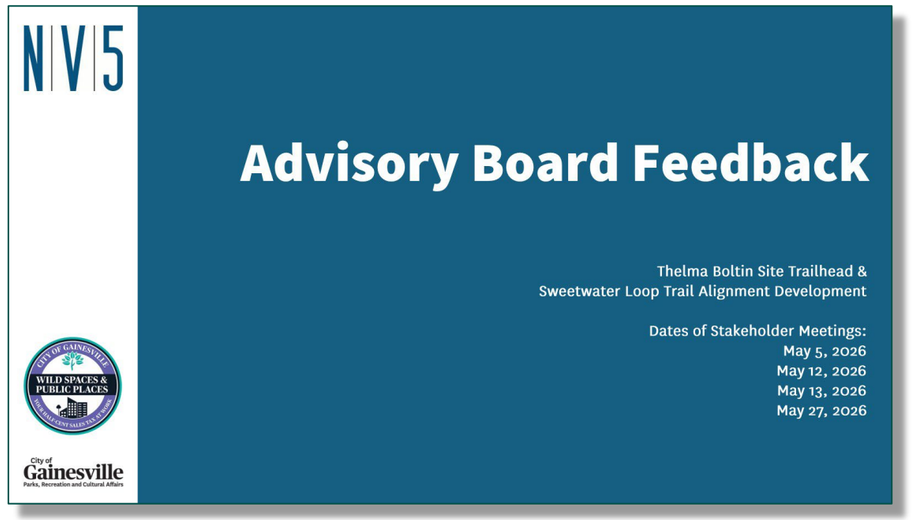
PHASE 2 FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

Since Workshop #1, we have met with the following groups:

1. Tree Advisory Board (9/9)
2. Duckpond Neighborhood Association (9/14)
3. Public Recreation & Parks Board (9/16)
4. Friends of Thelma Boltin Center (9/23)

The following meeting is scheduled:

1. Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Board (10/20)



Advisory Board/Stakeholder Feedback Summary Document. Available on Project Website: GainesvilleFL.gov/thelmaboltin

Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Program Priorities:



Reimagine site as a trailhead for Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail



Honor Thelma Boltin's legacy: folk art and musical history



Create usable community outdoor space



Recognize WWII servicemen through art and/or sculpture



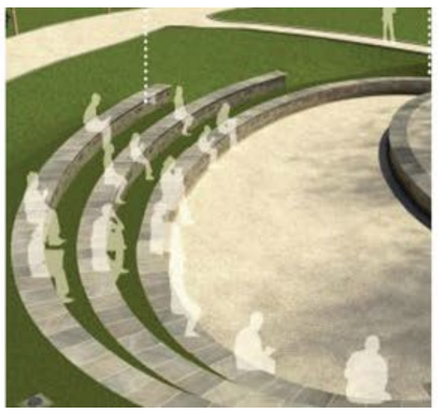
Provide park amenities (bike racks, tables, benches)



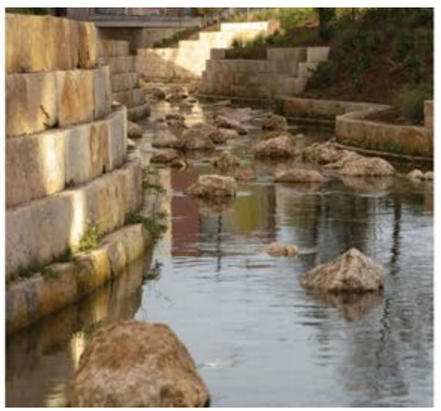
Maintain community garden element



Replace historic marker



Include pavilion and/or event space



Propose creek improvements



Provide interpretive signage: Thelma Boltin, musical history, WWII

Preliminary Plans + Feedback

Site Analysis

EXISTING CONDITIONS









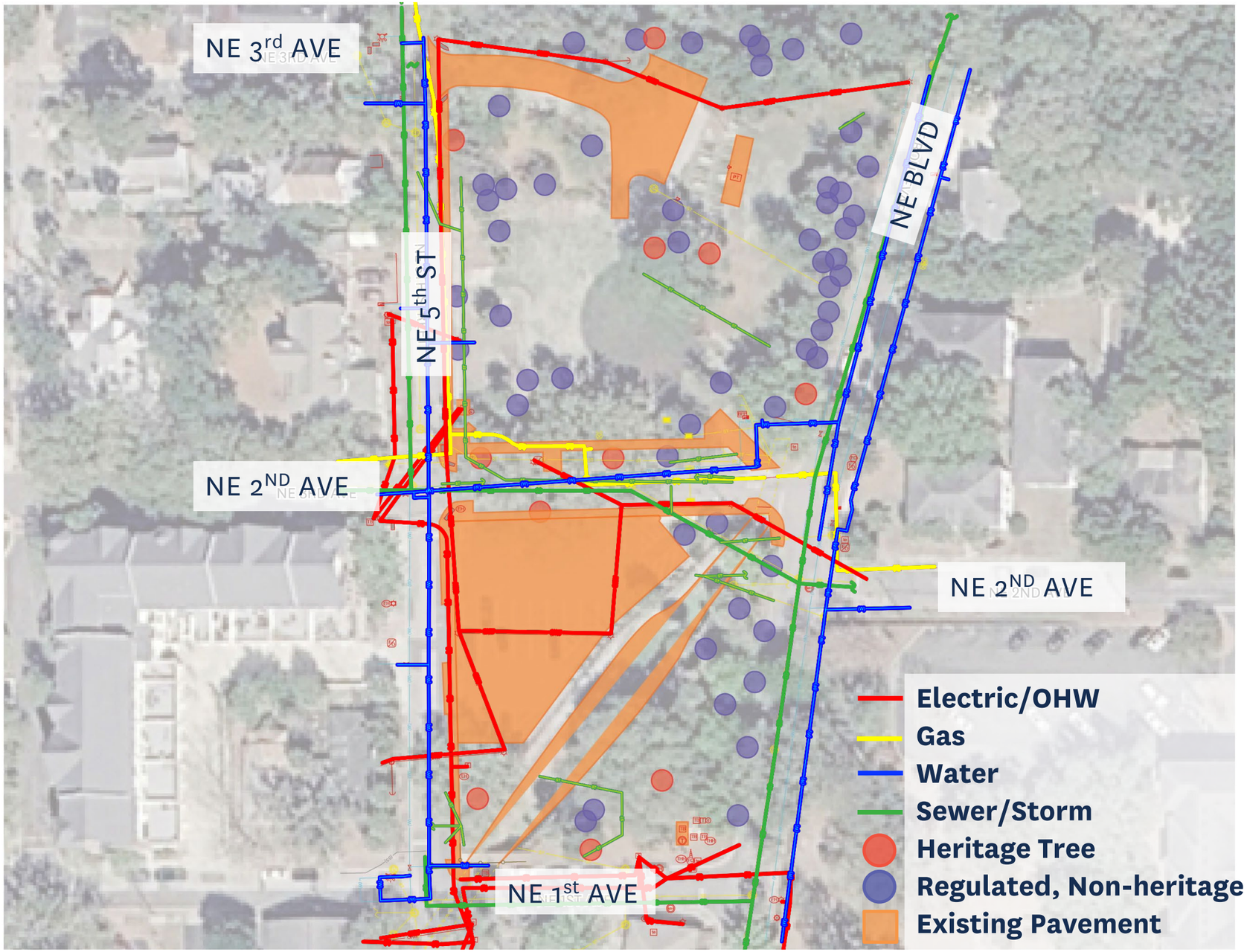






Site Analysis

UTILITIES & TREES







Site Analysis

REGULATED & HERITAGE TREES



Heritage Tree List

1. 38” Live Oak
2. 22” Cedar
3. 49” Live Oak
4. 23” Live Oak
5. 41” Live Oak
6. 48” Live Oak
7. 32” Live Oak
8. 33” Pine
9. 26” Pecan
10. 23” Live Oak
11. 31” Live Oak





Site Analysis

REGULATED & HERITAGE TREES

Design Considerations



Preservation of trees, especially high-quality heritage trees



Trees present in or around existing infrastructure



Creek improvements will impact some existing trees



Plan for replanting impacted trees

Site Analysis

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED, is an approach to crime prevention using urban and architectural design. It uses physical elements of the built environment to improve safety.

The five key principles include:

1. Natural Surveillance
2. Territorial Reinforcement
3. Activity Support
4. Maintenance and Management
5. Lighting and Visibility





Depot Park, Gainesville, Florida

Preliminary Plans: Thelma Boltin Trailhead

PROGRAM PRIORITIES BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

This project has a $2M construction budget.



Reimagine site as a trailhead for Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail



Honor Thelma Boltin's legacy: folk art and musical history



Create usable community outdoor space



Recognize WWII servicemen through art and/or sculpture



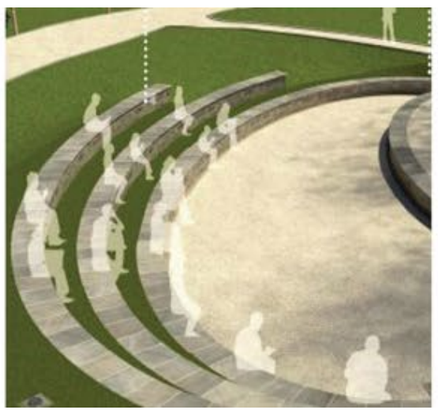
Provide park amenities (bike racks, tables, benches)



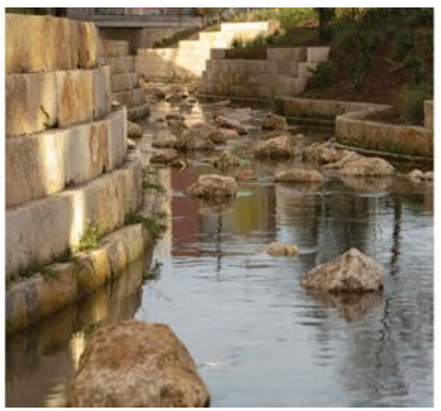
Maintain community garden element



Replace historic marker



Include pavilion and/or event space



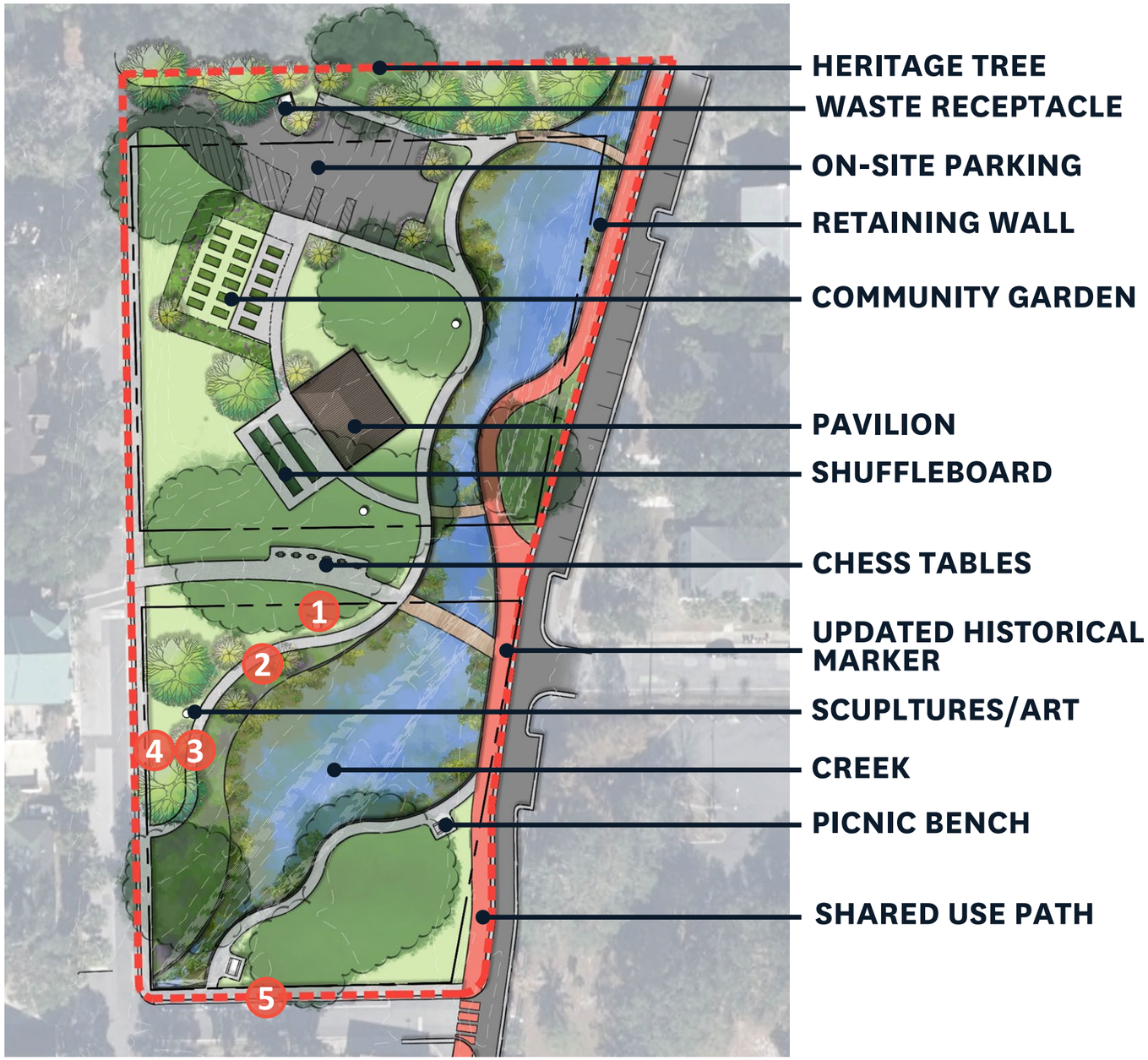
Propose creek improvements



Provide interpretive signage: Thelma Boltin, musical history, WWII

Preliminary Plans: Thelma Boltin Trailhead

EXAMPLE ‘A’



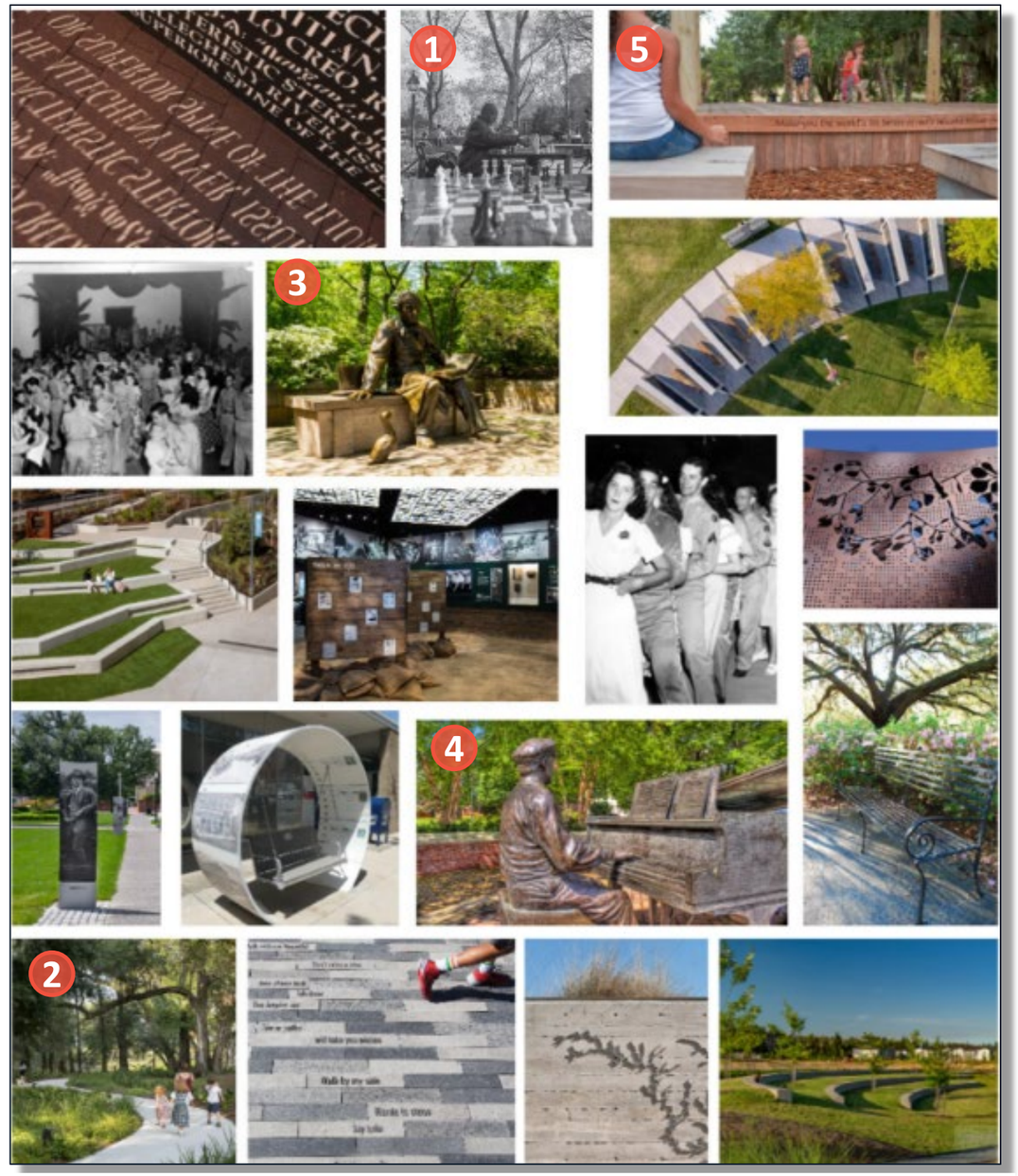


Image Board selected during Public Workshop #1

Preliminary Plans: Thelma Boltin Trailhead

EXAMPLE ‘B’



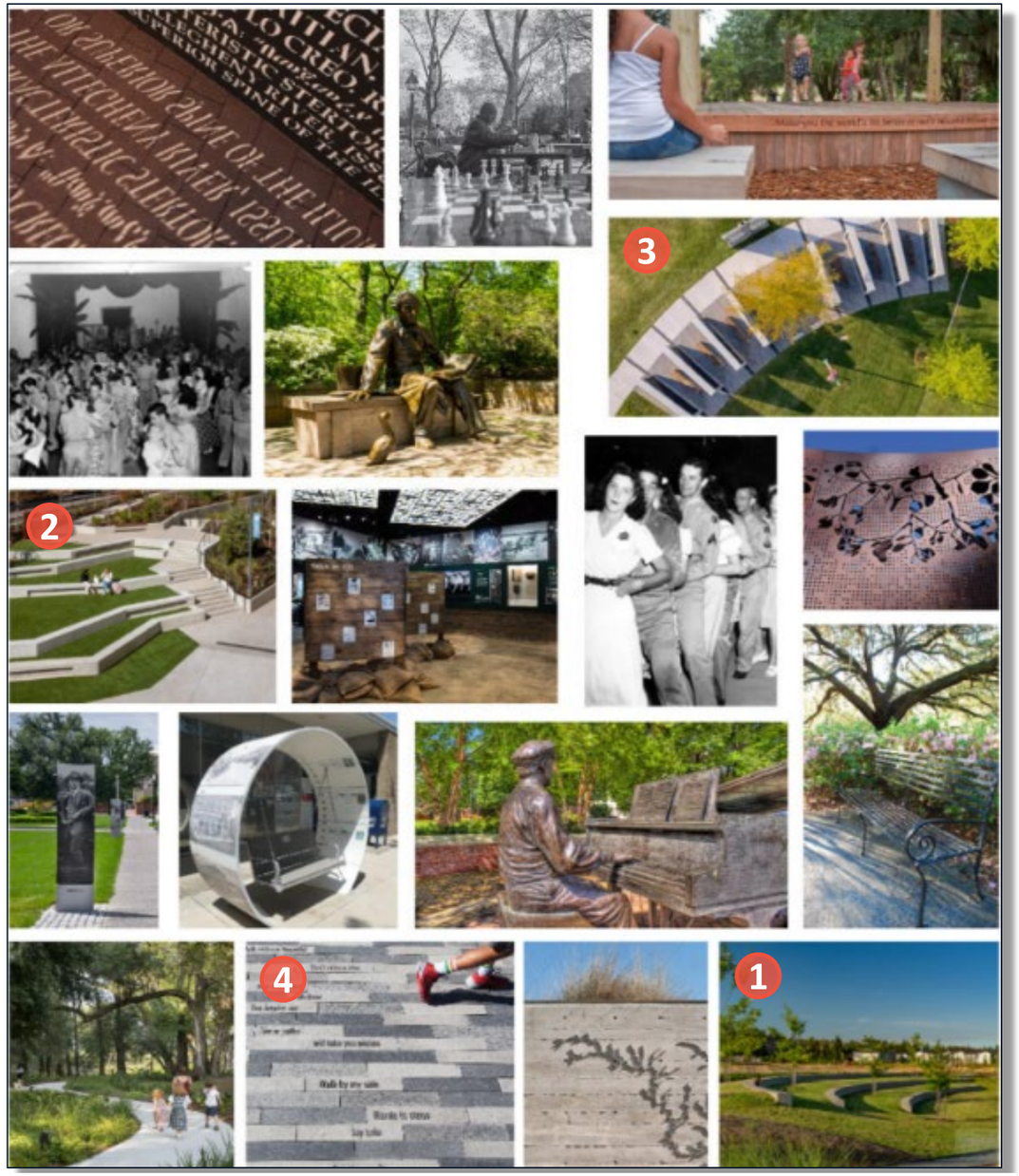


Image Board selected during Public Workshop #1

Preliminary Plans: Thelma Boltin Trailhead

EXAMPLE ‘A’ + EXAMPLE ‘B’ COMPARISON



Example ‘A'

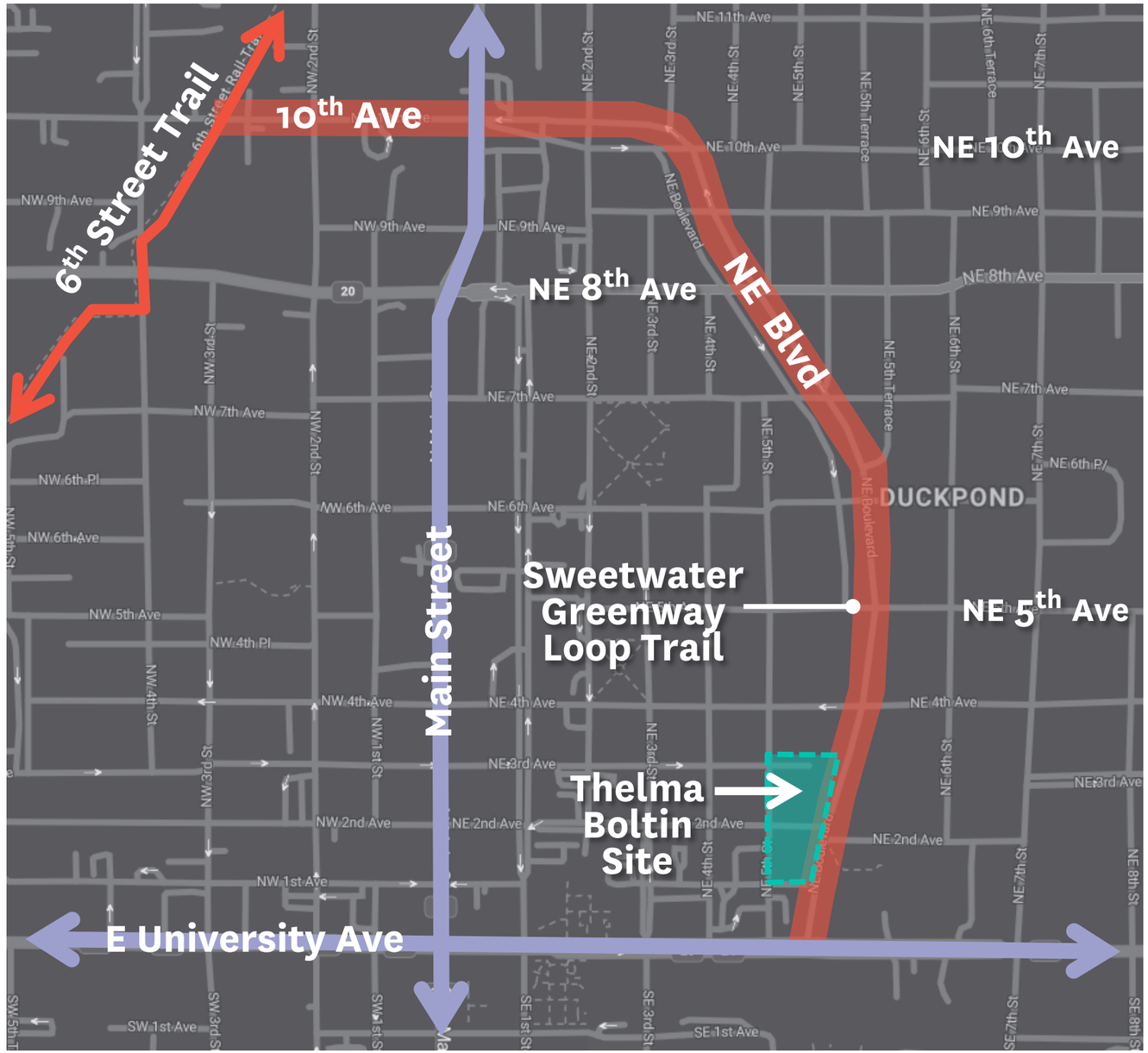


Example ‘B'

Preliminary Plans: Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail

OVERVIEW

- A “Shared Use Path” is an approximate 10’ or wider pathway that accommodates multiple modes of transportation.
- Construction of shared use path is not currently funded. This effort will help establish a potential budget.
- The proposed Sweetwater Greenway Trail Corridor follows NE Boulevard from University Avenue to 10th Avenue and follows 10th Avenue west across Main Street to connect with the existing 6th Street Trail.
- The trail and site are being studied concurrently for design synergy and integrated public engagement.

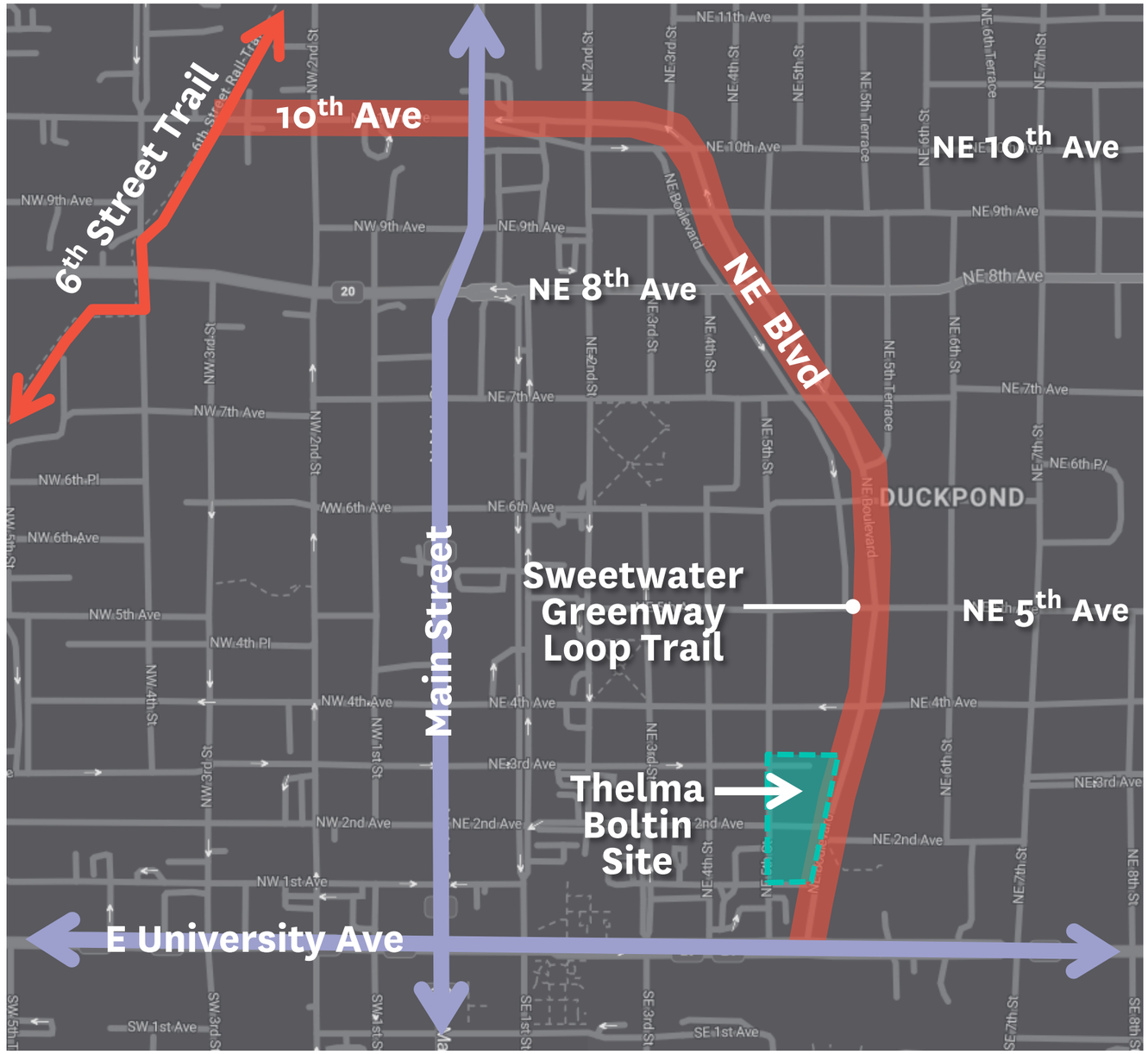


Preliminary Plans: Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Important design considerations for the trail corridor include:

- Project aims to utilize existing Right-of-Way as much as possible.
- Minimizing tree impacts is a priority of the community and the city.
- Much of the existing creek infrastructure along the corridor requires maintenance and/or complete replacement.
- Focus groups desire for the trail to fit within the existing character of the neighborhood.
- Project is studying other potential creek improvements to reduce flooding in the area.

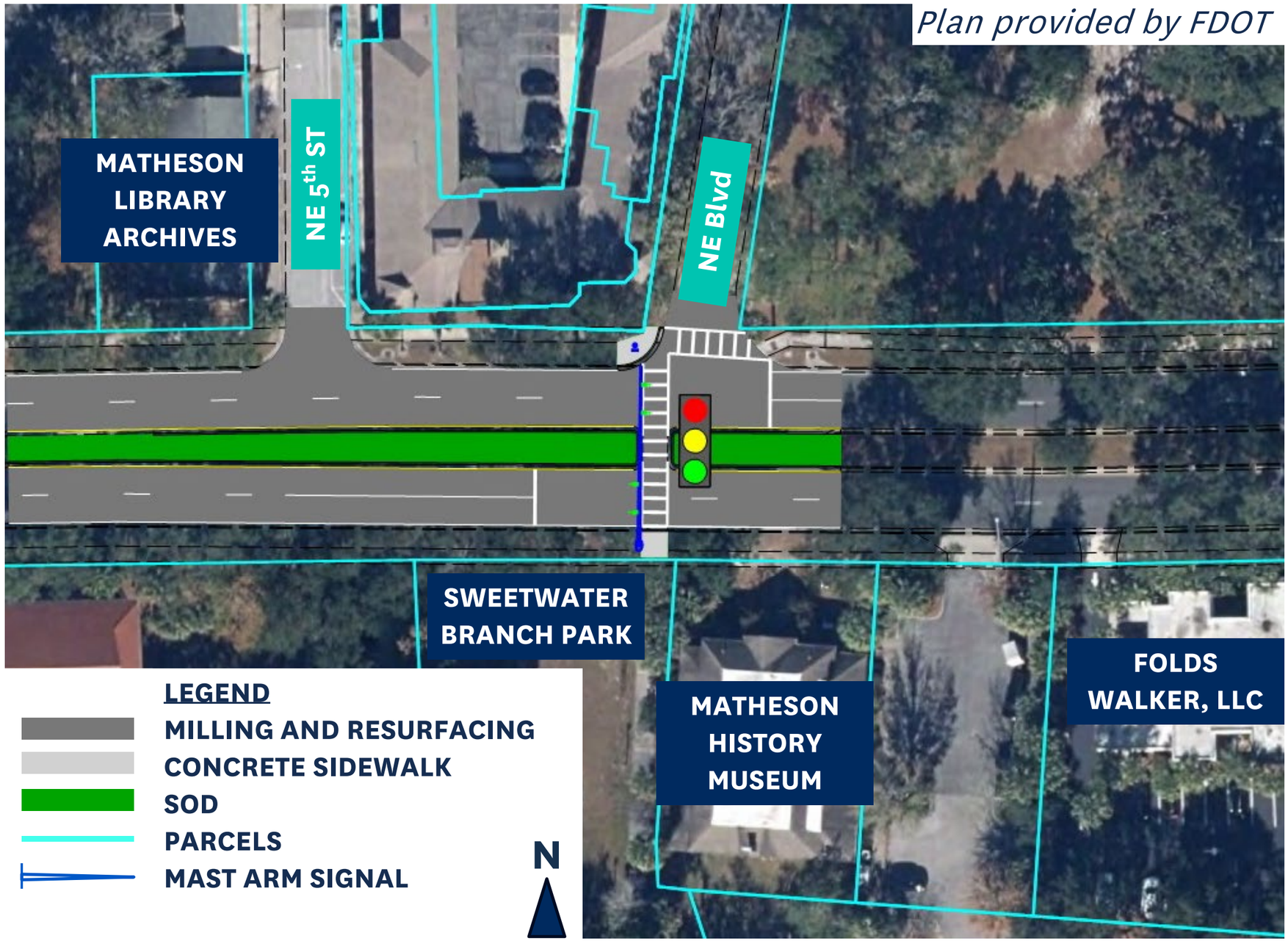


Preliminary Plans: Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- FDOT has plans for a future crosswalk on East University Blvd. at the west side of NE Blvd
- Crosswalk will connect Sweetwater Branch Park to NE Blvd and provide signalized crossing for the future trail connection across University Avenue.
- FDOT project begins sometime in early 2028

Plan provided by FDOT



Preliminary Plans: Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Project is exploring design options for the trail corridor including:

The southern end of the trail (University Avenue to NE 5th Avenue) could be on the east or west side of NE Boulevard.

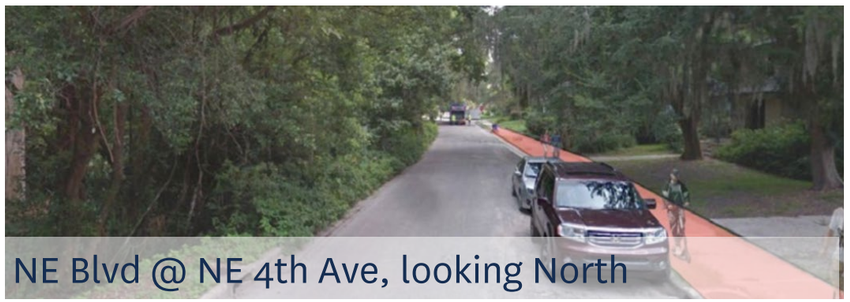


Map Key

Example A: East Trail Alignment



NE Blvd @ University Ave, looking North



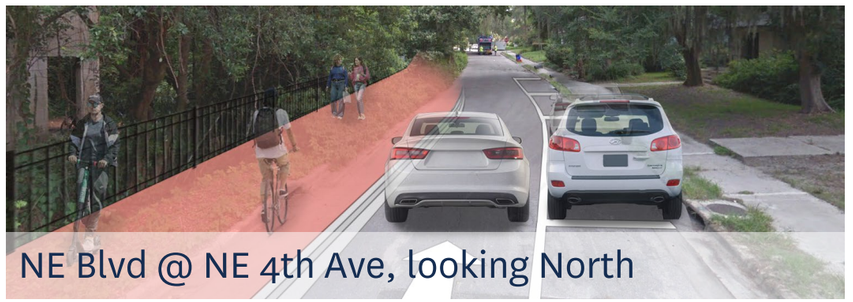
NE Blvd @ NE 4th Ave, looking North

- Does not align with crosswalk on E. University Avenue. Users will also need to cross NE Blvd at University Ave.
- Existing roadway of NE Blvd remains as-is.
- Sidewalk is added and grass strip paved along eastern side of NE Blvd.

Example B: West Trail Alignment



NE Blvd @ University Ave, looking North



NE Blvd @ NE 4th Ave, looking North

- Aligns with FDOT crosswalk on E. University Avenue.
- NE Blvd is narrowed to a single, north bound lane and a new, separated shared use path is added.
- On-street parking can be maintained or removed to add more buffer between shared use trail and roadway.

Preliminary Plans: Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail

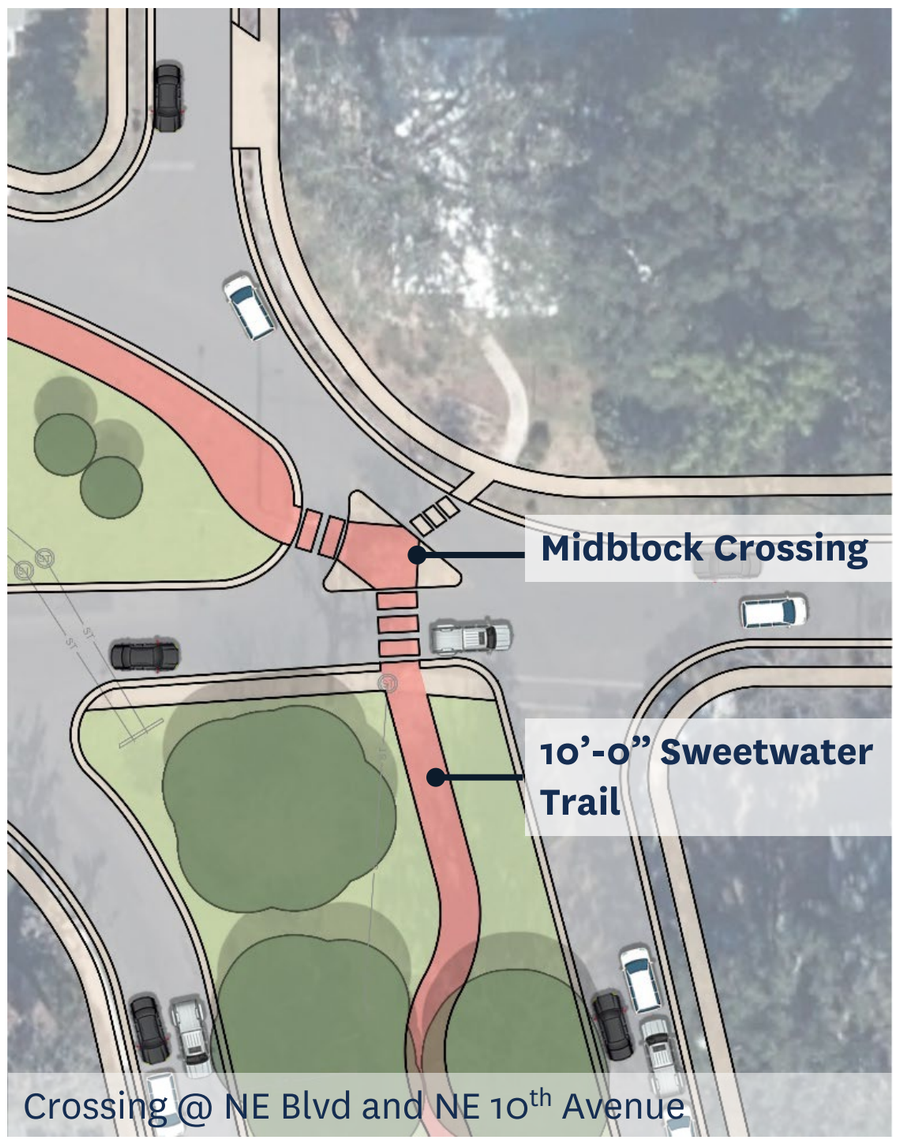
DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Project is exploring design options for the trail corridor including:

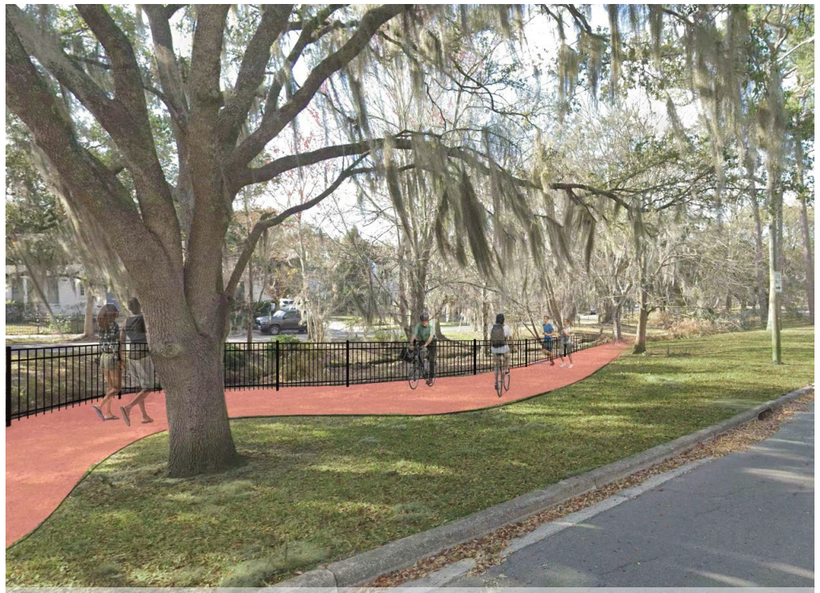
In the Duckpond area, team is reviewing for safe crossings, tree-preservation, and maintaining the character of the neighborhood.



Map Key



Crossing @ NE Blvd and NE 10th Avenue



NE Blvd near NE 7th Avenue



Crossing @ NE Blvd and NE 8th Avenue

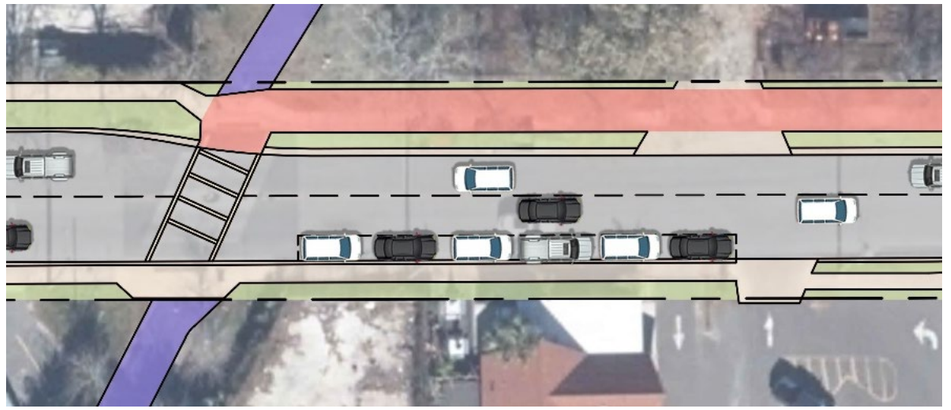
Preliminary Plans: Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail

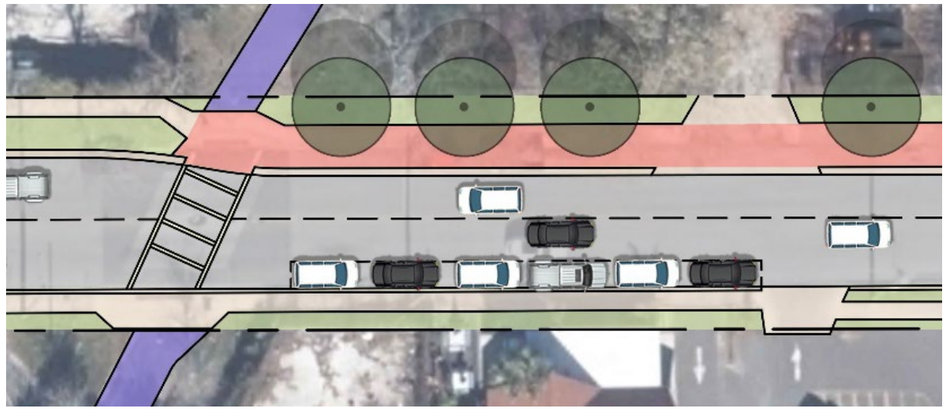
DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Project is exploring design options for the trail corridor including:

Along NE 10th Ave, considerations being reviewed include existing roadway width, on-street parking, tree preservation, and connection to 6th Street Trail.

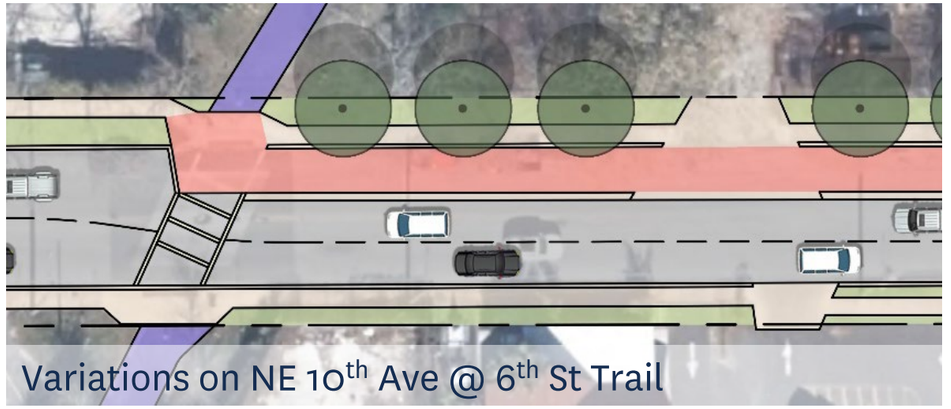




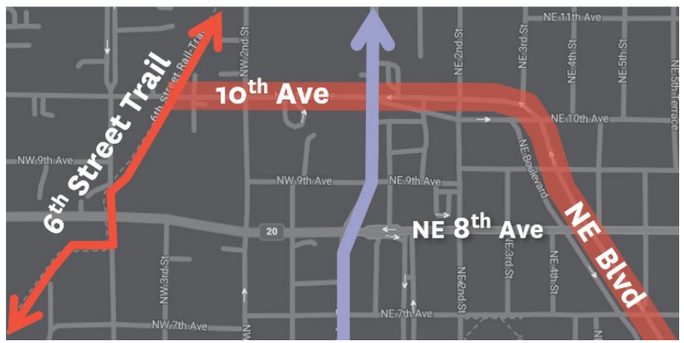




Variations on NE 10th Ave west of Main St.



Variations on NE 10th Ave @ 6th St Trail



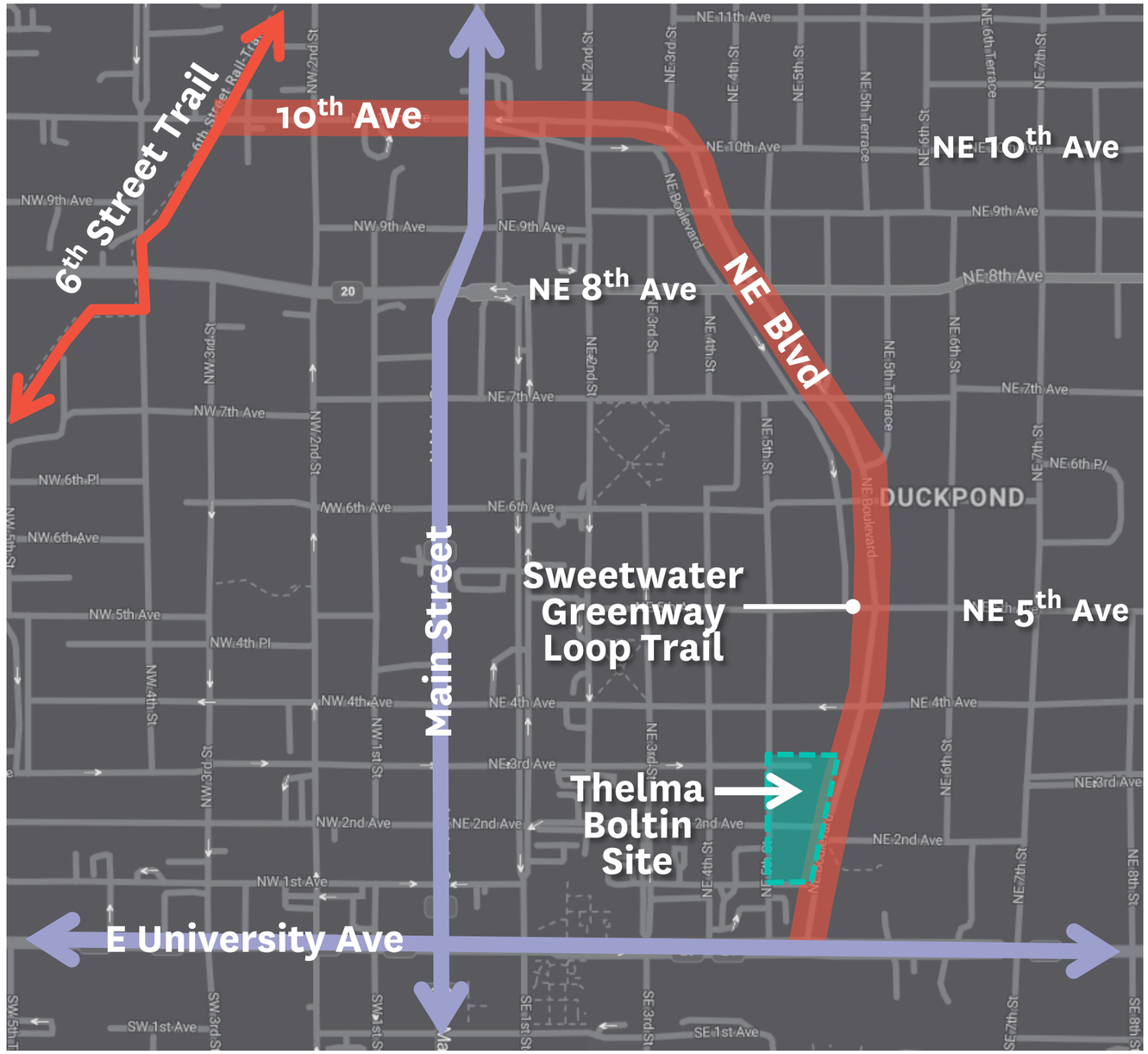
Map Key

Preliminary Plans: Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail

The project will present additional trail information at the City of Gainesville Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Board on October 20, 6:00pm at the RTS Administration Building, Conference Room 5264.

Please plan to attend and/or visit the project website for more updates.

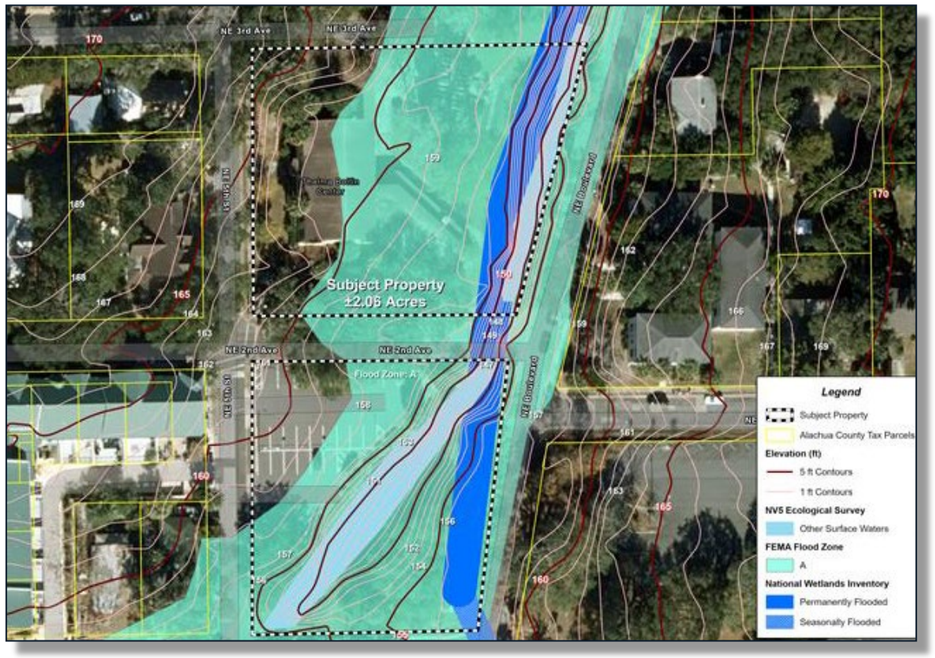
GainesvilleFL.gov/thelmaboltin

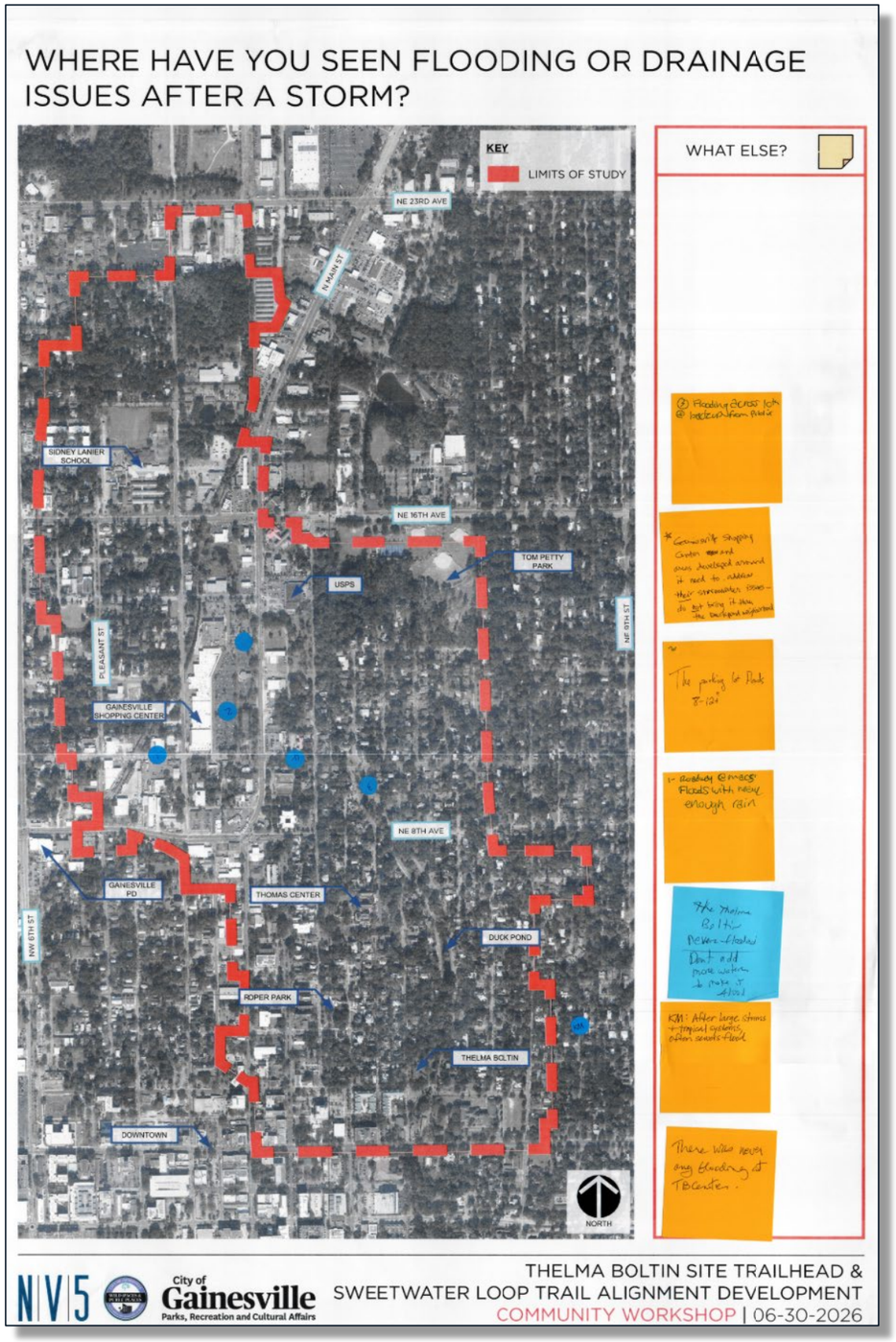


Stormwater Improvements

FOCUS OF WORK

- A hydraulic analysis is necessary to determine feasible Floodplain storage/restoration on site.
- It is important to identify current choke points and problem areas to make recommendations & propose solutions.
- Recommendations from the report are not currently funded, but this will help to establish a budget for future improvements.





Creek Improvements

RECOMMENDATIONS

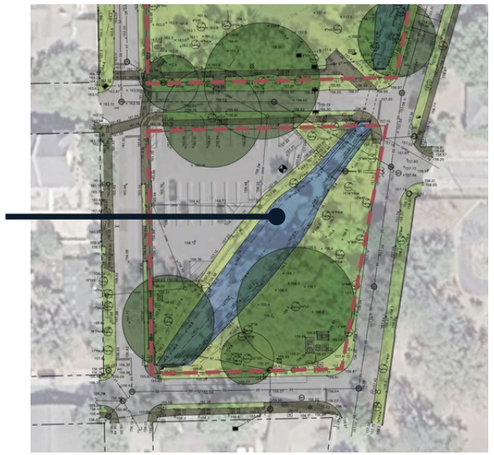
<u>On the Project Site</u>:

- Propose floodplain storage
  - South parcel of the site
  - Floodplain storage widens the creek on the west side
  - Creek wall on east side should remain to protect existing trees

<u>Within the Study Area</u>:

- Repair or replace creek walls in areas where poor condition impacts effective water flow

- Remove “choke points” at identified locations by replacing or upsizing stormwater pipes







EXAMPLE PLAN A



EXAMPLE PLAN B



Feedback

Thelma Boltin Trailhead Project

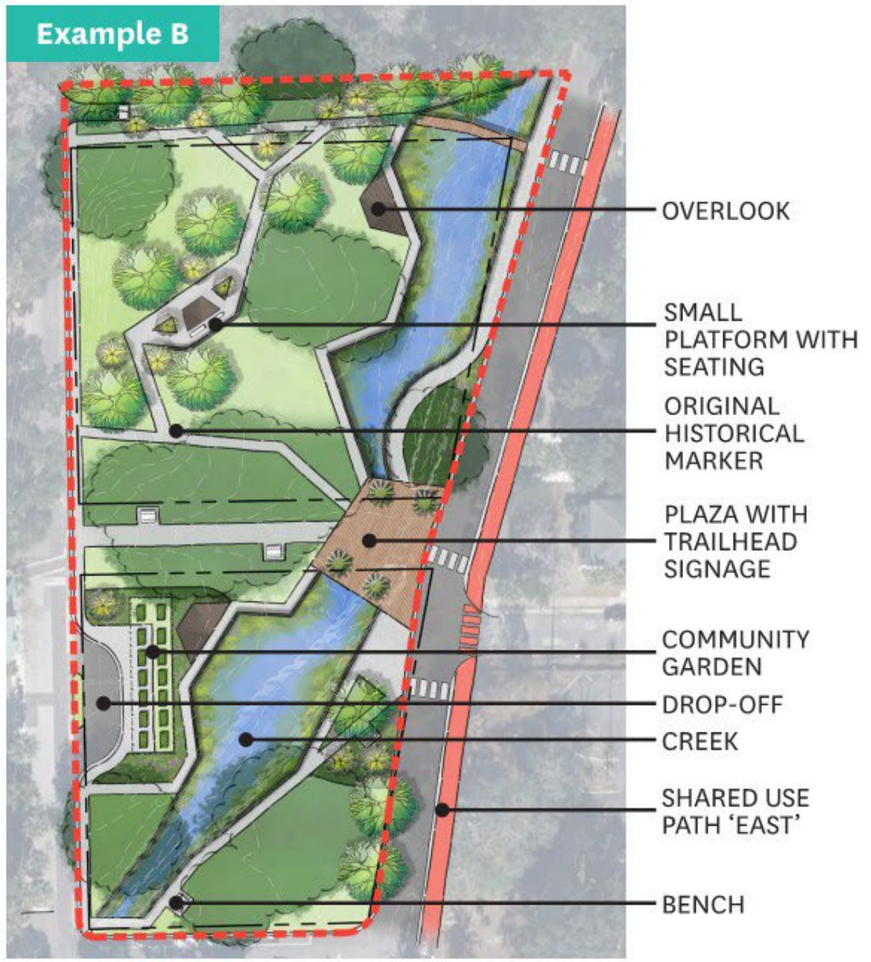
Please circle elements you like and cross out the elements you do not like with an 'X'. Provide additional feedback below.

Example A



Do you have any additional comments about Example A?

Example B

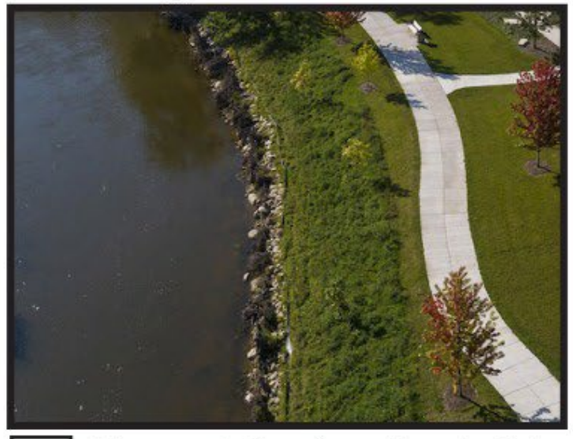


Do you have any additional comments about Example B?

Thelma Boltin Trailhead Project

Please check all of the creekside amenities you would like to see in the park.

These images illustrate different examples of a Natural Sloping Creek Edge

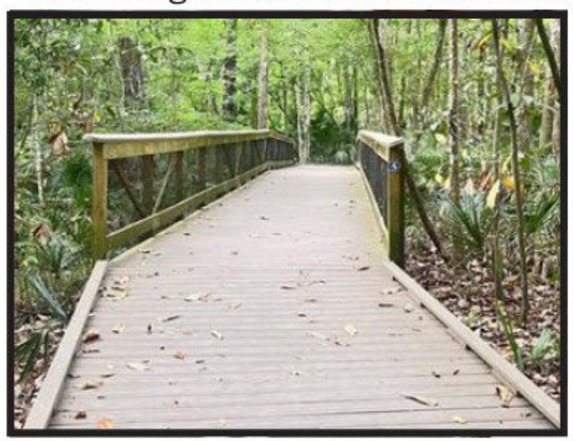






☐ Natural Sloping Creek Edge

These images illustrate different examples of a Boardwalk







☐ Boardwalk

Thelma Boltin Trailhead Project

Please check all of the creekside amenities you would like to see in the park.

These images illustrate different examples of an Overlook



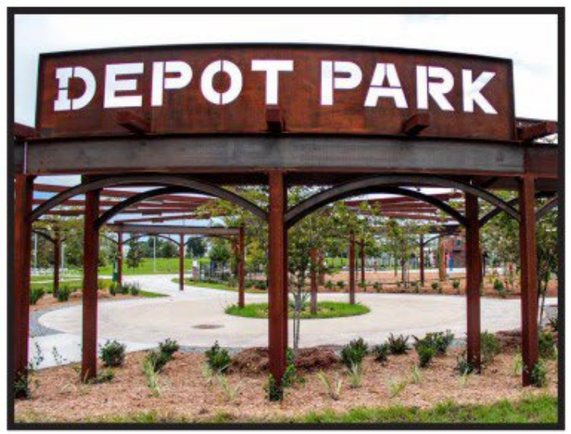


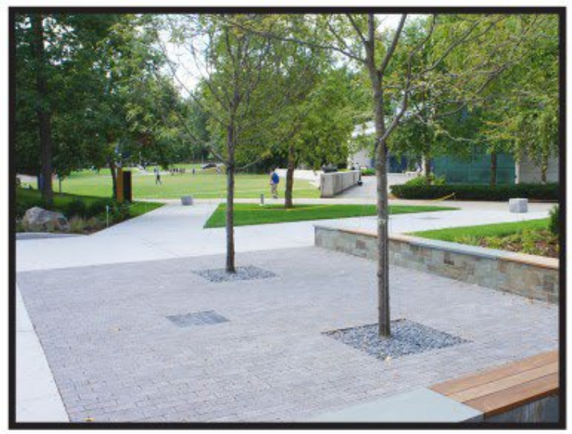


☐ Overlook

These images illustrate different examples of a Plaza







☐ Plaza

Thelma Boltin Trailhead Project

Please check all of the activities you would like included in the park.



☐ Shuffleboard



☐ Chess



☐ Gathering Space



☐ Ping-Pong

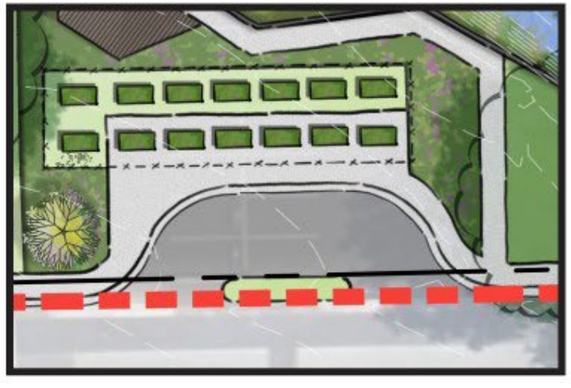


☐ Activity Space

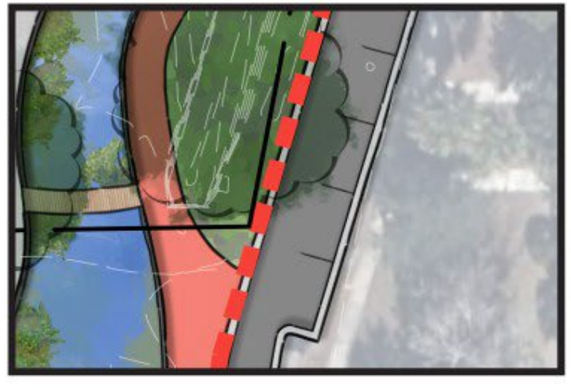
☐ Other amenities you would like included in the park.

Thelma Boltin Trailhead Project

Please check all of the elements you would like to see included in the park.



☐ Vehicular drop off



☐ On-street parking



☐ On-site parking



☐ Remove vehicular access through the center of the site on NE 2nd Ave



☐ Retain vehicular access through the center of the site on NE 2nd Ave



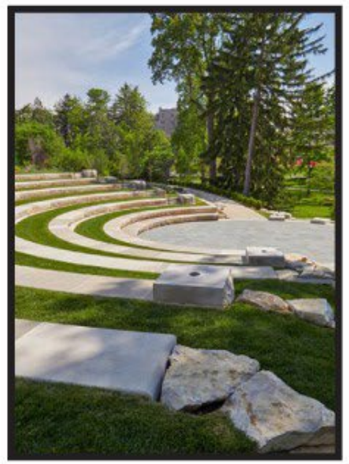
Map Key

Thelma Boltin Trailhead Project

Please answer the question below.

How can we commemorate the former Thelma Boltin Center?





☐ Platform or performance area at former Thelma Boltin Center auditorium room





☐ Outline of former building footprint with commemorative signage

Thelma Boltin Trailhead Project

Please answer the questions below.

Rank the following park characteristics from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important to you and 5 being the least important.

___ Convenient and available parking

___ Recreational amenities

___ Green space and landscape

___ Neighborhood gathering and activity space

___ Public art

Comments:

Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail Alignment Project

Please answer the questions below.

Would you like to see the Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail as a:



☐ **Widened sidewalk**
NE Blvd remains two-way from University Ave to NE 5th Ave

OR





☐ **Separate shared use path**
NE Blvd becomes one-way from University Ave to NE 5th Ave

Map Key



If you selected **Separate shared use path**, which of the following would you prefer?

☐ **Keep** some on-street parking, even if that means no buffer between the shared use path and the travel lane

☐ **Remove** some on-street parking to have a buffer between the shared use path and travel lane

Please answer the question below.

Any additional feedback?

Please keep this page to stay engaged with the project. Return the rest of the worksheet to staff.

Thelma Boltin Trailhead & Sweetwater Greenway Loop Trail Alignment Project Information

Project Website: GainesvilleFL.gov/thelmaboltin

WSPP Project Manager: Rachel Mandell - 352-393-8544 - MandellRC@GainesvilleFL.gov



Next Steps

Public Engagement: Community-Driven Design

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

1

Identify Community Priorities + Explore Opportunities

- Conducted 4 Stakeholder Meetings
- Held Community Workshop #1

2

Share Draft Designs + Verify Understanding

WE ARE HERE!

- Stakeholder Meetings
- Community Workshop #2
- Preliminary City Commission Presentation

3

Refine Plans + Finalize Recommendations

- Stakeholder Meetings
- Community Workshop #3
- Final City Commission Presentation

Stay Informed

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Website:

GainesvilleFL.gov/thelmaboltin

Contact:

Rachel Mandell, Project Manager

352-393-8544

MandellRC@GainesvilleFL.gov

Past & Future Public Meeting Schedule:

Community Workshop #3 – Date TBD

Stay Updated:

Click the Link to Get on the Mailing List

Learn More:

Read the Project Archive, Project Summary, Site Information

