

REUSE CONCEPT PLAN

Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District, Williamston, North Carolina



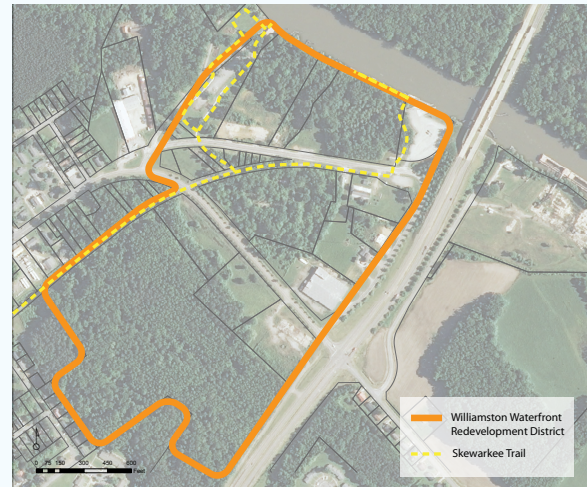
March 2014



OVERVIEW

The Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District is a collection of former industrial properties, vacant lands and wetlands totaling 47 acres along the scenic Roanoke River. Adjacent to North Carolina Wetland Game Land, the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge, a public boat access and a major state highway, the site is uniquely positioned to connect visitors and the local community to significant natural assets and recreational opportunities.

Situated on one of the few navigable rivers in the state, the area is characterized by a rich maritime history, as well as a history of industrial use which led to contamination across several of the properties. In 2011, the Town of Williamston was awarded a grant from EPA's Brownfields Program to assess the contaminated sites in the River Road area, develop clean up plans, and work with the community to explore how the properties can return to productive use and revitalize the area. This Concept Plan is one of the outcomes of this process and was developed based on community interviews, a stakeholder workshop and a public open house conducted during 2013.



Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District

VISION

On June 18, 2013, community members gathered at Moratoc Park to work toward a shared vision for redevelopment of the properties clustered between East Main Street and the Roanoke River, referred to as the Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District. In recognition of the area's significant natural, recreational and cultural assets, participants endorsed an eco-tourism theme to guide investments in the area that increase access to the Roanoke River while promoting sustainability, regional heritage and ecological awareness. Community members envision a range of features and activities to support the theme and local economy, from birding and boat tours to seasonal restaurants and supply stores.



Planning Workshop, June 18, 2013

CONSIDERATIONS

The following considerations identified during the planning process have guided the Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District concept plan design:

Roanoke River. The Roanoke River is a scenic waterway that offers opportunities for recreation including boating, fishing, paddling, naturalist exploration and ecological education. Protecting water quality and riparian habitat while making the river more accessible for locals and visitors is a key priority in the redevelopment plan.

Economic Development. Proposed investments should support long term economic sustainability by enticing younger residents and families to settle in the Williamston area, creating local jobs and new revenue streams, and attracting regional visitors and tourists.

Tourism. The site's proximity to regional hubs and major highway interchanges en route to North Carolina beaches makes it a convenient destination or stopping point for regional travelers. The plan considers specific amenities that may appeal to both highway travelers and visitors to the nearby equestrian and recreation centers.

Potential Funding Sources. The plan considers future uses that may be attractive to grantors, private investors and target users for the redevelopment area. Identifying potential funding sources and aligning redevelopment activities with funding cycles can help with implementation planning.



Skewarkee Trail leading to boardwalk along Roanoke River

CONCEPT PLAN

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Workshop participants identified a range of redevelopment opportunities for the Williamston waterfront area that maximize existing infrastructure, build on partnerships and support the vision for a nature-based recreation destination. The proposed redevelopment opportunities are grouped within key activity areas:

River Landing Center. The primary destination is centered around a 3,000 square foot facility that provides visitor information and showcases cultural heritage artifacts. The former industrial structure also provides office space for contractors providing services such as boat rentals, portage and eco-tours.

Vehicular access around the building is provided for passenger drop-off, handicapped parking and service deliveries.

Several areas surrounding the visitor center and museum can be designated for specific uses prioritized by stakeholders, including a dog park, replica Tuscarora village and sustainability demonstrations such as rain gardens and bioswales. Other areas can be used for informal recreation such as disk golf or pick-up soccer.

Riverside. A boardwalk extension connecting the existing boardwalk to Moratoc Park is a high priority for the community. The boardwalk provides opportunities for fishing, walking, biking and wetland and river observation.

Once constructed, the increased access may support waterfront services such as a seasonal restaurant and/or supply outlet housed in an elevated structure. An existing walkway connecting the proposed River Landing area to the river can be rebuilt for future use to provide pedestrians more direct access to the waterfront. In addition, floating docks along the waterfront can accommodate boaters.

River Landing Camping Center. Tent and recreational vehicle camp sites can be concentrated in the large, undeveloped property south of River Road. Infrastructure, such as bath/shower facilities and RV connections, can be developed incrementally to accommodate demand for various types of camping. As depicted in the concept plan, the camping center can accommodate 25-50 tent and/or RV camp sites. Cabins, proposed by the owner of the property west of the Skewarkee Trail, would provide another lodging option for seasonal visitors during fishing and hunting peak seasons.

Provisions Anchor. A strong commercial anchor is critical to attract regional motorist traffic from NC Highway 17 at the east gateway entry. Ideally, the anchor can provide motor and boat fuel, food services and recreation supplies to meet the needs of regional and local visitors. The commercial structure's design and offerings should be aligned with the vision for the River Landing park.

Rental Housing. Quality rental units to meet existing need (10-20 units) can be constructed facing Main Street, connecting residents to existing residential areas and the River Landing amenities.



















SITE DESIGN

Use Zones

- Community Gathering Spaces**
Spaces for individuals or groups to use for relaxing, meeting, informal recreation and other activities.
- Lodging**
Year-round rental units, seasonal cabins, tent and RV facilities.
- Services**
Food, fuel and provisions to meet the needs of local residents, River Landing visitors and regional travelers.
- Recreation**
Maintained recreation facilities and preserved wetland and riparian areas.
- Flexible Future Use**
Future use to be determined.

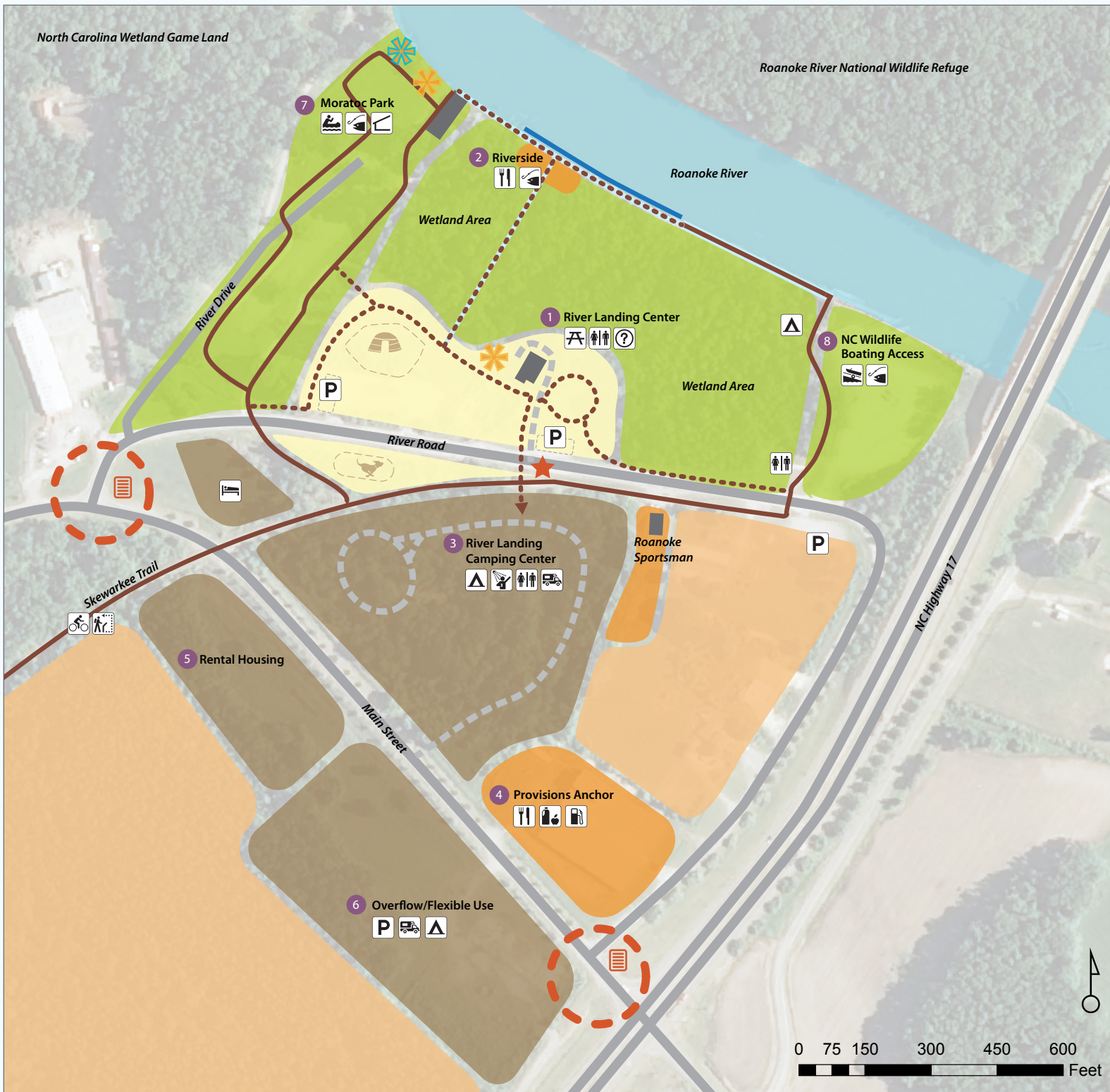
Activity Areas

- 1 **River Landing Center**
- 2 **Riverside**
- 3 **River Landing Camping Center**
- 4 **Provisions Anchor**
- 5 **Rental Housing**
- 6 **Overflow Parking/Camping/Future Development**
- 7 **Moratoc Park** (existing)
- 8 **NC Wildlife Boating Access** (existing)

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Motor boat launch |  Tent sites |
|  Picnic area |  Cabin rentals |
|  Camp site |  RV sites |
|  Bath facilities |  Shower/bath facilities |
|  Fishing |  Picnic area |
|  Canoe launch |  Restroom facilities |
|  Hiking |  Seasonal restaurant or other food service |
|  Bike trail |  Auto and boat fuel |
|  Parking |  Provisions (food, supplies) |






Existing boardwalk and boat access along Roanoke River









Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District






Access

-  River Landing entry
-  Welcome signage
-  River Landing gateway

Circulation

-  Skewarkee Trail (existing)
-  Boardwalk (existing)
-  Roads (existing)
-  Potential trail extensions and connections
-  Potential boardwalk extension
-  Potential vehicular access

Additional Features

-  Portage/rental pick up and drop off areas
-  Mobile food service
-  Dog park
-  Replica Tuscarora village
-  Floating dock

MOVING FORWARD

Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District, Williamston, North Carolina



Illustration highlighting the arrangement of potential amenities around a future visitor center.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Creating design guidelines focused on sustainability for the waterfront district can encourage decisions during redevelopment that protect the riparian ecology, water quality and health of the community. Design principles can also guide decisions that highlight the natural beauty of the area and reinforce the eco-tourism concept.

Guidelines for hardscape materials might include pervious surfaces such as concrete pavers, permeable pavement and gravel which allow water to drain safely in trails, parking lots and vehicular paths. Guidelines for plantings may include a selection of specific native, low maintenance perennials, shrubs and trees that can be planted throughout the public and private properties to provide native wildlife habitat and a cohesive look and feel for the waterfront district. Other guidelines might be considered for signage, equipment, facility construction and operations.



Illustration of a potential provisions anchor at the gateway facing NC Highway 17.

PHASING

A "Rest Stop (near term) to Destination (long term)" phasing strategy can provide an incremental development approach that begins with lower cost, high value features that build momentum around the park, increase visitor traffic and encourage continued investment.

Stakeholders identified many features of the proposed River Landing visitor center and camping area as near term opportunities that can be developed within five years. To meet demand for services that may take longer to accommodate with permanent infrastructure, partnerships with mobile food vendors and local businesses to handle tours, rentals and other amenities can build a commercial base for more significant investment in the future. As development, awareness and activity grow, the area can eventually offer a range of services, amenities and features that position the waterfront district as a visitor destination.

NEXT STEPS

Formalizing the stakeholder group that has been involved to date into a coalition that supports the waterfront redevelopment over the long term can ensure continuity of the vision for the unique destination. The variety of roles, industries and networks represented by members of the coalition can help the team identify funding resources and opportunities through grants, public-private partnerships, universities, volunteer programs and more. Continued outreach to the larger community and coordinated marketing and economic development efforts with the Town and Martin County are also critical to build momentum.

BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM

A 2011 EPA Brownfield grant has provided funds to the Town of Williamston for a Brownfields project. The grant, managed on behalf of the Town by Mid-Atlantic Associates, includes community outreach, site inventory, environmental site assessments, and cleanup and redevelopment planning. For more information about the Town of Williamston Brownfields Project or the Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District, please contact: Brent Kanipe, Director of Planning and Development, Town of Williamston at (252) 792-5142, ext 227 or rbkanipe@yahoo.com.