

UrbanRiver Visions 2

An initiative of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, in partnership with the City of Pittsfield

The West Branch of the Housatonic is a hidden asset, even to those who live in Pittsfield's Westside. The River provides a beautiful natural environment in the heart of the city – a place to walk beside, to enjoy from canoe, or from which to see the local wildlife that also live within the community. Working together, Westside residents can share in making the River a safer, healthier, more attractive place for all to enjoy.

A Westside Riverway of trails, parks, and more will provide new and inviting opportunities for local residents to enjoy the River that winds through their neighborhood. New on- and off-street biking and walking paths will make the River a more visible, more accessible part of the community. Small parks created on now-vacant riverside land will transform neglected spaces into community assets – places where neighborhood residents can come to picnic, play, and learn about the ecology and history of their River. A focused clean-up effort will improve water quality, strengthening the River as community asset. Extending from Wahconah Park to Clapp Park, the Westside Riverway will help the "hidden river" become a treasured place at the center of the community.

Pittsfield's Westside Riverway: A Vision for the West Branch of the Housatonic

Improve River access and trail connections at Wahconah Park

- Establish a continuous nature trail along the River from Wahconah Park to Dewey Avenue
- Create a pedestrian crossing over the West Branch to the former King Street Landfill property
- Acquire an easement along the riverfront portion of the undeveloped land off Turner Avenue to allow development of a trail
- Develop a canoe/kayak launch site near the ball field and post interpretive signs near the launch site and along the trail
- Implement parking improvements for the Wahconah Park ball field
- Create a rain garden to treat stormwater from the park's parking lot and other nearby impervious surfaces; install interpretive signs with information about water treatment
- Utilize City-owned land at the end of Dewey Avenue to install a viewing tower
- Support the establishment of the Housatonic River Museum at Wahconah Street as an educational resource and activity center



Along the West Branch are many homes, so the health of the River relies on what happens in each private backyard. Flyers and engaging public events are good approaches to spreading the word about easy ways everyone can help keep the River clean and improve water quality.

Recognize the River as the "Heart of the Neighborhood" from Linden Street to West Street

- Create a map or brochure of existing parks and other attractions within the Westside neighborhood
- Designate on-street bike trails and include them on the map
- Develop off-street trails through parks and along the River
- Establish a fence policy for public parks that allows access to the River while providing safety for children
- Enhance Pitt and Dorothy Amos Parks as integral parts of the Westside Riverway system through annual celebrations
- Provide ADA accessible viewing and fishing areas at Pitt Park
- Create pedestrian River crossings through undeveloped parcels and City rights-of-way: one at the west end of Bradford Street, another through the middle of the Columbus Avenue and West Street block
- Implement pedestrian and streetscape improvements from the River to downtown via Bradford Street
- Provide a connection to the River from the Conte Community School by showing the path of the Taconite Creek tributary as it runs underground through the neighborhood; include nature trails, informational exhibits, good stormwater management and a pool habitat for fish at the empty parcel on Columbus Avenue
- Develop a canoe/kayak launch site at the empty parcel north of Linden Street, east of the River

Pitt and Dorothy Amos Parks serve as great gathering places for neighborhood children. Additional open spaces and recreational trails will give residents of all ages more places to play and more ways to learn about their natural environment.



Create new greenway and River connections in the Boylston Street area

- Acquire the Tax Title property on Harris Street for open space along the River
- Acquire a trail easement along the River on the East Mill Street brownfield site in the event of site redevelopment
- Repair the Boylston Street pedestrian bridge
- Create a kayak/canoe launch site with parking at the end of Fern Street

Improve stormwater practices along Hurlbut and West Streets

- Treat stormwater in parking lots before it flows into the West Branch by installing pervious paving, rain gardens and/or vegetated bio-swales
- Create a model for stormwater infiltration at the empty lot on the corner of Center and South Church Streets
- Plant trees along streets and in parking lots to help cool the area
- Create tree-lined pedestrian ways to better connect the area to downtown

Create new parks and greenway connections in the Mill Street Dam area

- Support ongoing efforts to remove the dam
- Create a "picnic park" next to the River on City-owned parcels along the east side of Mill Street; explore creation of a River's edge connection between these two parcels through discussion with homeowners
- Explore opportunities for small parks and art installations
- Develop canoe/kayak launch sites above the dam and on the east side of the Mill Street bridge
- Install signs about the mill, the dam and the industrial history of the West Branch



Bridge crossings are great places to view and connect with the River. Interpretive signs will provide information about the River, local history and area wildlife.

Create River access and develop trail connections at Clapp Park

- Establish a trail along the railroad tracks to create a pedestrian loop from the Mill Street Dam to Clapp Park, with the loop circling back up to the Dam along the West Branch
- Acquire Tax Title properties at the end of Fern Street and south of the Boylston Street bridge to help complete the trail circuit
- Build a bridge over the River and/or investigate ways to make the existing informal River crossing into a safe bridge; add a new crossing over the railroad tracks to connect to open spaces south of the park
- Acquire the riverfront land south of Clapp Park
- Install interpretive signs at the parking area
- Develop canoe/kayak launch sites near the ball field parking lot and at the end of Hollister Street
- Implement erosion control along the River banks
- Preserve the mountain views from the hill in Clapp Park



Old mill buildings provide wonderful opportunities for new community businesses and activities.



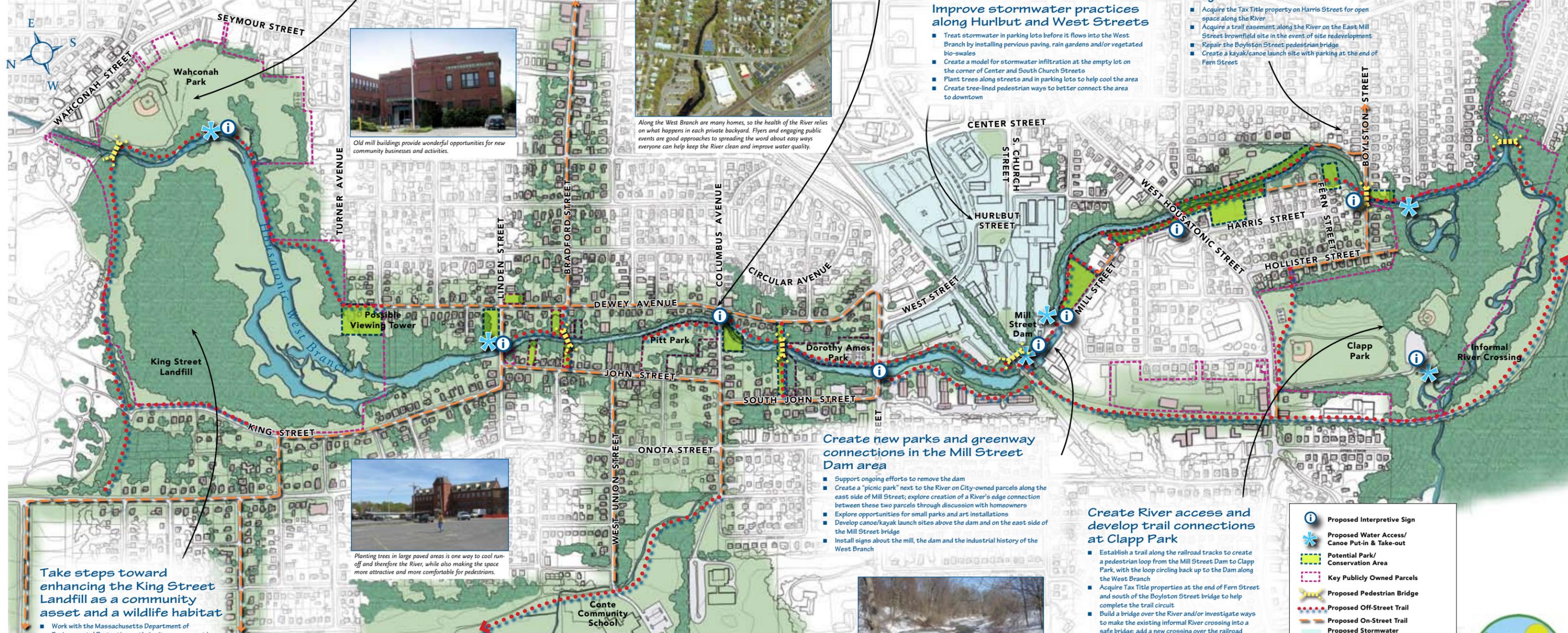
Planting trees in large paved areas is one way to cool run-off and therefore the River, while also making the space more attractive and more comfortable for pedestrians.

Take steps toward enhancing the King Street Landfill as a community asset and a wildlife habitat

- Work with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection on their site assessment/evaluation of clean-up alternatives for the King Street Landfill; consider restoring the floodplain along this side of the River to help alleviate flooding at Wahconah Park
- Create a pedestrian trail along the edge of the property; include a footbridge connecting to Wahconah Park
- Build a boardwalk through wetlands for wildlife viewing
- Promote canoe access through this section of the River
- Preserve the scenic views into the site from King Street and construct a viewing tower within the park at the end of Dewey Avenue

Target municipal resources to improve water quality and enhance River use

- Strategically remove fallen trees from the River to facilitate canoe and kayak use, utilizing currently available funds
- In order to reduce stormwater pollution, prioritize Department of Public Works street sweeping efforts to focus on streets that drain into the River (similar to the policy in place for lakes)
- Continue City efforts to clean up pollution sources identified through water quality monitoring programs
- Work with environmental advocacy groups to distribute information to residents about how they can care for the River in their backyard



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