

North
Greenville

TOWN COMMON
Tar River

River Park
North

West
Greenville

Uptown

University /
Tar River
Neighborhoods

East Carolina
University

At the core of the City's seven-mile long riverfront is Town Common. Town Common is an important point of community-river convergence and can best be described as Greenville's "central park". Town Common is bounded to the east and west by historic neighborhoods. The park also serves as the 'front door' to the riverfront from the City's central business district, Uptown.



Sycamore Hill Baptist Church

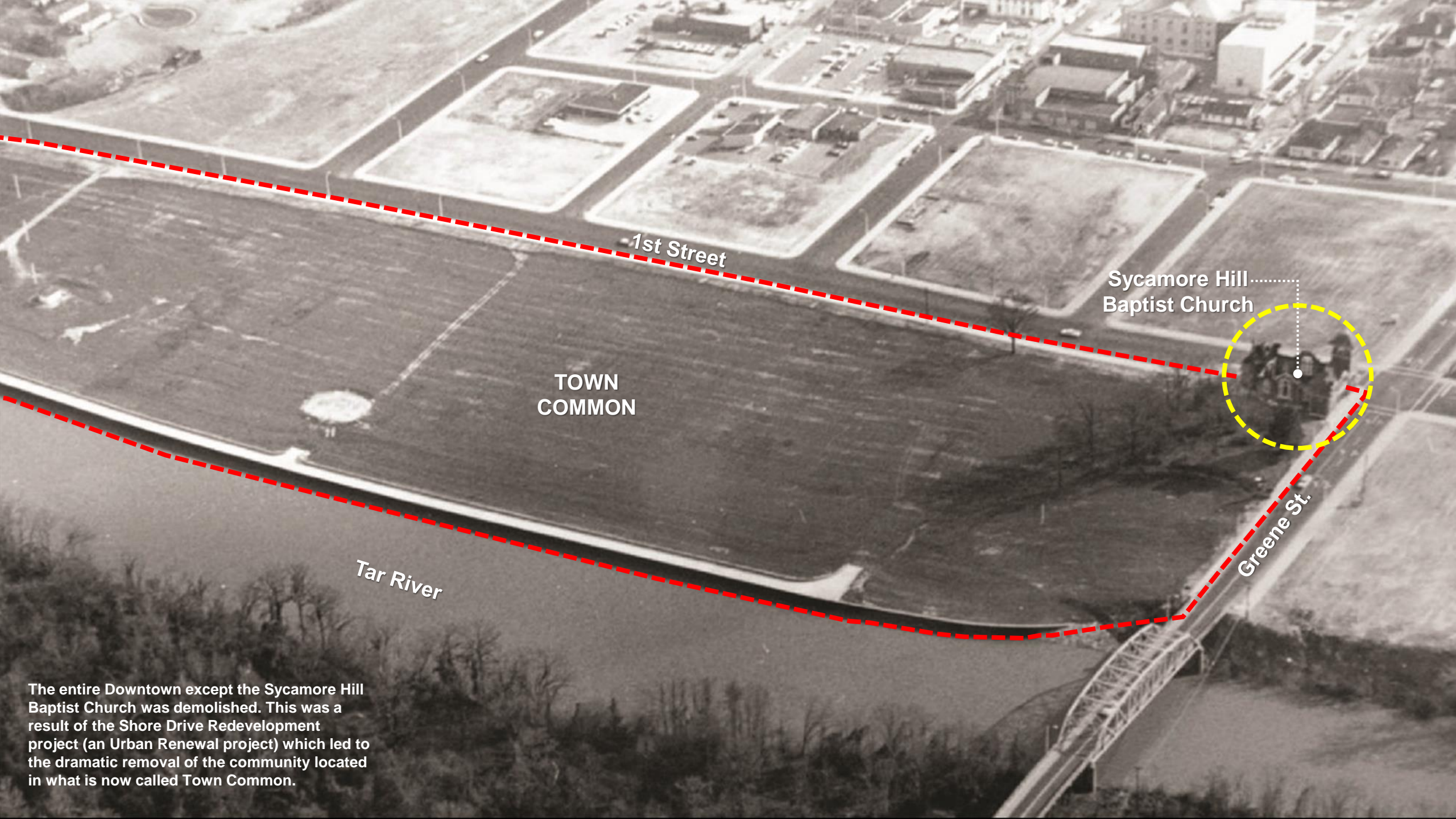
Greene St.

1st Street

TOWN COMMON

Tar River

Greenville's riverfront has evolved over time. Downtown was an authentic and thriving downtown African-American neighborhood located along the City's riverfront.



1st Street

Sycamore Hill
Baptist Church

TOWN
COMMON

Tar River

Greene St.

The entire Downtown except the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church was demolished. This was a result of the Shore Drive Redevelopment project (an Urban Renewal project) which led to the dramatic removal of the community located in what is now called Town Common.



The Sycamore Hill Baptist Church was a cornerstone institution for the Downtown community. It was a center of social, political, and economic activity, a place to nurture souls, guide younger congregants, listen to a gifted choir, and help others in need. It was the pride of the Community. The Church was burned by arsonists to the ground.

“The Church was like two arms reaching out and embracing the community.”

Former Downtown Resident

During the master planning and design process, former 'Downtown' residents recalled their memories of the predominately African American neighborhood which was eradicated as a result of the City's Urban Renewal project.



“I lived at 408 West First Street. I lived there from birth until 1965. After they moved us out, they called this ‘Uptown’ when it was actually ‘Downtown’. Why they changed it, I don’t understand that.”

Bertha Gaye, Former Downtown Resident

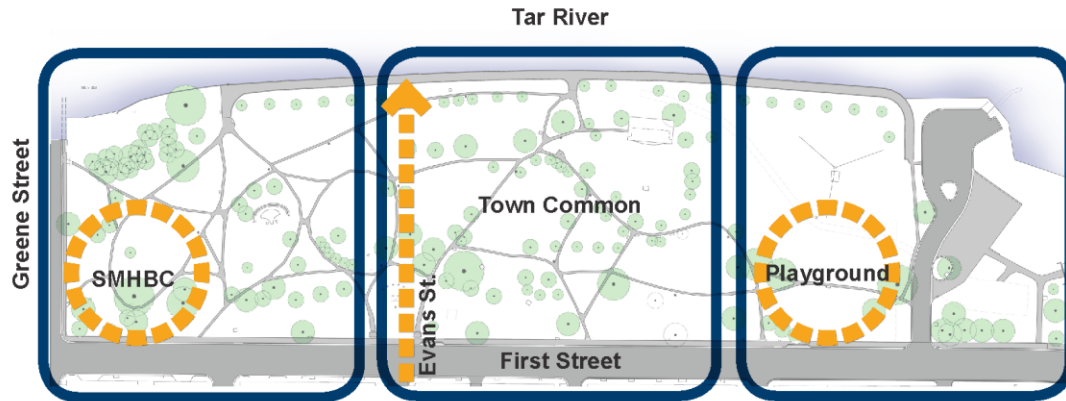




The park master planning and design process uncovered generational scars from urban renewal and resulted in community rifts. As the design team discovered, there is a significant opportunity to tell the story of Downtown and the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church while bringing contemporary park programming to the sacred space.

Design Framework

Thematic zones were established within the park to designate program and activity opportunity areas including both east-west and north-south orientation.



Thematic Zones:

CIVIC

- Anchored by the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church Commemorative site

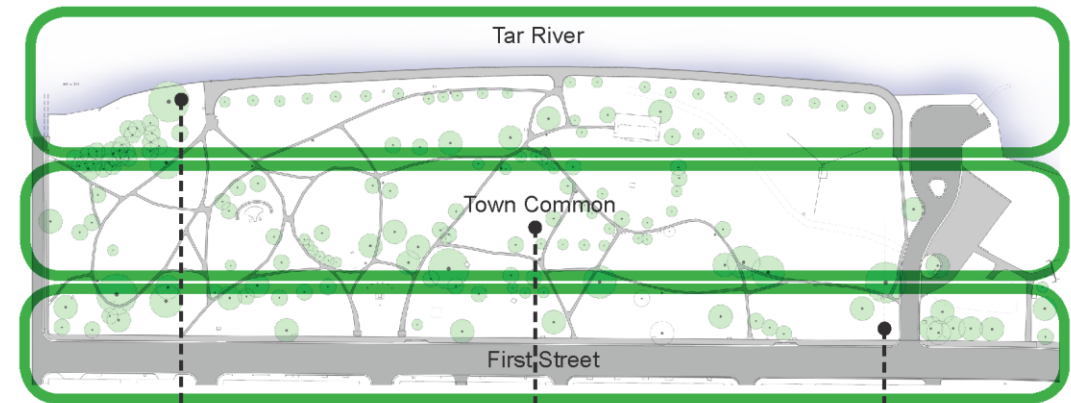
ENTERTAINMENT

- Extends the pedestrian activity of Evans Street into the park

PLAY

- Builds upon construction of new playground

EAST-WEST



Thematic Zones:

RIPARIAN

- Living Shoreline

ACTIVE GREEN SPACE

- Extends the activity of both Evans Street and the playground into the park

1ST STREET PROMENADE

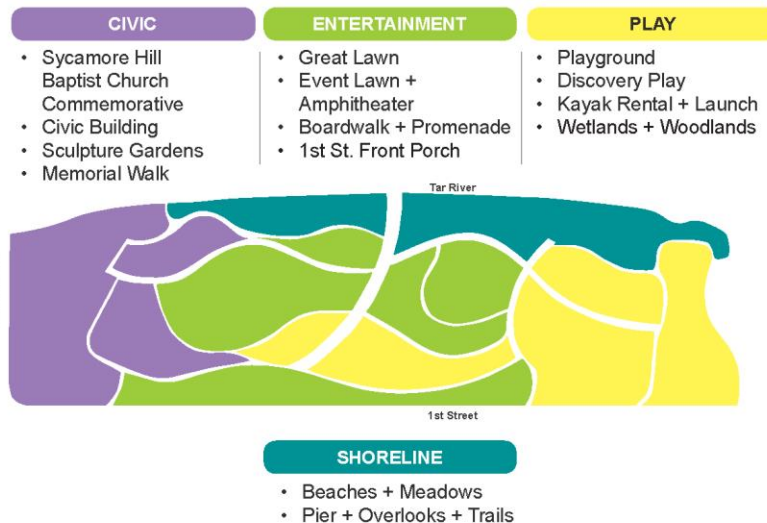
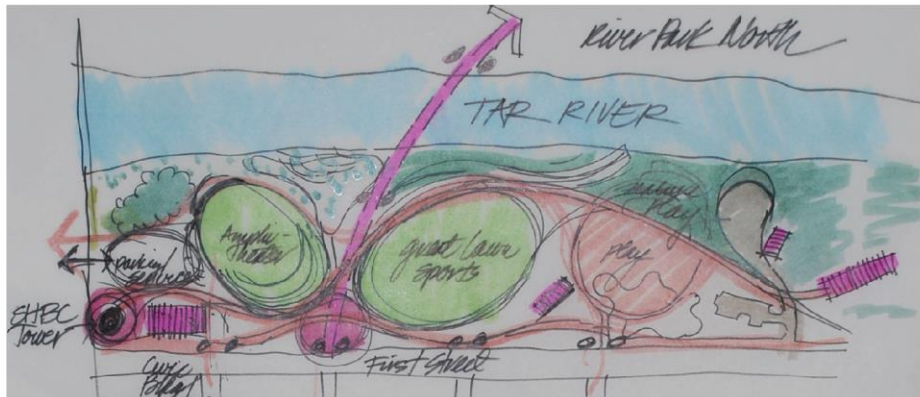
- Creates a new front door to Town Common

NORTH-SOUTH

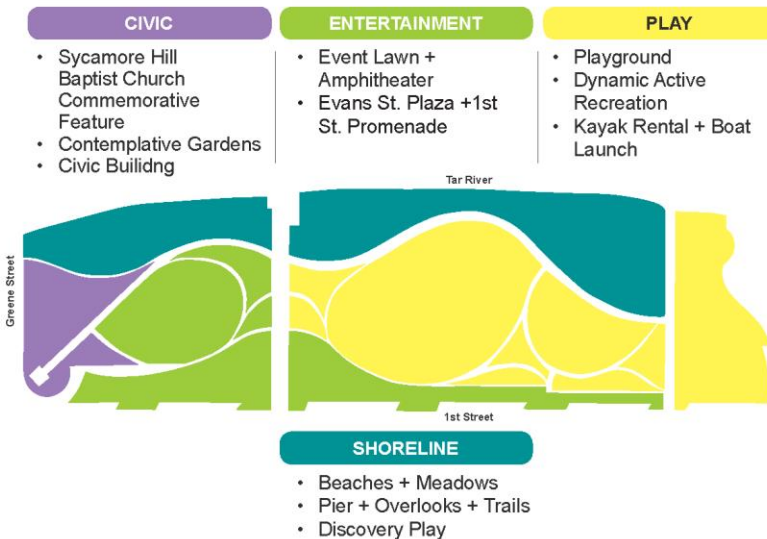
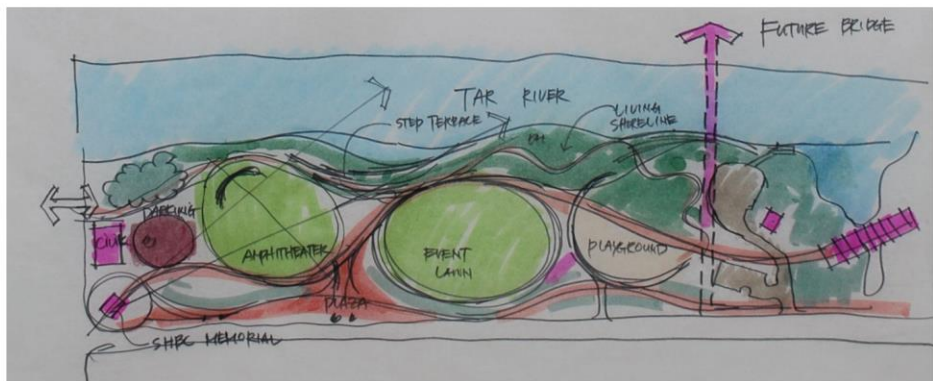
Concept Alternatives

Based on initial community feedback and analysis of existing conditions, the design team presented two concept plans for Town Common for public review & feedback:

CONCEPT 'A' DESIGN FRAMEWORK



CONCEPT 'B' DESIGN FRAMEWORK



Schematic Design: Illustrative Plan



- | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. Sycamore Hill Missionary Baptist Church Commemorative Tower + Plaza | 5. 1st Street Promenade | 11. Multi-Purpose Field | 18. Kayak + Canoe Rental |
| 2. Sycamore Tree Grove + Commemorative Gardens | 6. Interactive Water Feature / Ice Skating Rink | 12. Playground | 19. Town Creek Wetland Restoration Area |
| 3. Relocated Veterans Memorial | 7. Farmers Market Plaza | 13. Future Playground Expansion | 20. Parking + Access Drive |
| 4. Relocated Sundial | 8. Civic Building | 14. Active Living Shoreline | 21. South Tar River Greenway |
| | 9. Amphitheater + Event Lawn | 15. Beach | 22. Restrooms |
| | 10. Boardwalk | 16. Kayak Launch + Fishing Pier | 23. On-Street Parking |
| | | 17. Dock + Viewing Platform | 24. Planted Median |

Project Links:



Living Shoreline & Stabilization Techniques

Along the living shoreline, banks are stabilized with native vegetation, rip-rap, terraces, and steps. Clusters of trees are planted within the shoreline area, providing both bank stabilization near the river's edge and shade for park visitors. The park's tree canopy and understory vegetation are designed to maintain views of the river while stabilizing the river bank and providing areas of shade throughout the park.



Rip-Rap Armor



Boulders, Steps, & Terraces

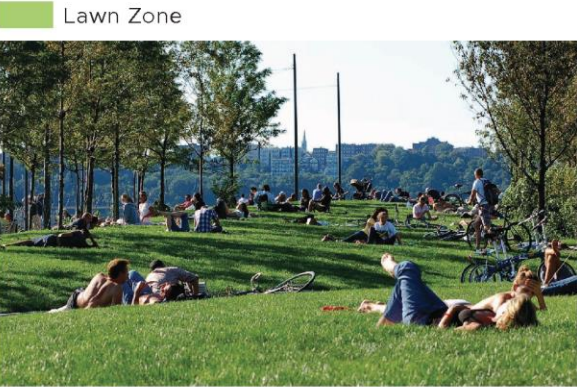
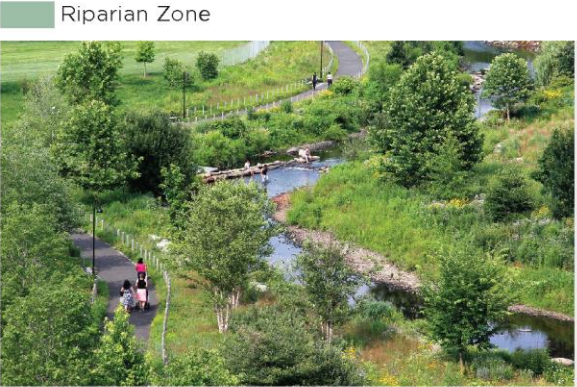


Dense Planting



A Place to Celebrate Native Plantings...

The park will be comprised of three primary planting zones- riparian, garden, and lawn. These planting zones will create a sustaining landscape, that responds to the ecological characteristics of the park as well as activities and program recommended as part of this plan.





Town Common is a place for families. Per the Master Plan, a playground has been constructed on the eastern edge of the park. The playground serves as an important first phase project that increases park activation. A grant from Trillium Health Resources and City funds were used to build the first project.

Project Links:

- [Redacted link]
- [Redacted link]
- [Redacted link]
- [Redacted link]



Town Common Playground is an inclusive accessible playground that can accommodate children of all physical abilities.



The playground integrates the topography of the park to create exciting play opportunities.



The success of the Playground at Town Common provided critical momentum for the City to take on Phase II improvements. These improvements include the construction of a commemorative memorial on the site of the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church that celebrates both the Downtown community and the Church. The memorial serves as a place for healing and celebratory remembrance, to reflect on the past while creating an acclaimed regional and national attraction for the City.

1st Street



As a result of a five-month design process, the design team worked extensively with community residents and stakeholders to define a vision for the Sycamore Hill Gateway.



A signature tower and associated commemorative landscape will tell the history of the Church and the Downtown community through dynamic and emotionally powerful interpretive features.



The Sycamore Hill Gateway Plaza was opened to the public on the 50th anniversary of the Urban Renewal project on August 11, 2020. At the core of the commemorative is a flexible outdoor community space that can be used for special events such as weddings, small performances, commemorative-related events, outdoor dining, and other community gatherings.



The plaza is a place of storytelling and learning. A series of precast concrete walls with glass interpretive panels tell the dynamic history of the Downtown community and the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church which once occupied the site.



An iconic tower creates a dynamic beacon at the corner of First & Greene Street which symbolizes the former stained glass church bell tower.

Project Links: