

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Matthew Rhoten, County Manager

**From:** Randi Gates, City of Gastonia, Director of Transportation

**Thru:** Ray Maxwell, Infrastructure & Asset Manager

**Date:** September 5, 2024

**Subject:** Item for September 24, 2024 County Commissioners Meeting

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### **RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT APPLICATION TO U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S 2024 RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES PILOT (RCP) GRANT PROGRAM**

#### **Grant Application Request**

The City of Gastonia, with support from Gaston County, is seeking a Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Grant to complete a feasibility study to cap the railroad ditch that runs through Downtown Gastonia, which creates a barrier to mobility, connectivity, access, and economic development to the transportation disadvantaged communities to the north, as well as an overall connectivity study for the downtown.

#### **Background**

Over the last 30 years, the decline of the neighborhoods north of the railroad corridor are a direct indication of the lack of connectivity and accessibility. The neighborhoods to the north of the rail corridor were once part of Downtown Gastonia, but are now segregated. Postcard images from before the railroad was ditched show a level of development equal to that along Main Avenue today, but unfortunately, the character of this area today has been completely altered from its previous self. The range of uses that once thrived to the north of the rail corridor point to a vital and active collection of urban, mixed use neighborhoods.

Project CHANGE – Connecting Highland: Access, Neighborhood Growth, Equity, a.k.a. the Downtown Gastonia Reconnector Project, was identified as a project in the NC-7 Corridor Study and Plan, completed in January 2018 by the City of Gastonia and the Gaston Economic Development Commission.

Project CHANGE is transformational and RCP funding is critical to advance this project by the completion of a downtown connectivity study and feasibility study to understand the technical and financial feasibilities of capping the railroad ditch while looking to maximize public benefits by way of better mobility and connectivity, and assessing various development opportunities.

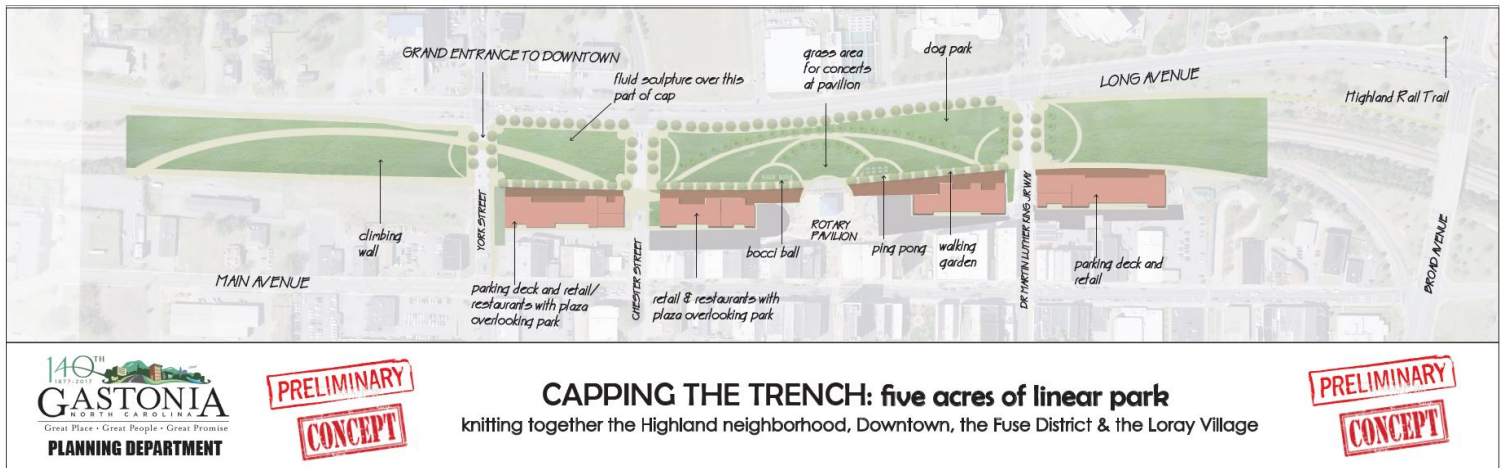
#### **RCP Grant Application Submittal**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program provides technical assistance and grant funding for planning and

capital construction to address infrastructure barriers, restore community connectivity, and improve peoples' lives.

Funds for the FY 2024 RCP Program are to be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that reconnect communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, including to mobility, access, or economic development. In FY 2024, DOT may award up to \$150 million for eligible public engagement, feasibility studies, and other planning activities.

Applications must be submitted by Monday, September 30, 2024.



### Recommendation

Approve the attached Resolution of Support for the City of Gastonia's Application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's 2024 RCP Grant Program.