

Urban Projects Group



Raleigh
Planning

PROGRESS REPORT 2022-2025

Contents

Introduction	2
Leading Implementation	4
Collaborative by Design	4
Service Units.....	5
UPG Team.....	6
01 Foundational Work	8
CIP Inventory and Prioritization	10
Partnership Policy Update	12
02 Human-Oriented Design and Placemaking	14
South Park Heritage Trail.....	16
City Plaza Improvements	18
Chavis-Dix Strollway	19
Commerce Place Phase 1	20
Commerce Place Phase 2	22
Public Engagement.....	24

03 Partnerships for Parks and Greenways	26
Dix Park Financial Model and Analysis	28
Crabtree Blvd Greenway Project	29
Smoky Hollow Park Land Sale	30
Louisburg Road Greenway Partnership.....	31
04 Major Redevelopment Projects	32
Raleigh Union Station Bus Facility.....	34
Raleigh Convention Center Expansion, Red Hat Amp. Relocation, and New Omni Hotel.....	35
Moore Square Redevelopment	36
Former DMV Redevelopment	38
05 Affordable Housing Program Support	40
Acquisitions	43
RFPs	43
Advocacy	43
06 Creation and Management of New Programs	44
P3 Fund.....	45
Civic Places Program.....	45
Streetscape Plans	45



coming from?
place it on the map.

Imagine
Commerce Place
A DESIGN STYLE YOU

Future Events
CHOOSE WHAT YOU LIKE

- Food
- Public
- Chalkboard
- Active

We value you
PO COMMUNITY

PARKING
ANY TIME

Introduction

Urban Projects is a new division within the City's Planning and Development Department, created by a reorganization starting in 2021, and not fully staffed until fall of 2022. As the following pages will show, in this short period the division has laid a foundation for future progress and implemented unique projects and partnerships, often using tools that were either new to the City or seldom used. In the coming years, the results of this work will be visible on the ground in the form of affordable housing, greenway connections, park improvements, public realm enhancements, and major new development projects like Moore Square and the former DMV site.

The principle underlying all these outcomes is **leverage**. Leveraging City dollars with contributions from partners. Leveraging our specific expertise with that from experts across the City organization. Leveraging City

assets with private development to implement policy and achieve public benefits. Putting the City in a position to best leverage our people, funds, and assets is central to our division's work. It involves convening and coordinating the right people and partners, staying alert to new opportunities, uncovering areas of mutual benefit, and strategically deploying resources to where they can have the greatest impact.

We hope you enjoy reading about some of our accomplishments from the prior year and look forward to sharing even more progress in the next.

Sincerely,

Ken Bowers
Deputy Director

June 2025



An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Atlanta, Georgia, featuring several prominent skyscrapers and a mix of urban development and green spaces. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Mission

To accelerate plan and project implementation through internal coordination, external partnerships, and creative problem solving.

Leading Implementation

The City of Raleigh has a consolidated Planning and Development department addressing every phase of land development, including comprehensive planning, area and corridor planning, zoning and development regulation, development plan review, building plan review, and site and field inspections. The department has a staff of nearly 200 and an annual budget of \$21 million.

Raleigh has a tradition of visionary planning. Bold visions require an equally bold approach to implementation.

The Urban Projects Group (UPG) was established in 2022 within Planning and Development to catalyze and accelerate the transition from plan vision to physical reality.

Collaborative by Design

UPG is made up of several collaborative work units, which report to the department's Deputy Director. Our work is made possible by close collaboration with our internal partners at the City, including the City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office, and the following departments and offices:

- Planning and Development
- Transportation
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources
- Engineering Services
- Strategy and Innovation
- Sustainability
- Finance, Budget and Management Services; and more.

Service Units

Civic Projects and Places

The Civic Projects and Places unit leads the design and implementation of public realm related capital improvement projects, leveraging expertise in urban design, data analysis, capital budgeting, and coordinating across City departments. This unit also provides technical services, such as GIS/spatial analysis, CIP prioritization, concept designs and renderings, as well as the facilitation of community engagement for implementation efforts.

Partnerships and Urban Development

The Partnerships and Urban Development unit is the City's primary point of contact for sourcing and coordinating public-private partnerships that deliver critical infrastructure and public benefits faster, cheaper, or with less risk than traditional methods. This team is also responsible for managing major City-led redevelopment projects and seeks opportunities to convert underutilized City land or other assets into public value.

Real Estate

The Real Estate team is responsible for managing the real property strategy and all transactions for the entire City of Raleigh organization. The Real Estate staff provide expertise and insight into deal structures involving City land, support affordable housing through the strategic acquisition of sites, and look for opportunities to meet multiple departmental and civic needs in each site search. Additionally, staff manage city leases, property inventory, acquisitions for the purpose of rights-of-way or public utilities, easement requests, and the disposition of City surplus real property.

Special Projects and Advocacy

The Special Projects and Advocacy unit works with internal departments and private partners to shepherd affordable housing and public-interest projects through the development review process, meeting critical funding deadlines and avoiding unnecessary costs. As of January 2025, the Special Projects unit has been moved to be under the Continuous Improvement & Customer Service division within Planning and Development.

UPG Team

CIVIC PROJECTS and PLACES



Dhanya Sandeep
Urban Design Supervisor



Dylan Bruchhaus
Senior Planner



Sydney Honeycutt
Urban Designer



Ken Bowers
Deputy Director



Chris Stebbins
Senior Urban Designer

PARTNERSHIPS and URBAN DEVELOPMENT



Jake Levitas
Planning Supervisor



Mary Elizabeth Russell
Senior Planner



James Marapoti
Development Services
Supervisor



Steve Ma
Senior Planner

SPECIAL PARTNERSHIPS and ADVOCACY

REAL ESTATE



Ralph Recchie
Real Estate Manager



Sarah Beth Gentry
Senior Real Estate Analyst



Robert Mathes
Senior Real Estate Manager



Allison Pant
Senior Real Estate Analyst



Susan Mullins
Real Estate Supervisor



Melanie Leach
Real Estate Analyst



John Bloomer
Real Estate Analyst



Jessie Schilens
Real Estate Analyst



Kanika Strickland
Executive Management
Coordinator



Gregory Laughinghouse
Paralegal-7



Dustin Kornegay
Real Estate Analyst

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Atlanta, Georgia. In the foreground, a large construction site is visible, featuring a tall red tower crane and a multi-story building under construction with exposed concrete frames. The middle ground is filled with various urban buildings, including a prominent white skyscraper with a pointed top (Bank of America Tower) and several other high-rise structures. The background shows a dense forest of trees under a cloudy sky. The text "01 Foundational Work" is overlaid in large white letters on the left side of the image.

01 Foundational Work

After being established as a new team in 2022, the first order of business for UPG was to set up a foundation for success across our work units.



Building a foundation for our work involved:



Cataloging, auditing, and prioritizing the backlog of identified capital improvement projects



Documenting statutory authority, developing a policy framework, and streamlining the process to pursue partnerships to advance City goals



Defining and communicating UPG's internal and external service delivery



Building internal and external relationships



CIP Inventory and Prioritization

Projects considered for the annual Capital Improvement Program are identified through several means, including area plans and other community engagement efforts.

However, there was previously no single point of reference to compare identified projects against one another and chart a path forward for those projects to be completed.

An aerial photograph of a city street scene. In the upper left, a highway interchange with multiple lanes and overpasses is visible. To the left of the highway, there is a construction site with various pieces of heavy machinery, including excavators and trucks, and piles of materials. The surrounding area is filled with lush green trees and grass. In the lower right, a residential neighborhood with houses and parking lots is visible. A large white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing text and a numbered list.

The UPG team has created a critical foundation for moving projects of all sizes across Raleigh toward implementation:

1. **Established a single database unifying and categorizing all identified capital projects.**
2. **Developed a prioritization tool to rank these projects according to several criteria, including equity.**
3. **Digitized the projects into a map that allows staff to more readily identify areas for coordination and partnership with the private sector, when planned developments overlap with priority investment areas.**

Partnership Policy Update

A significant accomplishment of 2024 was City Council's adoption of the City's updated Partnership Policy on May 7, 2024, which provides direction to staff regarding the initiation of partnerships with private entities, their evaluation for worthiness and practicality, and the negotiation of terms that are fair to all parties.

The updated Partnership Policy covers three types of partnerships, as defined by the Urban Land Institute: those that facilitate development of an area; those that develop critical infrastructure; and those that monetize public assets for public benefits. UPG has already pursued multiple partnership opportunities of each of these types, and we anticipate many more.

The UPG team has been working closely with the City Attorney's Office to create a robust Partnerships Toolkit so that the City can take a more proactive approach to collaboration with the private sector to see Raleigh grow equitably and efficiently.

Some of the tools that may be used in such partnerships are development agreements, reimbursement agreements, acquisition/disposition/swaps of City real estate, and others, which can be applied to achieve a variety of City goals, including:

- Affordable housing
- Parks and greenways
- Transportation improvements
- Utility infrastructure
- Public art
- Redevelopment of underutilized property, and more.

Types of Partnerships Supported by this Policy



Partnerships to
facilitate development
of an area



Partnerships to develop
critical infrastructure



Partnerships to
monetize public assets
for public benefit

A young girl with red hair, wearing a red cable-knit sweater and purple leggings, is hula hooping on a city street. She is standing under a large orange canopy. In the foreground, a large outdoor chessboard with red and black squares is laid out on the pavement, with several red chess pieces. A person in a dark blue jacket is sitting on the ground, playing chess. In the background, there are brick buildings, trees with autumn foliage, and other people walking. A sign for 'BEER' is visible on the left, and a sign for 'VILLAGE SQUAD' is on a building in the background.

02 Human-Oriented Design and Placemaking



Vibrant public spaces are a vital component of successful cities, supporting public health, economic development, pedestrian safety, and more.

The UPG team leverages expertise in human-scaled urban design to create signature public spaces that improve the pedestrian experience, incorporate cultural and historical touchpoints, and integrate art and nature.

To test concepts and deliver shorter-term improvements, the UPG team has used a tactical approach to design and activation, which involves low-cost, scalable interventions and policies.

South Park Heritage Trail

The proposed South Park Heritage Trail is an approximately two-mile-long cultural trail that will tell the story of an important historically Black neighborhood and increase awareness of the area's importance to downtown Raleigh's evolution.

This project began with a report developed by SPERNA in collaboration with the NC State University College of Design, which documented the

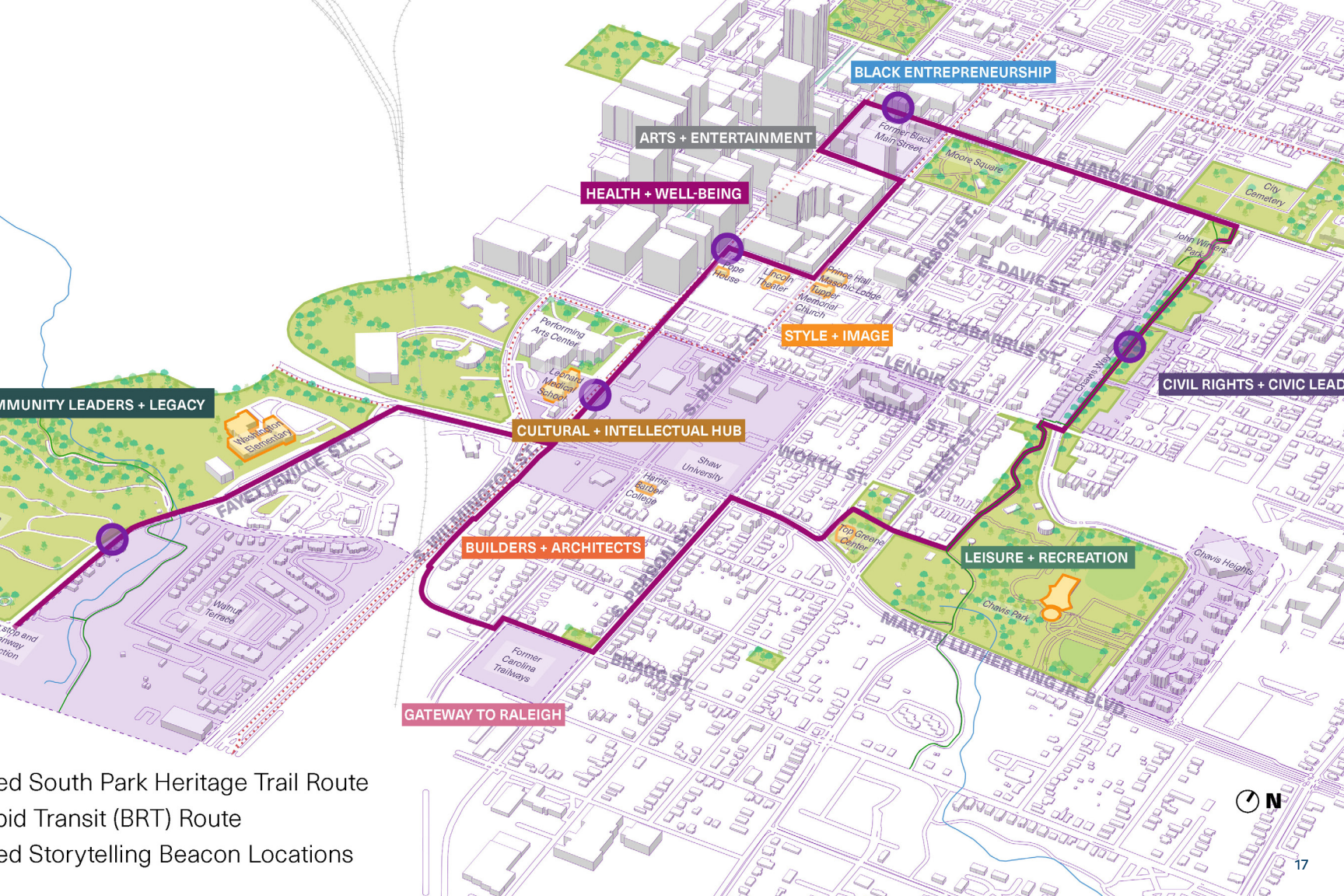
unique cultural history of this neighborhood through extensive community engagement efforts.

The UPG team is leading and supporting the design phase of the project's implementation, assisting with public outreach, and collaborating with internal partners and a consultant team (led by Design Workshop). Conceptual design was completed at the end of 2024.



Legend

- Proposed
- Bus Rapid
- Proposed



ed South Park Heritage Trail Route
oid Transit (BRT) Route
ed Storytelling Beacon Locations



City Plaza Improvements



The Downtown Raleigh Alliance (DRA) completed a Public Realm Study in mid-2021 that identified a priority for short- and mid-term infrastructure improvements to City Plaza to support economic revitalization and reinvigoration in the post-COVID era.

With Council approval and an allocation of \$400,000 in ARPA funds, the UPG team has led the implementation of short-term improvements (including two painted pickleball courts) and conducted analysis for new shade structures, seating, and greenery to energize the space. Completion of the project is expected in late 2025.



Chavis-Dix Strollway



The Chavis-Dix Strollway is a cultural trail project that will connect two historic parks – Chavis Memorial and Dorothea Dix – while highlighting the rich cultural history of historic black neighborhoods to the east and west of downtown south. UPG developed illustrations showing design options along South Street while integrating the planned South Street closure. The illustrations addressed concerns about the street closure and its impacts to the Strollway.

Commerce Place

Phase 1

UPG and our partners are reimagining Commerce Place, a mid-block alley in the Warehouse District that has gone underused for decades, as a place for people. With a two-phased approach to implementation, this streetscape project will serve as both a pilot and a precedent for public shared streets in Raleigh.

To kick-start the process, the UPG team hosted a community engagement event on-site on November 3, 2023, where hundreds of attendees gave feedback to inform the street's long-term future. Then, UPG worked closely with the adjacent property owners on the street, Turnbridge Equities and Empire Properties, to implement "Phase 1" – a short-term strategy to activate the street sooner

with temporary improvements before more permanent investments are made.

This included the conversion to one-way vehicle traffic, the removal of a few parking spaces to make room for an outdoor dining area (streetery), some of the first outdoor string lighting in downtown Raleigh, a driveway apron, and much needed asphalt repairs. These improvements were anchored by the addition of two vibrant "asphalt art" murals by local artist Mary Carter Taub (some of the largest in Raleigh's history at about 2,000 SF each).

The completion of Phase 1 was marked with a second on-site event on November 1, 2024, where the public was invited to enjoy the new shape of the street.



We are deeply grateful to Turnbridge and Empire for their partnership, to the Raleigh Design Review Commission and Raleigh Civic Ventures for their additional funding support of this project, and to our colleagues in Raleigh Transportation and Raleigh Arts for their collaboration to help make this happen.





© 2023 McAdams



Commerce Place

Phase 2

In preparation for "Phase 2" – a series of permanent people-centric improvements to the street – the partners have created design concepts for a new shared street Streetscape Plan.

Phase 2 will ultimately be implemented as a public-private effort in parallel with a new residential development led by Turnbridge, the front door of which will open onto Commerce Place. Once implemented, this project can serve as a model for future shared streets across Raleigh.

Public Engagement

UPG proactively led or assisted in several community engagement efforts focused on projects in the implementation phase. The UPG team also provided support for leadership and educational programs sponsored by the City of Raleigh.

Some of the projects we have supported with public engagement include:

- » South Park Heritage Trail
- » DMV Redevelopment Site
- » Commerce Place
- » Downtown Mobility Study
- » John P. "Top" Greene Community Center
- » Chavis-Dix Strollway
- » Capital Area Greenway System Wayfinding Plan
- » Commute Smart Ambassador Academy
- » Raleigh's Black Heritage and Historic Places Study
- » Planning Academy





A large crowd of people is gathered in a park, likely for a community event or festival. In the background, a city skyline is visible, featuring several tall buildings, including a prominent skyscraper with a pointed top. The park is lush with green trees and grass. Several tents are set up on the left side of the image, and people are walking around, some pushing strollers. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

03 Partnerships for Parks and Greenways



Parks and greenway improvement projects offer excellent opportunities for partnerships because of how they directly benefit the public while also serving as an amenity for nearby private developments. UPG has helped facilitate several parks-focused partnerships this year.

On these projects, UPG typically serves as the lead City contact for private partners, negotiates deal terms, conducts economic analysis, and takes concepts from vision to implementation.

Dix Park Financial Model and Analysis

UPG has been instrumental in supporting the process to create a 10-Year Implementation Plan for Dix Park, which outlines the phasing and funding strategies for the park's implementation. UPG worked with the City's design and financial consultants to create a robust financial model that has helped support the City and Dix Park Conservancy in making informed planning decisions about the park's future.

The UPG team will continue to be involved in the financial and development planning of Dix Park, considering a variety of revenue tools, potential public-private partnerships, and strategic real estate decisions.



Crabtree Blvd Greenway Project

UPG has led the negotiation of a public-private partnership with Loden Development to construct a new trailhead park adjacent to the Crabtree Creek Greenway Trail.

Loden is planning a new apartment building adjacent to the parking access for the trail—currently just a basic gravel lot. The City has agreed to sell 0.33 acres of underutilized City-owned park land nearby (valued at \$550,000) in exchange for the design and construction of significant park and infrastructure improvements on the remaining City property.

The land sale will create a higher quality trail access point, paved parking, a walking path, shade structures, and an improved stormwater system for the public.



Meanwhile, Loden will be able to construct more residential units than otherwise possible and will gain a new park amenity that their future residents can enjoy.

This project demonstrates the value of creative partnerships to advancing City goals. Construction of these improvements is expected to start in 2026.

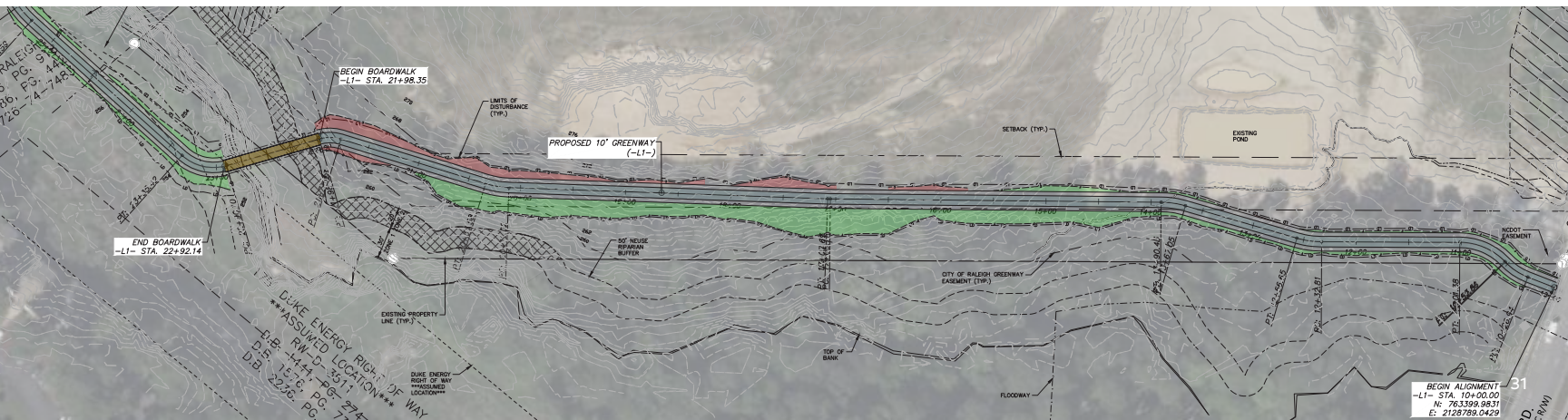
Smoky Hollow Park Land Sale

Charged by City Council with finding creative ways to fill a funding gap for Smoky Hollow Park, UPG facilitated the sale of 0.30 acres of underutilized land to the owner (Raleigh Development Company) of adjacent parcels, unlocking \$1.18 million in funding for the future park north of Downtown. This 14-acre park project will focus on environmental remediation, stream restoration, flood and stormwater management, greenway trail implementation, and park improvements for passive recreation. Construction is expected to start in 2026.



Louisburg Road Greenway Partnership

UPG is proud to have led the negotiation of a Council-approved Development Agreement with the Halle Companies, which will result in a new greenway trail connection in conjunction with their future development project at 5009 Louisburg Road. As part of the agreement, the Halle team will design and construct the greenway trail, pavement striping, pedestrian signal heads, and a pedestrian refuge, and the City will reimburse half of the estimated costs as specified in the agreement. This is a strong precedent for future partnerships with developers who see the value in a strong parks and greenway system as an amenity to their private projects, which will help the City realize its plans and priorities more quickly and cost-effectively. This partnership was made possible through close collaboration with our City Attorney's Office, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department, Transportation Department, and other internal City partners.



An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Pittsburgh, featuring several prominent skyscrapers and a mix of urban development. The text "04 Major Redevelopment Projects" is overlaid in large white font. The background shows a dense urban area with various building styles, including modern glass-fronted towers and older brick structures. Green spaces and trees are interspersed among the buildings. In the foreground, there are parking lots with cars and some construction activity. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

04 Major Redevelopment Projects



The City of Raleigh is investing in several key redevelopment projects that will transform the downtown landscape and experience, deliver new housing at varying income levels, and advance economic development.

On these complex projects, UPG leads discussions and negotiations with all relevant internal and external stakeholders to promote transparency and ensure accountability to City goals and deadlines. As projects progress into the review and permitting process, the Special Projects and Advocacy team provides Advocacy Services to ensure timelines are met.

Raleigh Union Station Bus Facility

The "RUS Bus" project is a new vertically integrated mixed-use transit development and destination in the Warehouse District of downtown Raleigh, being developed by Hoffman & Associates in partnership with GoTriangle. The UPG team is providing Advocacy Services for RUS Bus, helping the development team to meet the Federal USDOT BUILD grant deadline, critical for the financial security of this project. The project is now under construction and the transit component is expected to be complete in 2025.



Raleigh Convention Center Expansion, Red Hat Amp. Relocation, and New Omni Hotel

The Raleigh Convention and Performing Arts Complex is preparing for expansion (to be delivered in 2028), along with a new 550-room Omni Hotel (to be delivered in 2027), which will enable the City to book larger events with greater economic impact. To accommodate the expansion, the Red Hat Amphitheater is planned to be rebuilt one block south and will require the partial closure of South Street.

To navigate the implications of these developments and infrastructure projects on downtown, the UPG team has acquired key parcels of real estate, coordinated multiple stakeholder meetings, engaged a traffic consultant, negotiated a complex array of agreements for the Omni Hotel, and provided Advocacy Services to ensure the project achieves its public objectives and tight timelines.



Moore Square Redevelopment

Following their selection via a competitive RFP process in 2022, UPG is working with Loden Hospitality and Harmony Housing to redevelop portions of two blocks surrounding Moore Square on City-owned land. This project includes affordable multifamily housing, commercial space, and much-needed hotel space. A downtown mid-rise affordable housing project has been a priority for the City, but these projects are expensive to build and often are not feasible within a typical tax credit financing structure. To subsidize the planned 160 affordable units, the City is administering a long-term ground lease with favorable terms and will ultimately reallocate the sale proceeds of the remaining parcels into the affordable housing project. Construction on the affordable project is expected to start in 2025, with the commercial and hotel components to follow in the subsequent years. Due to challenging market conditions following the original RFP, it is anticipated that the remainder of the eastern block will be readvertised for potential buyers and/or development partners in the near future.





Former DMV Redevelopment

One of the City's highest-priority projects is the redevelopment of the former NC DMV headquarters, located at 1100 New Bern Avenue. This 5.4-acre site is positioned along the future Eastern BRT line, which will connect two of the city's largest employment hubs, Downtown Raleigh and WakeMed, with frequent and reliable transit. The City proactively acquired this site from the State of NC for \$23 million in 2024 with the goal of facilitating community-driven, transit-oriented development that will provide mixed-income housing and other impactful uses. UPG is currently leading the solicitation process to identify and negotiate with a development team who will deliver these future improvements. In preparation for this UPG staff have joined the City's Community Engagement staff in facilitating a months-long engagement process with the DMV Project Working Group, a committee of 12 community members organized to identify neighborhood goals to prioritize in the site's redevelopment.







05 Affordable Housing Program Support

Housing affordability is a top priority for the City, and staff are taking a coordinated approach to tackle this complex issue.

UPG works directly with the City's Housing and Neighborhoods Department to:

- Acquire strategic properties to catalyze the new construction of affordable housing
- Issue and manage solicitations for affordable development projects on City-owned property
- Conduct financial and housing data analysis to inform the City's overall affordable housing strategy
- Provide Advocacy Services and streamline the review process for all City- and County-funded affordable housing projects
- Host community engagement events that expand public awareness and participation
- Evaluate project funding applications for City gap financing
- Explore innovative funding and delivery models for affordable housing

Affordable Housing Summit

UPG supported the Housing and Neighborhoods Department in hosting Raleigh's first Affordable Housing Summit at the Raleigh Convention Center in August 2024. This event was open to the public with the purpose of discussing the state of housing in Raleigh and the national affordability crisis, with presentations delivered by national speakers and local staff. The event included hundreds of attendees, and a recording is available to view on the City's YouTube channel.

UPG conducted detailed research on the state of housing in Raleigh, which set the stage for a discussion of potential policy tools to enhance affordability.



Acquisitions

The Real Estate team has made an intentional effort to acquire strategic sites downtown and near major planned transit lines to ensure there is equitable growth in desirable areas. The City acquired the 5.4-acre DMV Headquarters from the State of NC, assembled a 3.5-acre site on New Bern Ave. and Raleigh Blvd., a 20-acre site on New Bern and I440 and another 3.5-acre site on Western Blvd. — all along the future BRT corridors. After investing more than \$30.5M in the acquisitions, these sites will eventually be home to hundreds of new housing units that improve affordability and catalyze further development along the BRT corridors.

Advocacy

UPG has made several cost-saving improvements to guide developers and City staff more easily through the review process. At any given time, the Special Projects and Advocacy team is typically supporting 30+ affordable housing projects through the review process and another 6+ that are under construction. Our team has also updated processes to align with new City incentives, such as the Frequent Transit Overlay District density bonus program, to ensure these programs function as design to deliver affordability.

RFPs

To spur development of new affordable housing, the City is preparing to issue several Requests for Proposals (RFPs) on City-owned land within the Beltline that is ideal for multifamily housing with an affordable component. The UPG team has worked with Housing and Neighborhoods to redesign the RFP template to make it more user-friendly and replicable, as well as to create a new internal process for reviewing sites and proposals. These improvements will ultimately help deliver more affordable housing more quickly for Raleigh residents.

A man with a beard and a bucket hat is painting a colorful mural on a city street. He is using a roller to apply purple paint to a section of the sidewalk. The mural features various colors including purple, yellow, green, and red. In the background, there is a brick building with arched windows, a yellow utility box, and a stop sign. Another person is visible in the distance, also working on the mural.

06 Creation and Management of New Programs

The UPG team has successfully planned and funded new City programs that directly enable the implementation of placemaking and capital projects.

P3 Fund

The P3 Fund was established in 2023 as a dedicated, flexible pool of funding available to be invested strategically in mutually beneficial public-private projects that advance established City goals. This fund allows the City to take advantage of time-sensitive opportunities to deliver infrastructure more quickly and affordably than might otherwise be possible via the typical CIP process. The allocation of these funds is guided by the City's updated Partnership Policy.

Civic Places Program

The Civic Places Program is a newly funded program that launched in FY25 to implement small-scale, City-led civic infrastructure projects that enhance the public realm and create a sense of place. Projects within adopted area plan boundaries, low-income areas, and prioritized areas will be considered first.

Streetscape Plans

The UPG team took on a new function for administration of all Streetscape Plans from the Transportation department in 2023. Since then, an amendment to the Village District Streetscape Plan has been approved by Council, as well as a text change to Raleigh's UDO regarding the streetscape plan process. The UPG team now administers this program with an updated website, application form, application handbook available as additional resources.



Raleigh
Planning

Stay in touch with the
URBAN PROJECTS GROUP

Email: **UrbanProjects@raleighnc.gov**

Social: **@RaleighPlanning**

raleighnc.gov

search: Urban Projects Group