

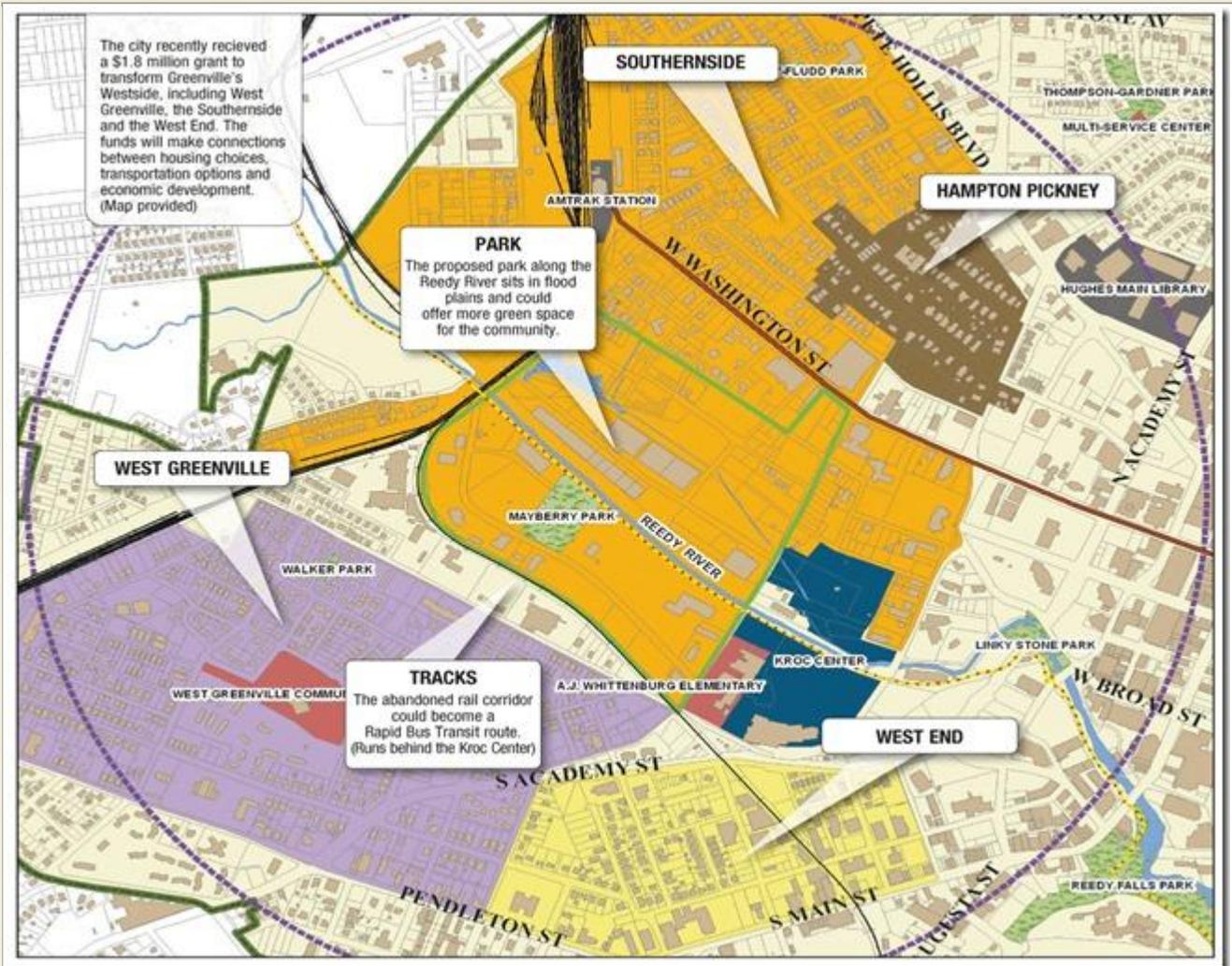
Westside Story

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The transformation of Greenville's Westside should open opportunities for residents and businesses.



A map outlining some of the city's plans for potential changes to the Westside of Greenville. **Correction: The abandoned railroad is misidentified. The abandoned railroad runs parallel to Lauren's Road and ends at either Pleasantburg or Washington Streets. In preliminary plans, the bus rapid transit route would then follow Washington into downtown to the transit station and then along Washington to the Amtrak Station. (Map/Provided – Designed/Art Director Kevin Greene)**

Greenville Mayor Knox White said the city is ready to expand into this area. A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School is well established and the Kroc Center is finished. The West End is open for business.

Downtown Greenville's Main Street is filled with construction and development and will soon spill onto side streets and neighborhoods near downtown. The city of Greenville is already working on a master plan for expanding downtown along the river corridor of nearly 180 acres of mainly open space, White said.

The city applied for and received a \$1.8 million grant in the spring to support redevelopment of the low- to moderate-income level areas of West Greenville, the Southernside and the West End.

"We are looking to make connections in housing choices, transportation options and economic development opportunities with a focus on the West Side," said R. Wayne Leftwich Jr., a community planner in the city of Greenville's Community Development Division.

The city's proposal was one of 42 chosen out of 583 eligible applications nationwide. Greenville was one of 14 to receive the joint Housing Urban Development, or HUD, and Department of Transportation, or DOT, funding. The city is incorporating the proposal into a work plan and is in the initial planning phase.

"Our overall goal is to connect these low- to moderate-income neighborhoods, which we have three in that study area, and many nearby, and make sure they are connected to existing amenities, and also make sure they'll be connected to the future amenities," Leftwich said.



The city of Greenville hopes to transform the Westside of Greenville to create more housing and transportation options, promote economic opportunities, and create a park with more green space than other city parks. (Photo/Provided)

The arrival of the Kroc Center at 424 Westfield St. and the Tennis Complex at 205 Gibbs Court signifies the city's continued move up river and also informs people in the city of the area's location and potential, White said.

"This facility will open people's eyes and hopefully bring investment to the area as well," White said at the Kroc Center opening. "And it's all walking distance from Main Street."

The comprehensive planning for the West Side includes: developing an economic development component; developing a community park; using findings from the housing strategy, Bus Rapid Transit and Transit Oriented Development plans, including zoning codes; and evaluating

alternative scenarios for the future. A more detailed plan will be finalized in the spring 2012.

Proposed park



The \$1.8 million grant aims to revitalize the three pockets of Greenville’s Westside, which currently has mainly low-to-moderate income housing and many abandoned buildings. (Photo/Liz Segrist)

An area within the Southernside that runs along the Reedy River, near the Kroc Center and A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School, could become a large community park. The area is a flood plain region and the city already owns many of the properties in the area, which mainly consist of vacant warehouses or demolished buildings.

“This sets a high standard and a vision for what this river corridor could be,” White said. “Our greatest opportunity as a city is for us to continue to move up river and to create a new park.”

This park would be different from other city parks by offering more green space. City officials hope it would spur economic development around it.

Leftwich said this is a very long-term plan since not all of the buildings within the proposed park area are city-owned. The grant includes performing a real estate study for the potential community park.

Transportation connections



An abandoned rail corridor could become a Bus Rapid Transit route, which could create economic

development opportunities.
(Photo/Liz Segrist)

The proposal includes a Bus Rapid Transit route along an abandoned rail corridor throughout the area to run along Laurens Road, through downtown and into the West side, hitting major destinations points like Amtrak, the Kroc Center and the Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research.

The Greenville Transit Authority, which runs Greenlink, applied for funding and was denied.

The grant will fund a consultant to look at a transit route and do more in-depth planning to get a better understanding of the situation and improve the chance of getting funds in the future.

“There’s a big push for transit-oriented development, meaning each transportation route planned could create opportunities for economic development and even residential development in these areas,” Leftwich said.

Housing plans

The grant implements a citywide housing strategy in which a consultant works on the strategy to determine the supply and demand of housing in the city. Leftwich said the key is having housing options within the city and surrounding areas.

“What are the needs and the unmet demands of housing in the city? We need to answer that and then go from there,” Leftwich said. “This will look at where we need to go as a city and what we need to do to get there. For example, certain price brackets that we’re not meeting.”

Clemson University graduate students in regional and city planning are doing some 2010 census data work, which creates a baseline of data and develops metrics to measure change.

The students will also draft a master plan for the Southernside neighborhood, which was drafted about seven years ago, but was never passed.

Brownfield funds will be used for the environmental assessments of West Side properties. Community Development Block Grants and HOME funds will be used for energy efficient, affordable housing in the area. The zoning and building codes must support the Transit Oriented Development Plan.

Community involvement

The city created a new position for a livability educator to engage the youth in the planning process by coordinating with A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School. The educator will develop an outreach program with a speaker series, film series, a web page and other marketing tools.



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The West Greenville Community Center’s Livability Studio will promote community involvement in the planning effort and become a public meeting space, display area, computer lab and classroom space.

Leftwich said the communication with the neighborhoods throughout the three-year grant period is very important, with focus teams on transportation, housing, parks and trails, economic development and policy and implementation.

An alignment team will be formed for the planning effort and to coordinate the focus teams. An alignment consultant will be hired to manage the public participation element.

The Community Development Division, Economic Development Division, Planning and Zoning, Parks and Recreation, Office of Management and Budget, Greenville Transportation Authority and the Greenville County Planning departments are collaborating on this grant.