

Outreach + Engagement

Public Exhibition and Block Party

On Saturday, June 2, 2018, the City of Knoxville and Urban Wilderness Project Team hosted a public exhibition and block party at the James White Parkway Terminus to share project ideas and gather input from the community. Visitors were invited to learn about the project through visual displays including diagrams, drawings, aerial photographs, and a 15' long matchbox car-scale plan of the project. Mostly importantly, party-goers had the opportunity (for the first-time ever!) to experience the James White Parkway terminus as a pedestrian and imagine the space as a park for people, rather than as a dead end.

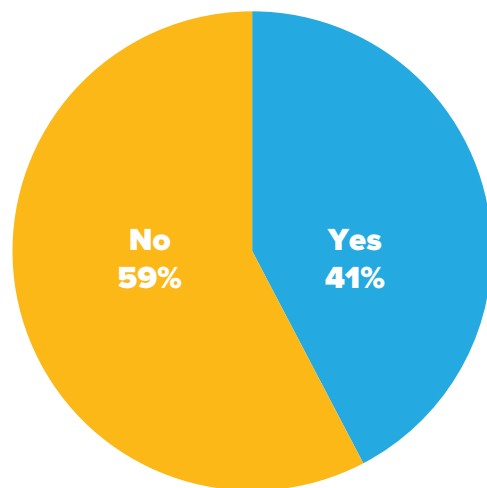




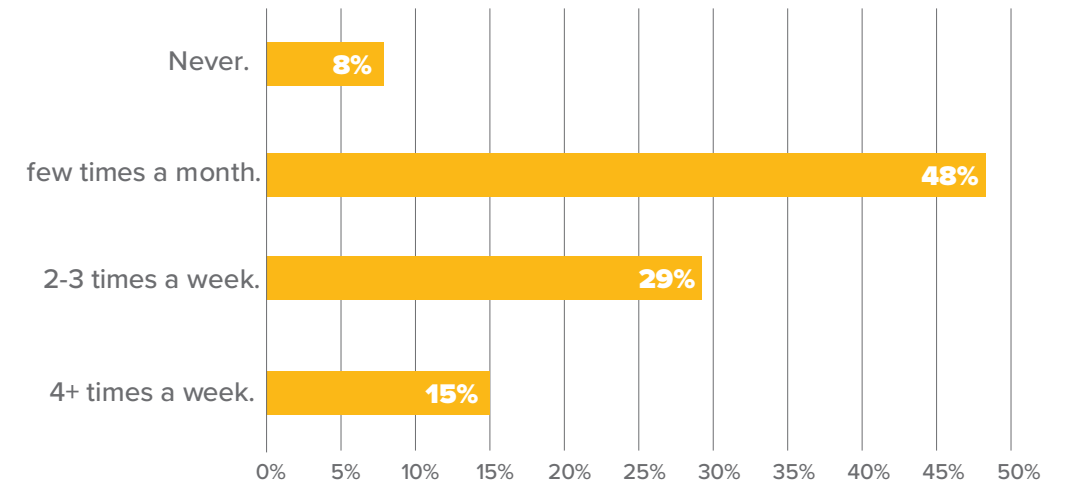
Online Survey

The City of Knoxville conducted an online survey to gather input from all those interested in the project. The survey was active from May 11 - July 2, 2018, and received 828 responses. Questions included the four illustrated here as well as an open invitation for additional ideas. A full compilation of the survey can be found in Appendix E of this report.

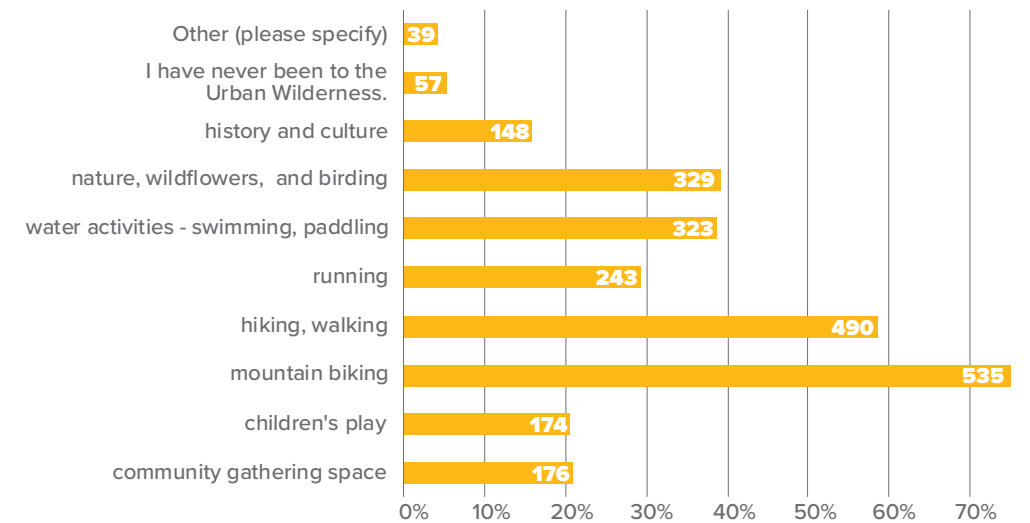
Question 1: Do you live in South Knoxville?



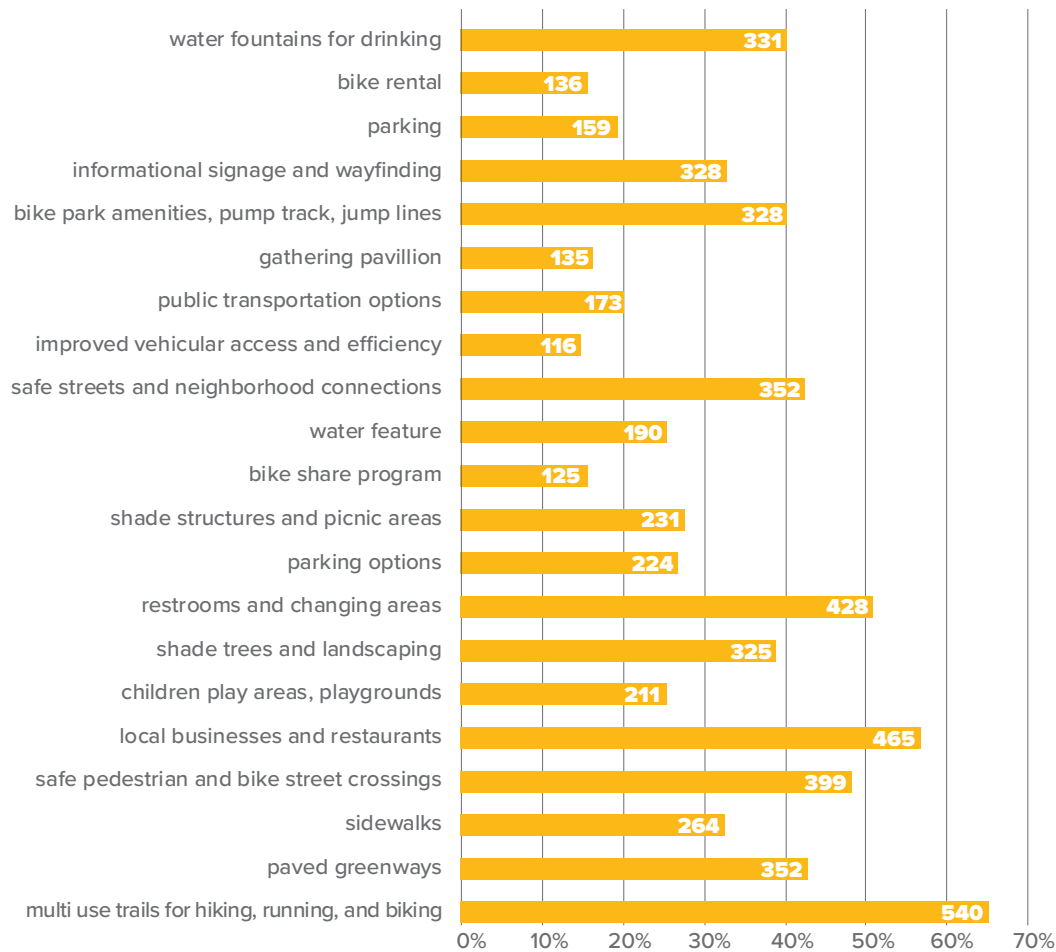
Question 2: How often do you use the Urban Wilderness or any other parks, trails, and greenways in South Knoxville?



Question 3: What are your favorite experiences in the Urban Wilderness? (choose at least one)



Question 4: What would you like to see more of in this area? (choose at least one)



Additional Comments and Ideas:

- There should be a safe way to bike there from downtown.
- A central visitor information center with detailed maps and lists of activities, such as mountain biking, greenway riding, hiking, river and quarry paddleboard and kayak rentals, and rock climbing. Also bike path connections to downtown and the south waterfront.
- I've never been quite sure how to access the Urban Wilderness. A clear entrance with amenities will help a lot.
- I would love to see the JWP turned into a multi-use road, with bike lanes, sidewalks as well as traffic calming so that its less of an interstate and more or a linear park.
- Benches, improved lighting, and pedestrian accessibility in and around the new park and neighborhood are my biggest priority areas.
- Non-traditional playgrounds.
- A public dirt jump spot would be great for the mountain bike community. It is the only thing the Knoxville is missing in terms of biking. Having a dirt jump spot that kids and beginners are able to use and learn new skills but also very experienced riders are able to have actual dirt jumps to ride would be an amazing addition to the riding scene in Knoxville.
- Please make landscaped areas indigenous and encourage wildflowers. Build it and the native wildlife will take refuge and enhance the parks.
- Educational component that addresses the need for the rehabilitation and conservation of natural areas, their importance to our community and what makes this area so special.
- Integrating the Gateway Park with facilities under construction by Knox County for the South Doyle BMX track would both better utilize those facilities and potentially allow the city to focus more of its investment outside of amenities such as parking, restrooms, and a pump track which are already integrated into the county project.

Stakeholder Workshops

Twice during the Framework Plan and Concept Design phases of work, the Project Team convened workshops with key stakeholders to gather input, feedback and ideas for the future park. Stakeholders included members of the Urban Wilderness Steering Committee, neighboring South Doyle Middle School and key representatives from the City of Knoxville. The team asked the stakeholders for their feedback on the Framework Plan, their Top Priorities for the project and area, and ideas for the types of programming and activities that should be included in Phase 1.

A complete log of all comments received from the Stakeholders is included in Appendix F of this report.

Stakeholders

- Appalachian Mountain Bike Club (AMBC)
- Aslan Foundation
- Ijams Nature Center
- Legacy Parks Foundation
- Knox County Parks & Recreation
- Baker Creek Bottoms
- South Doyle Middle School
- City of Knoxville

Top Project Priorities

Appalachian Mountain Bike Club (AMBC)

- Constant progress, early wins and maintaining momentum on near and long-term project phases.

Aslan Foundation

- Connecting the Urban Wilderness Gateway and James White Parkway to the Battlefield Loop.

Ijams Nature Center

- Educational components, signage and wayfinding.

Legacy Parks Foundation

- Connectivity; How can a visitor park their car and leave it for the full day? This requires being able to easily get to food and activities.

Knox County Parks & Recreation

- Traffic flow that facilitates the extra load that will happen when events are being held at the BMX course.

Baker Creek Bottoms

- A strategic plan for public infrastructure in the area.

Framework Plan Feedback

Appalachian Mountain Bike Club (AMBC)

- Very supportive of transforming the James White Parkway into a bike-friendly corridor, and making connections from Baker Creek to the River.

Aslan Foundation

- Very supportive of a green corridor for biking and driving.

Ijams Nature Center

- Volunteered to assist in developing an educational/ interpretive overlay for the project, and to be involved early in the project to ensure successful programming and coordination with their Learning Center and other local institutions

Legacy Parks Foundation

- Very supportive of the park starting north of the river and urged the design team and city to strongly vocalize the importance of this part of the project.

Knox County Parks & Recreation

- Supportive of a strong, singular identity for the Gateway project and other UW sites, so visitors know immediately they are in the UW system.

Baker Creek Bottoms

- Anticipated annual visitor volume to the future Baker Creek Bottoms development between 400K and 1M. The area will need increased parking capacity to handle UWG and BCB visitors.

Programming, Circulation and Access Feedback

Programming + Amenities

Include in Phase 1:

- Picnic areas
- Community outdoor space
- Open, flat, lawn
- Designated tent space
- Infrastructure for food trucks
- Bathrooms
- Shade - canopy trees or structures
- Information Kiosk
- Water and Drinking Fountains

Include in Future Phases:

- Skate Park
- Dog Park
- Native Plant/ Forestry Classroom

Avoid:

- Visitor Center that requires staffing
- Bike Wash stations that promote riding in muddy conditions

Circulation and Access

- A variety of trails including paved greenways, dirt pathways, and a cross country trail to accommodate a wide array of users.
- Access from multiple points and the ability to flow through from end to end.

Parking

- Parking near the amenities for families and less able people.
- Parking distributed throughout the project rather than one large parking lot.
- Could the project share parking with the adjacent Middle School?

Additional Community Outreach

In addition to the open public input at the public exhibition and the online survey and targeted sessions with stakeholder groups, the City of Knoxville and the design team met with representatives from specific neighborhoods adjacent to the project corridor. Additionally, the City of Knoxville participated on the steering committee for the Baker Creek Area Vision Plan, a parallel project led by the East Tennessee Community Design Center.

Neighborhood Roundtables “Phase One Adjacent Neighborhoods”

Initial meeting June 1, 2018. A follow up meeting August 1, 2018

- South Haven
- South Woodlawn
- Old Sevier
- Lindbergh Forest
- Councilwoman Stephanie Welch
- COK Office of Neighborhoods

Neighborhood Roundtable “Urban Wilderness Gateway Corridor Neighborhoods”

August 8, 2018

- Island Home
- Southside Waterfront
- Morningside
- RiverHill Gateway
- Councilwoman Stephanie Welch
- COK Office of Neighborhoods

Baker Creek Area Vision Plan

- COK participation on steering committee

Open Public Meeting

An open public meeting will be held at South Doyle Middle School to present the Vision Plan and Phase 1 Scope. The meeting is anticipated September 2018.

Past and Current Parallel Projects

In developing the Framework, Vision and Concept Design the project team studied and considered past and current parallel projects. Those projects are listed here.

South Haven Baker Creek Area Vision Plan

Knoxville's Urban Wilderness Four-Year Implementation Plan

Knoxville South Waterfront Vision Plan + ongoing projects

Dogwood Outdoor Coalition

- Dogwood Elementary outdoor classroom + trails
- Connection to Lippencott Ridge Park

Lindberg Forest Traffic Calming Initiative

Transportation Planning Organization Chapman Highway Implementation Plan

COK/Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization Bicycle Facilities Plan 2015

Aslan Foundation Battlefield Loop Master Plan

Legacy Parks Foundation South Knoxville Linkages Study 2013

South Waterfront Traffic Study

COK James White Parkway Study

Summary, Conclusions, and Next Steps

Several key themes emerged from the outreach and engagement work performed by the Project Team during the Framework Plan and Concept Design Phases. First and foremost, the project has generated overwhelmingly positive feedback from the stakeholders and public-Knoxville is very supportive of the improvements being proposed at the Gateway site at the Terminus of the Parkway, as well as the ideas for re-purposing lanes of the Parkway as a bike and pedestrian greenway connecting the Urban Wilderness to Downtown Knoxville, across the Tennessee River. In addition to these general takeaways, other notable conclusions are outlined here.

The Project Team plans to meet with the stakeholders and public again in future phases of work to ensure the project's detailed design and execution continue to reflect the priorities and aspirations of the community.

Improved Trails and Greenways for Biking, Walking and Running

Biking, walking and running are the most popular activities in the Urban Wilderness today, and the Mountain Biking Trails draw visitors from across the country. The Gateway project should expand and improve the trail network, building upon it's popularity and success by:

- 1) Creating access and amenities for all levels of riders, including beginners and children;
- 2) Connecting to existing and future bike-related amenities, including the BMX park, Baker Creek Bike Park and Children's Pump Track;
- 3) Augment the trail system with related features including drinking fountains, bike racks, rentals and repair facilities.

New Spaces for Events, Gathering and Play

South Knoxville is lacking key public spaces for events, gathering and play, and the Gateway Park has the opportunity to provide the community with these important public realm amenities.

- 1) An open and flexible plaza for large gatherings, events and festivals;
- 2) Areas for small gatherings, such as picnics and birthday parties;
- 3) Play amenities for families including features for all ages and non-traditional settings and play equipment;
- 4) Additional parking to meet the increased levels of park goers the improvements and amenities will bring.

A Connected South Knoxville

The Gateway project has the opportunity to not only link the Terminus site to Baker Creek, but also on a larger scale, create a network of connections between destinations in South Knoxville and link South Knoxville to Downtown via new greenways.

- 1) Connecting the Baker Creek Trails to destinations in South Knoxville via Cottrell Street and the future James White Parkway Greenway;
- 2) Improving connections and navigation to the broader system of trails through wayfinding, maps, and trail markers.