

SUGAR HILL TRAIL CONCEPT LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE CORE TEAM MEETING #2

July 22, 2020 | 10:00 to 11:30 am | Zoom Meeting

Participants

Project Team

Kaipo Awana, Planning Director, City of Sugar Hill

Addie Weber, Project Manager, Toole Design

Blake Loudermilk, Engineering Lead, Toole Design

Meghan McMullen, Engagement Lead, Toole Design

Core Team

Julie Adams, Vice Chair, City of Sugar Hill Planning Commission

Troy Besseche, Assistant City Manager, City of Sugar Hill

Jeff Coleman, Senior Pastor, Church on the Hill

Vince Edwards, Transportation Planning Engineer, Gwinnett County DOT

Brandon Hembree, City Council, City of Sugar Hill

Joel Hoffman, Creative Content Coordinator, City of Sugar Hill

Bobby McGraw, Executive Pastor, Sugar Hill Church

Kristen Petillo, Neighbor

Jay Petillo, Neighbor

Daniel Piotrowski, Transportation Planning Engineer, Gwinnett County DOT

The Core Team is serving as the steering committee for the City of Sugar Hill Greenway Concept Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and consists of City staff, representatives from partner agencies like the Atlanta Regional Commission and Gwinnett County, and community members. This meeting was held virtually due to social distancing requirements in response to COVID-19. Staff was supported by consultants from Toole Design, a multimodal transportation planning and design firm with national experience in trail design. Presenters included:

- Kaipo Awana, Planning Director, City of Sugar Hill
- Addie Weber, Project Manager, Toole Design
- Blake Loudermilk, Engineering Lead, Toole Design
- Jeff Ciabotti, Principal-in-Charge, Toole Design
- Meghan McMullen, Engagement Lead, Toole Design

The purpose of this meeting was to update the Core Team about the planning process, community input received to date, and alternative potential route alignments.

Welcome

Meghan McMullen welcomed the group, reviewed the agenda, and shared an update on the project schedule. The group reviewed the project's guiding principles to frame the discussion:

We will develop a signature trail amenity for Sugar Hill by:

1. *Designing a safe and comfortable facility for users of all ages and abilities*
2. *Connecting community facilities and other useful destinations*
3. *Maximizing access to nature*
4. *Using existing public land and ROW as much as possible*

Virtual Open House #1 Update

The team discussed community comments from the first virtual open house, which was held on July 15th. The most popular aspects that most participants said made for a great greenway were safety, natural areas, and access to downtown, rivers, and other attractions.

Alternative Routes Deep Dive

Toole Design staff identified potential alternative routes for each of the project corridors: SR 20 West, Downtown, Hillcrest, and SR 20 East. Before the group reviewed each potential segment, Jeff Ciabotti framed the discussion of route selection considerations, including:

- User safety and comfort
- Available right-of-way
- Topography
- Access to destinations
- Constructability
- Estimated cost

He also reviewed different approaches to implementation based on who controls the land to provide additional context for participants. Depending on if the land where the desired route falls is owned by the City of Sugar Hill, another public entity, or a private owner, there are different levels of control and steps toward implementation. In general, routes through private property are slower to implement because the City has less control over the land.

The group then reviewed potential alternative route segments, as shown in Figure 1. The segments could be combined or reconfigured; these are initial options for discussion.

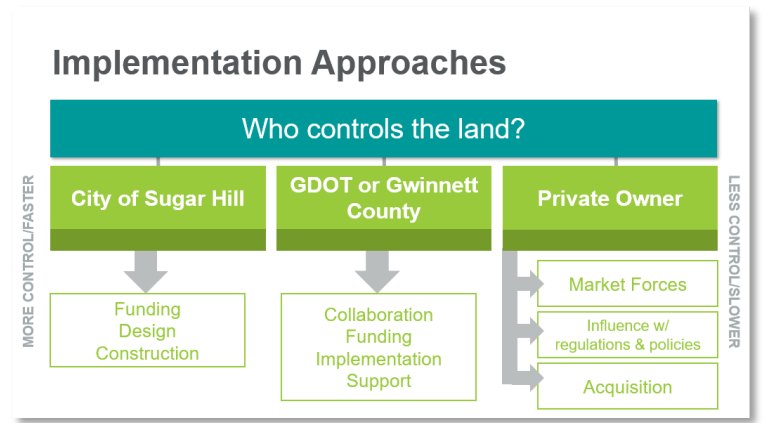
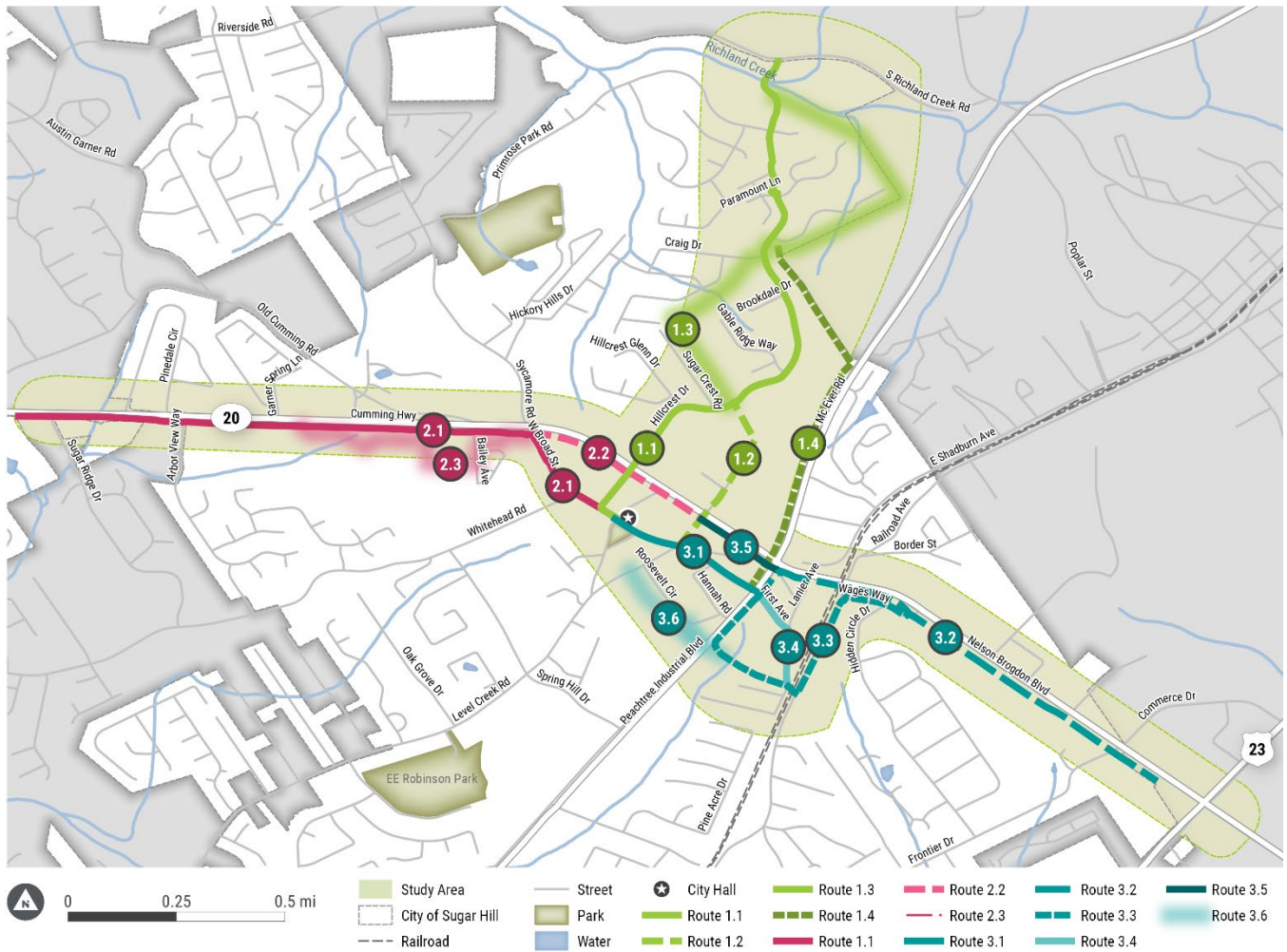


Figure 1. Alternative Route Segments



SR 20 West

- 2.1/2.2
 - **Pros:**
 - Publicly-owned
 - Shorter timeframe
 - Continuous route
 - Visibility
 - **Cons:**
 - Ditches/creeks
 - Adjacent to traffic
- 2.3
 - **Pros:**
 - Natural setting
 - Partially city-owned
 - **Cons:**
 - Privately-owned parcels
 - Acquisition costs

- Negotiation (uncertainty and delay)
- Toole Design shared potential features for a trailhead at a new community park planned on SR 20 near Sugar Ridge Dr, such as covered bicycle parking, water fountains with water bottle refill functions, shaded seating, and bicycle repair stations. Core Team members loved the water bottle refill and bike repair station ideas.

Hillcrest

- 1.1
 - **Pros:**
 - Publicly-owned
 - Shorter timeframe
 - Continuous route
 - Low traffic volumes/speeds
 - Connects to future park and new development
 - **Cons:**
 - Steep slope to the north
 - Adjacent to traffic
 - ROW <12' in some locations
 - Utility conflicts
 - Uncertain cul-de-sac development
- 1.2
 - **Pros:**
 - Connects to planned pedestrian bridge and civic complex
 - Natural setting
 - Connects to potential redevelopment
 - Aligned with planned 16-mile greenway loop
 - Some City-owned property
 - **Cons:**
 - Privately owned parcels
 - Acquisition costs
 - Negotiation (uncertainty and delay)
 - Increased number of crossings/conflicts
 - Doesn't address missing sidewalks on Hillcrest Dr
- 1.3
 - **Pros:**
 - Natural setting
 - Avoids hill on Hillcrest Dr
 - Connect to second city-owned conservation parcel
 - **Cons:**
 - Privately owned parcels
 - Acquisition costs
 - Negotiation (uncertainty and delay)
 - Portions with steep slopes
 - Portions in 100-year floodplain
- 1.4
 - **Pros:**
 - Publicly-owned

- Shorter timeframe
 - Natural section
 - Addresses missing sidewalk
 - Connects to potential redevelopment
 - **Cons:**
 - High speed traffic on PIB
 - Privately owned parcels
 - Acquisition costs
 - Negotiation (uncertainty and delay)
 - Portions with very steep slopes
- Core Team member comments on the alternative routes included:
 - Residents on the steep downhill cul-de-sac section of Hillcrest Dr will likely have concerns about the trail running through their backyards
 - Think some residents would prefer no trail at all in this area
 - Think most residents would prefer for it to wind between the woods, but with enough distance between housing and trail and the trail should have lighting
 - Sections that closely align with homes should not have waysides to keep foot traffic moving
- Toole Design shared potential design elements that could be incorporated into a new trailhead park at Richland Creek. Core Team member comments included:
 - Opportunity for creative placemaking here.
 - Like the boardwalk concept.
 - Change name to “amenity” instead of trailhead
 - Encourage people to park Downtown and walk or bike here on the trail
 - Focus on City-owned property north of Richland Creek
 - If there is any parking on site, it should be on the north side of the creek and accessed via S Richland Creek Dr
 - Opportunity to have a children’s natural play area

SR 20 East

- 3.1
 - **Pros:**
 - Publicly-owned
 - Shorter timeframe
 - Direct access to destinations
 - Existing signal at PIB
 - **Cons:**
 - Too narrow for separate path
 - Signal reconfiguration required
- 3.2
 - **Pros:**
 - Grade-separated rail crossing
 - Publicly-owned
 - Potential integration to SR 20 widening project
 - Direct access to destinations
 - Sections with wide ROW
 - **Cons:**
 - Dependent on GDOT/GCDOT
 - Steep slopes from PIB to Wages Way

- Stormwater drainage conflicts
- 3.3
 - **Pros:**
 - Avoids SE 20/PIB intersection conditions
 - City-controlled ROW; not dependent on GDOT
 - **Cons:**
 - At-grade rail crossing
 - Skewed intersection
 - Longer route
 - Less direct access to future redevelopment at SR 20/PIB intersection
 - Traffic along PIB (partial)
- 3.4
 - **Pros:**
 - Avoids SE 20/PIB intersection conditions
 - City-controlled ROW; not dependent on GDOT
 - Avoids PIB
 - **Cons:**
 - At-grade rail crossing
 - Skewed intersection
 - Longer route
 - Less direct access to future redevelopment at SR 20/PIB intersection
- 3.5
 - **Pros:**
 - Connection to planned pedestrian bridge and civic complex
 - Visibility/gateway feature
 - Gradual slope
 - Multiple publicly-owned properties
 - **Cons:**
 - Traffic volumes and speed
 - SR 20/PIB intersection length and conditions
 - Potential tunnel or bridge would add expense
 - Tight segments near Race Trac (~13')
- 3.6
 - **Pros:**
 - Natural setting
 - **Cons:**
 - Would require a new signal on PIB or tunnel/bridge to cross at this location
 - Privately owned parcels
 - Acquisition costs
 - Negotiation (uncertainty and delay)
- Core Team member comments about the SR 20 East potential segments included:
 - It would be ideal to have a pedestrian crossing alongside the bridge
 - The topography on the east side of PIB lends itself to a bridge at the unsignalized First Avenue intersection
 - Some people feel crossing the tracks at First Avenue may be an easy option, while others find it to feel unsafe

General Greenway Design Elements

Toole Design shared an overview of several potential greenway design elements to get feedback from the Core Team about preferred or undesired elements to include in the concept design. Comments included:

- Where space allows, separation of cyclists and pedestrians would be nice
- Buffers
 - Landscaping will need to be designed so that it doesn't buckle pavement, but shading is nice where appropriate
 - Canopies would also be nice in certain areas
 - City maintenance staff could have some issues with buffer landscaping
- Include educational elements in rest areas
- Sugar Hill Station and Downtown could be good mobility hubs
- Like the inclusion of public art, and there are local art and history groups that would be great to engage
- Wayfinding
 - Include trail maps throughout
 - Use consistent, recognizable branding
 - Consider color coding or creating character areas for different segments (e.g. art theme, history theme)
 - Incorporate artistic elements
 - City of Sugar Hill marketing staff is currently developing a brand for the overall greenway and will consider identifying themes for different segments
- A calisthenics park or exercise outposts would be good additions

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The online Community Input Map is currently live and Core Team members were encouraged to participate and share the link with their networks. This is the last Core Team meeting, but participants will be kept in the loop about the project via email update. There will be another virtual open house in August (tentatively scheduled for August 13th) and an online survey that will open when the draft plan is published in August. Participants were asked to contact Meghan McMullen with any ideas or follow-up questions at mmcmullen@tooledesign.com