

# Reimagine Middle Branch Press Release

September 29, 2021

## For Immediate Release

**Reimagine Middle Branch Plan team shares preliminary design ideas for the future of 11+ miles of shoreline along the Patapsco River**

*Preliminary ideas reflect feedback and responses following months of engagement with stakeholders and local communities, as well as the first community event on the water.*

BALTIMORE, MD (Wednesday, September 29, 2021) – The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan team – led by the City of Baltimore, South Baltimore Gateway Partnership, and Parks & People Foundation, and partnered with landscape architecture and urban design firm James Corner Field Operations – shared draft preliminary design ideas for the future of the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River at a virtual public meeting this evening.

The team has proposed a three-part framework that: **1) protects and connects the shoreline; 2) transforms barriers into connections; and 3) strengthens communities with new parks and programs.**

- 1. Protect and connect the shoreline:** A reconstructed and reshaped shoreline will improve water quality, absorb floodwater and protect against storm surge, while providing natural habitats for birds and aquatic species, and offering scenic beauty and recreation for Baltimore city residents. It will be a place for all that includes a continuous trail system for biking, walking and jogging; boardwalks and piers for fishing, crabbing and taking in the views; and, outdoor classrooms and soft footpaths – all offering unique waterside experiences.
- 2. Transform barriers into connections:** Rebuilding roadways as “green boulevards” will link neighborhoods to one another and to jobs, transit and major destinations in the city and region. The green boulevards, which include improvements to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge, will be designed and built as “complete streets” that balance the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, cars, trucks and transit, while incorporating shade trees and “green” stormwater management practices.
- 3. Strengthen communities with parks and programs:** Reimagine Middle Branch will activate the waterfront with new amenities and bolster neighborhoods with equitable community development projects and programs. The park destinations will create special places both on the waterfront and within neighborhoods. The equitable development programs will create jobs and improve quality of life for South Baltimore residents.

Together, these three frameworks compose a connected and cohesive “park-shed” for the Middle Branch and its adjacent communities, creating a network of places and spaces that support health, vitality and future investments.

Over the next four months, the Reimagine Middle Branch Plan will incorporate feedback from the public and stakeholders into draft planning documents, which are scheduled to be released in final form in spring 2022.

The preliminary design ideas, which were shown at the project’s first virtual public community meeting this evening, were shared with six stakeholder committees at a series of workshops held over the last two weeks.

These draft preliminary designs and planning concepts draw upon the Reimagine Middle Branch Plan team’s engagement with local communities and attendance at multiple neighborhood events over the past three months. The consultants collected more than 150 survey responses, welcomed five graduate student fellows from Morgan State University to the project, and hosted “Splash! - A Community Event on the Water” at Middle Branch Park on September 12, which was attended by over 200 people.

## **Project Background**

Reimagine Middle Branch is centered on Baltimore’s “blue-green heart,” stretching from Curtis Bay and Brooklyn on the south, through Cherry Hill, Westport, Carroll-Camden and Pigtown on the west, to Sharp-Leadenhall, Federal Hill, Riverside, Locust Point and Port Covington on the north and east. Within the project area are 19 neighborhoods overall, 30 parks, and more than 11 miles of shoreline.

Historically, the Middle Branch had a gradual, natural and resilient shoreline edge typical of the Chesapeake Bay. Over time this edge was reshaped and hardened by industry and infrastructure, resulting in a shoreline that today is thin, fragmented, and impacted by trash, highways, vacancy and erosion.

Likewise, the neighborhoods of South Baltimore that surround the Middle Branch have been disconnected from one another and the water due to transportation infrastructure and industrial uses. Despite this physical isolation, these neighborhoods are diverse and filled with assets and vibrant communities that Reimagine Middle Branch aims to support, strengthen and connect through this community-driven initiative.

## **Preliminary Design Ideas**

*The following preliminary design ideas were presented by the Reimagine Middle Branch Plan team, led by James Corner Field Operations, at the project’s first public meeting on September 29, 2021.*



*Aerial View of the Middle Branch design concepts showing a resilient shoreline, green boulevards, and new neighborhood activity hubs. Credit: James Corner Field Operations*



Task 2: Preliminary Design & Equity Frameworks

**THE LIVING SHORELINE**

**REIMAGINE MIDDLE BRANCH**

*A new shoreline design envisions improved water quality and resiliency measures that protect communities from damaging storms, while adding trail connections, boardwalks, and scenic beauty to the Middle Branch. Credit: James Corner Field Operations*



*New piers and upgrades to existing piers are envisioned to increase access to the water around the Middle Branch. Credit: James Corner Field Operations*



*The Plan envisions a new east-west bridge connecting Westport and Mount Winans to Port Covington and the South Baltimore peninsula. The design includes bike and pedestrian lanes, and integrates wetlands and resiliency berms to protect nearby neighborhoods from flooding, while continuing to enable boats to access Ridgely’s Cove. Credit: James Corner Field Operations.*

For more information on Reimagine Middle Branch, please visit: <https://reimaginemb.com/>

For more information and to schedule interviews, please contact publicists.

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**REIMAGINE MIDDLE BRANCH**

Reimagine Middle Branch is a community-driven initiative to reconnect South Baltimore to its 11+ miles of shoreline along the Patapsco River. The Plan involves designing a network of world-class parks, trails, and programs, while fostering connections and economic opportunity in adjacent neighborhoods.

The re-imagining of the Middle Branch has been underway for over a decade. With the vision of creating connections and delivering a world-class waterfront, many plans, projects and initiatives are already in motion. In summer 2021, we launched a new round of engagement and activation as we strive to maintain and build momentum.

For more information on the Reimagine Middle Branch project and other engagement events visit: [reimaginemb.com](https://reimaginemb.com)