



# COMMUNITY Planning Initiative

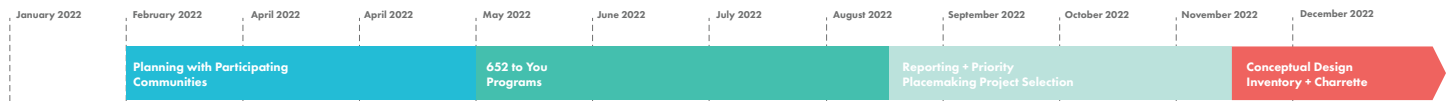


## Project Background

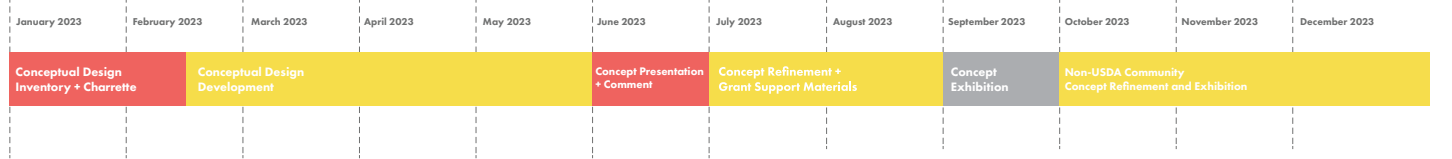
The Community Planning Initiative (CPI) was a collaboration between participating Tennessee RiverTowns communities and the Tennessee RiverLine team to develop a local vision for North America’s next great regional trail system. At the conclusion of this two-phase planning initiative, participating communities were empowered with an understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and aspirations relative to their relationship with the Tennessee River, and were provided resources necessary to make those aspirations a reality. The program began in the summer of 2022 and concluded in the winter of 2023 with a set of conceptual designs for each community’s priority placemaking project.



## Year One - 2022



## Year Two - 2023



652 to YOU - Calvert City, KY

## Phase One: 652 TO YOU

CPI began in participating communities with a public engagement program called 652 to YOU. 652 to YOU is an opportunity for community leaders and residents to provide feedback about existing recreation experiences and infrastructure on or along the river and share ideas for their improvement and expansion by participating in a series of interactive events and activities facilitated by the Tennessee RiverLine team. At the conclusion of each 652 to YOU program, the Tennessee RiverLine team provided a detailed report out, including recommendations for how each community can make progress toward their aspirations related to the Tennessee RiverLine vision. Additionally, a list of potential projects was identified based on the community’s shared vision for their section of the Tennessee RiverLine along with potential sources of funding for project implementation. These projects included new riverfront parks, campsites, access points, connective trails and greenways, and other asset-based infrastructure investments.

# 265 5.6%

individual markers of total markers from all communities

top 3

from map it



River Access



Trails (Bike, Hike, Walk)



Access the River

top 3

from river gauge



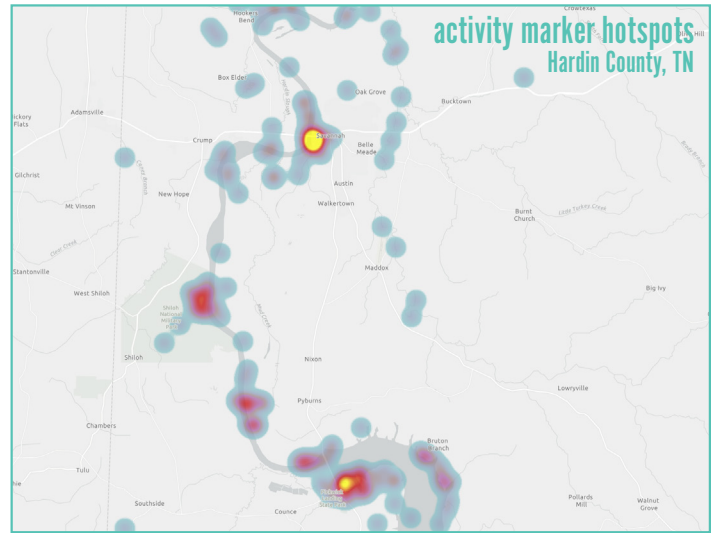
Access the River



River Access



Trails (Bike, Hike, Walk)



## Phase Two: Priority Placemaking

During Phase Two, the Tennessee RiverLine team continued collaborating with participating communities to develop a conceptual design, funding strategy, and grant application materials for a single priority placemaking project based on the community feedback gathered during the 652 to YOU program. These materials will be used by community partners to build public support and make progress toward project implementation.

The following seven communities participated in CPI during 2022-2023 through support from the Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge cooperative agreement with USDA Rural Development. Each community selected a priority placemaking project for the Tennessee RiverLine Planning & Design group to study and develop conceptual designs. These concepts aim to help each community develop its reach of the Tennessee RiverLine and to enhance their community's "[River as Park](#)."



Interpretive Hike at Shiloh Indian Mounds - Hardin County, TN



Open House Exhibit - Clifton, TN



Open House Exhibit - The Shoals, AL

## Community Deliverables

See the links below to access the Phase 1: 652 to YOU and Phase 2: Conceptual Design documents created for each participating community:

### Bridgeport, AL

- Phase 1: [652 to YOU](#)
- Phase 2: [River Park & Boat Ramp Conceptual Plan](#)

### Calvert City, KY

- Phase 1: [652 to YOU](#)
- Phase 2: [Haddock Ferry Park Conceptual Plan](#)

### Clifton, TN

- Phase 1: [652 to YOU](#)
- Phase 2: [Ross Creek Park Conceptual Plan](#)

### Guntersville, AL

- Phase 1: [652 to YOU](#)
- Phase 2: [Bucky Howe Park Conceptual Plan](#)

### Hardin County, TN

- Phase 1: [652 to YOU](#)
- Phase 2: [Countywide Conceptual Plan](#)

### Roane County, TN

- Phase 1: [652 to YOU](#)
- Phase 2: [Kingston Waterfront Park Conceptual Plan](#)

### The Shoals, AL

- Phase 1: [652 to YOU](#)
- Phase 2: [Old Railroad Bridge & Patton Island Conceptual Plan](#)



## Bridgeport Riverfront Park & Campground

Bridgeport, AL

A new accessible kayak launch would provide all ages and abilities better access to the water and paddlercrafts. The launch is located adjacent to the parking area and a short walk from the general store and plaza for ease and convenience. Restored riparian plantings would create habitat, help filter water, and mitigate erosion.

## What have been the most challenging or unexpected aspects of this project?

**Community engagement:** Engaging communities can be challenging due to wide ranging perspectives and interests. The success of the project heavily relies on active community participation, and achieving diverse and widespread involvement was more challenging in some communities than others. Interest in and knowledge of outdoor recreation and the benefits it provides varies drastically by community and played a role in the ROI of the marketing efforts that the volunteer leadership teams and Tennessee RiverLine staff led to muster public engagement.

**Resource allocation:** Balancing the aspirations of the project with the available resources and timelines was complex. Each community operated with different bandwidth from local leadership volunteers serving as on-the-ground program coordinators, as well as community-specific schedules of events and priorities for public engagement. This made it difficult to keep all seven communities on the same schedule so that the Tennessee RiverLine team was able to meet deadlines set forth in the original workplan submitted to Rural Development.

**Potential implementation hurdles:** Efforts to convert conceptual designs into tangible projects can face unexpected hurdles. Issues such as regulatory approvals, environmental concerns, or land-use conflicts were all considerations that had to be made during the conceptual design phase. However, the Tennessee RiverLine Planning & Design group will continue to serve as a resource for communities who may find navigation of these administrative hurdles too daunting to tackle alone.

**Project Longevity:** Ensuring the long-term sustainability and momentum gained for each of the projects may be challenging. Maintaining community interest, securing ongoing funding, and addressing evolving needs over time will require diligent collaboration between the Tennessee RiverLine team and participating communities. Communities' continued involvement in the Tennessee RiverTowns Program and their efforts to secure RiverTown designation will hopefully keep them engaged in this work and provide incentive for them to aggressively pursue project implementation.



Concept Plan for Haddox Ferry Park - Calvert City, KY



## Kingston Riverfront Gateway

Roane County, TN

## What advice would you give to other organizations planning a similar project?

**Enact a Robust Planning Process:** Invest time and effort in thorough planning. Clearly define project goals, engage stakeholders early, and create a flexible framework that can adapt to unforeseen challenges.

**Communicate Effectively:** Establish open and transparent communication channels with participating communities. Keep citizens and stakeholders informed about the project's progress, challenges, and opportunities to maintain their interest and support.

**Build Community Capacity:** Empower local communities by building their capacity to take an active role in the project. Provide training and resources to enhance their ability to contribute meaningfully.

## Strengths of CPI:

**Community-Centric Approach:** CPI's focus on community engagement and prioritizing local visions strengthened its potential for long-term success through grassroots support. The Community Planning Initiative was developed as an add-on to the existing Tennessee RiverTowns Program. This enabled the Tennessee RiverLine team to leverage existing networks of support within the communities themselves to execute CPI.

**Collaborative Partnerships:** Collaborations between the Tennessee RiverLine team and project partners like UT, TVA, USACE, and other organizations provided a foundational understanding of guidelines to consider throughout the conceptual design process and potential limitations to implementation.

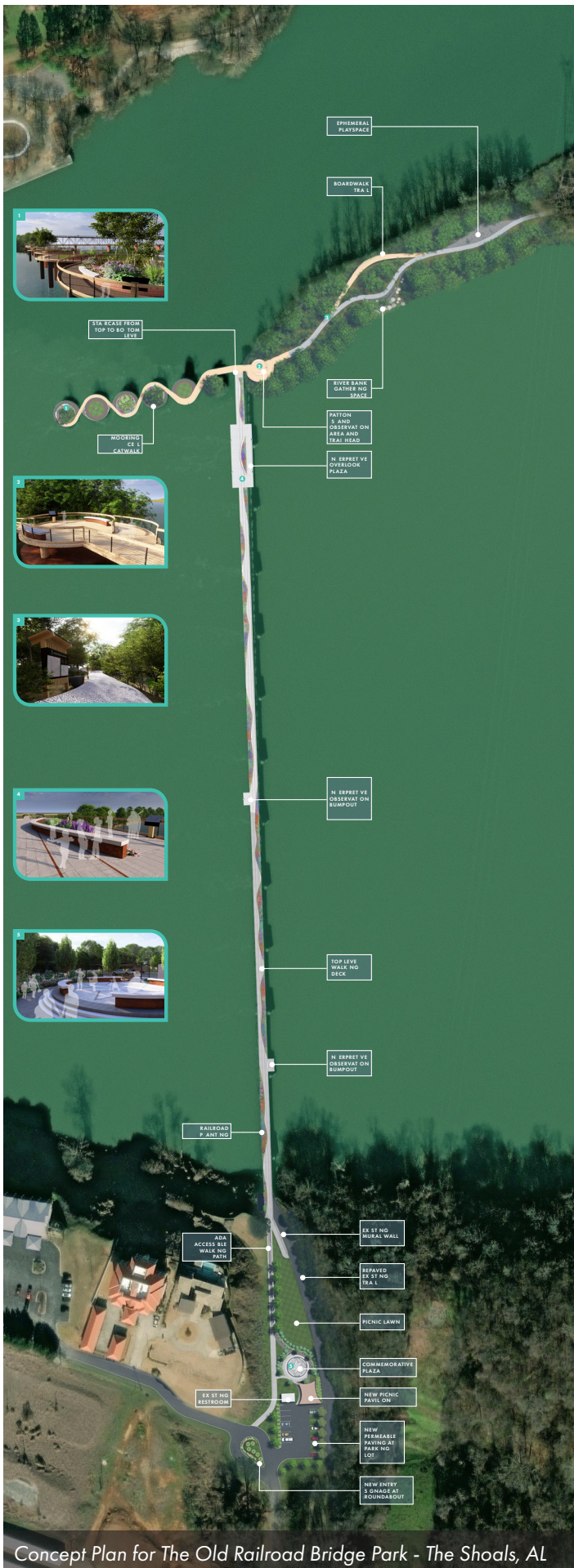
## Limitations of CPI:

**Scope vs. Schedule:** The limited timeline, when paired with such an ambitious scope of work was one of the greatest challenges. Working concurrently with seven different communities, spread out along the Tennessee River's 652 mile reach, required extensive project and logistics planning to successfully meet the project's deliverables.

**Varied Community Capacities and Involvement:** Communities differed in their capacities to actively engage in the planning process, which led to uneven project collaboration and design outcomes. The most prominent example of this was in the loss of two communities from the program due to changes in local leadership and capacity between the time of the RPIIC application and the execution of the program.



Boardwalk Rendering at Ross Creek Park - Clifton, TN



Concept Plan for The Old Railroad Bridge Park - The Shoals, AL

## Innovative Approach:

CPI incorporated many innovative tools throughout the project. These interactive elements included:

**652 to YOU** – Using a series of engaging activities and displays, the 652 to YOU program allowed participants to share feedback and ideas on current river access and usage as well as express wants and needs of their community regarding the river’s economic, social, and environmental development.

**RiverGauge** – An online interactive survey map that provided all residents, leaders, advocates, and river users alike an opportunity to share their ideas and feedback even if they were unable to attend in-person events.

**Virtual Design Workshops** – The Planning and Design team used the collaboration platform Mural to facilitate virtual design workshops in each community. This gave community stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the design process by sharing ideas on project amenities, and their potential benefits and challenges to implementation.

**Typeform Surveys** – For those community members that were unable to participate in the virtual design workshops, an online survey was developed using Typeform to get feedback on project elements and investment priorities.

**Conceptual Design Open Houses** – The design process culminated in public exhibits of the work in each participating community. Large, interactive exhibits allowed attendees the opportunity to engage with the conceptual designs and provided a forum for additional feedback.

**Virtual Reality and Animation Videos** – To help the stakeholders and public participants better visualize the proposed concepts, the Planning and Design group developed video fly-throughs and used virtual reality to provide 360 degree, panoramic views of each project. The video fly-throughs for each project can be viewed here:

<https://vimeo.com/user21512992/videos>

## If you had the opportunity, what would you have done differently?

**Continuous Evaluation:** Implement a robust system for continuous evaluation and feedback throughout the project to identify and address challenges in real-time.

**Long-Term Planning:** Incorporate strategies for long-term project viability from the project's inception. Items to consider are how to sustain momentum and community involvement, and how to develop strategies for communities to secure funding and approvals to move projects beyond the conceptual phase.

**Adaptability:** Build flexibility into the project plan to adapt to changing community needs, unexpected challenges, and emerging opportunities.

For more information, visit

<https://www.tnriverline.org/community-planning-initiative>



Video Animation for Bucky Howe Park - Guntersville, AL



Virtual Reality for The Old Railroad Bridge Park - The Shoals, AL

Tennessee RiverLine is an initiative of



with principal partners



**for all who seek to experience the Tennessee River  
for generations to come**