

CATEGORY

UNBUILT WORKS

PROJECT NAME AND LOCATION

St. Cloud Riverwalk Master Plan
St. Cloud, Minnesota

ABSTRACT

The St. Cloud Riverwalk is a transformation place that uses the Mississippi River to reconnect the city's residents and create a new image for the city's future. The Landscape Architect re-established ecological, economic, and social connections to the Mississippi to transform the city. The project physically and metaphorically pulls the Mississippi into the fabric of the city to encourage interaction and connection. The Landscape Architect delivered a project that serves as a precedent for downstream cities and promotes stewardship by innovatively using ecology, redevelopment, and social connections to improve the river and community's health.

NARRATIVE

St. Cloud is the first city with a population over 50,000 on the Mississippi River and is located 200 miles from the Mississippi River Headwaters. Throughout history communities have been attracted to this location because of its transportation advantages and rich natural resources. Historically the city turned its back to the river as many communities have. City leadership identified a reconnection to the river as a means to reinvigorate the city's economy, quality of life, and image. The Landscape Architect was hired to bring previous planning studies together, engage the community, and create an inspiring and uniquely St. Cloud vision for the Riverwalk. Initial goals for the project proposed a place that would be a catalyst for re-development, restore ecological function to the riverbanks, and help define a community identity focused on the Mississippi. A new regional destination that brands the city and connects residents. The Riverwalk is a 1-mile linear park along the Mississippi that connects regional trails and city landmarks and creates a new civic hub developed on a public-private expanse of land at the river's edge.

The Landscape Architect authored and led all elements of a collaborative process that integrated key participants, residents, city staff, and a diverse team of experts. A visionary master plan was developed that was place specific, transformational, and genuinely informed by meaningful public input. The Landscape Architect built a powerful collaborative vision that was grounded in science and hydraulic modeling to prove the viability of the project.

The design focuses on key elements that connect people to the Mississippi River. The River is inaccessible in throughout St. Cloud due to steep bluffs and major transportation infrastructure. This site is a rare opportunity to physically connect to the Mississippi and city leaders recognized and prioritized this opportunity. The LA reduced the existing roadway to accommodate a new pedestrian experience at the river's edge. River touchpoints along the linear park define viewsheds, fishing, and other opportunities. A large private school campus adjacent to the Riverwalk was re-visioning its campus at the same time and the LA showed them how they could leverage Riverwalk's opportunities to strengthen their campus, redefine their brand and educational experience, connect to the neighborhood, and generate redevelopment opportunities previously not considered. 35,000+ square feet of mixed-use office and an additional 26,000 square feet of education/ community building is located above the floodway with panoramic Mississippi views. This vision was focused on the school's open grass play field within the floodplain and created a destination for the community focused

on the river. A series of spaces transition down the hillside to the floodplain and extend the school campus, create engaging public spaces, and connect to the Mississippi. A channel distributary is proposed to be diverted into the site from the main channel to create a unique feature that allows safe interaction with the Mississippi. Hydraulic modeling informed the channel geometry design, and water quality research validated that this location is not impaired as it becomes a few hundred miles further downstream. This site will become one of few urban locations along the 2,300-mile course where interaction with the Mississippi is safe, healthy, and encouraged. The Riverwalk is a new center of activity, economic opportunity, community, and celebration that focuses on our country's greatest river.

Collaboration was critical to this project and instrumental in the final design. The LA focused the team's expertise and understanding of the river and proved the viability of our proposal through coordination of preliminary hydraulic modeling. Integrating key stakeholders that included the school's leadership, neighborhood residents, key businesses and real estate professionals, and river advocates was a highly positive experience. These groups originally had different priorities and perspectives, but through design it was discovered that they could all strengthen and support each other with a powerful shared vision.

–As the first major city on the Mississippi, St. Cloud has a chance to foster stewardship of the river's health that will flow to other communities downstream. The health of the river and its people are intertwined. Many communities have turned their back on the Mississippi, and have turned away from the energy, health, and uniqueness that the river provides. The Riverwalk will re-connect to the Mississippi and harness that energy to redevelop portions of the community; attracting the next generation of urban residents to Live, Work, and Play in St. Cloud. The Riverwalk will be ingrained into the identity of the City and become an integral part of St. Cloud's image.

The St. Cloud Riverwalk is a 1-mile linear park that connects the Hospital to downtown along the Mississippi River. The Riverwalk provides connections to key elements in the city and to the Mississippi River.

ST. CLOUD HOSPITAL

HESTER PARK

DOWNTOWN SAUK RAPIDS

WILSON PARK

WOBEGON TRAIL

8th STREET

RAU FIELD

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL

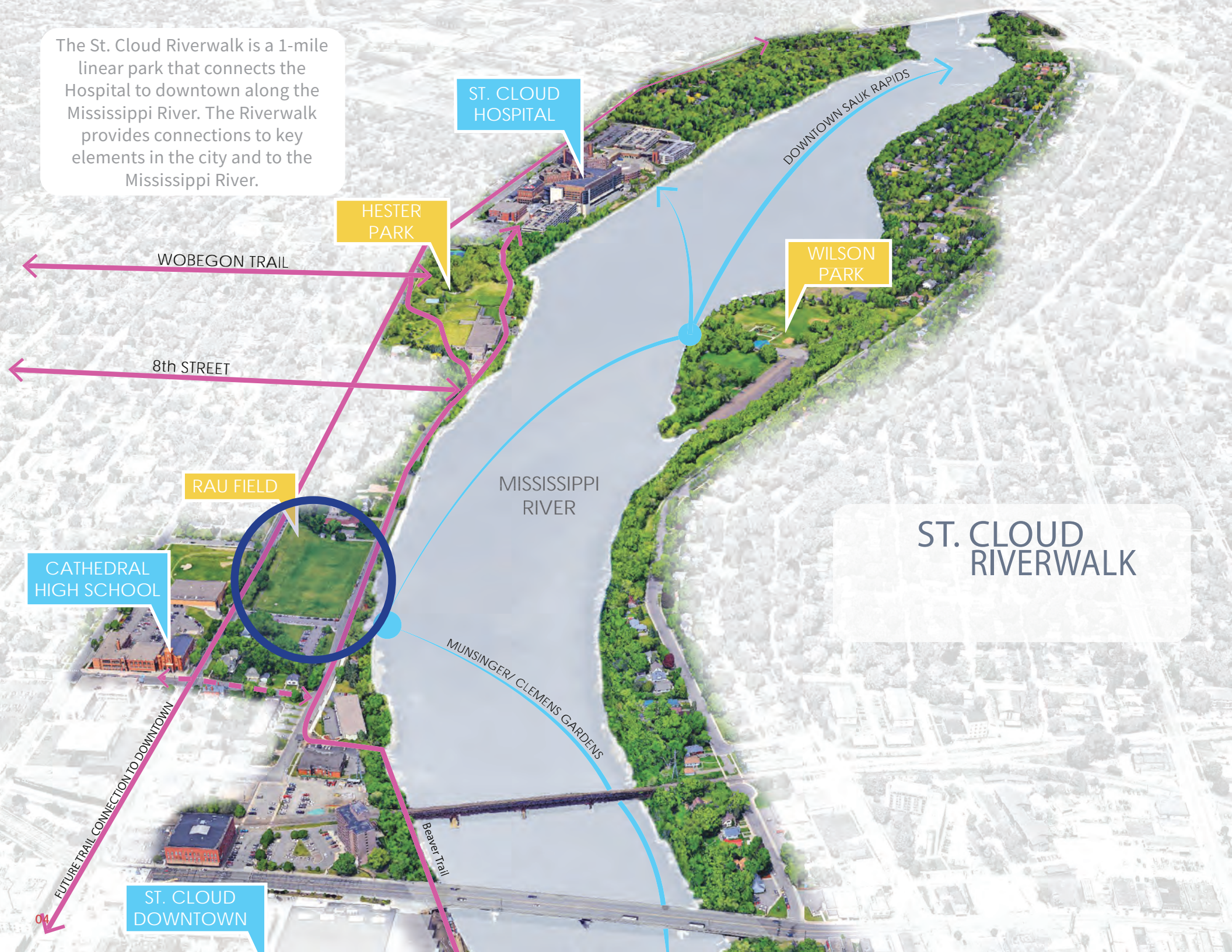
ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

MUNSINGER/ CLEMENS GARDENS

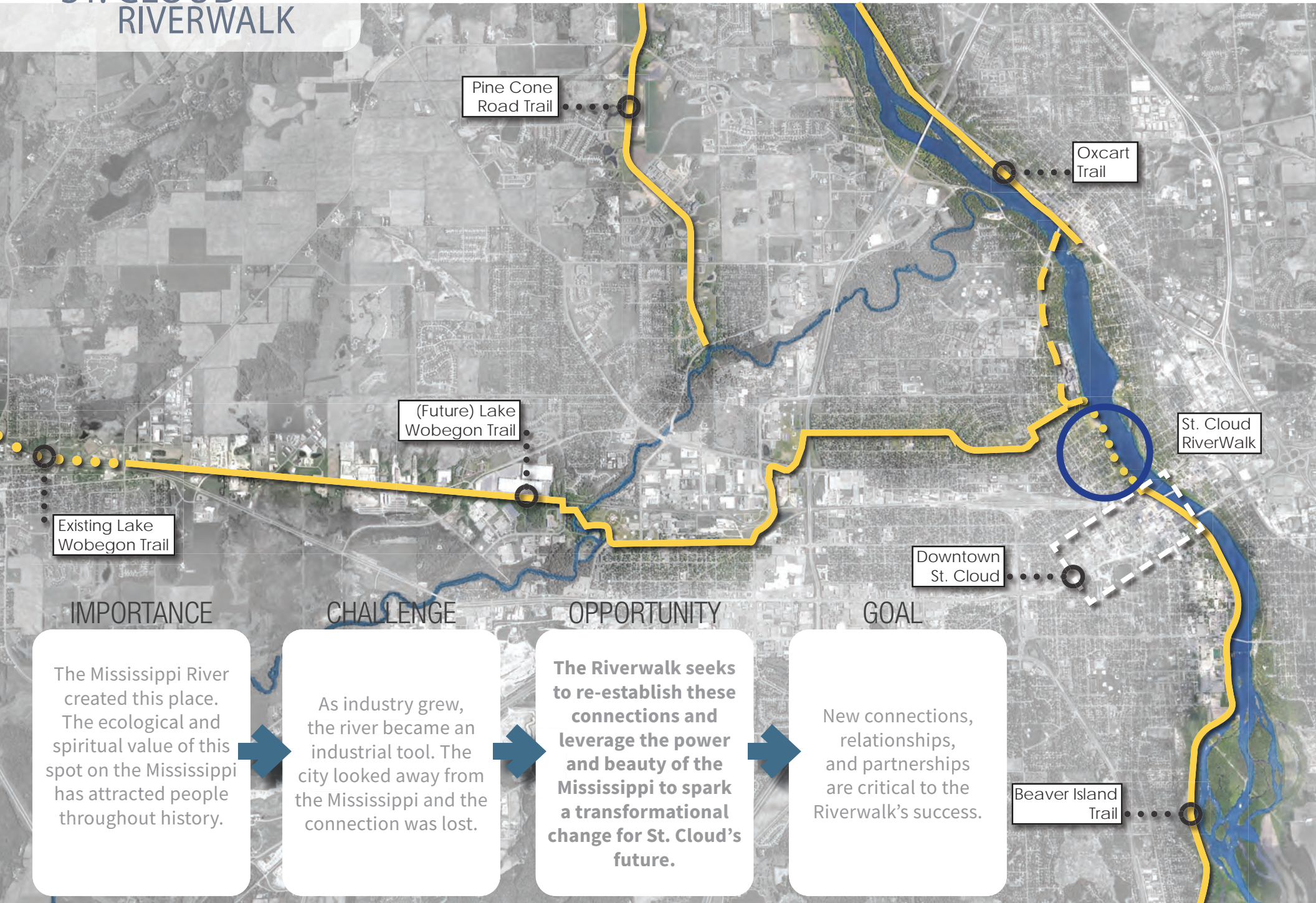
Beaver Trail

ST. CLOUD DOWNTOWN

FUTURE TRAIL CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN



ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK



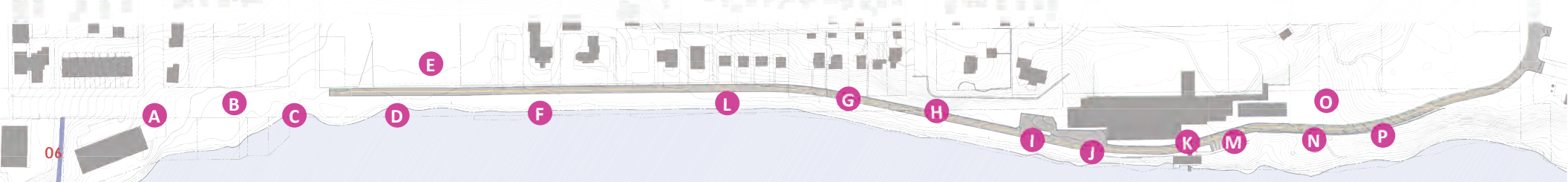
ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

- EXISTING
- CONDITIONS

Mississippi Headwaters Watershed



St. Cloud is the first larger urban area on the Mississippi. The water is still clean at this location but becomes impaired just downstream. The City has a unique opportunity to safely connect to the Mississippi and become a model for downstream cities.



ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

- COMMUNITY
- ENGAGEMENT

Community input was collected throughout the entire design process - from initial ideas and visioning to collaborative placemaking, and finally through concept refinement and feedback. This continuous feedback loop allowed the design process to move forward with maximum public input and flexibility to adapt to new opportunities.



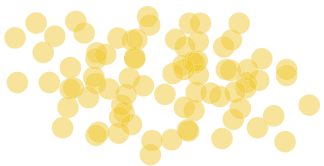
TASK FORCE COMMITTEE

SEVERAL COMMUNITY LEADERS COMPRISED A TASK FORCE COMMITTEE. THE TASK FORCE PROVIDED TECHNICAL INPUT AND REGULAR FEEDBACK, INPUT, VISIONING, AND EXPERTISE IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS. TASK FORCE MEMBERS REPRESENTED A CROSS SECTION OF THE GREATER ST. CLOUD REGION THAT COULD POSITIVELY AFFECT, AND BE AFFECTED BY, THE RIVERWALK PROJECT.

A KEY MOMENT IN THE PROCESS WAS A DESIGN CHARETTE CALLED 'PARK-A-PALOOZA', WHERE THE TASK FORCE PARTICIPATED IN THE INITIAL VISIONING OF THE RIVERWALK, AND HELPED DEVELOP THE FIRST CONCEPTS.

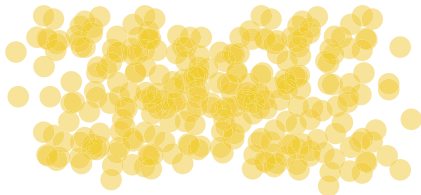


URBAN EDGE



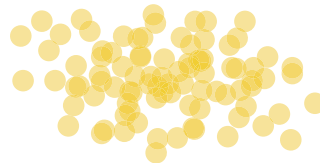
20% OF RESPONDENTS PREFER

BALANCED EDGE

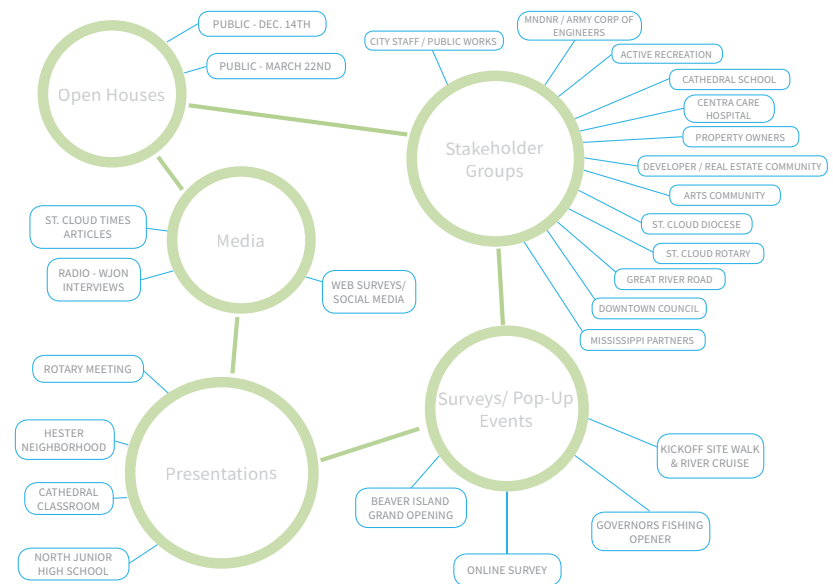


57% OF RESPONDENTS PREFER
[244 RESPONSES]
EQUAL MIX OF NATURAL RIVER EDGE AND HUMAN INTERACTION

NATURAL EDGE



23% OF RESPONDENTS PREFER



ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

- RIVER
- CONNECTION



EXISTING

The Riverwalk reclaims an excessively wide city-street along the Mississippi River and provides trails, river touchpoints, streambank restoration, viewing nodes, and native landscaping to the this part of the city. A vision for a school's open playfield invites the river in to the site and prioritizes pedestrian access and connection to the Mississippi.

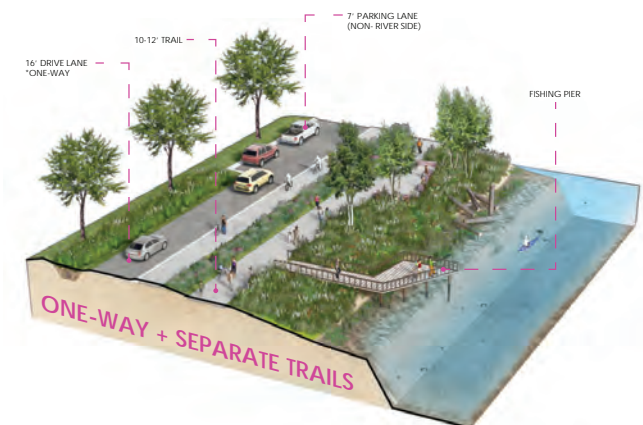
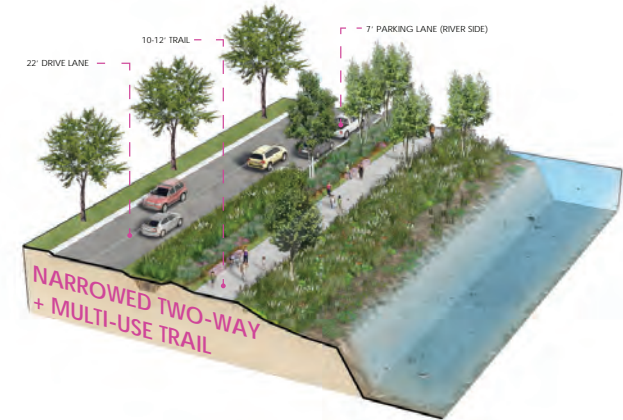
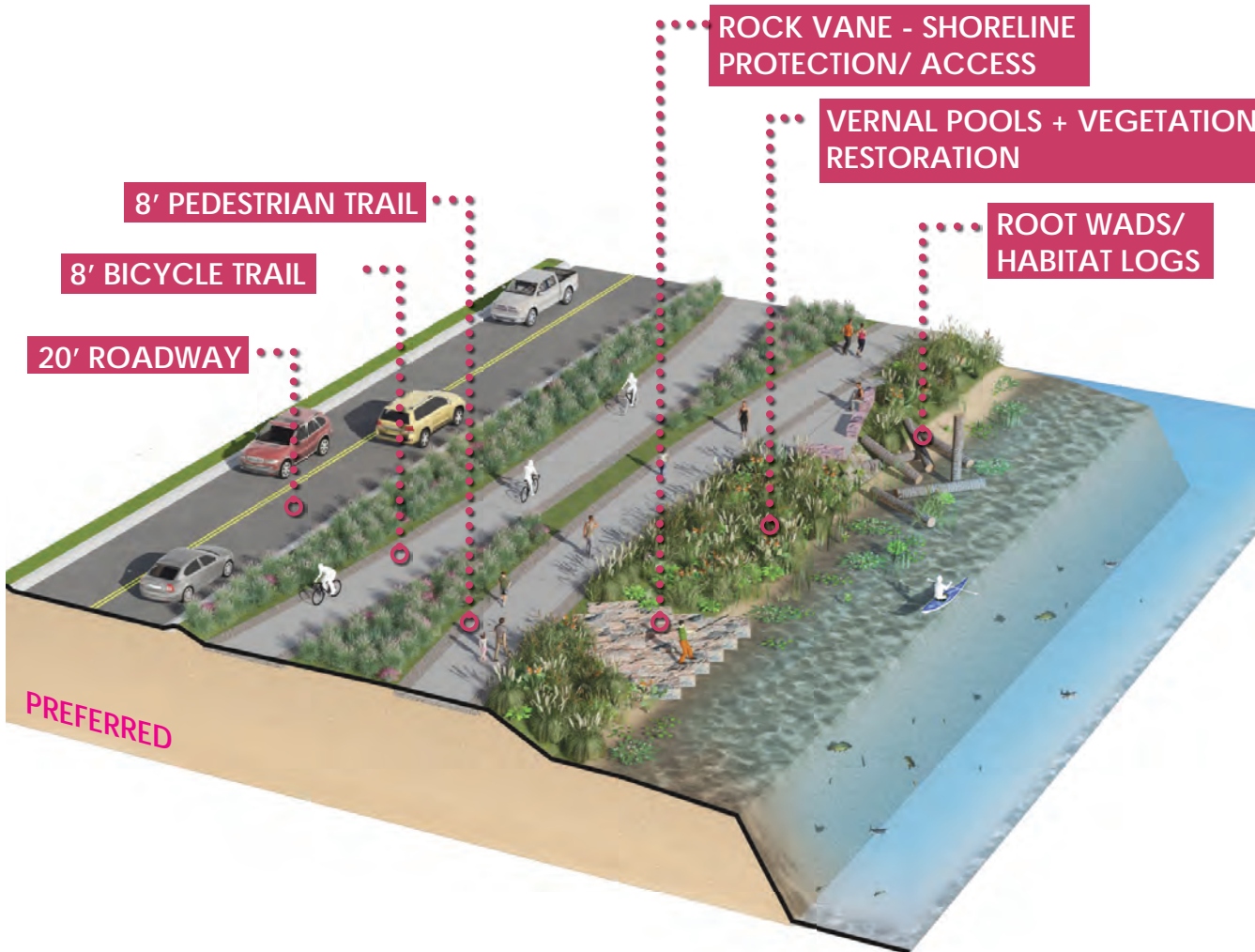
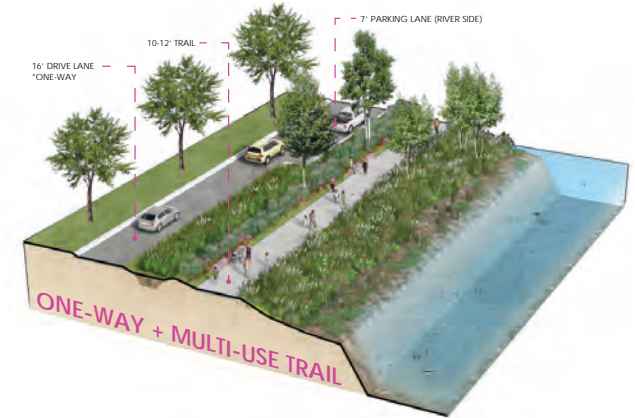
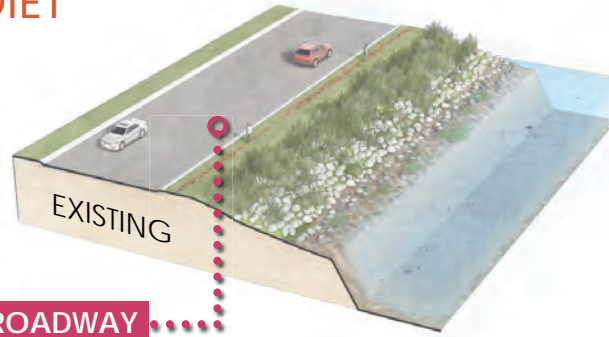


PROPOSED

ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

- CONNECTIONS
- ROAD DIET

A major component of the Riverwalk was reclaiming the riverbank and pedestrian space from the existing overly-wide street. The LA worked with neighborhood residents, biking groups, and public works to provide a road diet for 5th Avenue that would create an inviting and attractive linear park.



ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

•• CONNECTING
•• ECOLOGIES

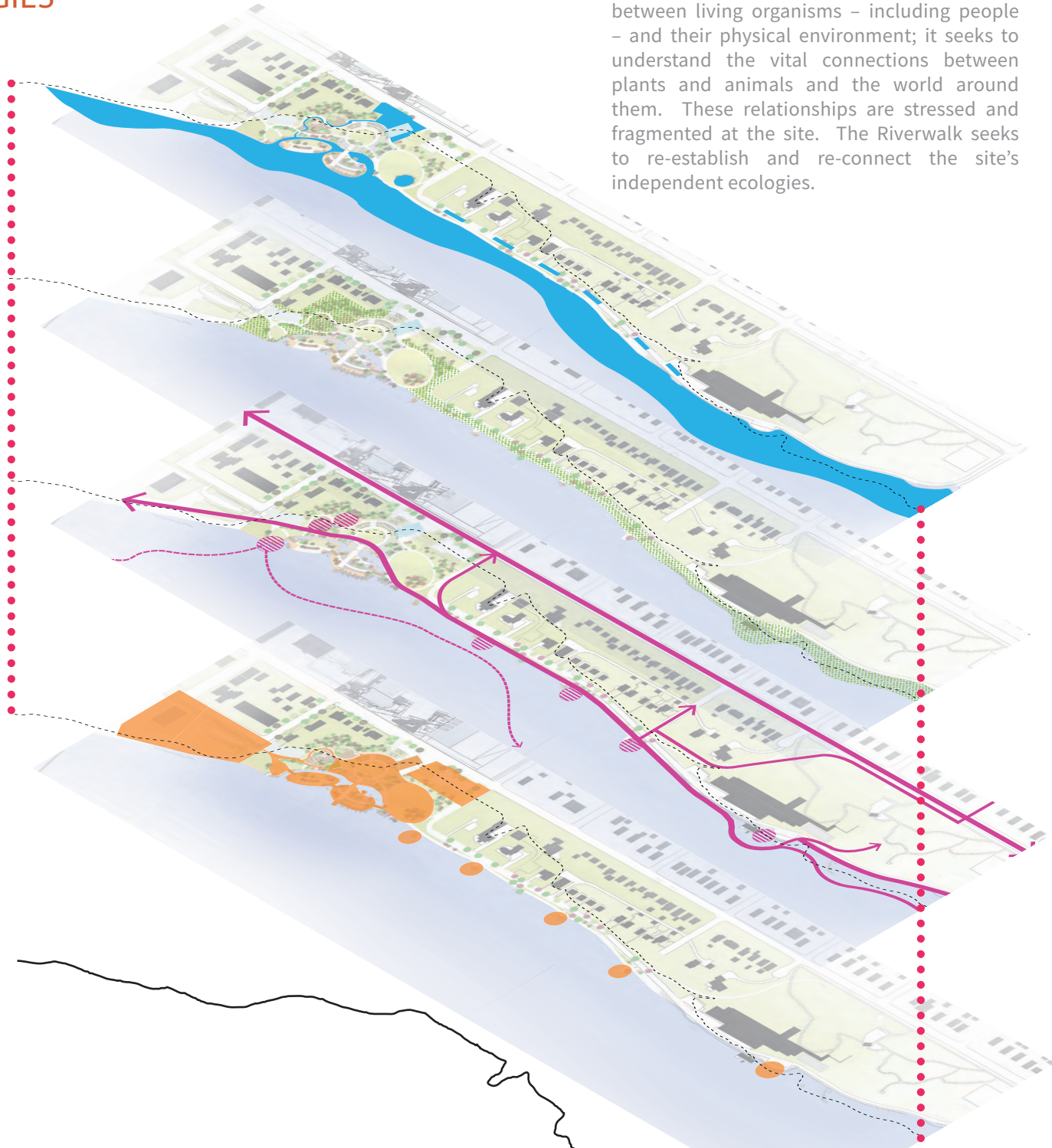
WATER ECOLOGIES

NATIVE ECOLOGIES

HEALTH ECOLOGIES

URBAN ECOLOGIES

100 YEAR FLOOD



Ecology is the study of the relationships between living organisms – including people – and their physical environment; it seeks to understand the vital connections between plants and animals and the world around them. These relationships are stressed and fragmented at the site. The Riverwalk seeks to re-establish and re-connect the site's independent ecologies.

ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

- HUMAN
- ACTIVITIES



NATURAL PLAY ENVIRONMENTS



STORMWATER BIOSWALE



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER LARGE GATHERINGS



SAFE CROSSINGS/ CONTINUOUS CAMPUS

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

BUTLER PARK



SHALLOW DISTRIBUTARY

SAFE CANOE/ KAYAK LAUNCH AREAS



POTENTIAL ACADEMIC USE



ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

- COMMUNITY
- SPACE

BIOSWALE

collects, cleans, and conveys stormwater toward the river, becoming an educational feature

STORMWATER WEEP WALL

plaza and rooftop stormwater is harvested and allowed to slowly seep out of granite cracks and crevices - mimicking the natural bluff seeps

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

the park visually integrates surrounding land uses and provides building pads above the floodway with dramatic views, activating the park and extending the school campus

AMPHITHEATER

opportunities for events, graduations, classes, lounging, and viewing the Mississippi's slow churn

EVENT LAWN

a flexible open space that can support larger community events or lunch-time Frisbee

ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

- ISLAND
- SHORELINE

RIVERWALK TRAIL
the main trail will cross at the island and hug River's edge.

NATIVE VEGETATION
provides visual appeal and habitat, water quality, while keeping sight lines open to the River.

GRANITE SHORELINE ARMOR
large granite blocks form vanes to stabilize the shoreline and provide access to the River's edge.

ACTIVATED 'ISLAND'

the island is carved from the shore and designed to support passive and active recreation and allow for a constant flow of users. a large dock provides the "up-north" experience for city residents

RIVERWALK RECREATION

canoe and kayak launches provide easy access for non-motorized water recreation; habitat improvements increase fishing quality

ST. CLOUD RIVERWALK

- INTERACTIVE
- RIVER CHANNEL



MULTIPLE ACCESS POINTS

allows for users to access the island along the main trail and from park areas, creating photo and selfie opportunities

GRANITE BEACH

high traffic areas to allow for an easy transition to the water's edge

LOCALLY SOURCED GRANITE

emphasizes the St. Cloud identity, while reinforcing the shoreline and providing seating, play elements, and crayfish nooks

SHALLOW DISTRIBUTARY

allows families to safely interact with the Mississippi River and play with nature.

NATIVE BUFFER

filters rainwater before it flows into the River, while also providing habitat.