MINUTES
City Council Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee

Wednesday, April 15, 2026, at 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member Lauren Wise, Vice Chair, Council Member Daniel Jessee, Citizen Member Jackson Tate, Citizen Member Reba Osborne, Citizen Member JD Powers, Citizen Member Howie Granat, Citizen Member Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Ex-Officio
Staff Present:	David Todd, Assistant City Manager Wesley Shook, Public Works Director Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director Shawnee Cummings, Assistant to the City Manager
Guests:	Rebekah Robinson (Conserving Carolina), Leila Husain (Conserving Carolina), Drake McNeary, Patrick Looney, Sherry Downing, Barb Christing, Charlie Miller, Randy Collette, Randy Burgess, David Thomas, Trish Davis

A. Welcome and Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager Shawnee Cummings certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

A. Baker stated that there was one requested change to the agenda, which is that Item E., Design Options for Main Street to MCJ + Rosman Highway to High School segments, be moved to the May meeting. L. Wise motioned to approve the agenda as amended. D. Jessee seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes – March 18, 2026

H. Granat motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by D. Jessee. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Estatoe Trail Lamb's Creek Property Discussion

Conserving Carolina acquired a property from Pisgah Health Foundation and wanted to start the conversation about the vision for the property. Rebekah Robinson said Conserving Carolina has ideas for things to do during their ownership and then they intend to transfer the property to the City. Conserving Carolina visited the property near Lamb's Creek and Allison Creek, and determined both creeks require restoration work (Attachment A). Restoration will include minimal grading, removal of riprap, adding larger stones, creating stair steps for creek access, removal of invasive species, and planting native species. They plan to add crushed gravel on the low-lying, single-track areas, making it accessible to the retirement community and people at the hospital.

The Committee asked clarifying questions about the specific location of the land and plans to transfer the land to the City. L. Husain said the timeline is flexible, but they are looking to transfer the land in 3-5 years. A. Baker stated that from a City perspective, the main concern will be to plan for and pay for maintenance. D. Todd stated that with less improvements made, it will be easier to maintain.

L. Husain said Conserving Carolina still needs to fundraise but they wanted to bring the plan to the Committee to get a sense of how the Committee feels about it. The Committee approved of the plans and thanked R. Robinson and L. Husain for attending.

F. Tannery North Trail Construction Update

D. Todd stated the trail will be built by NCDOT, acting as the City's contractor, and they notified us that there have been delays in working with Duke Energy to get utility relocation work done. Construction is set to start in mid-July. Staff are focused on the tannery smokestack demolition and ideally will complete the demolition before trail construction begins, so the delays do not have a negative impact.

NCDOT asked the City to take down any trees that needed to come down prior to the Federal and State Bat Eviction Moratoria. D. Todd said Staff were able to take down all of the marked trees and clean up some debris, but there is still more debris to clean up.

D. Todd hopes to get bids on the smokestack demolition in late April or early May. One outstanding issue related to the demolition is that NCDEQ will need to approve the associated environmental management plan (EMP). D. Todd is hopeful that EMP approval will come before trail construction begins in July. If it does not, construction can begin on portions of the trail while the demolition takes place.

There is still discussion about whether a portion of the stack can remain as a monument and/or whether the crushed brick can be used as the trail bed. D. Todd said potential contractors will propose different demolition methods and the method used will affect how much brick can be repurposed. R. Osborne asked about engaging the art community to create a memorial. Mayor Copelof said the City intends to put out a call to artists if the entire stack comes down. If a remnant is left, that will be the memorial.

A. Baker asked after Staff receives the bids on the demolition, will that be brought to a Committee or straight to Council? D. Todd said it will likely be brought to Council because Staff will be asking for approval to award the contract, but it will be a slightly different process. After awarding the contract, Staff will work with the contractor to craft the EMP and if it comes back with changes, the contractor may have to revise their bid to address the changes. As a result, it may take longer to come to Council.

G. Follow-Up Discussion on E-Bikes in Bracken Preserve

L. Wise introduced the discussion by covering what was discussed about e-bikes at the last meeting, including the positions of State and Federal agencies, impacts to Pisgah National Forest and Dupont State Recreational Forest, liability concerns, and other municipalities' actions. He advised the public that the Committee just started the discussion and does not anticipate a decision anytime soon.

A. Baker shared his thoughts since he was not at the last Committee meeting and acknowledged that the Committee and Staff received a lot of public input. He stated first, he believes there has been some conflation of what e-bikes mean for the Estatoe and Ecusta trails and what they mean for Bracken Preserve, as he sees them as very different things. E-bikes help create safe transportation networks, but there are not many commuters traveling through Bracken. Second, he stated that the City needs to look to the public lands around us for comparison to what the City is doing, particularly in Bracken, as it is adjacent and connected to Pisgah. He added we need to be cautious about opening a public land when no other public lands around us are doing the same.

R. Osborne asked if there is an urgency to this decision. A. Baker said there is not, as there is already a rule against e-bikes in Bracken, but with e-bikes proliferating, this conversation will be ongoing as rules and regulations change. He added that it is nearly impossible to enforce the "no e-bike" rule for people riding e-bikes in Bracken, Dupont, and Pisgah, and if Class 1 e-bikes were allowed, it would be equally difficult to enforce.

H. Granat was not present at the last meeting and shared the following thoughts:

- He is not against e-bikes, but he is against e-bikes at Bracken. He felt the recent Transylvania Times article and this discussion has clouded the progress made by new trail construction in Bracken. Instead of making it easier by allowing motorized vehicles, the community created newer, easier trails opening in July.
- Bracken has many passionate supporters, including mountain bikers, hikers, trail runners, and dog walkers. He added that the community is the reason behind Brackenfest, and the loan from Conserving Carolina to purchase the land. Even though increased usage is a concern, he wants to see more users as a result of more accessibility, rather than e-bikes.
- He is concerned that the push from local bike shops to increase e-bike access is because they want to sell more. He stated the bike shop owners have not provided any support of trail expansion at Bracken, which he sees as disingenuous.

- He does not think e-bike users are beginner mountain bikers. His fear is the typical downhill rider, who will do downhill laps through Bracken, creating safety concerns and requiring one-way trails that limit hikers and bikers.
- He understands there are many studies on e-bikes' trail impact, but those studies were out West and do not account for the rain and tree coverage in this area.
- He is in favor of permits that allows e-bikes for people with disabilities, injuries, or medical conditions, but recognizes that more research is needed on rules and regulations for a permit system. Criteria would be more specific and require a higher bar than ageing and e-bikes making it easier.

D. Jessee stated he is worried about repercussions, such as e-bikes making their way into Pisgah. He explained that it is the wrong time to put any more pressure on the Forest Service, as they have had to deal with Hurricane Helene, cuts to the sector by the current administration, and organizational restructuring. He is hesitant to do anything that would cause additional burdens, including enforcement and increased traffic.

A. Baker said while the Transylvania Times is not here, he felt the headline of the recent article was inaccurate and gave the public an expectation that there would be a change to the rules. H. Granat said the Committee may need to reaffirm the rules and increase signage, as it could be confusing to visitors or make it seem like e-bikes are inevitable.

JD Powers added that he has ridden on trails all over the country that allow e-bikes, but none of the trails were as small as Bracken or 100% single track. He further said that allowing e-bikes in a small trail system is asking for trouble, to which H. Granat added that if someone gets hurt in Bracken, that opens the city up to risk and liability.

R. Osborne stated she does not see any reason to allow e-bikes and asked if the Committee should think about tabling the issue given how controversial it has been. A. Baker said the Committee may have to table the discussion, at least until the issue is raised again, but it will not be today since so many people attended for public comment.

L. Wise said he will play devil's advocate. He has ridden mountain bikes since 1986, and at that time, a lot of hikers and birdwatchers said that mountain bikes on trails would destroy the forest and be unsafe. He sees us talking about the same things here. He said that those people were not entirely wrong because you can go to certain areas, like Sycamore Flats, and see what mountain bikes have done to our trails. Now, mountain biking is one of the community's most important economic drivers. While he is still on the fence and thinks that a lot of things still need to be considered, he wants to be very careful when discussing the safety and speed of e-bikes. According to the research, e-bikes are not more dangerous, faster, or more harmful to trails than acoustic mountain bikes. L. Wise said the City is spending a lot of time and money to make Bracken easier to access, and there will be an uptick in users. He does not think e-bikes will increase danger or change the impact on trails, but he believes more users will – it just so happens that more users are moving toward e-bikes. L. Wise said the real issues are increased usage and preconceived notions about e-bikes.

Mayor Copelof stated that she thinks it is essential to hear from the Forest Service, as they are a key partner, and their voice needs to be heard before any change in policy.

A. Baker stated that this item will be on next month's agenda for action. Mayor Copelof suggested inviting the Forest Service to the next meeting as well.

A. Bland added that he is waiting to hear from the NC Land and Water Fund (NCLWF), who has the conservation easement on the property and changed their rules regarding e-bikes. He said the rule change was for properties with easements after 2017, but the easement for Bracken is from 2007. The document capturing the rule change had minimal information about pre-2017 easements and it does not apply to Bracken, so A. Bland reached out for clarification on what that rule change means for Bracken.

H. Public Comment

Patrick Looney, who works for Squatch Bikes, asked how many Committee members have ridden e-bikes. Approximately half of the Committee raised their hands. He clarified he is only asking about Class 1 and asked if anyone would like to experience an e-bike, free of charge, at Kanuga Bike Park. A. Baker stated that there is not usually a back-and-forth during public comment but anyone interested can follow up with him.

Sherry Downing said H. Granat and A. Baker hit most of the points she was going to cover. She stated that she used to be a competitive mountain biker, worked in trail education, and fought for access in mountain biking. She now has a disease that slowly deteriorates her ability to move. Yesterday, she was in Bracken on a regular bike and if she had been on an e-bike, she would have been going faster and approached other bikers quickly. She disagrees with a permit for individuals with disabilities because they will likely have physical limitations like her that limit the ability to handle a heavy e-bike. She wanted the Committee to hear it from someone on that "slippery slope."

Barb Christing said she liked most of what she heard from the Committee. She stated she feels bad for people who are injured or aging, but when you get to a certain age, you have to understand there are things you cannot do anymore. She said if someone sees another person on an e-bike, they may assume that e-bikes are allowed. She advised you will have the same damage and same safety issues that come with e-bikes, whether the rider is injured or ageing or not. She encouraged the Committee to write an article to the Transylvania Times to counter the expectation of a major decision. She said there is limited parking at Bracken and if opened to e-bikes, it would eliminate more parking.

Charlie Miller stated that the main reason he does not want e-bikes at Bracken is because it is steep and there are a lot of blind corners. He has been riding for 30 years, knows all of the turns in Bracken, knows where he can speed up and slow down, and he still scares hikers. He cannot believe statistics that say that e-bikes are not faster because of the increased wattage. He encouraged the Committee not to allow e-bikes.

Randy Collette stated that with the Forest Service, he put "no e-biking" stickers throughout Pisgah and he is passionate about keeping e-bikes out of the forest. He stated there are Class 1 e-bikes where you can disengage the speed-limiting device, and go up to 28 mph. When you turn the bike off and back on, it clears the speed history so you cannot check a user's speed. He remembers 10 years ago when bike shops worked with the forest service to limit bikes on trails that were showing signs of wear. Now, he feels that bike shops are being dishonest to the community and Committee to get motorized vehicles in the forests so they can sell more bikes. He said if we work harder to educate users and take care of the forest, we wouldn't be having these conversations.

Randy Burgess said he retired from the Forest Service after 33 years and is proud to say he walked the Bracken Preserve with Mac Morrow when he was district ranger. He said he was part of the decision to allow the connecting trail to Pisgah National Forest and that trail was not intended for motorized vehicles, only for foot and bike traffic. He felt that the Transylvania Times article was misleading because it made it seem like we are in a bubble that does not allow e-bikes and everywhere else is allowing them. He said that most national forests do not allow e-bikes on non-motorized, single-track trails and individual forests can decide to change that, but few have. He appreciates the recognition of needing to work with the forest service, given the additional burdens.

Drake McNeary said he is not the manager of a bike shop, he is not representing Sycamore Cycles, and he is here on his own volition. He is not necessarily pro-e-bike, but the topic came up for him because he does commute to work through Bracken Preserve. If he could e-bike it, it would save him a lot of time. He reached out to NCLWF and they advised that they changed their rules and are leaving the decision to allow e-bikes up to the landowner. He brought it to the Committee as an honest question because he does have a bike shop perspective and thinks it would be good for the local bike shops. What he does not like is at Dupont, there is a flashing sign that says no e-bikes, making it clear they are not welcome. So, if we choose not to allow e-bikes, he wonders what our sell is as a community, and as a bike destination. He asked how we can frame it. He said no one wants anyone to do laps in Bracken, so there would need to be education and regulation. He said it is our choice to make and reiterated he does not represent Sycamore Cycles.

David Thomas thanked the Committee and said they have done a great job getting greenways in the community. He would like to see preservation, and not exploitation, of our parks and resources for the people that live here. He appreciated H. Granat's comments and felt heard, as a resident trying to protect and enjoy the community. He said allowing e-bikes would be a burden on the forest service and forests. He stated that he broke his ankle and he pushes his bike a lot more than he rides it, but that is part of the experience. He added that allowing e-bikes would be taking on a lot of liability.

Trish Davis stated that she appreciates H. Granat's and the Committee's efforts to take care of Bracken. Bracken is a preserve so we should preserve it. She asked if there are rules against e-bikes at Bracken, why aren't they enforced? She is not saying we should hand out fines, but it should be discussed because there should be consequences if people break the rules, there should be consequences.

I. Set Date for Next Meeting – May 20, 2026, at 3:30 PM

Committee members set the date for the next meeting on May 20, 2026, at 3:30 PM.

J. Adjourn

There being no further business, L. Wise motioned to adjourn, R. Osborne seconded, the motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:09 PM.

Approved: May 20, 2026

Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member, or
Lauren Wise, Vice Chair, Council Member

Shawnee Cummings
Assistant to the City Manager

Lambs Creek Site Plans

Brevard Parks and Recreation Committee

April 15, 2026

1. Stream Restoration

- Minimal Grading
    - Due to the constraints of sewer lines and the existing greenway, grading the stream banks back to the preferred 4:1 ratio will not be possible in most areas
- Stream Bank Stabilization
    - Existing small riprap will be removed and replace by larger stones that will better stabilize the banks
    - Adding stepped banks and stone steps will facilitate access to the creek in dedicated areas and increase water storage capabilities during flood events
    - Additionally, these larger stones will create a more natural look along the stream
    - Planting native grasses, shrubs, and trees along the streambank. The roots of these plants help to hold the soil in place, absorb excess water, and reduce erosion. Streams with well-established vegetation on their banks provide for better water quality and wildlife habitats.

2. Native Planting and invasive removal

- The currently mowed field and existing greenspace is a crucial area for wildlife in Brevard
- Removing nonnative species from the field and stream banks is an important step towards restoration
- Ideally, a habitat space should consist of 100% native plants that support birds, pollinators and other wildlife that are under increasing stress from climate change. Native plants provide the best possible habitat for native wildlife.
- Conserving Carolina may have the capacity to host volunteer workdays to get the community involved in nonnative species removal and concurrently native plantings

3. Crushed Gravel "Pocket Park" Trail

- The low-lying nature of the eastern part of the parcel may not be conducive to building singletrack
- A crushed gravel ADA accessible path that meanders through the eastern and forested side of the park may be a better option
    - This path could provide a nice way allow members of the community from the retirement home and hospital to recreate along the Estatoe Trail

CONSERVING CAROLINA

Example of a Conserving Carolina Restoration Project

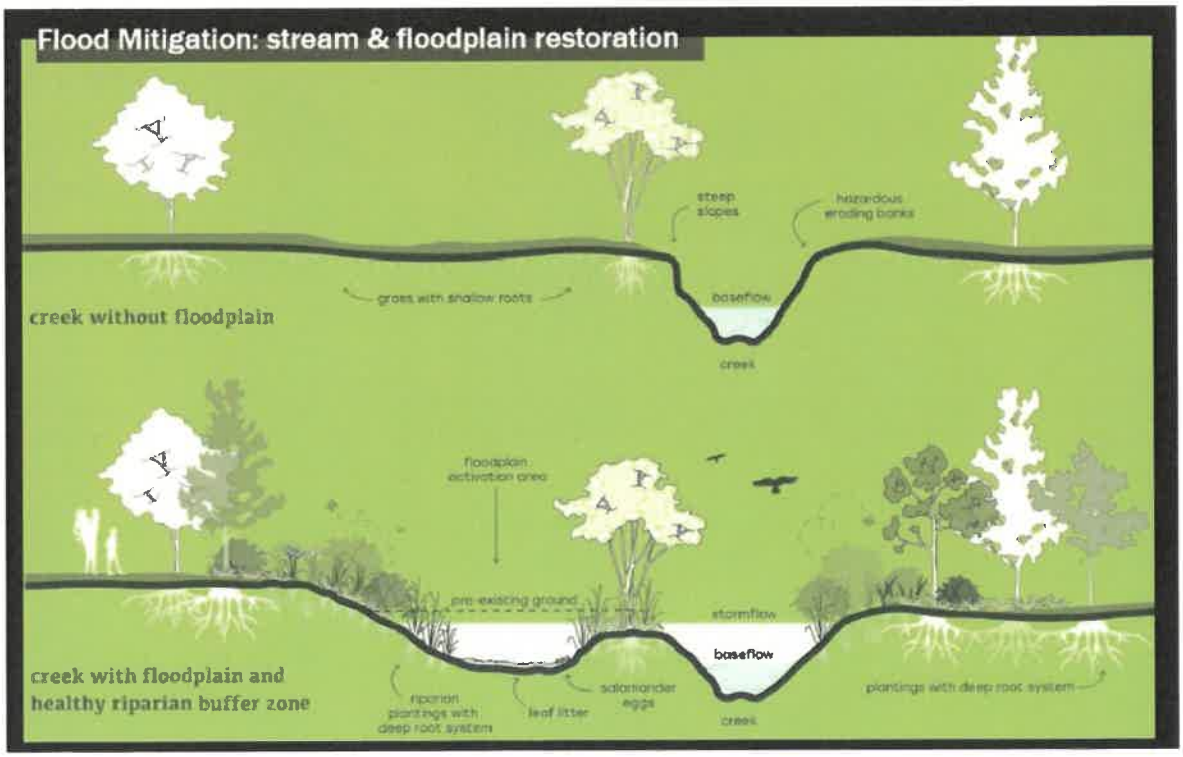
The Laurel Creek Stream Restoration in Hendersonville at Laurel Park

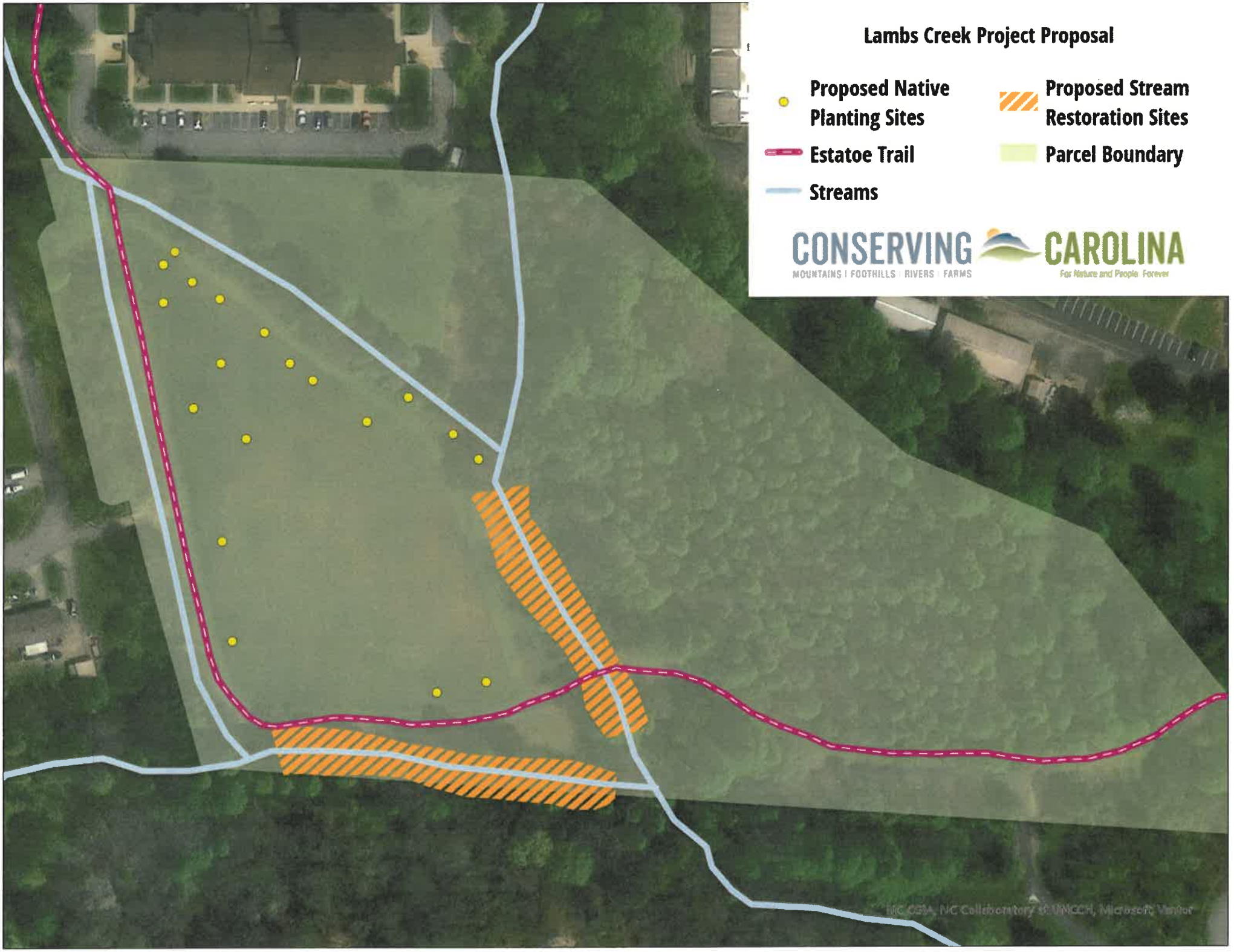




To left:
Anchored stream banks with large rocks and native plants

Below:
Graphic shows how a restored flood plain serves as an area to reduce the harm done during extreme flood events




Lambs Creek Project Proposal
Proposed Native Planting Sites
Proposed Stream Restoration Sites
Estatoe Trail
Parcel Boundary
Streams
CONSERVING CAROLINA
MOUNTAINS | FOOTHILLS | RIVERS | FARMS
For Nature and People Forever
USGS, NC Collaboratory, UNCCH, Microsoft, Vantor