Memorandum

To:	**People and Environment and Infrastructure Recovery Boards**
From:	**Kiera Bulan, Interim Director of the Sustainability Department**
Date:	**June 18, 2026**
Subject:	**French Broad River Park Project Questions and Answers**

Summary Statement

On June 1, 2026, members of the People and Environment (P&E) and Infrastructure Recovery Board (IRB) convened for an informal, non-quorum review of the French Broad Riverfront Project. The primary objective of this meeting was to review the project development to date and provide an opportunity for board members to pose questions and gain collective understanding ahead of the upcoming joint board discussion scheduled for June 23, 2026. The following document outlines the inquiries submitted by board members and the subsequent responses provided by City staff.

Key questions:

- **Question:** Request that the city project team share the unified design concept at least 1 week in advance of the meeting for review.
    - **Answer:** Due to consultants' existing timelines and schedules, full meeting materials will be circulated Friday, 6/19/26

- **Question:** How is the project considering neighborhood access? How are complementary projects (I-26, Amboy Road, greenways, bus routes, etc.) integrated to ensure maximum permeability of park project/borders and increased safe access points?
    - **Answer:** The design team has been in close coordination with NCDOT in determining opportunities that exist for collaboration in the designs, including crossing locations, signals, and lighting. This will ensure that we are maximizing opportunities for residents to walk, bike, bus, or drive to the parks.

Questions regarding Engagement

- **Question:** Is there a summary from the second round of feedback after the 3 themed concepts were made available?
    - **Answer:** Here is the engagement summary from the wave 2 engagement (focus group discussions + online survey)

- **Request:** Can the engagement data be presented as disaggregated to better understand how/if different population sectors identified different priorities?

- **Question**: What is the plan for filling named engagement gaps? Can you address the ways the project is proactively seeking input from underrepresented groups?
    - **Answer:** The City strives to ensure that varied perspectives inform every project. Achieving this can be a challenge, and Asheville is not unique in that. In an effort to reach underrepresented groups after the first wave of engagement, the project team deployed Community Connectors, sent "missing voices" emails to managed stakeholder lists in PublicInput (including youth, seniors, recreation, sustainability, transportation, arts and business), and shared information at each engagement opportunity with legacy neighborhood leaders via email. The team also reached out directly to underrepresented groups for participation in focused conversations and provided opportunities for one-on-one meetings. Pop-up tabling took place in nearby housing authority communities, and translated materials were provided to Spanish-speaking neighbors.

- **Question**: How is the project aligned with or considering the anti-displacement work the city is currently undertaking?
    - **Answer:** This project is slightly ahead of the anti-displacement project. For example, the displacement risk analysis tool is under development and cannot yet be applied; however, the anti-displacement project team is regularly updated on this park project. Our goal is to incorporate the results of the anti-displacement project into this project to the extent possible, realizing this project must remain on time and on budget. For example, when funding becomes available for the art installations in the concept design, the project team will be expected to incorporate the applicable results of the anti-displacement project that relate to preserving history and culture.

- **Question**: If we start from the premise that all CDBG-DR-funded projects should be designed to primarily benefit low and moderate income people, and we note that the extensive community engagement process around this project seems to have reached disproportionately few people in that category, how has the Unified Parks Design Project design been informed by the needs, desires, and perspective of this priority demographic? In what ways is the resulting design an attempt to serve those needs, desires, and perspectives?
    - **Answer:** The CDBG-DR census tract project beneficiaries on this project serve a total of 14,990 beneficiaries; 8,825 of these (or 58.9%) are low to moderate income.

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nearby housing authority communities, and translated materials were provided to Spanish-speaking neighbors.

    - **Answer:** Lastly, it is important to note that not everyone completes demographic information.

- **Question**: Can we see a copy of the 1989 Riverfront Plan document?
    - Jack Igelman will share the 1989 Riverfront Plan document from the design charrette (hard copy only).

Key Themes & Priorities

Note: The following themes, priorities, and concerns were shared with the Sasaki team in advance of the joint recovery board meeting on 6/23/26. The team will provide updated project information with these comments in mind during their presentation at the meeting.

- **Permeability** (both to/from park and in "natural sponge" horizontal surface permeability) & **Identity**

- Want to see a deeper incorporation of the depth of the history and ecology of ***this place***. What is the unique expression of here/this park? Design a park that is uniquely reflective of the deep cultural and ecological history but not specifically NOW. Bring the past into the project and set the stage for an enduring design

- Integrated functional landscaping - Natural playspaces - building with the knowledge of future floods and minimizing hazards and impact through what we put where

- City staff are moving this project forward quickly and efficiently to create plans with designers. Up to now, the community engagement process has been effective and thoughtful; concepts have captured many (most?) of the community wishes.

- Balance of passive and active space, avoid over-prescribed use as much as possible to encourage flexible and adaptive use of space by multiple user groups & activities

- Environmental works of art

- Riparian food forest systems

- Celebrate & elevate the "confluence" understanding and working with the natural flow rather than trying to manage in an artificial (and likely ultimately unsuccessful) way

Wishes & Potential Concerns

- Demonstrate or show specific examples of how (if) the project area is being approached from a stream velocity and engineering perspective. How are we understanding and celebrating/working with/elevating the natural flow and flood patterns?

- Concern that 3 themed concepts are “overprogrammed” - looking for the consultants to apply their expertise to avoid a “super park.” Hone in on unique features and understand that compromise is necessary for a cohesive, innovative design that fits the space
- Concern of the design feeling generic, like a nice park that could be anywhere
- There are many competing interests for the use of the park. The role of the recovery board is to help designers and the city process this information from the community and lean into the expertise of commission members.