



Reimagine Middle Branch Unveils Vision for the Future of South Baltimore Communities and 11+ Miles of Shoreline

Updated concepts for the Middle Branch to be shared at a virtual public meeting Thursday, February 24th at 6 p.m.

BALTIMORE, MD (February 22, 2022) – The vision for the future of Baltimore’s Middle Branch of the Patapsco River will be unveiled at a virtual public meeting on February 24th. This second public feedback session on the “Reimagine Middle Branch” planning effort will be hosted by the City of Baltimore, South Baltimore Gateway Partnership, and Parks & People Foundation, with presentations from the project’s local and national consultant team led by landscape architecture and urban design firm James Corner Field Operations.

With the goals of increasing equity and environmental justice and improving ecological resilience and public health, **Reimagine Middle Branch** represents a commitment to deliver parks, projects, and programs that unite the 19 neighborhoods of South Baltimore by reconnecting them to one another and to the waterfront. The plan’s recommendations fit within a framework of three guiding principles: Protect and Connect the Shoreline; Transform Barriers into Connections; and Strengthen Communities with Parks and Programs.

“Our work to Reimagine Middle Branch is a key component of our larger strategies to revamp and reinvigorate recreation opportunities and outdoor spaces throughout our city,” **says Mayor Brandon M. Scott**. “This is about providing clean, accessible, and modern spaces that show our residents, particularly our young people, that they matter. That we care about them and are going to do everything in our power to give them the best quality-of-life possible.”

Over the past four months, the consultants collected and integrated public feedback from community events, neighborhood meetings, and an online survey. The second outreach survey is now available on the project website and remains open through March 3rd. Preliminary planning ideas were presented at the first public meeting last September. In the upcoming public meeting, consultants will share materials that build upon these initial ideas with more fully rendered design concepts and community development initiatives.

“The City of Baltimore, South Baltimore Gateway Partnership, and their community partners are boldly envisioning an area of improved parks and shorelines supported by equitable economic development throughout the neighborhoods. It’s a holistic approach,” **says Megan Born, Senior Associate with James Corner Field Operations**.

The Reimagine Middle Branch plan builds on earlier community planning efforts and has evolved through extensive neighborhood-based engagement and outreach to stakeholders. This has resulted in a unique focus on integrated economic development and a concentration on investments in South Baltimore's traditionally underfunded Black and Brown communities. The plan leverages existing strengths and assets, such as local businesses and neighborhood parks, and identifies new opportunities for investment inspired by the community's input.

"The plan integrates physical planning with economic development that prioritizes job creation, entrepreneurship and increasing the future earning potential of local residents," says **Brad Rogers, Executive Director at South Baltimore Gateway Partnership**. "Alongside new public space amenities, we are equally focused on workforce development and business incubation opportunities, such as green jobs involved in maintaining and monitoring the restored wetlands, and pop-up markets for local vendors."

While this is a long-term plan, many elements are already funded and underway. The new Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center in Cherry Hill will open for community use by summer 2022, and the first phase of wetland restoration projects around Medstar Harbor Hospital is expected to start within a year.

Funding for this work comes from a mix of sources: Casino local impact grant funds, managed by the City of Baltimore and by South Baltimore Gateway Partnership, are paying for the plan, as is a Maryland state capital grant. Casino impact grants also contribute to the \$25 million total construction cost of the Fitness and Wellness Center and adjacent sports field complex. A mix of federal, state and local grants has been secured for wetland construction and trail projects.

At Thursday's public meeting, the consultants will "walk" the audience around the Middle Branch, describing a proposed park system and related initiatives extending 11 miles from Brooklyn and Curtis Bay to Cherry Hill and Westport, to Ridgely's Cove and Port Covington. These proposals comprise an open space network that connects to adjacent neighborhoods and strategically positions South Baltimore to catalyze and harness economic growth for the benefit of local residents. Detailed design plans will be made available following the event.

For more information on the Reimagine Middle Branch project, and to register and learn about upcoming public engagement opportunities, including the public meeting, visit: <https://reimaginemb.com/>.

For renderings and to schedule interviews, please contact publicists at kg&a:

Samantha Lem

Samantha.lem@kga-inc.com

1-613-983-8365

Candice Leung

Candice.Leung@kga-inc.com

1-647-223-5635

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.

For more information on the Reimagine Middle Branch project and other engagement events visit: reimaginemb.com.