The Canal

7.0 THE CANAL

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The Augusta Canal flows from the Savannah River, through Harrisburg and into Downtown Augusta (refer to Figure 7.1a). It was originally built in 1845 to harness the power of the Savannah River to transport goods, to generate power for the Augusta mills and to provide drinking water to the growing city. The Canal and the mills along it created the majority of Augusta's economy in the 19th and early 20th Centuries.

The Canal was built in 1845 - 1847 and then expanded and widened in 1874 allowing for the operation of three large textile mills, Enterprise Mill, King Mill and Sibley Mill. The Sibley Mill property had been previously used during the Civil War to produce gun powder. The Confederate poweder works stack remains at this site. Harrisburg grew up around the King Mill and the Sibley Mill, as housing for mill employees was needed. As the mills and Augusta prospered, so did Harrisburg.

In the mid-20th century the textile industry began to decline. This led to the closing of both the Sibley Mill and the King Mill in the early 2000s, the loss of jobs, and Harrisburg's downturn. By 1960, there was even a proposal to drain the Canal and replace it with a highway.

Prior to closing, the mills were designated as Historic Places on the National Register. The Augusta Canal and the Harrisburg neighborhood are also on the National Register of Historic Places. Together, the Augusta Canal, the Sibley Mill, and the King Mill are a National Historic Landmark, referred to as the Historic Augusta Canal and Industrial District. Additionally, the Canal is recognized by the US Congress as a National Heritage Area, overseen by the Augusta Canal Authority.

The Augusta Canal Authority (ACA), the government-appointed body that has jurisdiction over the Augusta Canal, currently owns the King and Sibley Mill properties. It is holding the properties with future plans to renovate the buildings into mixed use developments, which preserve their historic character. In the mean time, Sibley Mill and King Mill are providing the ACA with some revenue. The Sibley Mill's water-driven turbines generate electricity which is then sold to Georgia Power. The King Mill has been leased to Ohio-based Standard Textile and remains in operation. The ACA is currently seeking funding from the Environmental Protection Agency to remediate the Sibley Mill property with hopes that the environmental clean-up will be complete in time for a market upswing and will make the property more attractive to future developers.

The Augusta Canal is an important part of Harrisburg's history and has great potential to become a major asset to Harrisburg today. The Augusta Canal Authority has completed master planning efforts for the Canal and implemented many of these efforts, mainly in areas north of the Harrisburg community. With the leadership of the Augusta Canal Authority, in cooperation with the Harrisburg neighborhood, improvements could be made to the Canal that create a more accessible and attractive Augusta Canal within Harrisburg, for the neighborhood and the greater Augusta community to enjoy. The remainder of this chapter provides recommended strategies for improving the Augusta Canal within the Harrisburg neighborhood.

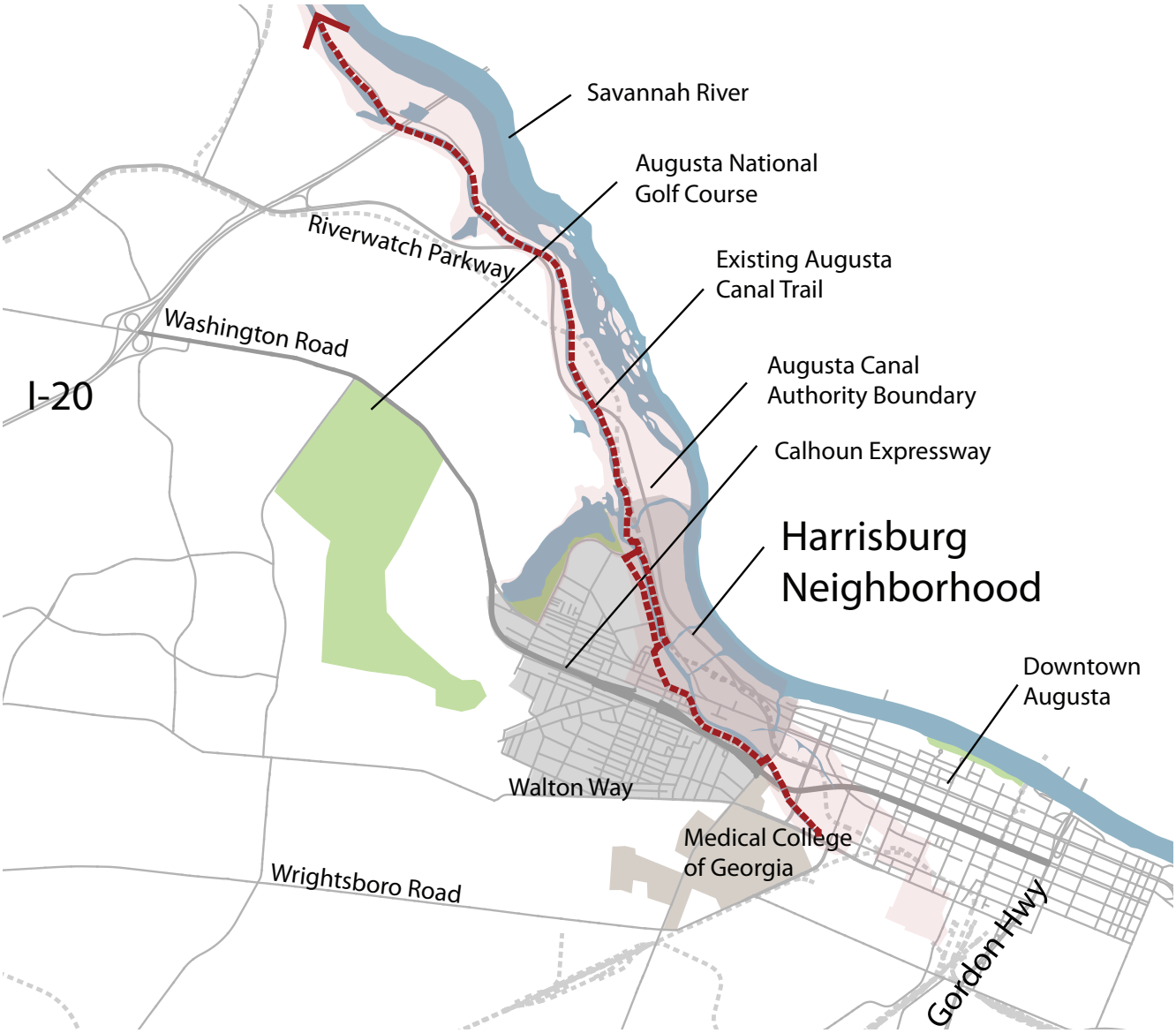


Figure 7.1a: Augusta Canal in context

7.1.1 ISSUES OVERVIEW

There are currently three major problems that should be addressed in order to make the Canal more accessible and attractive to the community. First, the Canal property itself needs to be improved and maintained to become an amenity for Harrisburg and the region. Second, the Canal needs to be connected to the neighborhood to promote easy access and security. Third, the neighborhood directly along the Canal needs to be rehabilitated and re-platted so that parcels which currently have their backs to the Canal are altered to front a street or tow path that lines the Canal.

7.2 ISSUES

7.2.1 ISSUE 1: CANAL UNDER-UTILIZED

The Canal is not being fully utilized as an amenity for Harrisburg and the Augusta region. Below is a list of physical issues that can be addressed to resolve this situation.

A. The Augusta Canal within the neighborhood is overgrown and disconnected (refer to Figure 7.2a).
Examples:

- Along Goodrich Street between Eve Street bridge and King Mill and beyond to the Power Plant, the trail does not exist.
- Along St. Luke Street to 15th Street the Canal trail is overgrown and not maintained.
- The quality of the trail from the GreenJackets Stadium to Chafee Park is a dirt road.

B. There is a lack of relationship between the green spaces and the Canal (refer to Figure 7.2b).
Examples:

- The Canal trail that extends across Chafee Park is not aligned with the edge of the Canal.
- The Canal is segregated from the cemetery by a fence with no gates or access to the Canal and/or the Canal trail.
- The Canal trail does not currently connect to the GreenJackets Stadium.

C. There is residual land along the Canal that is abandoned and neglected (refer to Figure 7.2c).
Examples:

- Land between the Humane Society and the Canal on Milledge Road.
- Land between Riverwatch Parkway and Goodrich Street, north of the Sibley Mill.
- Land at the corner of Tuttle Street and St. Luke Street .
- The parking lot behind the Martha Lester School.
- The intersection of Butt Memorial Bridge and Calhoun Expressway Ramp.
- The corner of Walton Way and St. Sebastian Way.

Abandoned foot-path trail

Trail along the railroad

Abandoned parcel by the mills

Figure 7.2d: Images of Conditions Along the Canal

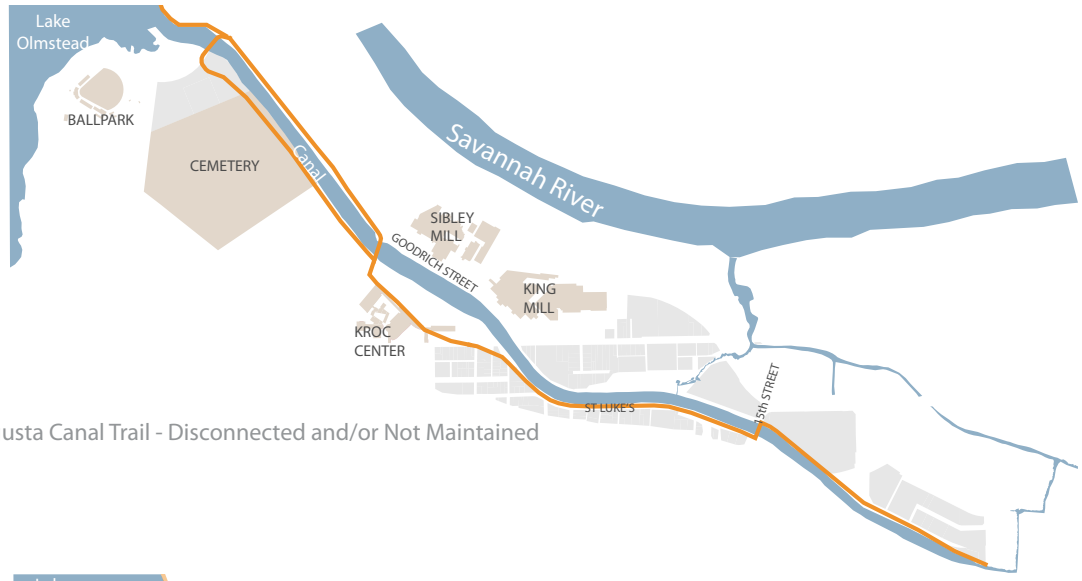


Figure 7.2a: Existing Augusta Canal Trail - Disconnected and/or Not Maintained

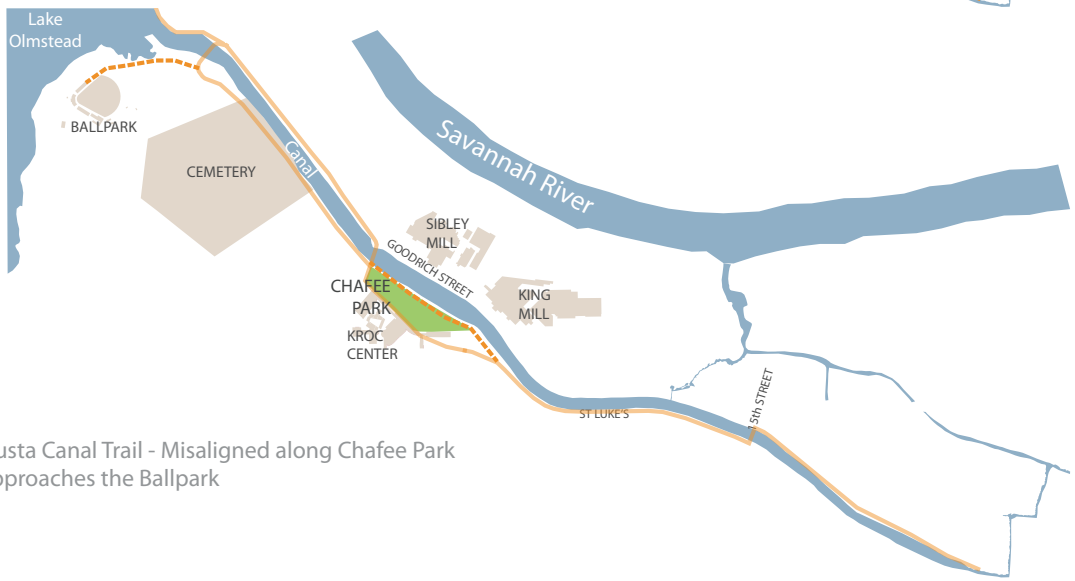


Figure 7.2b: Existing Augusta Canal Trail - Misaligned along Chafee Park and Discontinued as it Approaches the Ballpark

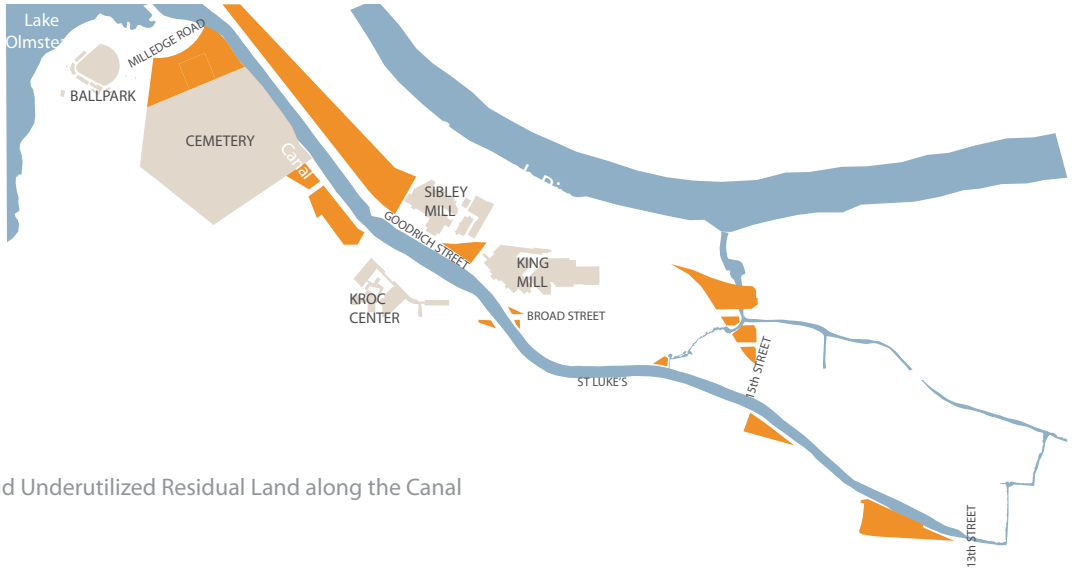


Figure 7.2c: Neglected and Underutilized Residual Land along the Canal

7.2.2 ISSUE 2 - CANAL DISCONNECTED

The Canal is disconnected from the Harrisburg neighborhood and, therefore, from the region. Below is a list of physical problems that can be addressed to resolve this issue.

A. Calhoun Expressway bisects the neighborhood and prevents many direct routes to the Canal (refer to Figure 7.2f).

Examples:

- Tuttle Street, Tubman Street, and Metcalf Street all dead-end into the expressway.

B. Streets dead-end and/or turn away from the Canal before reaching it (refer to Figure 7.2g).

Examples:

- Milledge Road and Wood Street
- Perkins Street and Brinson Street
- Curry Street
- Canal Street and Tuttle Street

C. There is no continuous public right-of-way along the edge of the Canal, which limits access to this public amenity (refer to Figure 7.2k).

Examples:

- St. Luke Street and Goodrich Street are the only streets along the Canal and service only a small section of the neighborhood.

Calhoun Expressway Bisecting the Neighborhood

Dead-end Streets

Backs of Lots Facing the Canal

Figure 7.2e: Images of Conditions Along the Canal.

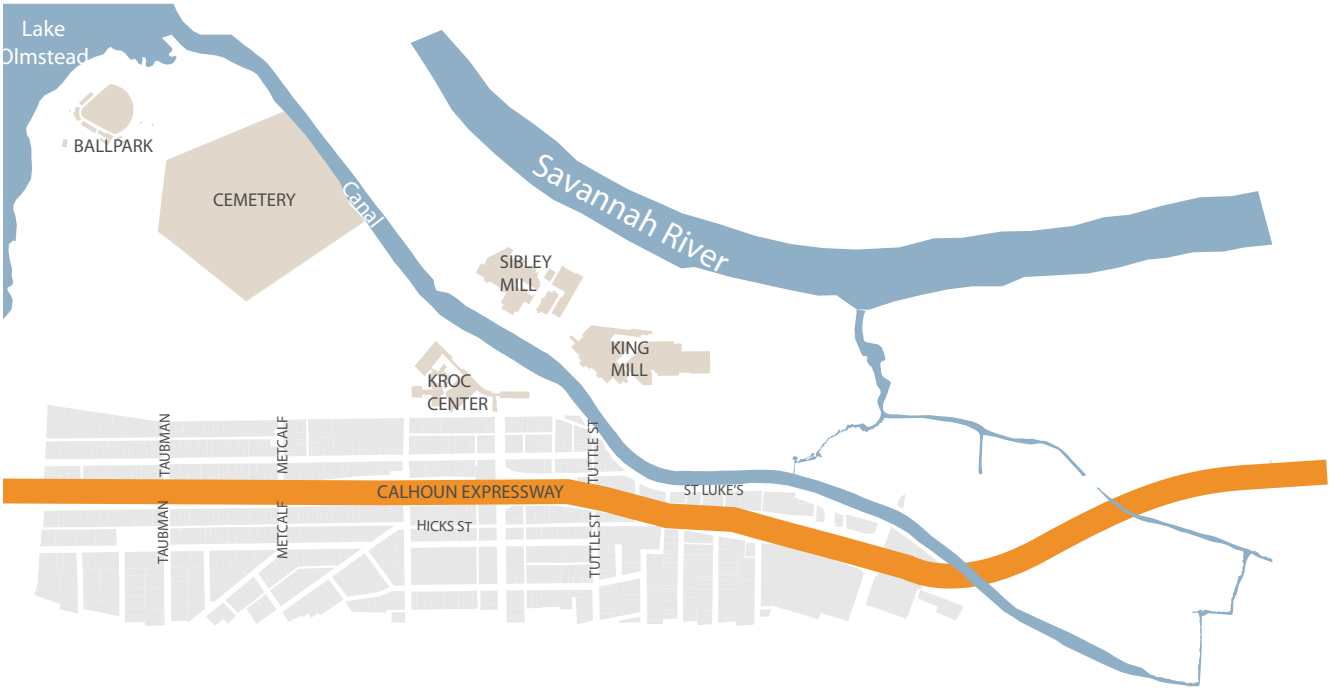


Figure 7.2f: Calhoun Expressway Bisects the Neighborhood and Prevents Direct Access to the Canal

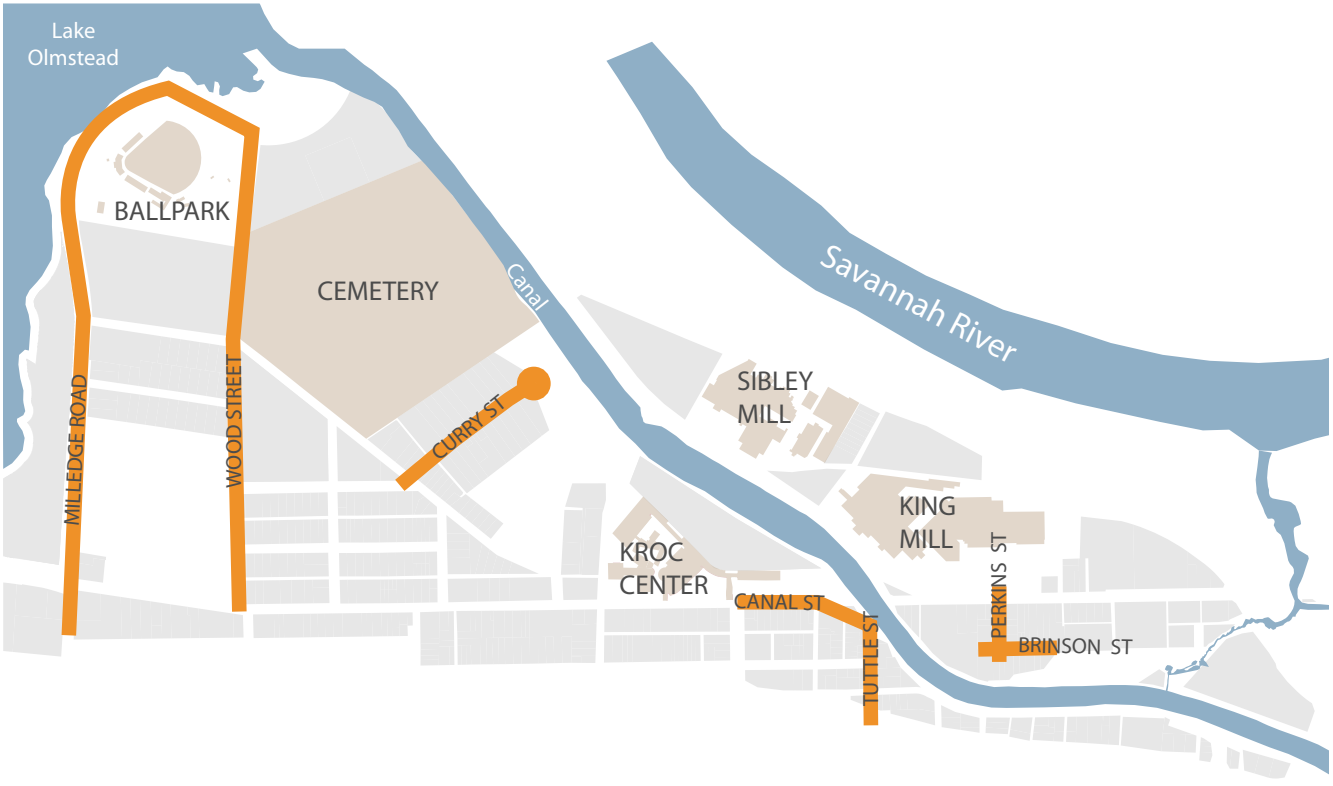


Figure 7.2g: Dead-end and Redirected Streets - Streets do not Connect to the Canal

7.2.3 ISSUE 3 - THE CANAL IS SEEN AS A UTILITY CORRIDOR AND NOT AS AN AMENITY

Historically, the Canal was used to support the industries that lined it and was seen as a utility corridor. Today, the Canal is no longer utilized for industrial purposes and is full of potentail to become an urban park servicing the entire Augusta region. The fronts of buildings along the Canal, however, are oriented away from it, with the Canal hidden behind them. Below is a list of physical problems that can be addressed to resolve this issue.

A. Deteriorating housing conditions along the Canal provide opportunities for acquisition and reconstruction of buildings that face the Canal. Examples:

- The houses between the Martha Lester School and the Canal on Broad Street.
- Housing near St. Luke Street and Hamilton Street.
- Housing near Canal Street and Deans Lane.

B. Buildings along the edge of the Canal are oriented away from it allowing backs of buildings to front the Canal. Few right-of-ways exist along the Canal for buildings to front (refer to Figure 7.2j and 7.2k). Examples:

- The Martha Lester School parking lot faces the Canal.
- Houses along Perkins Street back to the Canal.

C. The Sibley and King Mills are important historical assets that have not been adapted to the contemporary uses, nor has a relationship been established between these buildings and the Canal (refer to Figure 7.2m). Examples:

- The trail, railroad, streets and mills have not been integrated into the Canal landscape as a public amenity.
- The mill sites are inaccessible to the public and poorly maintained.

Deteriorated Housing Conditions Along the Canal

Railroad Tracks Along an Unmaintained Trail

Relationship of Trail, Railroad and Street with the Canal

Figure 7.2h: Images of Conditions Along the Canal

Figure 7.2j: Overgrown Canal Edge and Homes that Back on to the Canal

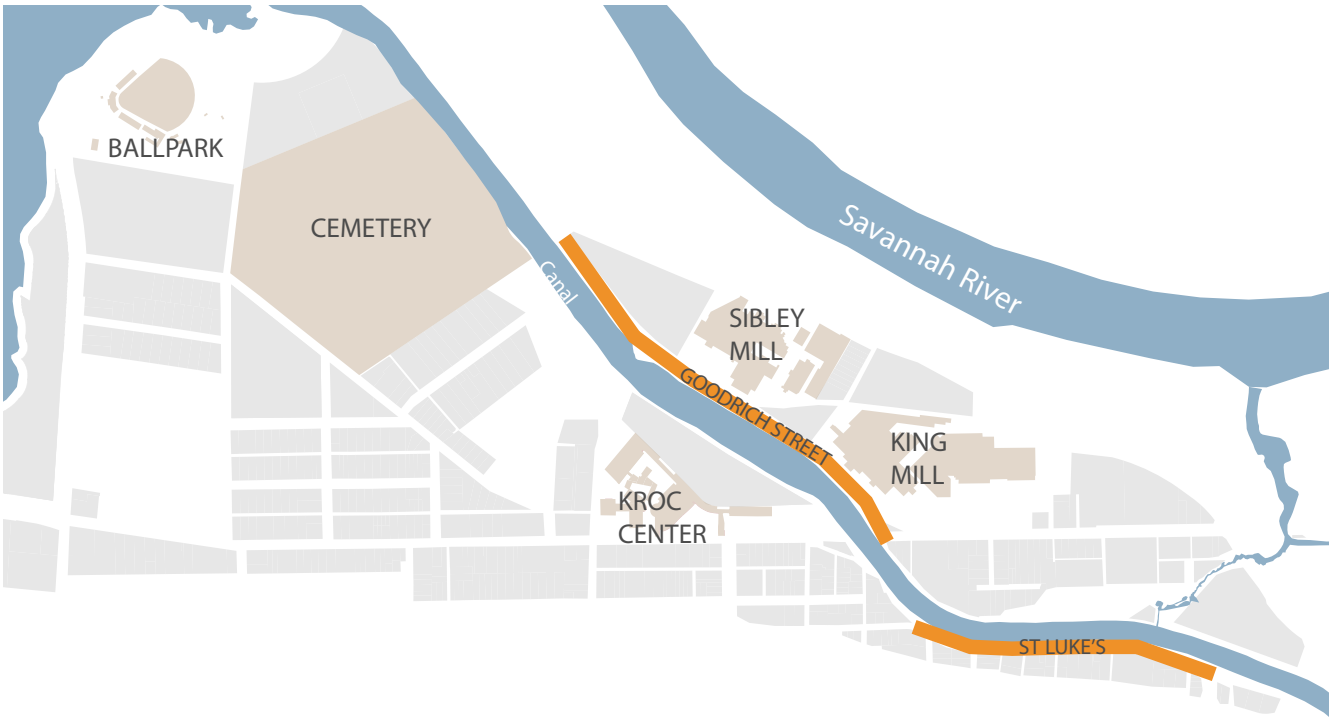


Figure 7.2k: Connection to the Canal - The Two Public Right-of-Ways Along the Canal (Goodrich Street and St. Luke's Street)

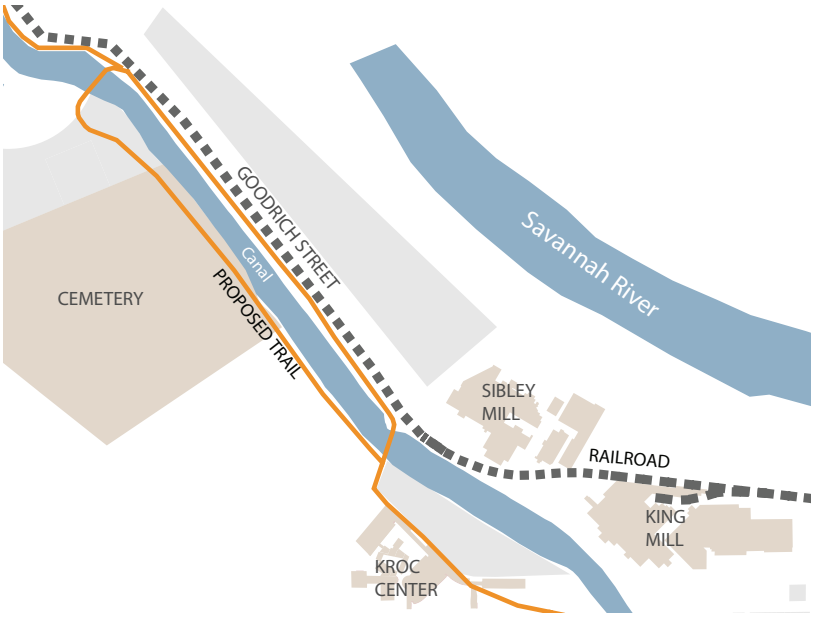


Figure 7.2m: Lack of Relationship Between the Canal, Trail, Railroad, Street and the Mills as an Integrated Part of Harrisburg's Identity

7.3 STRATEGIES

The following strategies attempt to provide solutions for the issues discussed in Section 7.2.

Strategy 1. Make the Canal an amenity for Harrisburg and the region by improving trails and creating usable greenspace along the Canal.

- The Augusta Canal trail should be connected and extended to form a continuous path along the edge of the Canal from the Headgates all the way to the Medical Center at 13th Street (refer to Figure 7.3a). This strategy is described in more detail in Implementation Phases 1, 2, and 3 - Sections 7.4.1, 7.4.2, and 7.4.3.
- The trail through Chafee Park should be realigned to be positioned along the edge of the Canal. Chafee Park should be redeveloped into an event space where the Canal can be celebrated (refer to Figure 7.3a). This strategy is described in more detail in Implementation Phase 1- Section 7.4.1.
- The residual and neglected land along the Canal should be developed as a network of green spaces connecting the edges of the Canal as a continuous thread (refer to Figure 7.3b). This strategy is described in more detail in Implementation Phase 2 - Section 7.4.2.

Strategy 2. Streets need to be extended and reconnected to provide easy access to the Canal and to provide a means to move along side the Canal.

- A new right-of-way along the Canal from the ballpark to Chafee Park should be created to activate use of the Canal and to better connect to the cemetery (refer to Figure 7.3d). This right-of-way can be an extension of the green spaces along the edge of the Canal, as discussed in Strategy 1. This strategy is described in more detail in Implementation Phase 1- Section 7.4.1.
- Calhoun Expressway should be replaced by a re-established Green Street which would renew cross connections on both sides of the Expressway like Tuttle and Metcalf and Hicks Streets (refer to Figure 7.3c). Refer to Chapter 8.0 for more details.
- Milledge Road, Curry Street and other streets that turn away before intersecting the street along the Canal need to be extended and connect to a new right-of-way established along the Canal (refer to Figure 7.3d). This strategy is described in more detail in Implementation Phase 1 - Section 7.4.1.
- Houses that are in disrepair near the Canal need to be repaired or demolished to make room for new development, with a new street framework that addresses and connects to the Canal.

Strategy 3. The neighborhood should adapt to the change in use of the Canal from an industrial corridor to a recreational amenity.

- Transform the way people view the Canal, increase proximity to it and advocate for frequent use of it by establishing a public right-of-way along the edges of the entire Canal. This strategy is described in more detail in Implementation Phases 3 and 4 - Sections 7.4.3 and 7.4.4.
- Re-subdivide, reorient and create parcels with direct access to the Canal (refer to Figure 7.3f). This strategy is described in more detail in Implementation Phase 3 - Section 7.4.3.
- The mills need to be adapted to contemporary uses, as the market allows. More immediately, the mill sites should be integrated into the landscape of the Canal through a greening and maintenance plan. The railroad, the trail, and the street need to be integrated into the Canal's landscape (refer to Figure 7.3e). This strategy is described in more detail in Implementation Phase 4- Section 7.4.4.

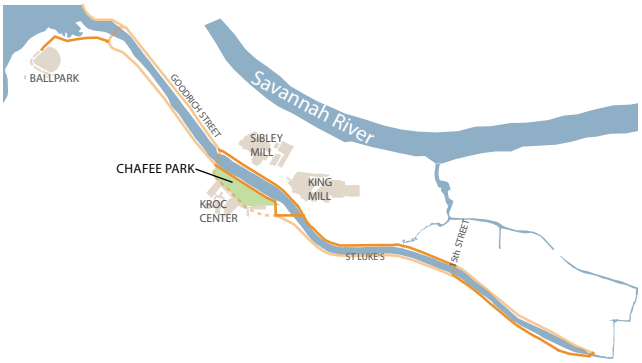


Figure 7.3a: Extend and Realign the Trail to Privilege the Canal

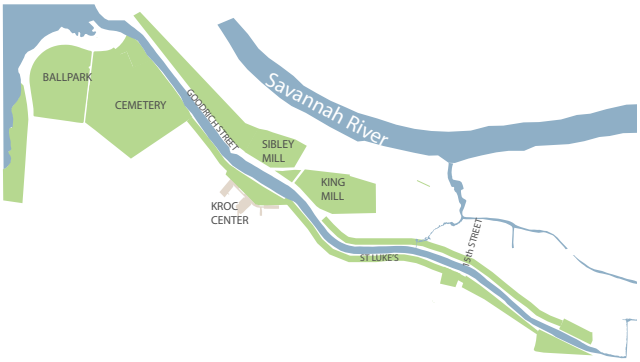


Figure 7.3b: Residual Spaces Should be Developed as Part of a Green Network Along the Canal

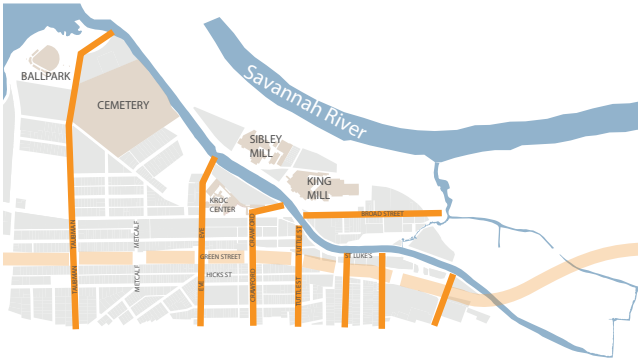


Figure 7.3c: Reconnect and Extend the Streets after Restoring Green Street and Removing the Calhoun Expressway

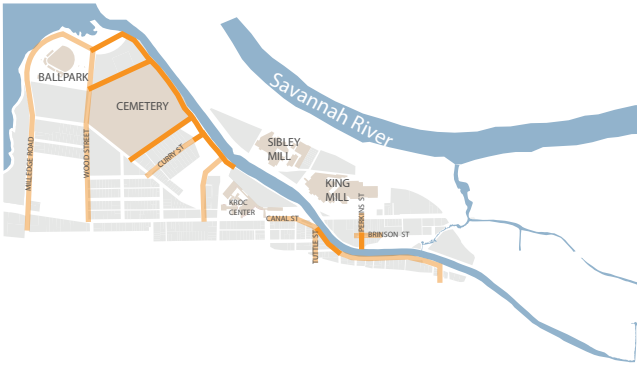


Figure 7.3d: Establish an Extended and Continuous Right-of-Way Along the Canal to Reconnect Streets

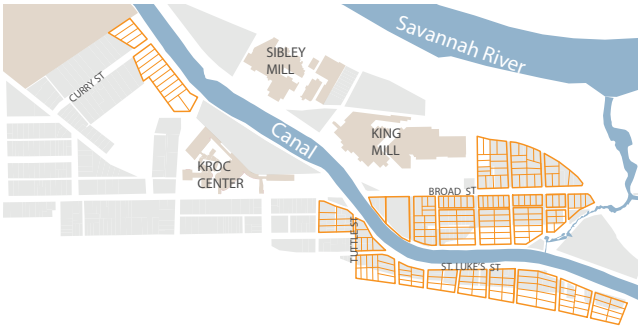


Figure 7.3f: Subdivide Parcels to Enable the Proposed New Development to be Oriented Towards the Canal

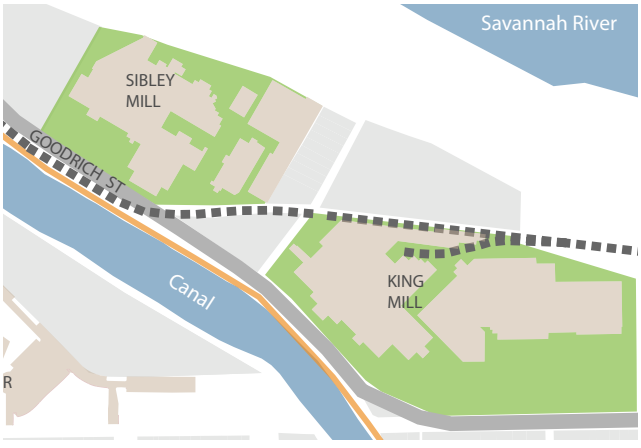


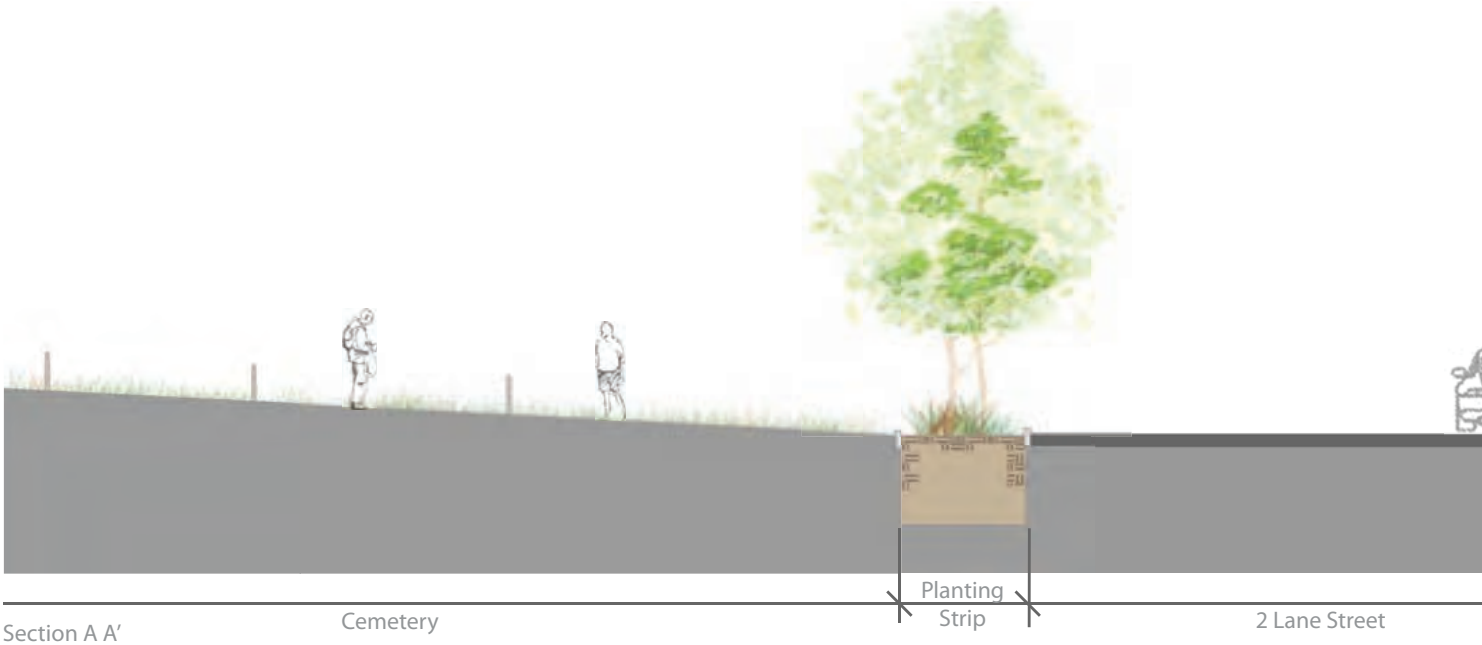
Figure 7.3e: Mills Established as Part of the Canal Landscape with a Relationship to the Trail, Railroad and the Street

Figure 7.4a: Proposed Implementation for Phase 1 - Area From the Ballpark to the Kroc Center
Scale 1"-400'

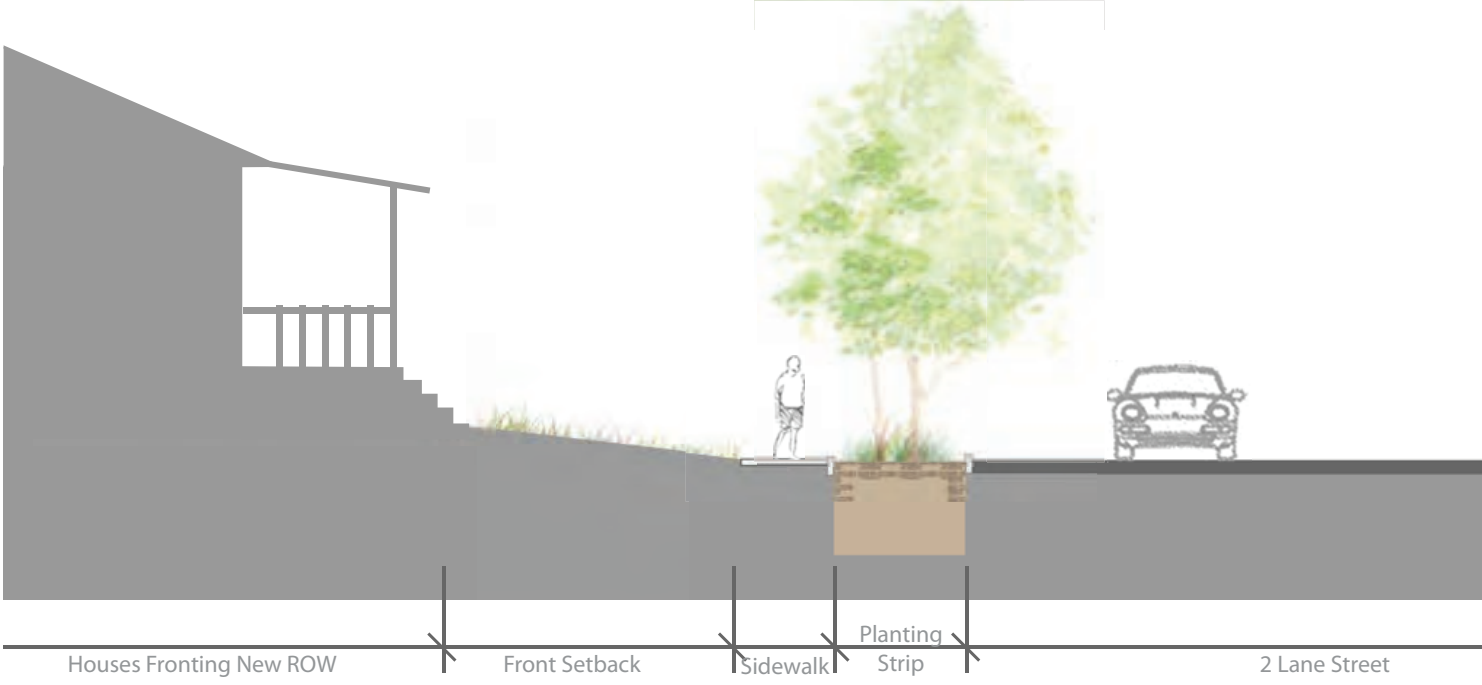
7.4 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND PHASING

7.4.1 IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 1:

- Re-establish the trail along the Canal edge from the GreenJackets ballpark, along the Cemetery, and the edge of Chafee Park all the way to Broad Street. This will help extend the use of the Augusta Canal trail that stretches from the headgates down to the ballpark (refer to Figures 7.4a, 7.4b, and 7.4c).
- Create a new right-of-way from Milledge Road to Eve Street along the Canal to allow better access to the Canal trail from the neighborhood and then connect Curry Street, Owen Drive and Langley Drive from Division Street to this new public right-of-way (refer to Figure 7.4a, 7.4b, and 7.4c).
- Improve Chafee Park, as part of developing the Kroc Center. It should be designed not only as a green space, but also as a place for the neighborhood to celebrate special events along the Canal (refer to Figure 7.4a, 7.4d, and 7.4e).



Section A A'



Section B B'

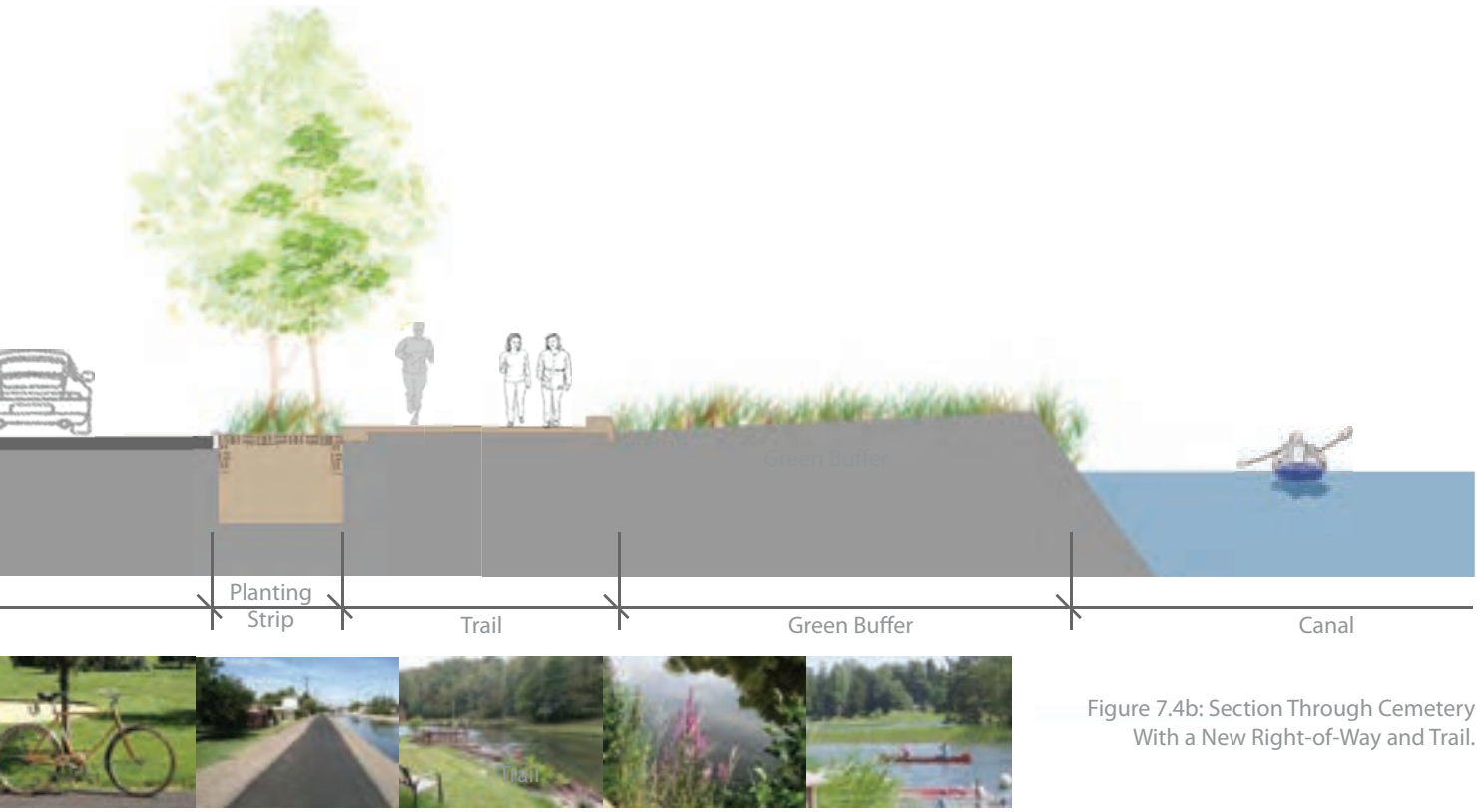
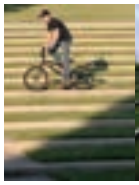
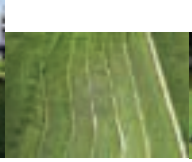


Figure 7.4b: Section Through Cemetery With a New Right-of-Way and Trail.

Figure 7.4c: Section Through Proposed Housing Fronting the Canal, With New Right-of-Way and Trail

Section C C'





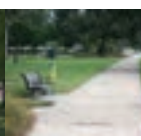


Figure 7.4d: Partial Plan - Realigning the trail along the Canal at Chafee Park and the Kroc Center

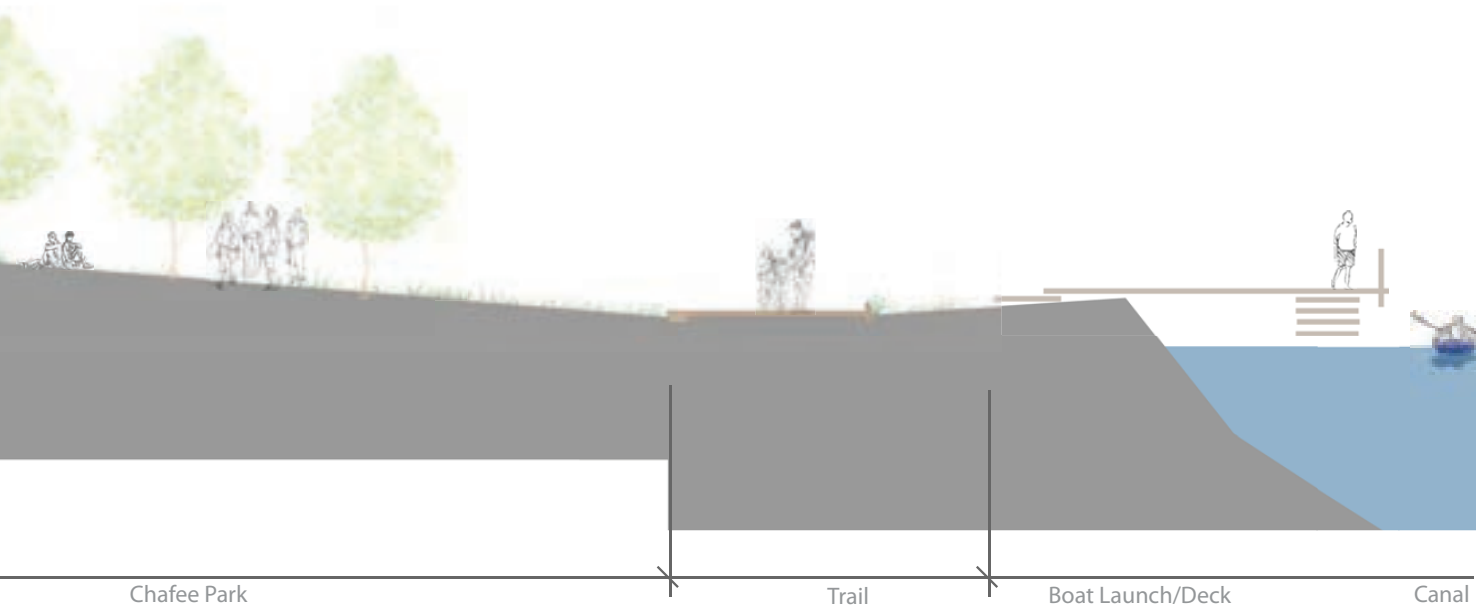


Figure 7.4e: Section Through Chafee Park With Trail Aligned Along the Canal Including a Boat Launch/Overlook

7.4.2 IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 2

- Integrate the Canal trail with a new Georgia Health Sciences University Master Plan around 13th and 15th Streets as a way to connect the trail from the Georgia Health Sciences University into the neighborhood and encourage use of the Canal as an amenity for both residents and students (refer to Figure 7.4f).
- Establish a system of small linear parks along the Canal. The residual spaces around the levee can be graded to create a gradual incline leading up to the Canal edge and the trail. In places where infill is not a viable solution, steps can be introduced to provide access to the trail and the adjoining recreational green spaces (refer to Figures 7.4f and 7.4g).

Section D D'

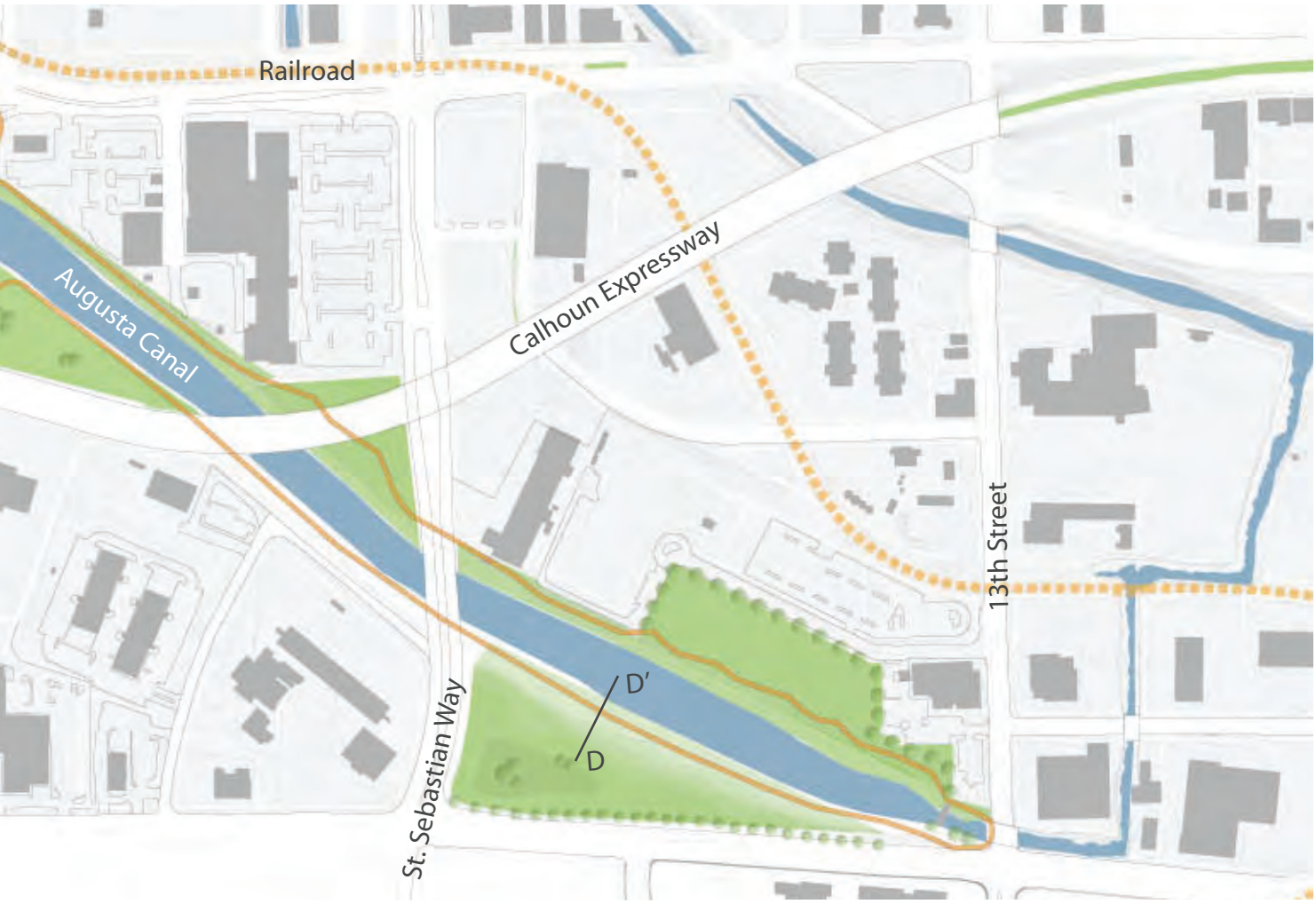


Figure 7.4f: Proposed Implementation for Phase 2 - the South End of the Canal Near 13th and 15th Street
Scale 1"-400'

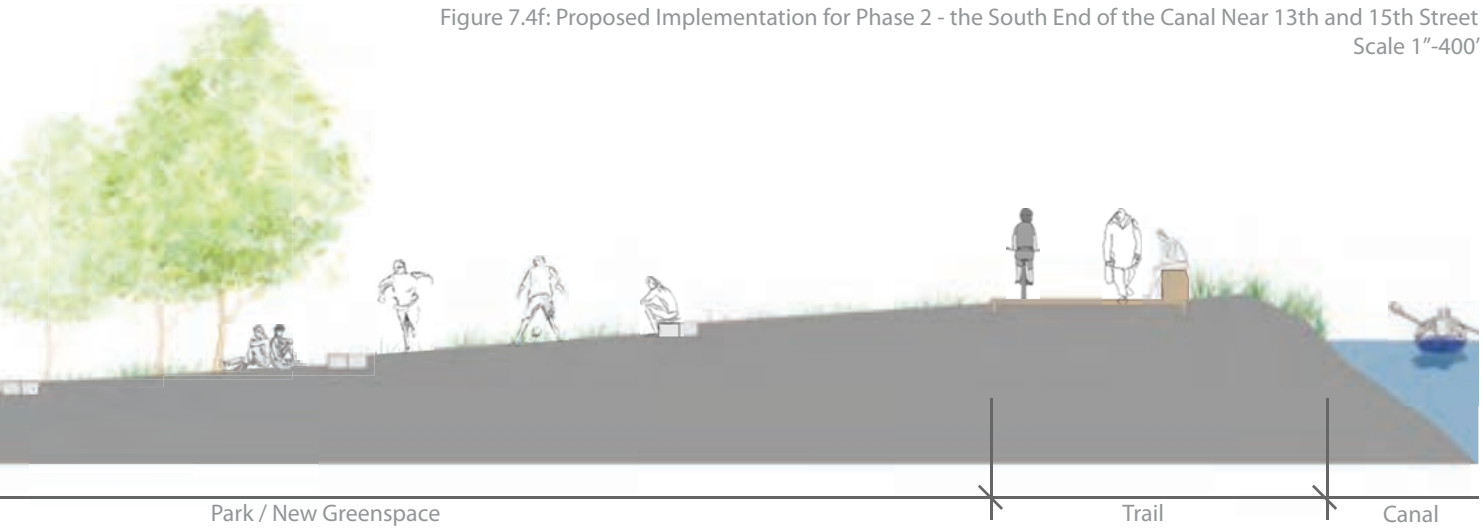


Figure 7.4g: Section Through Proposed Greenspaces With the Trail Along the Canal

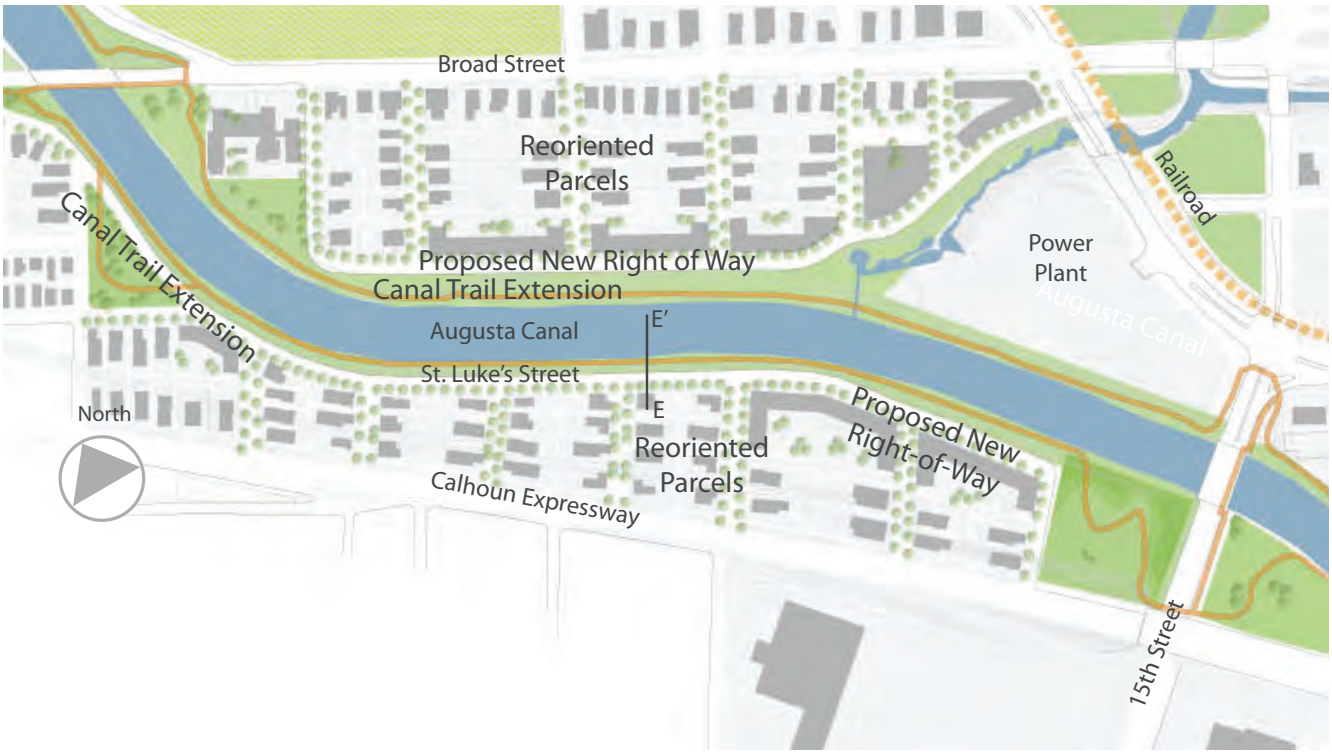


Figure 7.4h: Proposed Implementation for Phase 3 Between 15th Street and Broad Street - Proposed Redivision and Reorientation of Parcels
Scale 1"-400'

7.4.3 IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 3

- Extend the Canal trail, on both sides of the Canal to connect 15th Street (Georgia Health Sciences University) to the Kroc Center and Chafee Park, on the south side, and connect to the Mills and across Broad Street, on the north side (refer to Figure 7.4h).
- Introduce a new right-of-way along the Canal on the north side between 15th Street and Broad Street (refer to Figure 7.4h).
- Re-subdivide parcels between Broad Street and the new right-of-way to front the Canal (refer to Figures 7.4h and 7.4j). The future development of these parcels, with their front doors facing the Canal, can allow for the Canal to be seen as an amenity. The Canal trail on the north side will provide movement along the new right-of-way and the new right-of-way will provide greater access to the trail. The typical design strategy to address the Canal's grade change would be consistent with infill in places to create gradual inclined connections or steps leading up to the trail at key access points. The design of new development between Broad Street and the Canal should take into consideration that the Canal is raised approximately 6 to 8 feet above grade, in some areas. Design strategies that take advantage of the visual connection should be utilized.

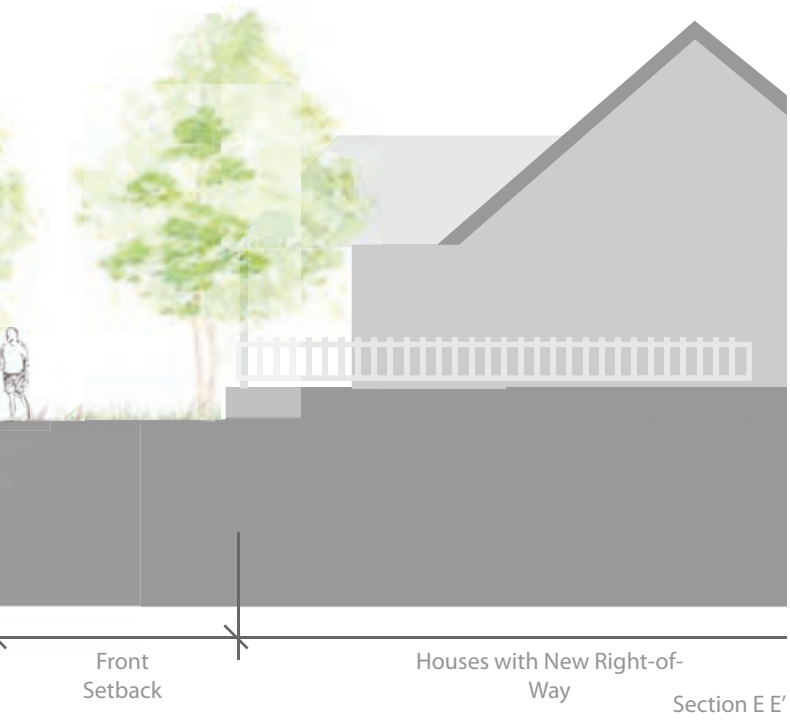
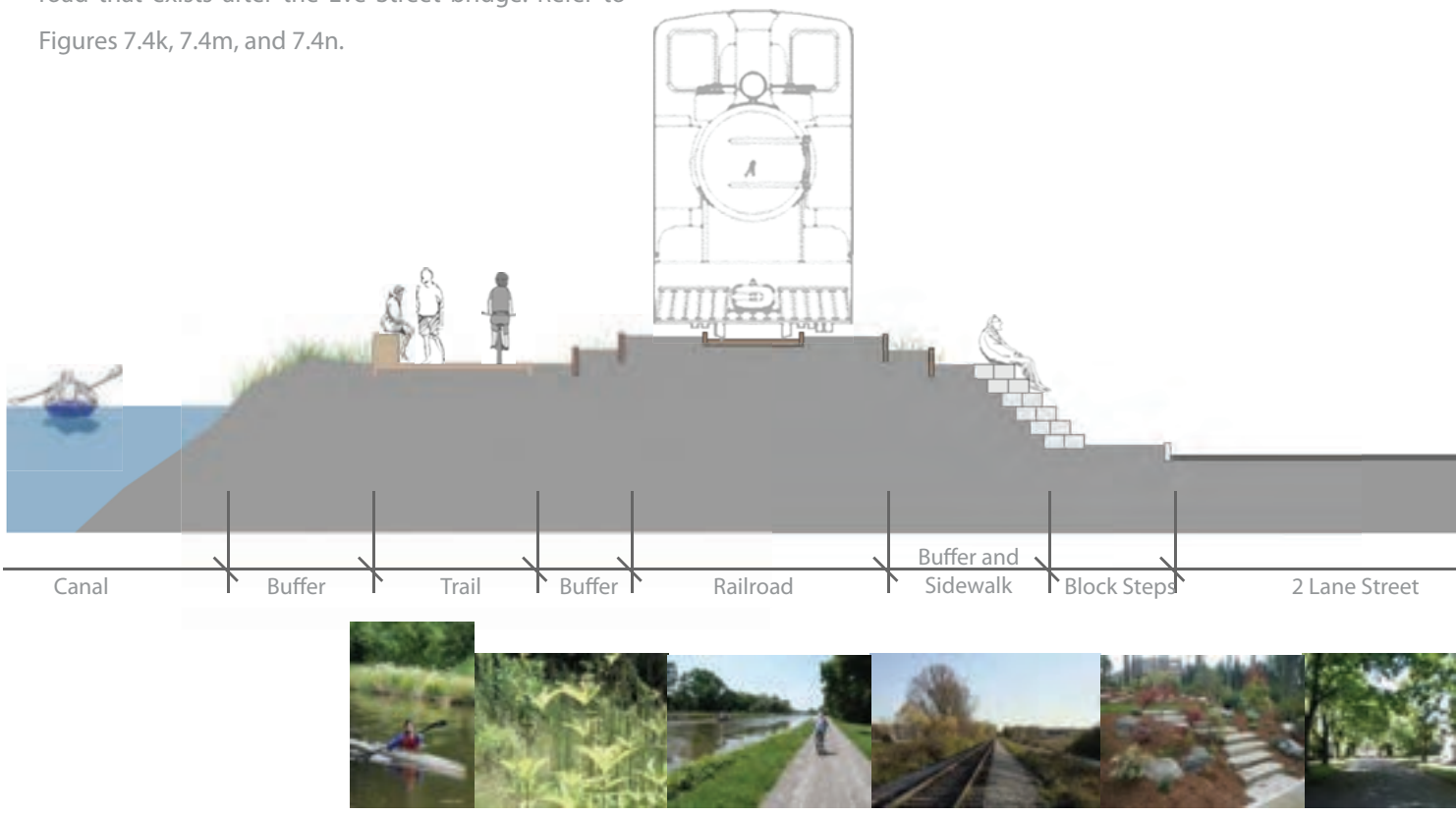


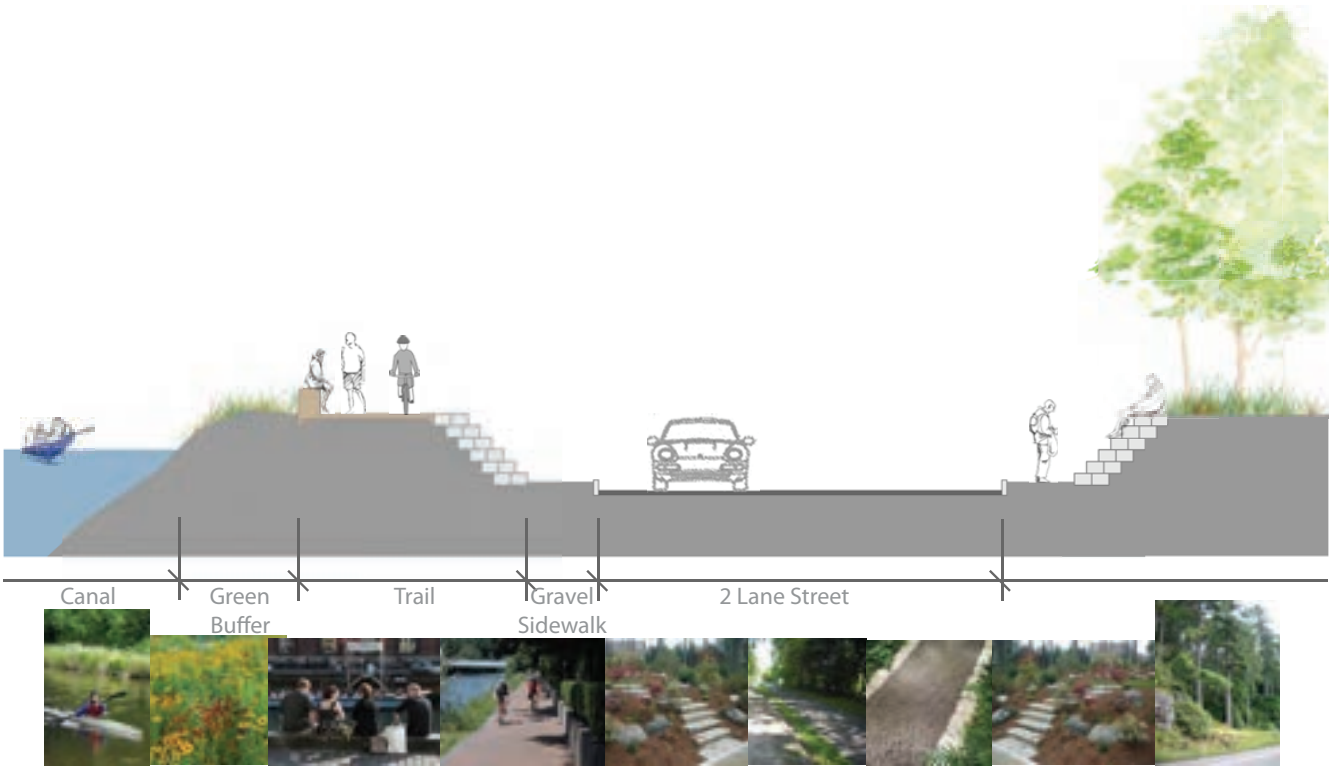
Figure 7.4j: Typical Section Through Proposed Division of Parcels and Reorientation of New Development to Address the Canal

7.4.4 IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 4

- The mills, as an important part of the industrial heritage of Augusta, need to be acknowledged just as much as the Canal itself. Neither would exist without the other. Until a decision is made on how to retrofit, develop and reuse the mills, the mill sites must be integrated into the landscape of the Canal. Treating the site and Canal as a backdrop to showcase the mills could make the mill more attractive for private investment.
- The railroad, Canal, trail and Goodrich Street in front of the mills have an awkward relationship with each other. The relationship should be clarified by establishing a clear and well-maintained trail along the Canal that is more than just a dirt path. This path will signify where the trail is and create a safe zone for trail users, separate from the railroad. Goodrich Street needs to be extended all the way to the trail bridge at Lake Olmstead. This can be done by paving the dirt road that exists after the Eve Street bridge. Refer to Figures 7.4k, 7.4m, and 7.4n.

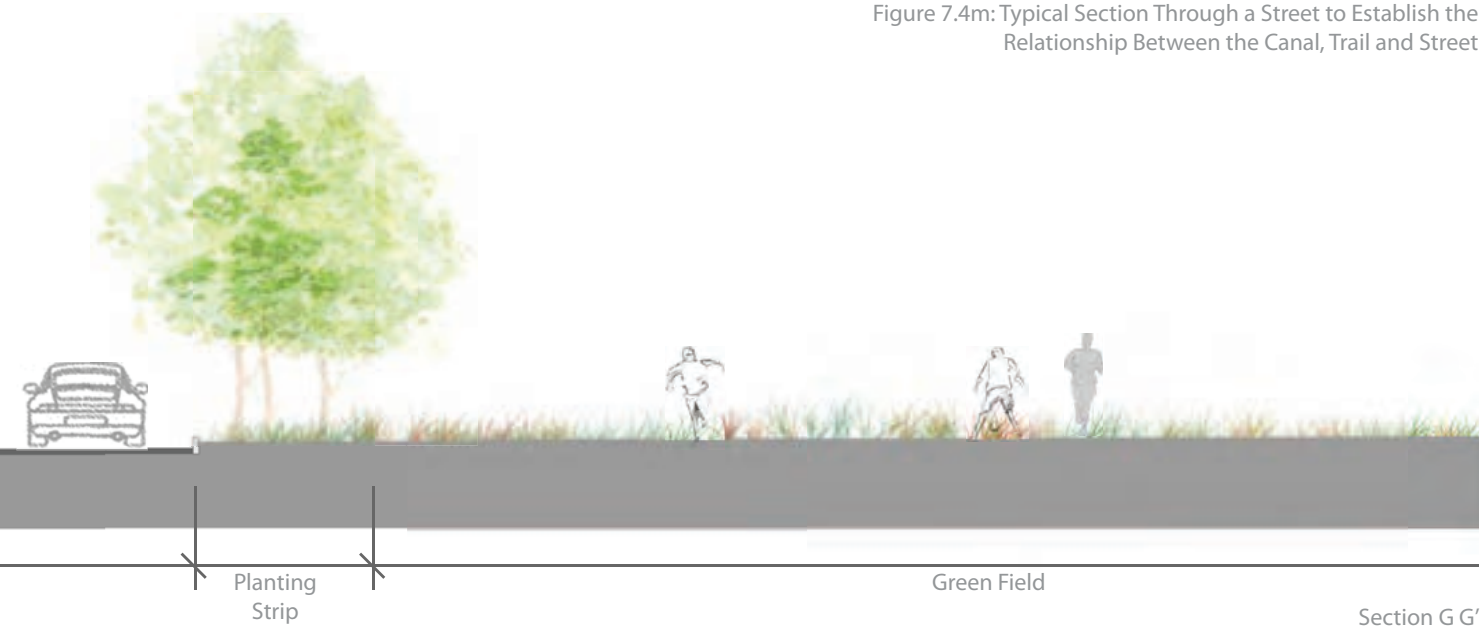
Figure 7.4k: Proposed Implementation for Phase 4 - Integrating the Mills, Goodrich Street, Railroad and Trail into the Canal Landscape





Section F F′

Figure 7.4m: Typical Section Through a Street to Establish the Relationship Between the Canal, Trail and Street



Section G G′

Figure 7.4n: Section Through the Area Near the Mills, Adopted for Use as a Greenspace, and its Relationship to the Street, Railroad, Trail and Canal

7.4.5 CONCLUSION

Figure 7.4p illustrates all four phases of recommendations for the Augusta Canal as discussed within this chapter. The Augusta Canal has great potential to become an asset to Harrisburg and greater Augusta community. By improving and building trails along the canal; creating better access with new right-of-ways and street connections; and redirecting parcels and new development to front the Canal, this waterway can be seen as the amenity it is. It will be important for the Harrisburg community to work closely with the Augusta Canal Authority, the Georgia Health Sciences University, Augusta State University, and other partner organizations to implement this new vision for the Canal. The economic success of these institutions relies on the success of Harrisburg becoming a vibrant place to live and work, just as much as the success of Harrisburg relies on partnerships with these institutions.

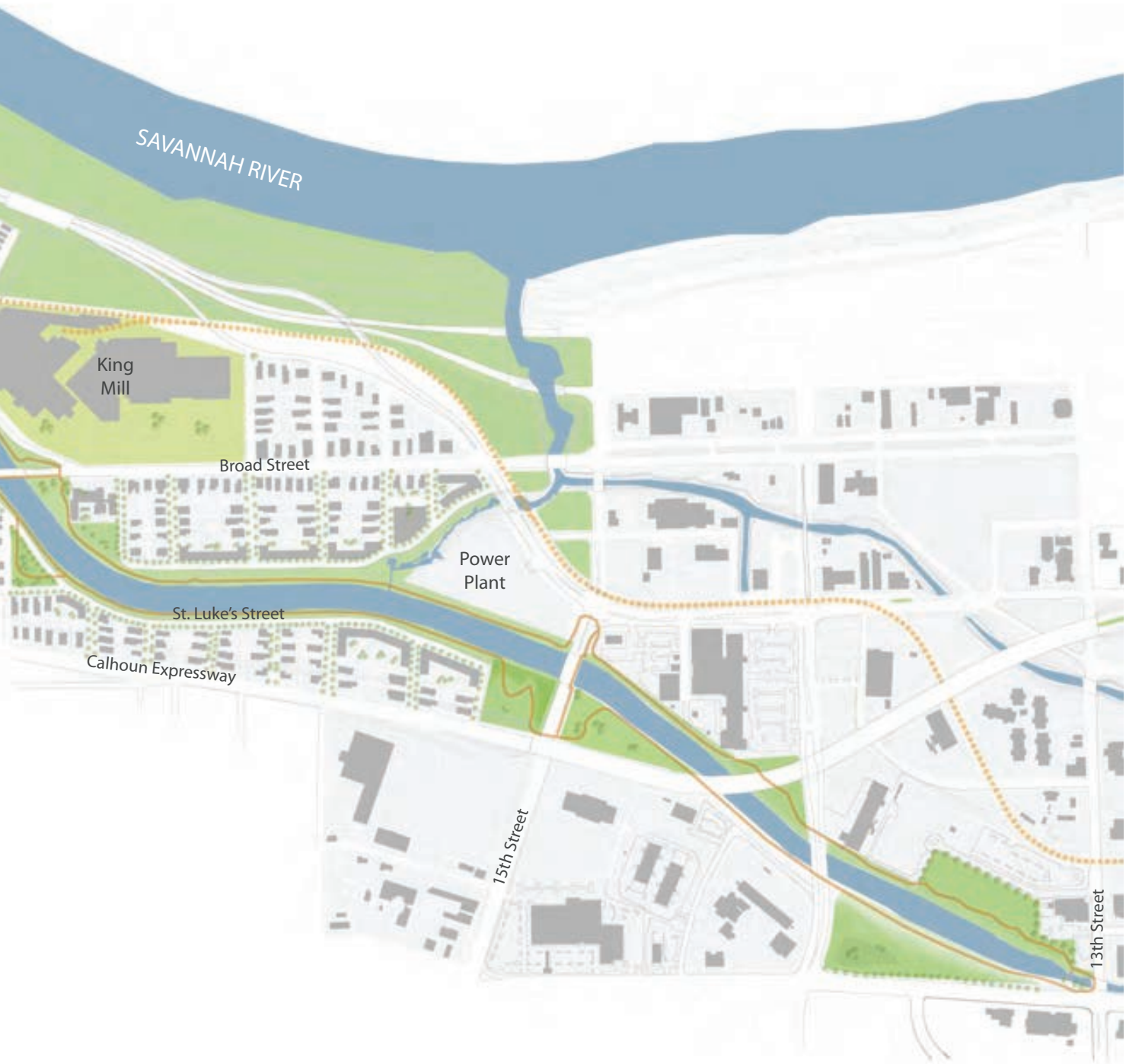


Figure 7.4p: Illustrative Plan for the Proposed Changes Along the Augusta Canal

Figure 7.4q: Illustration of Re-grading the Canal Edge for Public Access.

Figure 7.4r: Illustration of New Housing Constructed to Face the Canal Trail and a New Access Street Along the Canal.

Figure 7.4s: Proposal for an Improved Trail Near the Sibley Mill.