



VISIONING WORKSHOP

## A. Two Communities Working Together

The master planning process is noteworthy as a model of collaboration across jurisdictions, between agencies and different levels of government, and across multiple professional disciplines. In the summer of 2003, the City Manager of Alexandria and the County Manager of Arlington appointed an eighteen-member citizen task force comprised of citizens from both jurisdictions. Meeting regularly to oversee the progress of the project, this Joint Task Force (JTF) made recommendations to the City and County through a separate collaborative body, the Agency Coordination Group (ACG), which consisted of multidisciplinary staff from both jurisdictions as well as representatives from the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The two co-chairs of the JTF—one from Alexandria and one from Arlington—served as liaisons to the ACG and fully participated in ACG meetings.

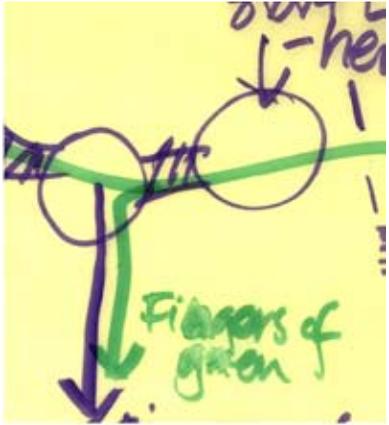
## B. Envisioning the Corridor

### 1. PUBLIC OUTREACH

At the outset, the JTF and ACG began with the shared conviction that broad community participation at every stage of the master planning process was essential to achieving a restored and revitalized Four Mile Run corridor. Moreover, the process required both bold thinking and realism; an understanding of the constraints imposed by current conditions in the stream corridor but also a willingness to think beyond these constraints and perhaps even dream a little. The process also required a long-term vision accompanied by short-term strategies to achieve incremental improvements on the way to a broader transformation of the corridor.

To begin the brainstorming and information-gathering, the JTF and ACG organized a series of initial public-outreach opportunities. The JTF sponsored several roundtable discussions, which brought together individuals representing environmental and community groups and local businesses. Additional meetings with civic associations in both jurisdictions and a roundtable discussion with members of the Latino community gathered further input. The centerpiece of these efforts was a major public event to bring together the Arlington and Alexandria communities for a one-day visioning workshop.

The Four Mile Run Restoration visioning workshop took place on Saturday, February 5, 2005 at the Charles Barrett School in Alexandria. The approximately 150 individuals who attended the event were asked to complete and return an eight-question survey to gauge the level of importance that participants assigned to particular goals for Four Mile Run. Next, the consultant team presented an analysis of existing conditions and



COMMUNITY DRAWINGS FROM THE VISIONING WORKSHOP

SCENES FROM THE VISIONING WORKSHOP

highlighted potential opportunities throughout the project study area. These presentations included a discussion and demonstration on the nature, characteristics and properties of water that would be important to consider in developing options for the Four Mile Run corridor.

Following the presentations, the group convened for a water-themed “warm-up” drawing exercise in which they were asked to imagine the various meandering patterns that flowing water might produce, the artistic qualities of those patterns, and the opportunities that such patterns presented for the Four Mile Run experience. Participants then divided into smaller, facilitated groups and were asked to respond to four key questions:

- What are the positive features and qualities of the Four Mile Run corridor today?
- What are the negative aspects and features of the corridor that should be changed?
- How do you envision the Four Mile Run corridor in 25 years?
- Specifically, how do you think Four Mile Run can achieve this vision?

For the final session of the day, each group presented a short summary of its discussion and the key ideas identified.

## 2. COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Participants offered a wealth of insights and a high degree of passion in outlining their vision for the future of Four Mile Run. From the perspectives articulated, a number of key themes emerged. These themes, which would drive the next stage of the master plan process, included the following:

### Bridges

Community members frequently identified the bridges that span Four Mile Run as opportunities. In some cases, participants envisioned ways to reuse existing bridges. In other instances, participants identified bridges that should be removed or locations where new bridges should be constructed. Many participants noted how existing bridges, particularly those near Potomac Yard, could serve as focal points, activity centers and gathering places, or venues for public art. Participants also envisioned that some bridges throughout the corridor would serve as open space links or “green bridges” with environmental or natural elements. In addition, participants identified opportunities to use and improve the undersides of existing bridges, such as illuminating the space underneath the bridges by adding “skylights” and adding sculptural features, art, lighting and other amenities.

### Green Corridors and Other Environmental Elements

Participants embraced the idea of “green corridors” of some form along Four Mile Run. Some participants imagined an “emerald necklace” or “spine of green” or “green fingers” that would provide continuous networks of green space along the stream and into surrounding communities. Moreover, they suggested creating continuous green edges along both sides of the stream. In addition, many participants imagined a mix of urban space and natural space with repeated transitions between urban and natural character along the corridor. Common to all of these visions, however, was the idea of a sustainable stream corridor that includes some green and natural elements to create a balance with urban characteristics.

In addition to green corridors, participants envisioned other environmental and natural elements in the stream corridor. They noted the need to improve water quality by incorporating stormwater management and other green design techniques into the plan for the corridor. Participants also suggested that the plan should increase the amount of pervious surfaces adjacent to the stream.

### Focal Points and Activity Centers

Many participants expressed a desire for a stream corridor that generates activity 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and at all times of the year. In general, activity would center around a few focal points along the stream corridor. Possible focal points included the U.S. Route 1 / Potomac Yard area, the Shirlington area and the Mount Vernon Avenue corridor. In addition, participants identified other locations—play areas, public spaces, bridges and nature centers—that also could function as focal points and activity centers.

### Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections

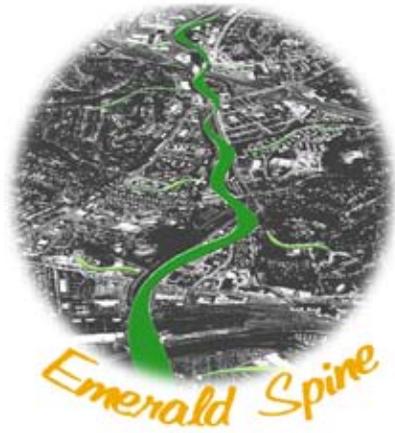
Participants emphasized the need for non-motorized transportation connections throughout the corridor. They suggested maximizing pedestrian connections in general, as well as adding pedestrian crossings at appropriate locations (for example, at the confluence of lower Long Branch and Four Mile Run). Participants also wished to see continuous trails on one or both sides of Four Mile Run and trail extensions that connect pedestrians and bicyclists to focal points and to the area west of I-395. Some participants expressed a desire for wider trails, with some suggesting the separation of pedestrians and bicyclists on these trails. Many participants also embraced the idea of providing bicycle facilities, such as bicycle rentals and showers for bicyclists, at highly traveled locations such as at the bridges near Potomac Yard.

### Access

Participants frequently cited the need for better access to Four Mile Run. They defined “access” broadly to include both transportation access (public, private and multi-modal) and physical access to the stream. From a transportation standpoint, participants were



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COMMUNITY DREAMS: PHRASES HEARD AT THE VISIONING WORKSHOP

in favor of adding a Metrorail and/or light rail stop near Four Mile Run and suggested providing sufficient parking throughout the corridor. Participants also envisioned formal access points to the stream's edge that would enable them to reach and touch the water. Participants also underscored the need to provide easy access to the stream from all surrounding communities.

### Boating

Many participants noted opportunities for boating activities, including kayaking and canoeing, along Four Mile Run. To support boating, participants envisioned boat houses and boat rental operations at certain locations, such as near Potomac Yard and at Four Mile Run Park. A number of participants suggested that boating would be one way to foster a better connection and seamless transition between Four Mile Run and the Potomac River.

### Aesthetics

Many participants complained that Four Mile Run is currently “ugly” and “smelly” and poorly maintained. They viewed the restoration project as an opportunity to make Four Mile Run beautiful, reduce unpleasant odors and develop new strategies for keeping the stream corridor clean and attractive. In addition, participants identified specific elements of the corridor that they would like to see removed, such as the power transmission lines and other elements that currently contribute to the “utility corridor” feel of Four Mile Run.

### Culture and Interpretation

Participants viewed Four Mile Run as a corridor with art and culture and a story to tell. Participants identified opportunities for visual and public art, as well as the performing arts and festivals. In addition, participants suggested maximizing interpretive and educational opportunities along the corridor by highlighting environmental and historic features and the extent to which Four Mile Run could serve as a “confluence of cultures.”

### Safety and Security

In general, participants felt that safety and security along Four Mile Run could be improved. Due to the lack of specific examples of safety concerns, it was not clear whether this feeling was a reflection of reality or perception. They felt that adding features such as call-boxes and lighting, as well as improving police access, would contribute to a feeling of safety in the corridor. In addition, they noted that improving the appearance of Four Mile Run and increasing the number of “eyes on the corridor” would further address safety concerns.

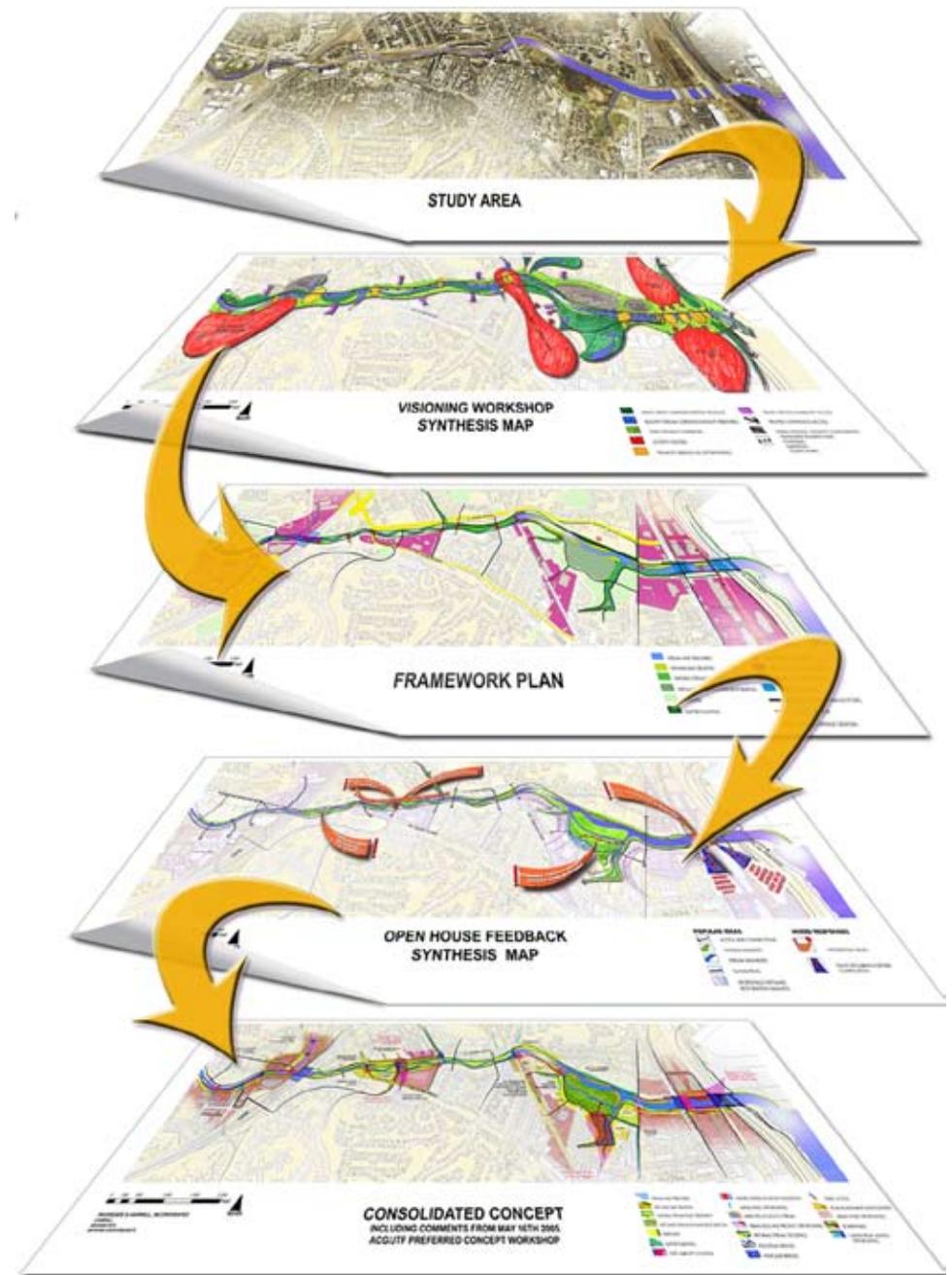


FIGURE 3.1: PLAN PROGRESSION

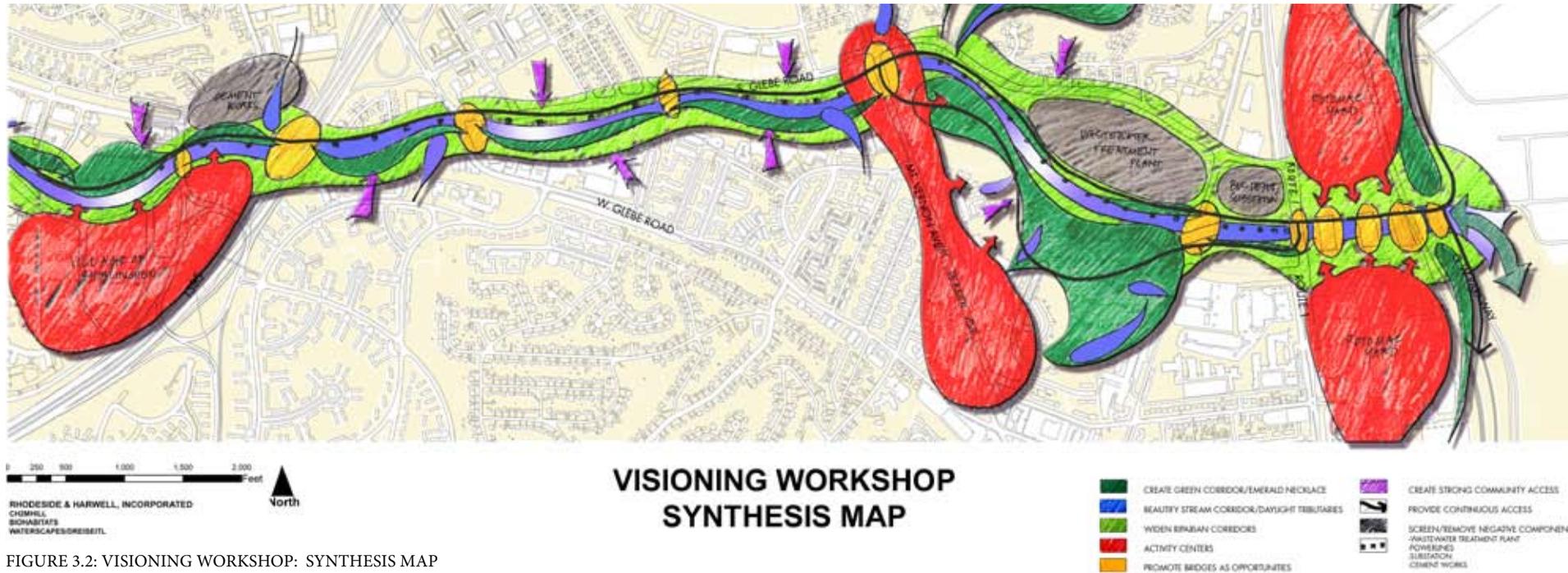


FIGURE 3.2: VISIONING WORKSHOP: SYNTHESIS MAP

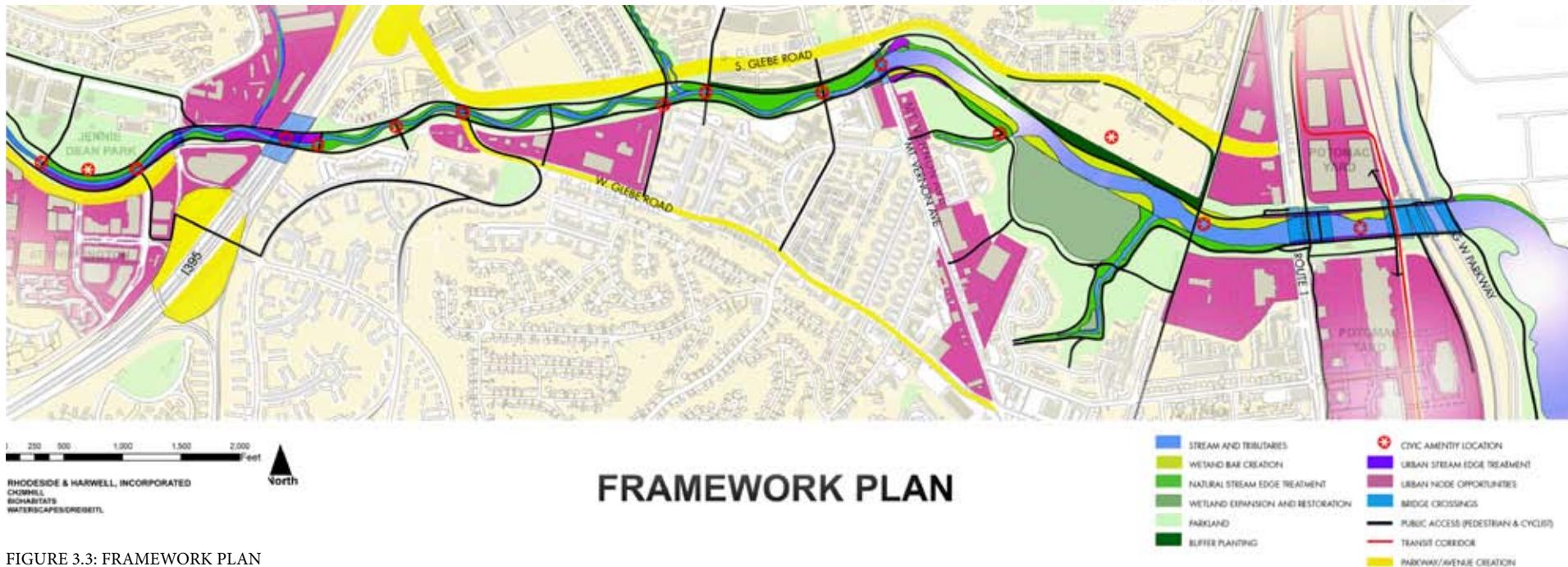


FIGURE 3.3: FRAMEWORK PLAN



VISIONING WORKSHOP



OPEN HOUSES: APRIL, SEPTEMBER AND DECEMBER

### Amenities

Some participants mentioned the need for additional amenities along Four Mile Run. Desired amenities included water fountains, bathrooms and urban design features that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### Land Ownership

Participants frequently mentioned the need to increase the amount of land in the corridor that is publicly owned. Some mentioned purchasing easements along Four Mile Run as one possible strategy for achieving this goal.

### Equity

Some participants felt strongly that improvements to Four Mile Run should promote social equity. They suggested that the restoration project would be equitable if it provided access for all groups and communities that might use the stream corridor and provided facilities for a wide range of community uses.

### Implementation

Many participants viewed the project as a long-term effort and suggested a variety of strategies for ensuring successful implementation of each subsequent phase of the project. Central to these strategies are educating and engaging both community members and government leaders in order to build support for the goals of the project. Other suggestions included seeking out creative funding from a variety of sources and continuing formal community involvement well into the future.

## 3. FRAMEWORK PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

During the visioning session and other public outreach, community members had the opportunity to respond to and comment on the proposed vision statement for the restoration project. Based on these comments and subsequent revisions, the JTF, ACG and the master planning team refined the document that would become the project's "Vision and Guiding Principles." [See the vision statement and guiding principles at the end of Chapter 1]

The input received from the public, the JTF and the ACG underscored the many issues that the Four Mile Run Master Plan must address. (Figure 3.2) Due to the variety and complexity of issues to be addressed in the corridor, the master planning team sought to communicate proposals for the corridor as a series of layers, each exploring a particular issue. This approach would allow the planning team to thoroughly explore each issue on its own and in conjunction with other issues. It also would help the community understand the various components of an illustrative plan and how these features relate to one another.

Based on the strong feedback and direction from the community, the JTF and the ACG, the master planning team developed a basic conceptual framework—the "Framework Plan"—for both in-stream and near stream areas of the stream corridor. (Figure 3.3) The Framework Plan would serve as the underlying "base" plan for all proposals and included those elements that the master planning team considered to be the essential components of any Master Plan concept. These components comprise a variety of layers within the Framework Plan.

The public outreach process also identified other issues and opportunities that required further exploration and public feedback before the planning team could make any further decisions. These areas of exploration are expressed as a series of alternatives, showing a variety of options at key locations along the corridor. The alternatives sought to gauge community sentiments on the spectrum of possible approaches, from those emphasizing a more natural stream corridor to those emphasizing more recreational amenities or a more urban character.

## 4. MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Just as the planning team had reached out to the Arlington and Alexandria communities earlier in the Master Planning process, the team once again called upon members of the community to review and comment on the Framework Plan and alternatives during two Open House events in April of 2005. (Figure 3.4) The planning team also met with the JTF and the ACG in a single workshop session to refine the preferred concept for the corridor based on the feedback received from the public.

The input received during these events, along with analysis of the stream corridor, allowed the master planning team to begin the design phase of the Master Plan. (See Figure 3.1 for Progression of Plans) Also critical to the development of the Master Plan was the outcome of the first round of hydrologic and hydraulic modeling (H & H modeling) being undertaken by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the findings of which would determine the necessary channel capacity, level of flood protection and the associated opportunities and constraints.

The master planning team completed draft designs for the Master Plan in the fall of 2005 and further refined these designs based on feedback received at two more public Open House events in September and December. By the end of 2005, the Master Plan was ready to be presented to the Alexandria City Council and Arlington County Board. The Master Plan detailed in the following chapter reflects the final concept that emerged out of this process.

## Conceptual Alternatives

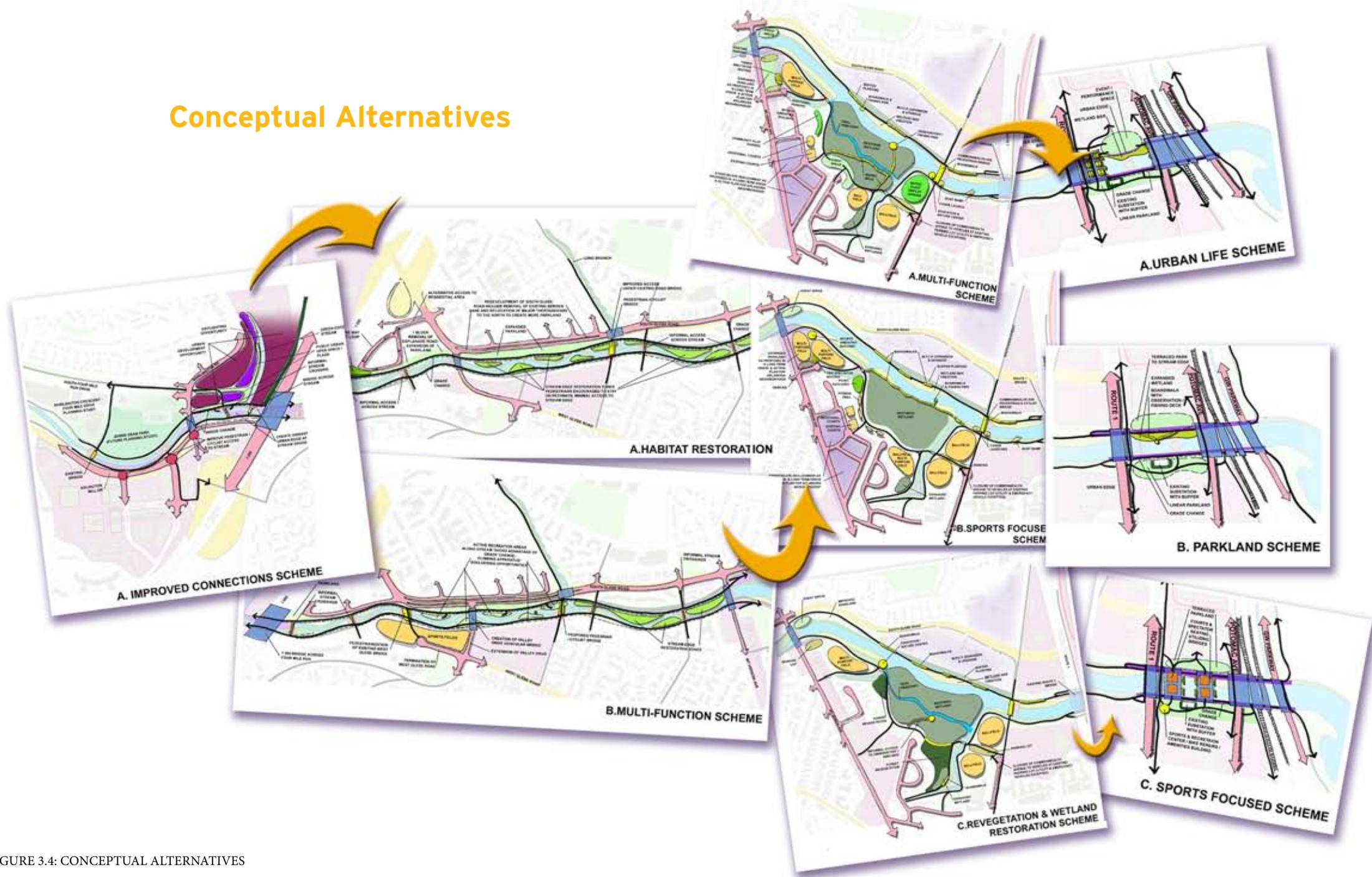
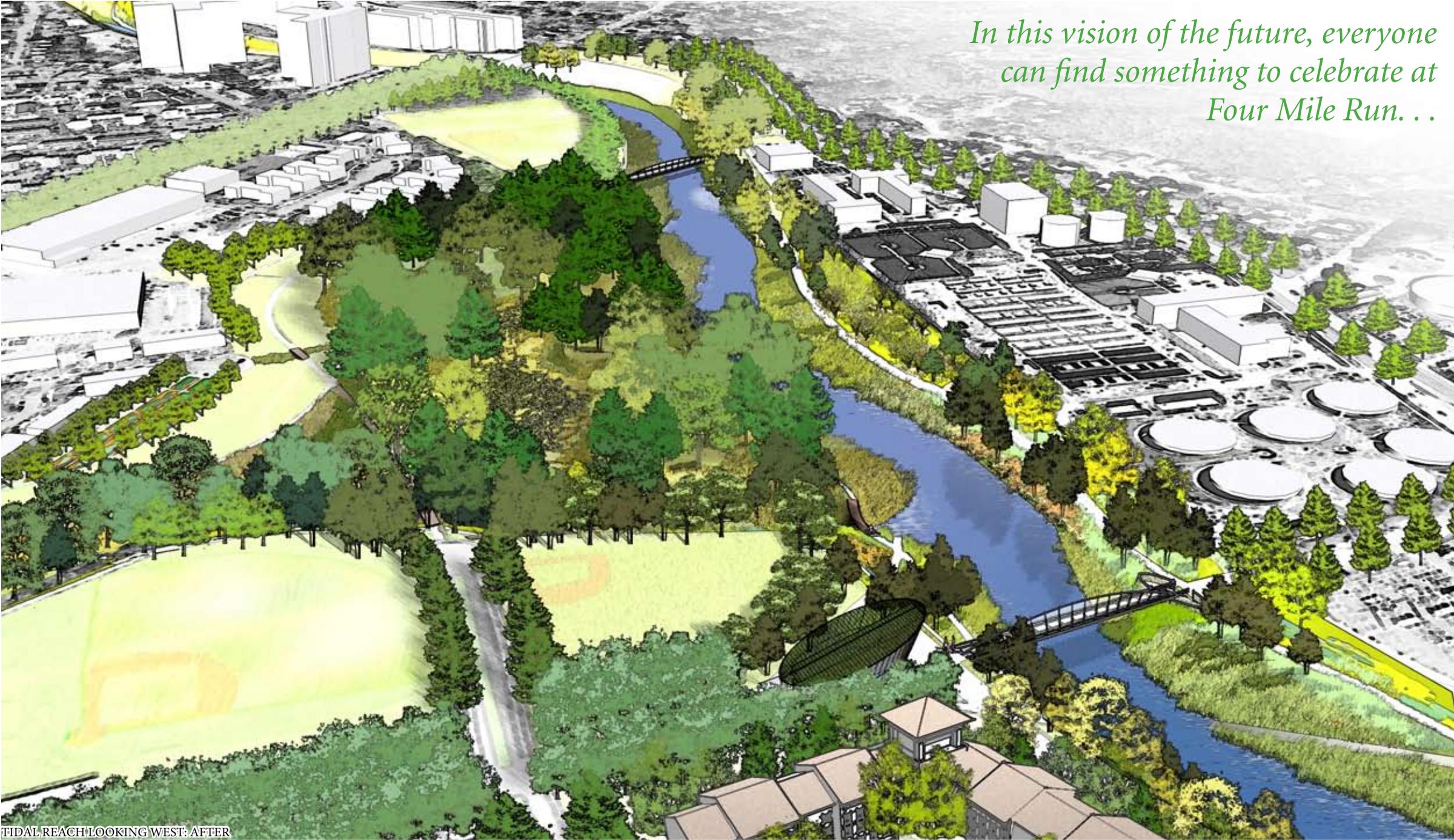


FIGURE 3.4: CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES

*In this vision of the future, everyone  
can find something to celebrate at  
Four Mile Run. . .*



TIDAL REACH/LOOKING WEST: AFTER