

High Falls State Park



WELCOME!

Framework Plan Launch Presentation

2025 October 21



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation



Empire State
Development

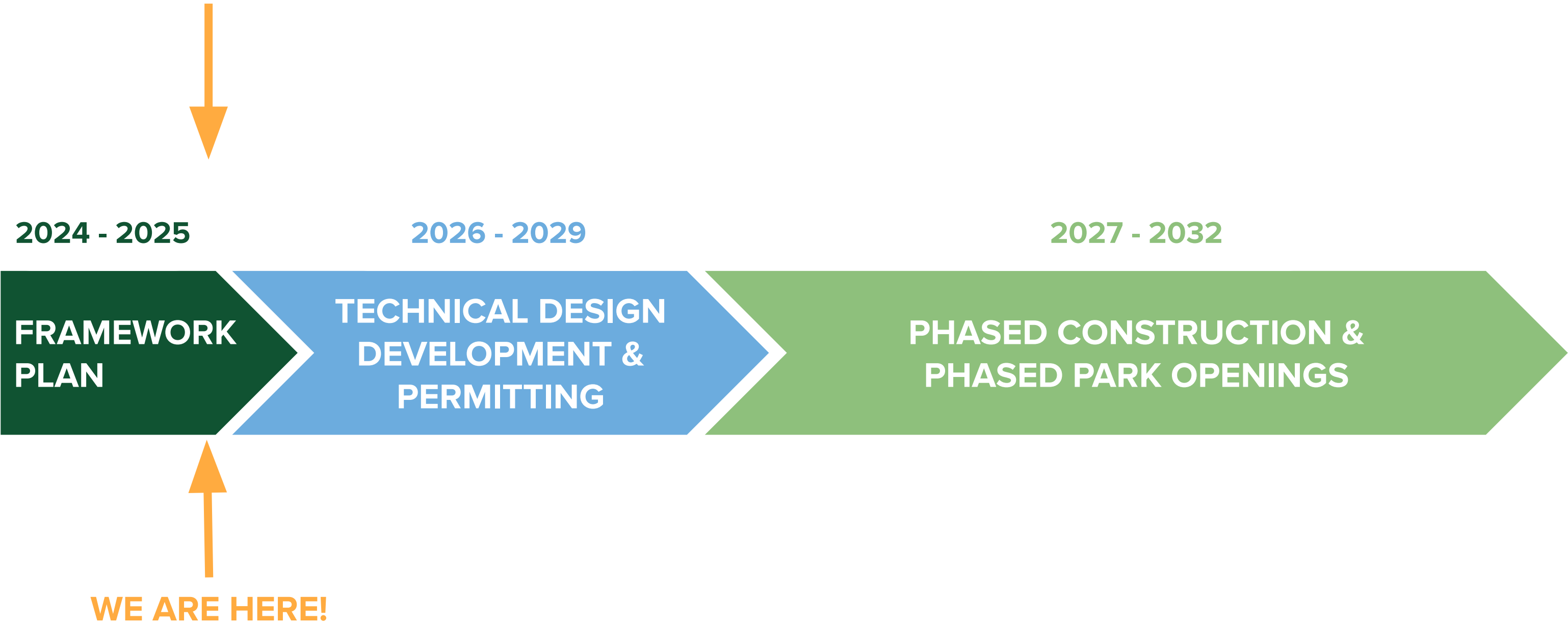
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High Falls State Park Process & Schedule

PROJECT SCHEDULE



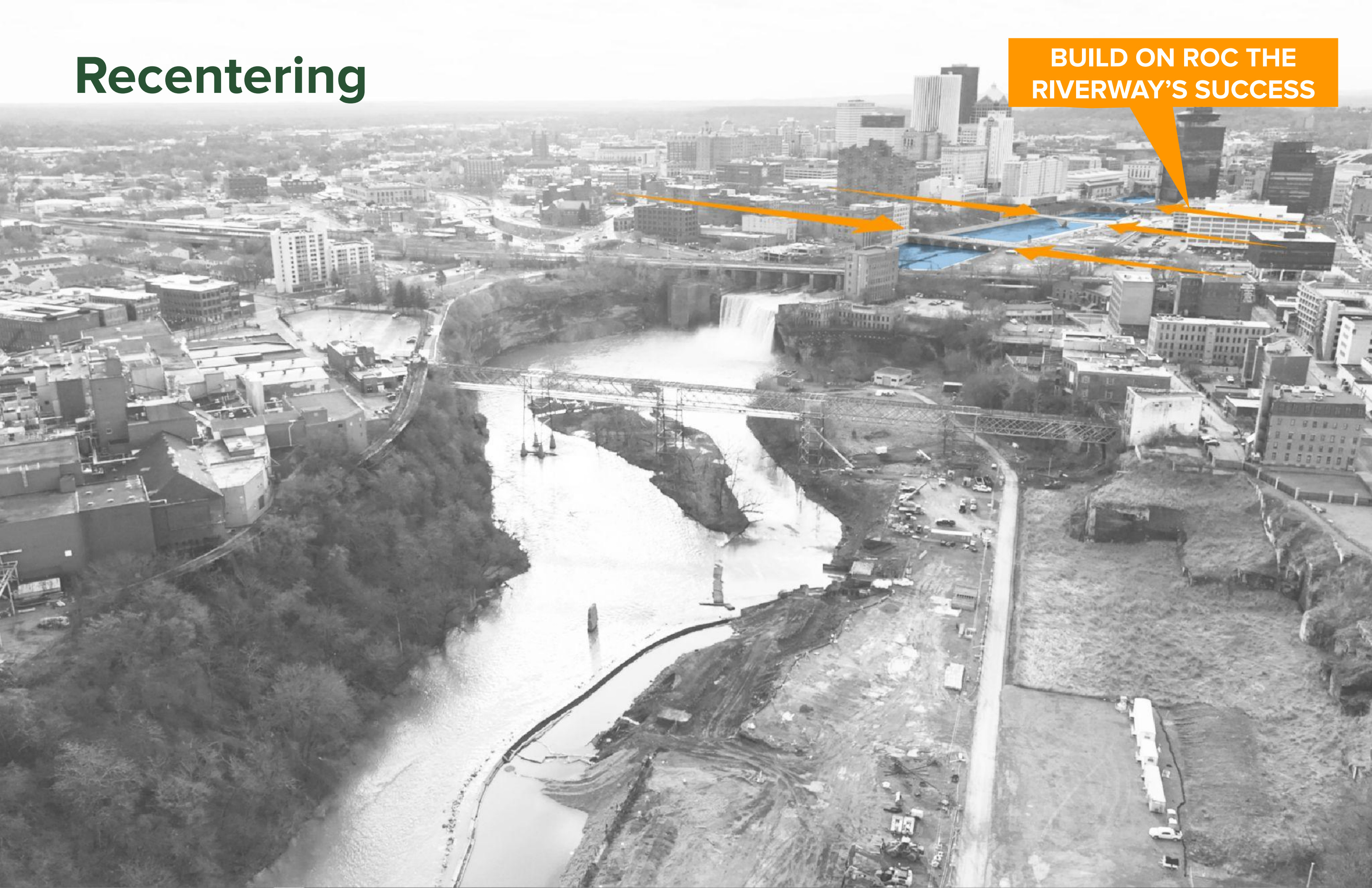
PROJECT SCHEDULE



November 2024 Open House Last Time. . .

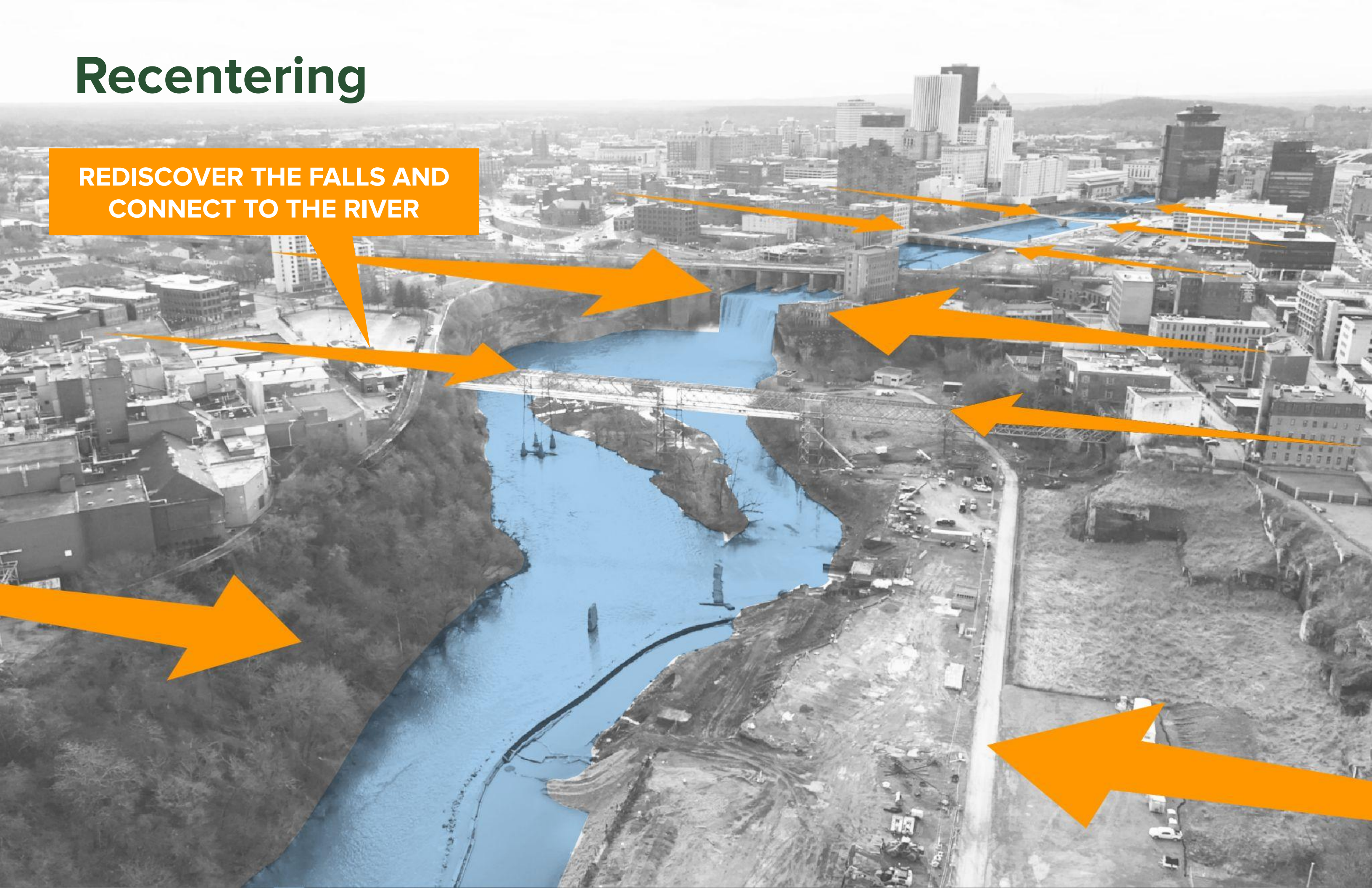
Recentering

**BUILD ON ROC THE
RIVERWAY'S SUCCESS**



Recentering

REDISCOVER THE FALLS AND
CONNECT TO THE RIVER



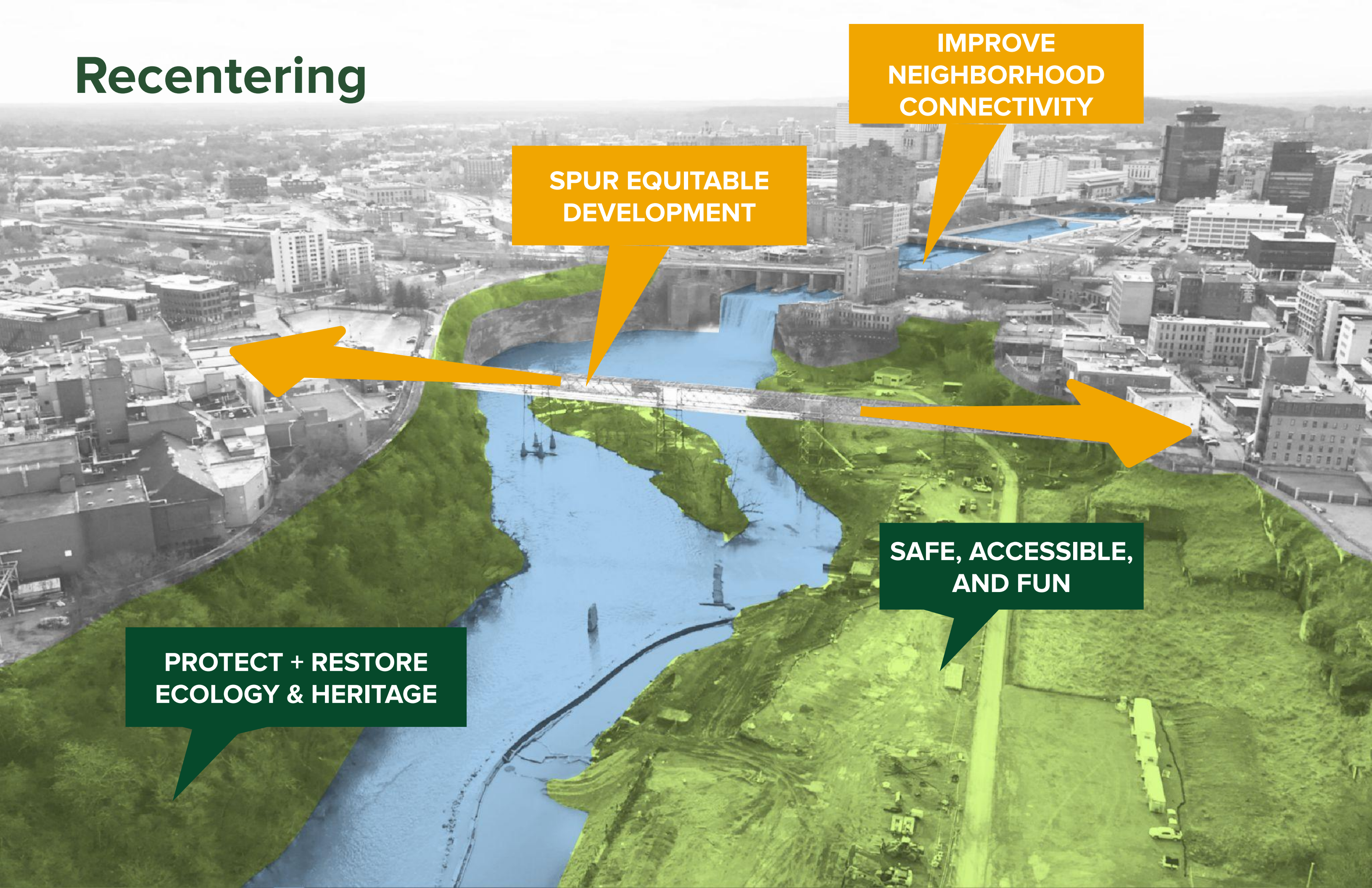
Recentering

IMPROVE
NEIGHBORHOOD
CONNECTIVITY

SPUR EQUITABLE
DEVELOPMENT

SAFE, ACCESSIBLE,
AND FUN

PROTECT + RESTORE
ECOLOGY & HERITAGE





High Falls State Park Community Engagement

ENGAGEMENT GROUPS



STEERING GROUP

New York State Parks, Office of Recreation and Historic Preservation
Empire State Development

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

City of Rochester
Monroe County

ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS

Bausch + Lomb
Rochester Gas & Electric

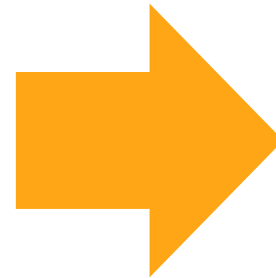
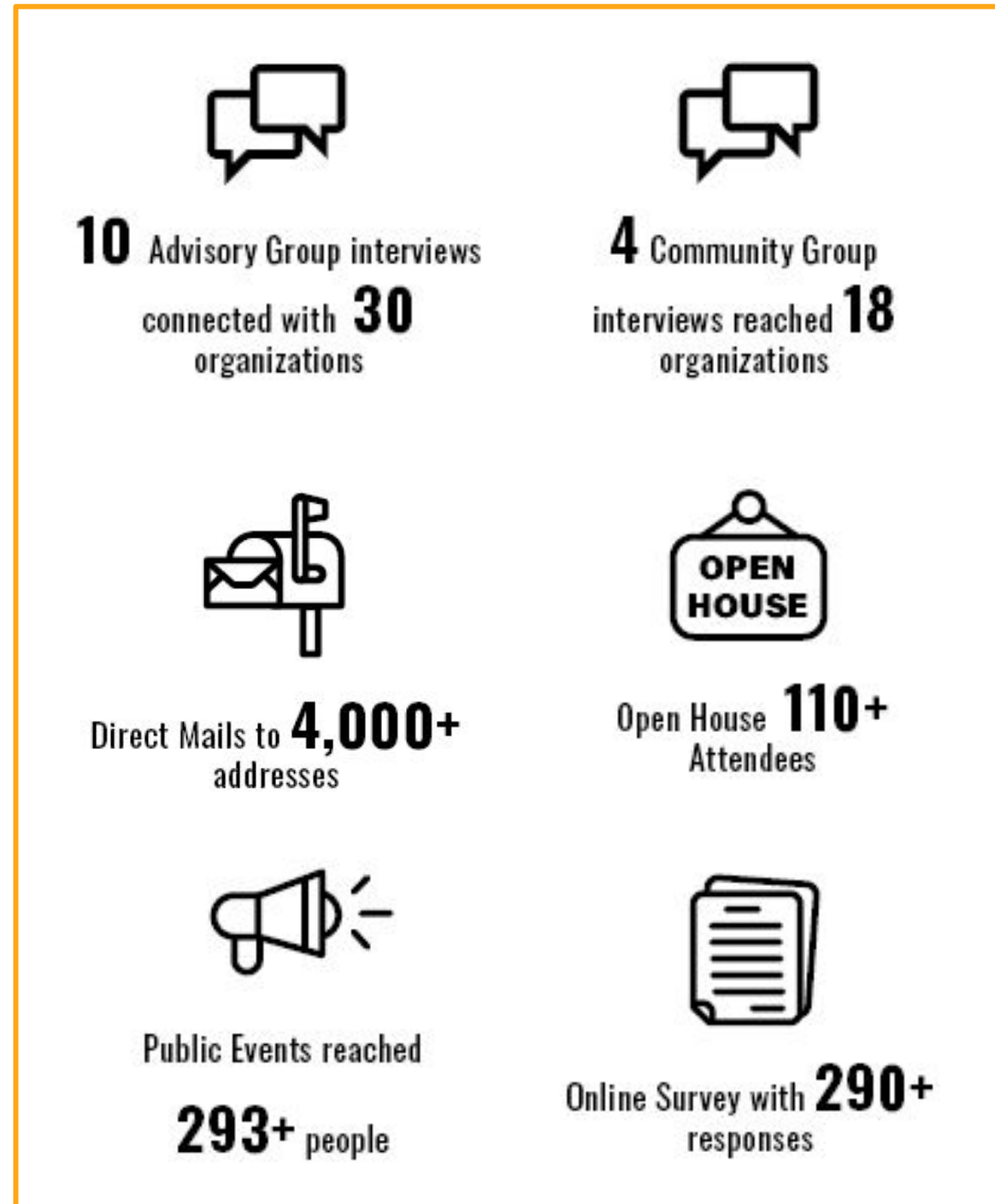
ADVISORY GROUP

Climate Solutions Accelerator
Community Design Center of Rochester
Constellation Brands
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County
Friends of Washington Grove
Ganondagan
Genesee Brewery (FIFCO)
Genesee Land Trust
Genesee River Alliance
Genesee RiverWatch
Genesee Valley Audubon Society
Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
Greentopia
GreenSpark
High Falls Business Improvement District
Monroe Community College
One ROC
Ralph C Wilson Jr Foundation
Regional Transit Services
Reconnect Rochester
Rochester City School District
Rochester Downtown Development Corporation
Rochester Ecology Partners
Rochester Olmsted Parks Alliance
Rochester School for the Deaf
St John Fisher University
SUNY Brockport
The Nature Conservancy of Central and Western NY
University of Rochester
Visit Rochester

COMMUNITY GROUP

Catalyst Consulting
Center City (C4) Community Coalition
Center for Disability Rights
Coalition of North East Associations (CONEA)
Common Ground Health-Healthi Kids Initiative
Corn Hill Neighborhood Association
Edgerton Area Neighborhood Association
El Camino Neighborhood Association
Group 14621 Community Rising Inc.
Hinge Neighbors
Ibero American Action League
Lyll Otis Community Association
Lyll Ave Business Association
North Clinton Ave Business Association
Rochester Accessible Adventures
Seneca Zoo Community
St. Simon's Tenant Association
Washington Square Community Association

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



WHAT WE HEARD

- **Restore historic ecology and implement environmental stewardship practices.**
- **Ensure ongoing park maintenance and promote equitable access for surrounding neighborhoods to foster inclusivity.**
- **Apply universal design principles.**
- **Recognize that activity fees will limit accessibility.**
- **Preserve and highlight the cultural history of the Genesee River and integrate industrial relics.**
- **Share diverse stories reflecting the region's past and present.**
- **Enhance trail connections and promote multimodal transportation**
- **Provide access to the water's edge.**
- **Address parking and safety concerns.**
- **Encourage solitude-promoting activities like hiking and biking.**
- **Include a venue for community celebrations, while being cautious of excessive programming that may detract from the natural environment.**

The findings from previous engagements influenced the approach for the High Falls State Park Framework Plan.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

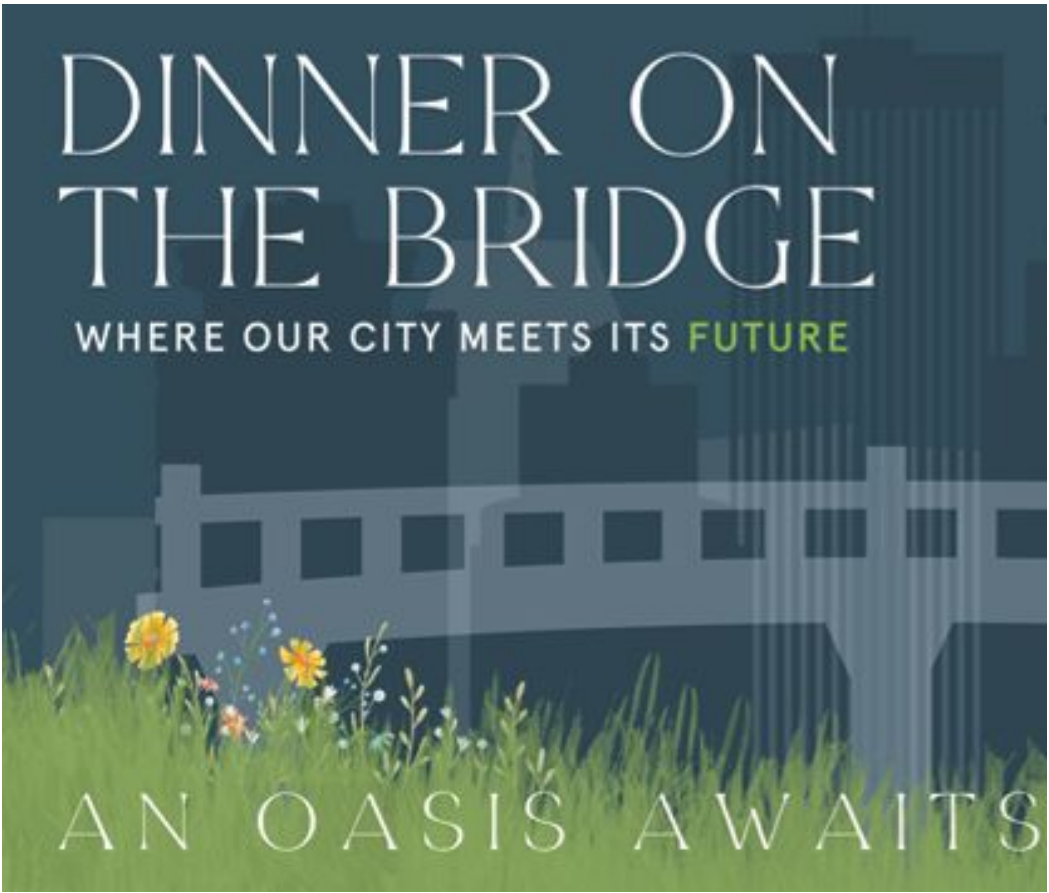
High Falls State Park

[About the Park](#) ▾ [Resources](#) ▾ [FAQ](#) [Get involved!](#) ▾

Vision Statement + Goals & Objectives

Vision Statement:

High Falls State Park is an oasis of natural beauty in the heart of Rochester that connects communities and visitors with the awe-inspiring Genesee River gorge and waterfall, as well as the city’s rich ecological, cultural, and industrial history.



Framework Plan

Vision & Experience

VISION STATEMENT

High Falls State Park is an oasis of natural beauty in the heart of Rochester that connects communities and visitors with the awe-inspiring Genesee River gorge and waterfall, and the city's rich ecological, cultural, and industrial history.

GOALS



Re-establish an **ecological foundation** for immersive nature experiences in the city.



Honor the Genesee River's **cultural significance** and Rochester's rich industrial heritage.



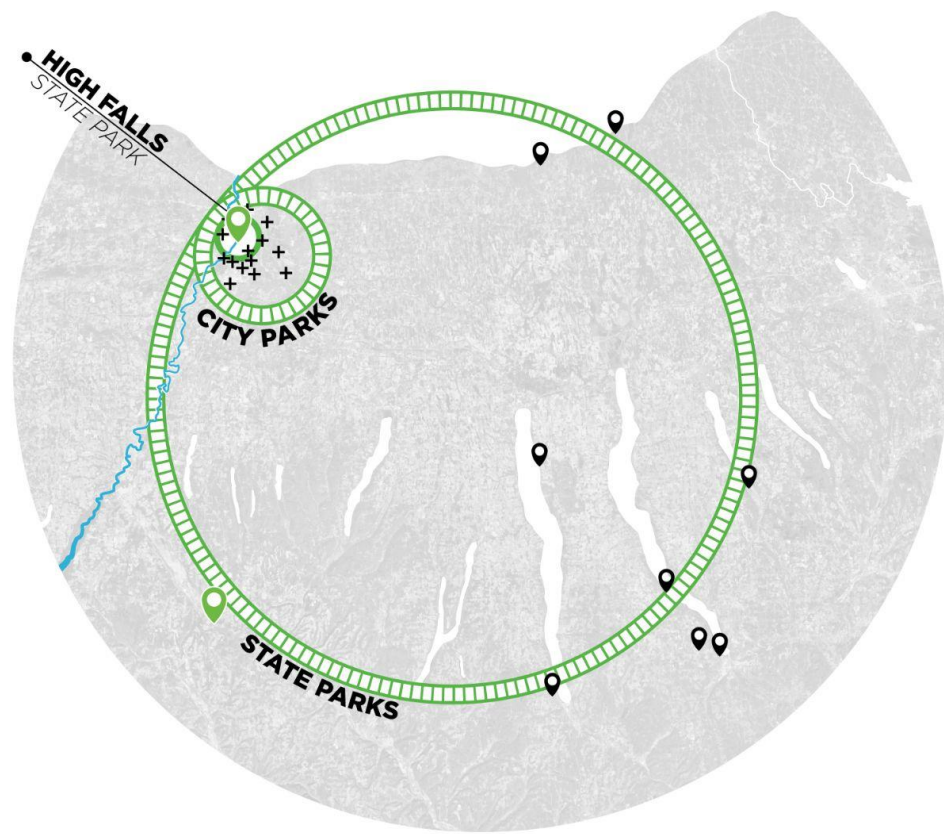
Express **equity in access, engagement, design, and cultural interpretation.**



Connect the park seamlessly with **Downtown, adjacent neighborhoods, and the Genesee River corridor.**



Provide **recreational and educational opportunities** that take advantage of the site's dramatic setting and history.



REGION

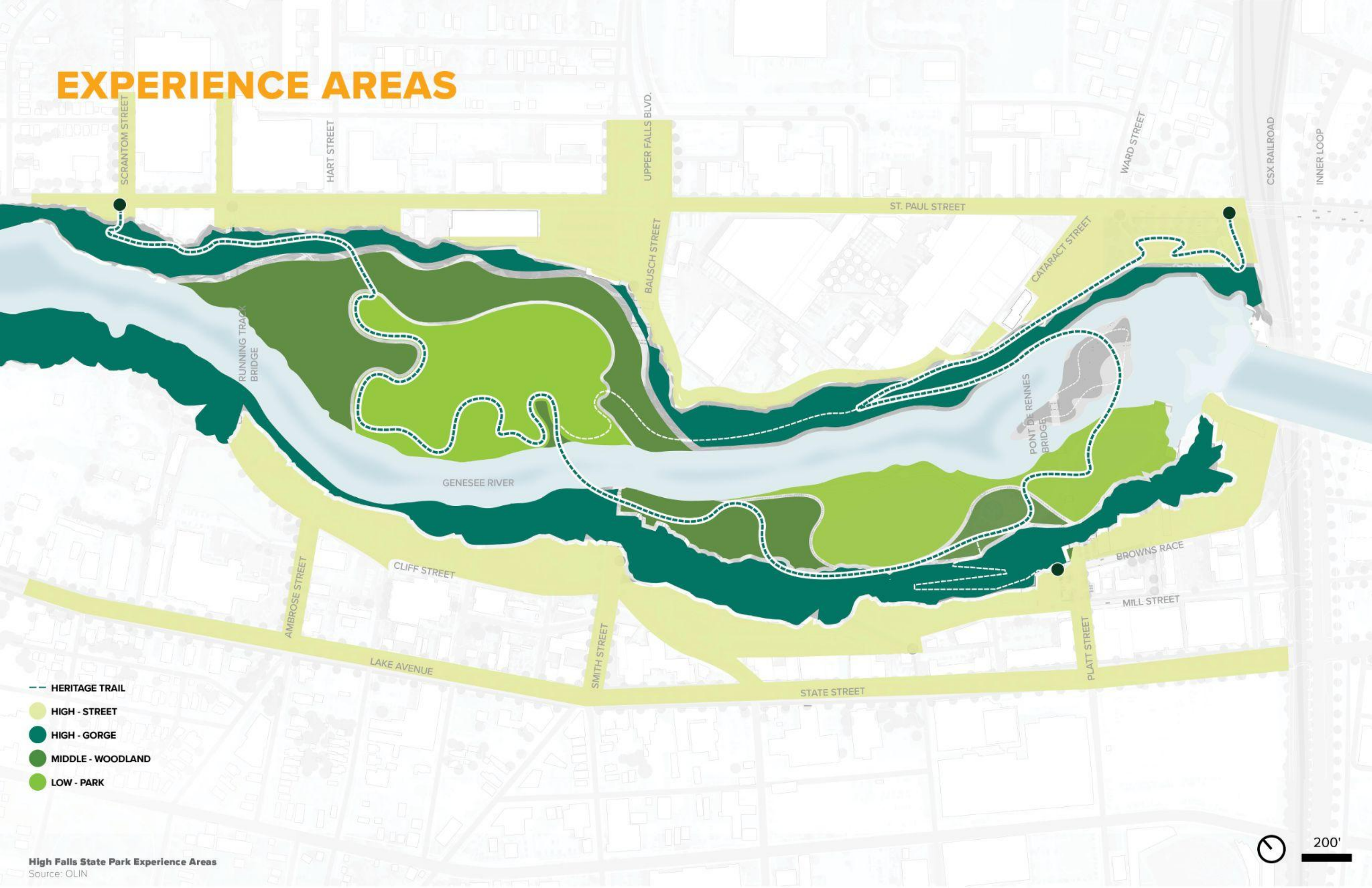


CITY



PARK

EXPERIENCE AREAS



- HERITAGE TRAIL
- HIGH - STREET
- HIGH - GORGE
- MIDDLE - WOODLAND
- LOW - PARK

FRAMEWORK PLAN

EAST

- 1 EVERGREEN PARK
- 2 SCRAMBLE STEPS
- 3 RIVER OVERLOOK
- 4 FOREST LOOKOUT
- 5 WOODLAND GROVE
- 6 MEADOW OPENING
- 7 EAST PLAYGROUND
- 8 EAST LAWN
- 9 OBSERVATION DECK
- 10 RELIC GARDEN
- 11 RIVER LOUNGE
- 12 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

WEST

- 13 SMOKESTACK
- 14 INCINERATOR PLAZA
- 15 WOODLAND GROVE
- 16 WEST LAWN
- 17 BEEBEE STATION WALK
- 18 WEST PLAYGROUND
- 19 SCRAMBLE STEPS
- 20 TAIL RACE
- 21 SOUTH LAWN
- 22 HYDRO OVERLOOK
- 23 ISLAND BRIDGE
- 24 ISLAND OVERLOOK
- 25 TRAIN TRESTLE WALK
- 26 TERRACE OVERLOOK
- 27 TERRACE PARKING

● GATEWAYS

— ROAD

— BOULEVARD

— SHARED PATH

— PARK PATH

— TRAILS

— SCRAMBLES

— CLEARING

— BUILDINGS

— GATHERING SPACE



TAKE A WALK THROUGH HIGH FALLS STATE PARK

- 1 WOODLAND GROVE
- 2 RELIC GARDEN
- 3 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
- 4 INCINERATOR PLAZA
- 5 WEST LAWN
- 6 WEST PLAYGROUND
- 7 BEEBEE STATION WALK
- 8 ISLAND OVERLOOK
- 9 HIGH FALLS TERRACE PARK OVERLOOK



WOODLAND GROVE



RELIC GARDEN



Smokestack

Smith Street Bridge

Genesee River

Meadow

Seating

Cafe Tables and Chairs

PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE



River Deck

Genesee River

Wood Deck

**ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
NORTHERN CARDINAL**

The Northern Cardinal is a member of the family of birds known as the Cardinals. It is a very common bird in the Northeast and is known for its bright red plumage. The cardinal is a very social bird and is often seen in small flocks. It is a very hardy bird and can survive in a wide range of climates. The cardinal is a very beautiful bird and is a favorite of many bird watchers. It is a very common bird in the Northeast and is known for its bright red plumage. The cardinal is a very social bird and is often seen in small flocks. It is a very hardy bird and can survive in a wide range of climates. The cardinal is a very beautiful bird and is a favorite of many bird watchers.

INCINERATOR PLAZA



WEST LAWN



Lawn

Smokestack

Smith Street Bridge

Shared Path

EAST PLAYGROUND



Pont de Rennes

Playground

Gorge Wall

Meadow Grasses

Shared Path

BEEBEE STATION WALK



Pont de Rennes

Gorge Wall

Access to Browns Race

Canopy Trees

Lower Beebee Walk

HIGH FALLS ISLAND OVERLOOK



Old Hydrostation

High Falls

Gorge Wall

Cafe Tables and Chairs

Seating

HIGH FALLS TERRACE OVERLOOK



CSX Railroad

Gorsline Building

Kodak Tower

Pont de Rennes

High Falls

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
NORTHERN CARDINAL

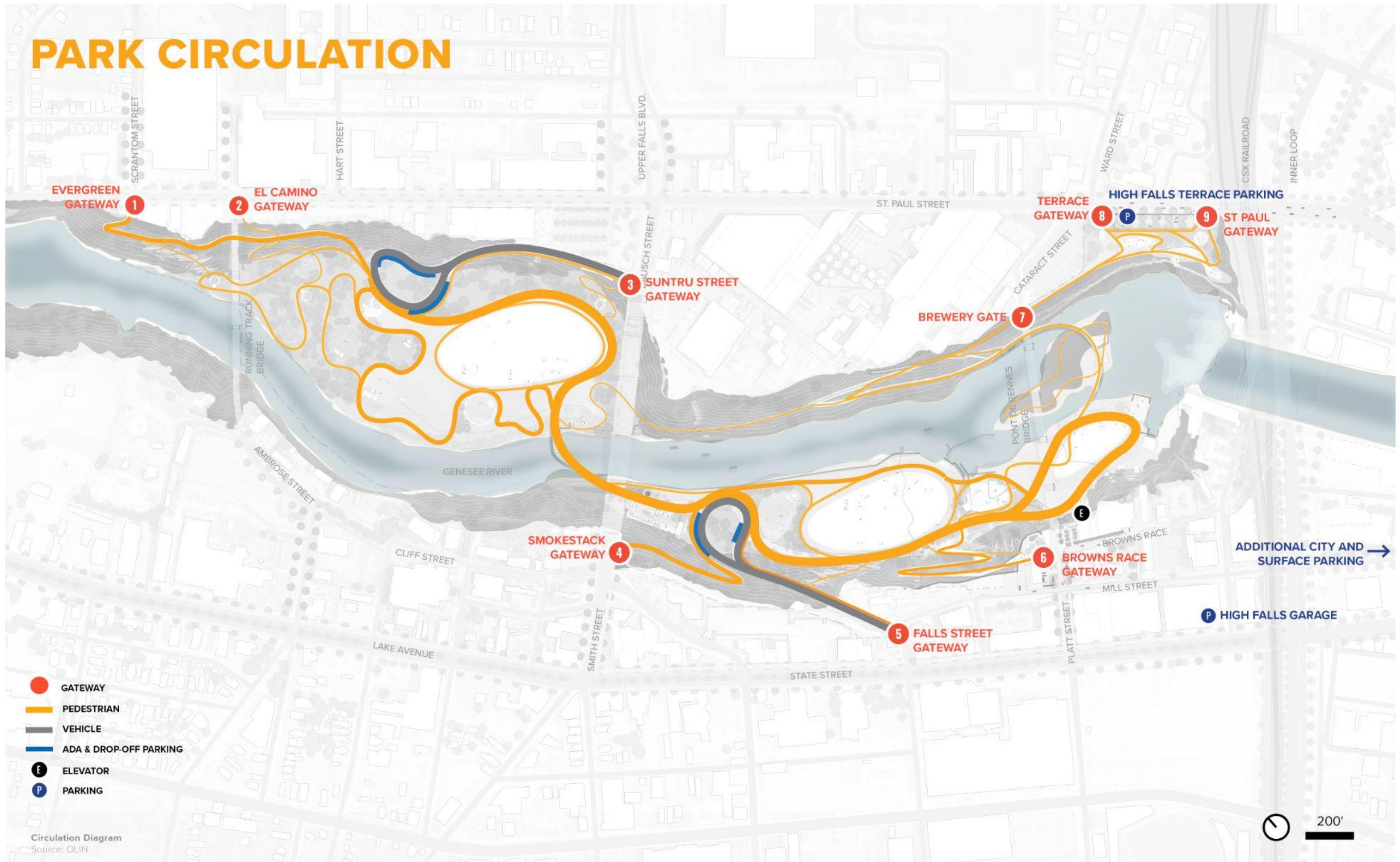
High Falls Terrace Overlook Perspective
Source: OLIN

Framework Plan Park Systems

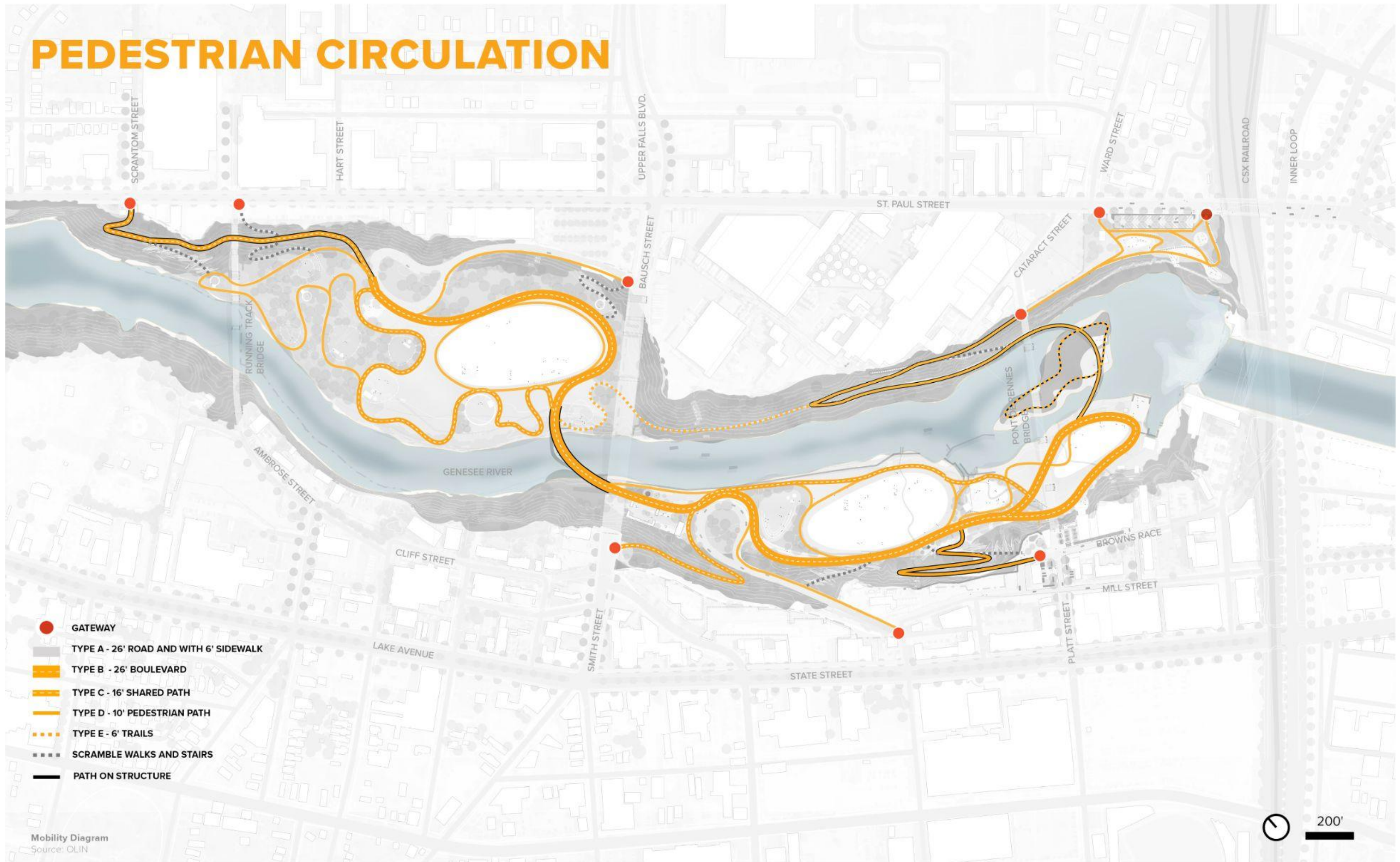
STREET AND TRAIL CONNECTIONS



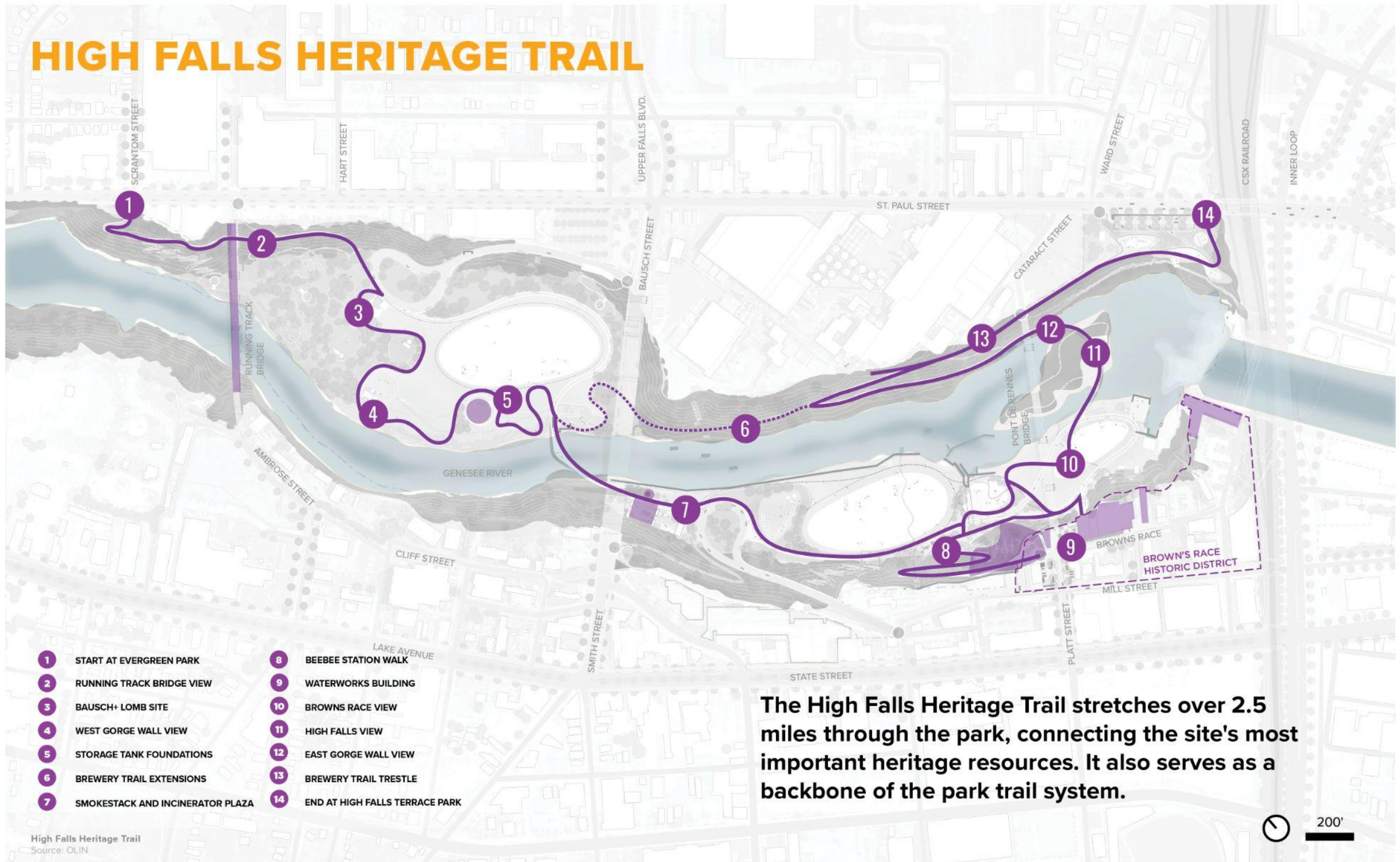
PARK CIRCULATION



PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION



HIGH FALLS HERITAGE TRAIL



- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 1 | START AT EVERGREEN PARK | 8 | BEEBEE STATION WALK |
| 2 | RUNNING TRACK BRIDGE VIEW | 9 | WATERWORKS BUILDING |
| 3 | BAUSCH+ LOMB SITE | 10 | BROWNS RACE VIEW |
| 4 | WEST GORGE WALL VIEW | 11 | HIGH FALLS VIEW |
| 5 | STORAGE TANK FOUNDATIONS | 12 | EAST GORGE WALL VIEW |
| 6 | BREWERY TRAIL EXTENSIONS | 13 | BREWERY TRAIL TRESTLE |
| 7 | SMOKESTACK AND INCINERATOR PLAZA | 14 | END AT HIGH FALLS TERRACE PARK |

The High Falls Heritage Trail stretches over 2.5 miles through the park, connecting the site's most important heritage resources. It also serves as a backbone of the park trail system.



2
Genesee Brewery and Train Trail, 1917
 Source: Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, RMSC



Site Visit Photo
 Source: OLIN 2025



8
Incinerator And Coal Gasification Construction Looking Southeast, 1920s,
 Source: Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, RMSC



Site Visit Photo
 Source: OLIN 2025



4
High Falls, 1875-1880
 Source: T.X. Grasso's "Geology and Industrial History of the Rochester Gorge, Part One", Rochester History, LIV (4), 1992.



Site Visit Photo
 Source: OLIN 2024



10
Historic Photo looking from Bausch + Lomb site to the south, 1947
 Source: Rochester Public Library Picture File, Local History & Genealogy Division, Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County N.Y.



Site Visit Photo
 Source: Google Earth



5
Looking at the backs of several mills and factories, 1880
 Source: Tim O'Connell, Maps and Surveys Dept., City of Rochester



Site Visit Photo
 Source: OLIN 2024



12
Bausch + Lomb Expansion, 1919
 Source: A Photographic History of Bausch + Lomb



Site Visit Photo
 Source: OLIN 2024



7
RG&E Beebee Station Demo, 2016
 Source: The Rochester Subway



Site Visit Photo
 Source: OLIN 2024



13
Running Track Bridge
 Source: Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, RMSC

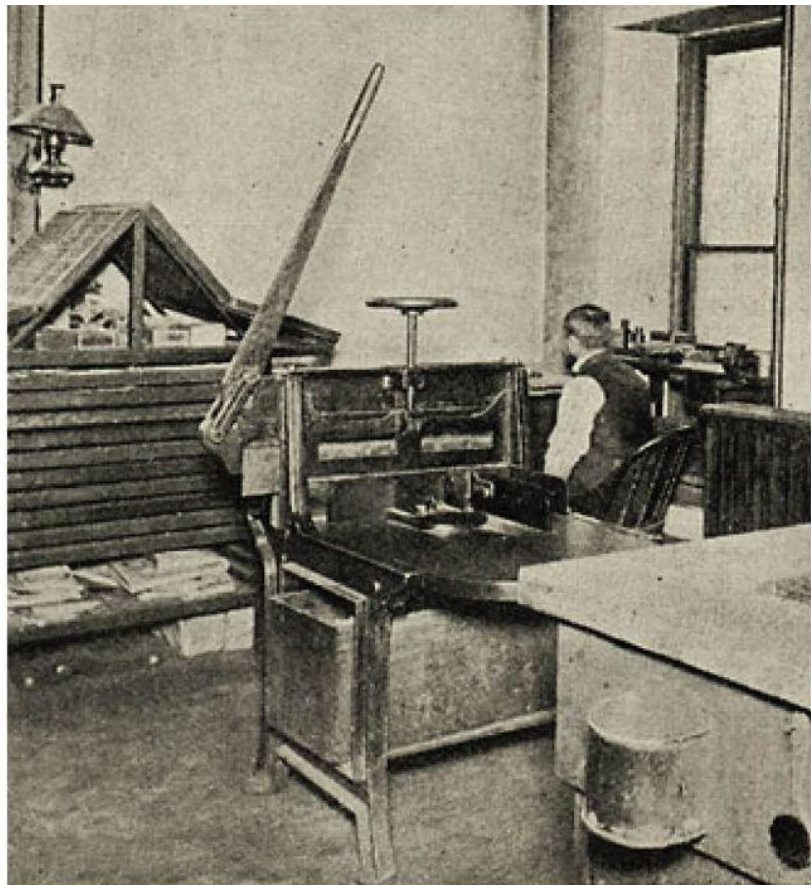


Site Visit Photo
 Source: OLIN 2024

SITE HISTORY AND CULTURE



Charles Johnson "Hew-in-rya-nus" (Tonawanda Seneca) holding the Treaty with the Six Nations. Source: Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, RMSC.



Frederick Douglass' North Star Newspaper Office. Source: Rochester Public Library, Division of Local History.

IT STARTS WITH THE RIVER

The site's rich history and contemporary allure all derive from the Genesee River and the Falls themselves. Programming and interpretation should begin with these elements, and be both specific and appropriate to the site.

SENECA HERITAGE

High Falls is significant to the Seneca People, and offers opportunities for highlighting the historic and ongoing relationship of the Seneca to the Genesee River and native ecologies.

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

High Falls is situated between a large scenic park and a downtown urban riverfront. This location sets the stage for High Falls to be a transitional and transformational part of the city and park system. The site features industrial relics from multiple eras, providing unique opportunities for storytelling and interpretation.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Rochester was an active location along the underground railroad. For many freedom seekers Rochester was their final destination along the underground railroad where many people would then board ships on the Genesee River and cross the border into Canada.

LAYERS OF CULTURE

Rochester's history of industry and innovation is also one of the people who came to seek opportunity. The neighborhoods adjacent to High Falls State Park bear witness to the waves of migration that continue to shape the city's culture.

OLMSTED'S LEGACY

Rochester is one of the few cities in the U.S. with a park system envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted, widely regarded as the father of American landscape architecture. His plans emphasized public health, social connection, and access to nature—principles that continue to shape how cities think about public space. Though not realized in his day, High Falls State Park can build on that legacy, reinforcing the idea that parks can reflect a city's values and contribute to its cultural identity.

HIGH FALLS EVOLUTION



Lithograph of the Upper Falls of the Genesee River at Rochester, NY by Artist John T. Young and Lithographer John Henry Bufford. Source: Bufford and Young, Library of Congress, 1838.



High Falls. Source: High Falls c. 1875-1880. From the back cover of T.X. Grasso's "Geology and Industrial History of the Rochester Gorge, Part One", Rochester History, LV (4), 1992.

1836

In the 1830s, Rochester was the center of industry in the area. Most notably, the falls powered thriving flour mills, leading to the city's nickname as "the Flour City".



Several people are gathered to observe the Upper Falls of the Genesee River. Source: "Onlooker at Upper Falls, Rochester, N.Y.", Rochester Public Library Local History Division, 1860-1870.

1860-1870

The city experienced industrial growth with the establishment of various factories, including two cement factories, while wheat-processing shifted to the west. In the absence of wheat-processing, a burgeoning nursery business emerged, leading to the city being nicknamed "the Flower City."



An 1885 view of Upper Falls looking south from Standard Brewery on Cataract Street. Source: "Rochester N.Y. and the Upper Falls," Rochester Public Library Local History Division, 1885.

1877

After the Civil War, the city experienced significant expansion on both sides of the river. During the post-war industrial boom, several businesses were established near High Falls, including Bausch + Lomb and Eastman Kodak. Clothing manufacturing, shoe manufacturing, brewing, and machine tool production industries began to flourish during this period.

1885

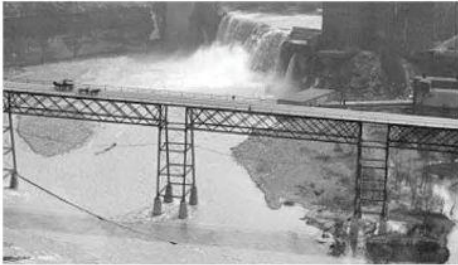
In the 1880s, Rochester was growing rapidly, experiencing widespread social reforms, passenger rail, and building public parks as large local businesses owners like George Eastman donated land and money to the city's growth,



Genesee Falls from Vincent Place. Source: LowerFalls.org, "The High Falls Area", 2024.

1900-1920

In the early 20th century, the canals around Rochester experienced major changes. In 1918, the Erie Canal was rerouted to allow for the Barge Canal construction. The abandoned canal bed was later developed and operated briefly between 1927 and 1956.

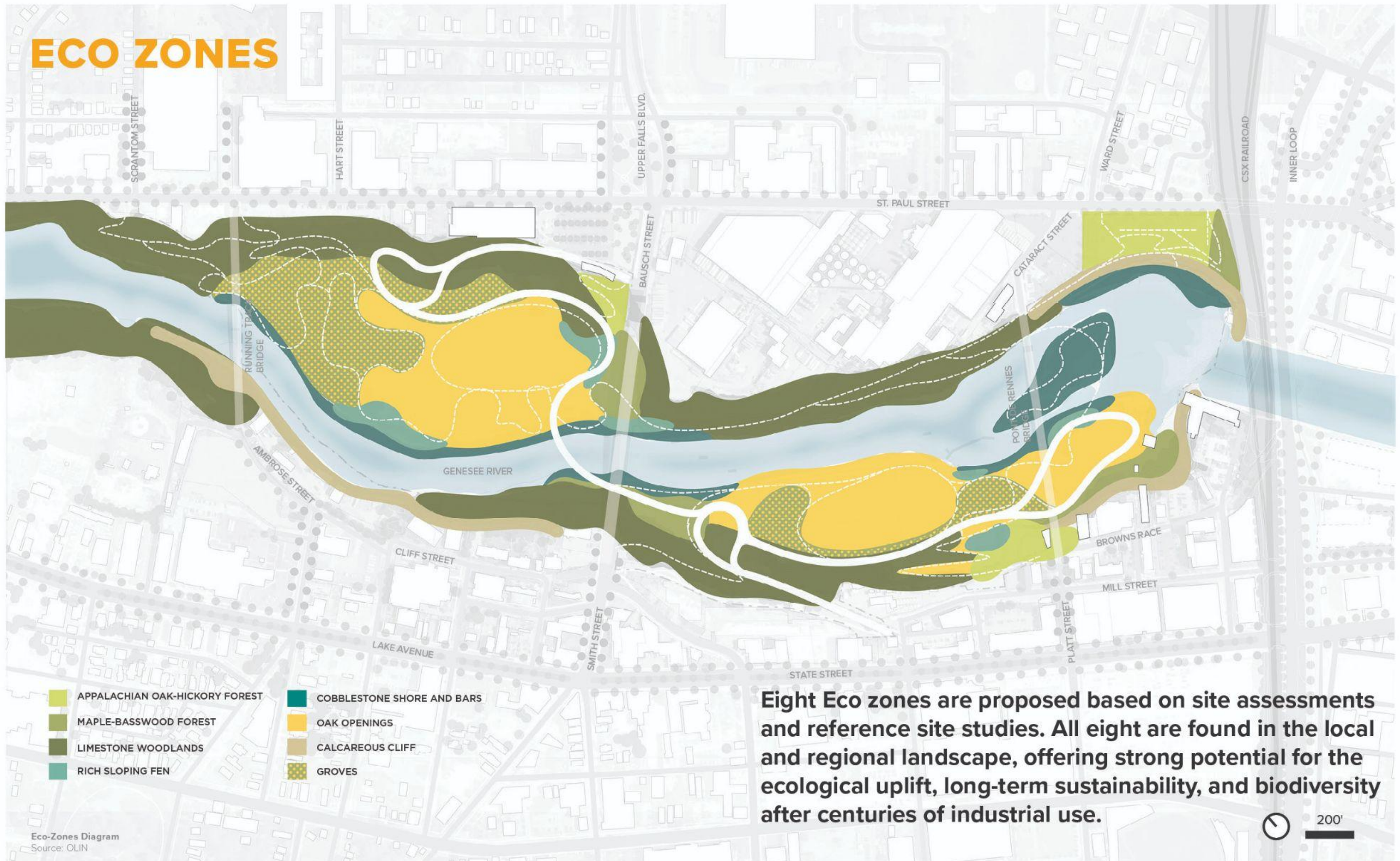


View of the Platt Street Bridge (Pont de Rennes) with the Upper Falls (High Falls) behind it. Source: Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, RMSC.

1947

By the 1950s, Rochester experienced significant population growth due to an influx of immigrants following World War II. This surge in arrivals, combined with industrialization, transformed the city into a prominent center for labor activism. In the 1960s, Rochester, like many other cities across the United States, began transitioning from urban living to suburban development.

ECO ZONES



Eight Eco zones are proposed based on site assessments and reference site studies. All eight are found in the local and regional landscape, offering strong potential for the ecological uplift, long-term sustainability, and biodiversity after centuries of industrial use.

**APPALACHIAN OAK-
HICKORY FOREST**



Mount Defiance
Source: NYNHP, Gregory J. Edinger

MAPLE-BASSWOOD FOREST



Mount Defiance.
Source: Eli Sador (Flickr). 2008

LIMESTONE WOODLANDS



Maplewood Park
Source: OLIN, 2024

RICH SLOPING FEN



Rich Sloping Fen
Source: NYNHP, Adele M. Olivero

**COBBLESTONE
SHORE AND BARS**



Genesee River
Source: OLIN

OAK OPENINGS



Rush Oak Openings Preserve
Source: NYNHP, Gregory J. Edinger

CALCAREOUS CLIFF



Gorge Wall
Source: OLIN

GROVES



Genesee Valley Park
Source: Sofia Charro, 2021

PARK PROGRAM

BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

-  RESTROOMS
-  OFFICES/MAINTENANCE
-  VISITOR CENTER
-  PRESERVED RELICS
-  GATEWAY FEATURE

NATURE-BASED ACTIVITIES

-  BIRD WATCHING STATION
-  WILDLIFE WATCHING
-  HIKING
-  NATURAL AREAS
-  NATURE TRAILS
-  WATERFALLS VIEWING
-  BIKING

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

-  NATURE PLAY
-  PLAYGROUND

SPORTS ACTIVITIES

-  MULTI-USE FIELD **FL**
-  LAWN GAMES **FL**

WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES

-  FISHING **FL**

PARK AMENITIES

-  PICNIC AREAS/PAVILIONS
-  OVERLOOKS
-  PUBLIC GATHERING AREAS **FL**
-  LAWNS
-  SEATING
-  INTERPRETIVE AREAS
-  SIGNAGE/WAYFINDING
-  TRAILHEAD KIOSKS

WINTER ACTIVITIES

-  CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING **FL**
-  SLEDDING **FL**
-  SNOWSHOEING **FL**

FL Flexible Programs: Programs that are permitted, but do not require dedicated facilities.

BUILDINGS



SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

DAWN TO DUSK OPERATION

Ensure that operations staff and parks police will be able to adequately staff and monitor the park.

LIGHTING

The urban, or street level portion of the park above the gorge will be well lit at night to ensure visibility for visitors and police.

PARKS POLICE

High Falls State Park will be patrolled by NYSOPRHP's Police, in coordination with the Rochester Police Department.

AN ACTIVE PARK IS A SAFE PARK

In the same way that "eyes on the street" deter crime in neighborhoods, "eyes on the park" will help deter crime here: it becomes much harder to conceal illicit activity.

EMERGENCY ACCESS AND EGRESS

High Falls State Park will comply with all applicable safety codes. This includes building safety and egress, as well as access to the park for fire, EMS, water rescue, and first responders.

WATER SAFETY

High Falls State Park is located between two significant waterfalls, High Falls and Lower Falls, and hydroelectric plants. For this reason, visitors will not be able to directly access the Genesee River. In addition, a water rescue plan will be developed in conjunction with the City of Rochester, and water rescue access points provided.

High Falls State Park

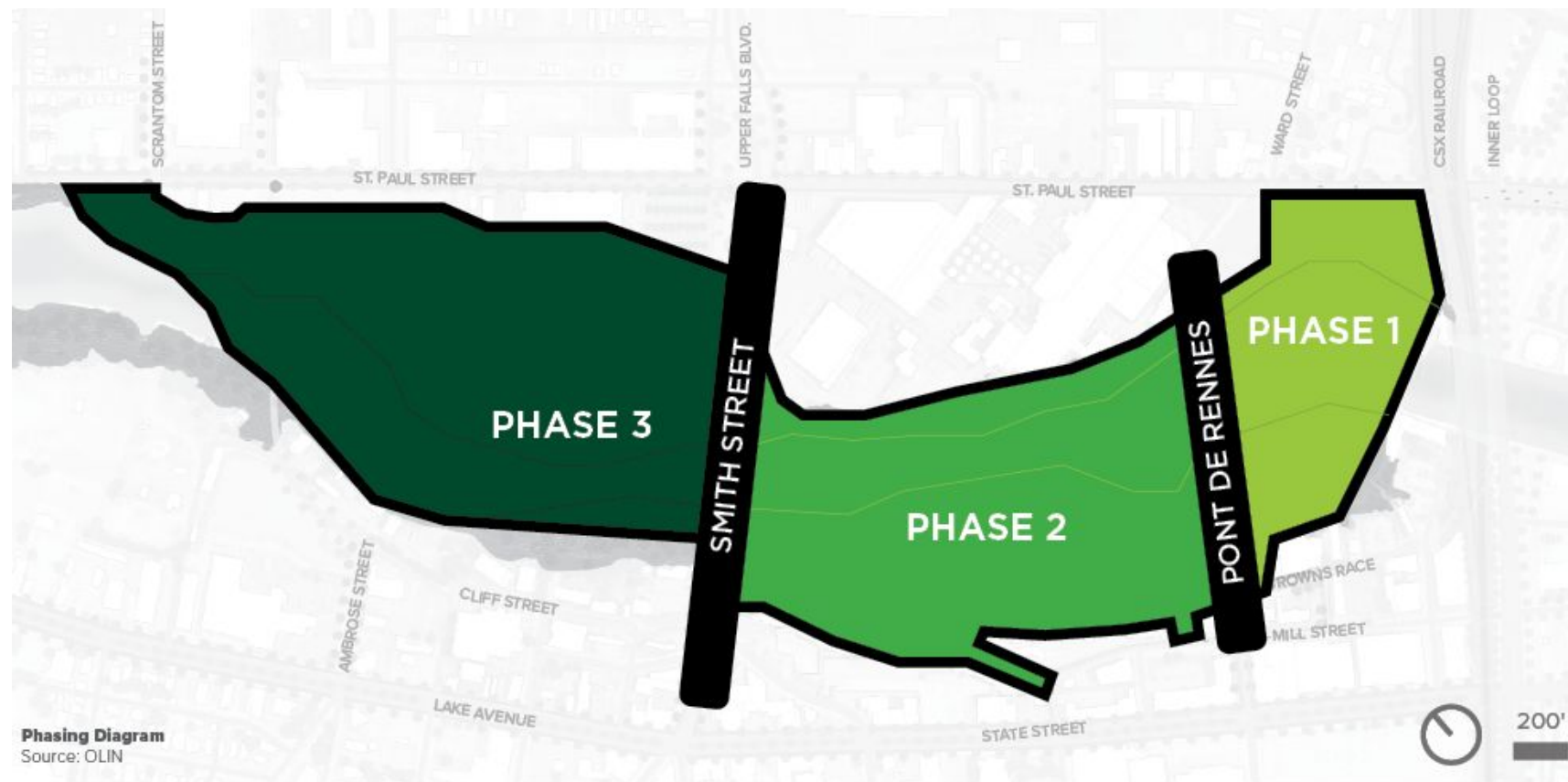
Framework Plan Next Steps

FRAMEWORK PLAN NEXT STEPS



PHASING

Park phasing will be driven by the timelines of remediation and acquisition because the majority of High Falls State Park is former industrial land that is owned by others.



PHASE 1

Phase 1 focuses on the gorge immediately downstream of High Falls and improvements to High Falls Terrace Park.

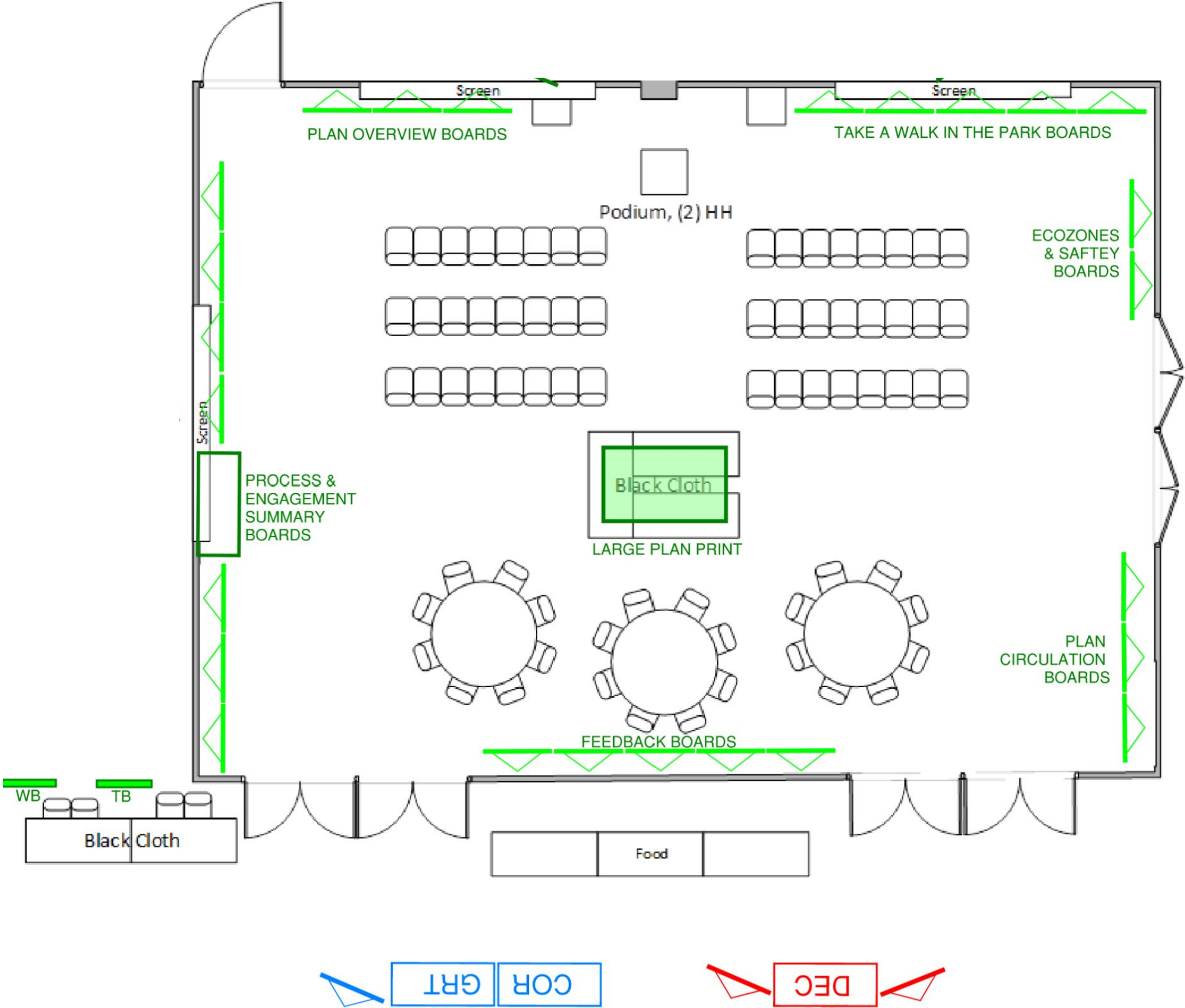
PHASE 2

Phase 2 transforms the former industrial lands on the west side of the gorge and connects the park to the Browns Race district.

PHASE 3

Phase 3 completes High Falls State Park with the east side of the gorge and connections to the Genesee River Trail towards Lower Falls.

PUBLIC LAUNCH ROOM PLAN



STAY UP TO DATE!

www.HighFallsStateParkNY.com



High Falls State Park



THANK YOU!



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation



NEW YORK
STATE OF
OPPORTUNITY.
Empire State
Development

OLIN