

1.0

WHAT IS THE LOWLINE?

THE LOWLINE IS...

...**PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE** ENHANCING THE LIVES OF ALL THE CITIZENS OF CHARLESTON.

...THE **CENTRAL SPINE** OF A REGIONAL PARK AND MOBILITY SYSTEM CONNECTING DOWNTOWN TO WEST ASHLEY, NORTH CHARLESTON, AND MT. PLEASANT.

...**TRANSFORMING** AN ABANDONED RAIL LINE AND NEGLECTED HIGHWAY CORRIDOR INTO A PLACE SUPPORTING AND EXPRESSING THE EIGHT SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS.

...MAXIMIZING THE STORAGE AND TREATMENT OF STORMWATER, ADDRESSING CITY-WIDE **FLOODING**.

...A CONTINUOUS GREEN CORRIDOR ENHANCING **BIODIVERSITY** AND PROVIDING PLACES FOR ACTIVE AND PASSIVE **RECREATION**.

...**UNIQUE TO CHARLESTON**.

CORE PRINCIPLES



SOCIAL RESILIENCE

- AFFIRM THE EQUALITY OF ALL PEOPLE
- PROVIDE EASY ACCESS TO ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION
- ENCOURAGE INCLUSIVE SOCIAL GATHERING AND UNIFICATION



CULTURAL RESILIENCE

- BE AUTHENTICALLY CHARLESTON
- CELEBRATE OUR CITY'S UNIQUE HISTORY
- COMBAT DISPLACEMENT OF LOCAL RESIDENTS BY SUPPORTING LOCAL NEIGHBORHOODS



ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

- EMBRACE WATER AND STORE RUNOFF SUSTAINABLY
- STRENGTHEN ECOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE PENINSULA
- PROMOTE HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOR HUMANS AND NATURE ALIKE



ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

- CREATE VALUE IN THE URBAN CORE
- BE FINANCIALLY SELF-SUSTAINING
- PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

REGIONAL CONTEXT

**NORTH
CHARLESTON**

**WEST
ASHLEY**

**MOUNT
PLEASANT**

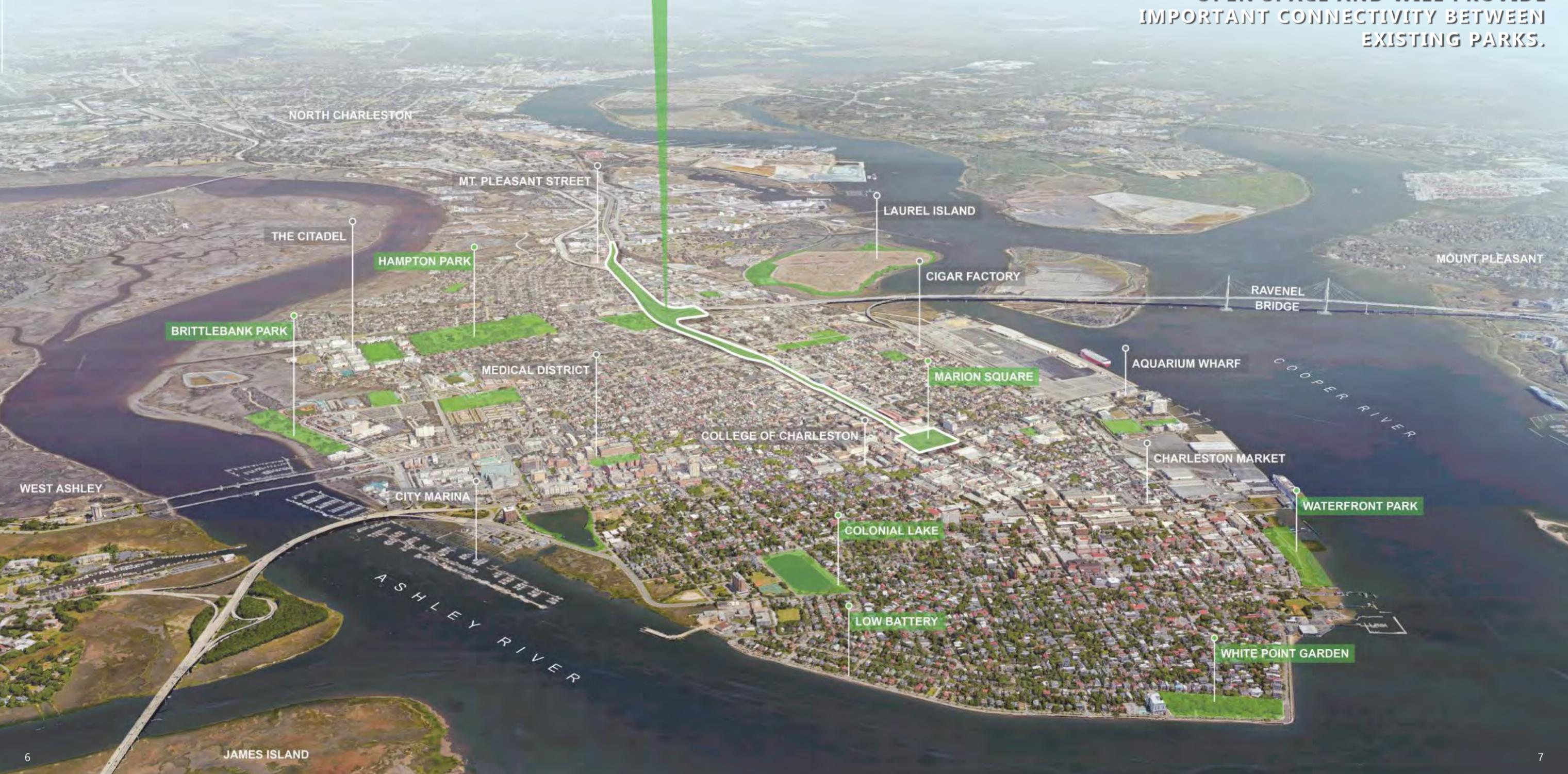
**THE LOWLINE WILL BE THE
CENTRAL SPINE OF A LINEAR
PARK SYSTEM CONNECTING
DOWNTOWN TO WEST
ASHLEY, NORTH CHARLESTON,
AND MOUNT PLEASANT.**

PENINSULA CONTEXT

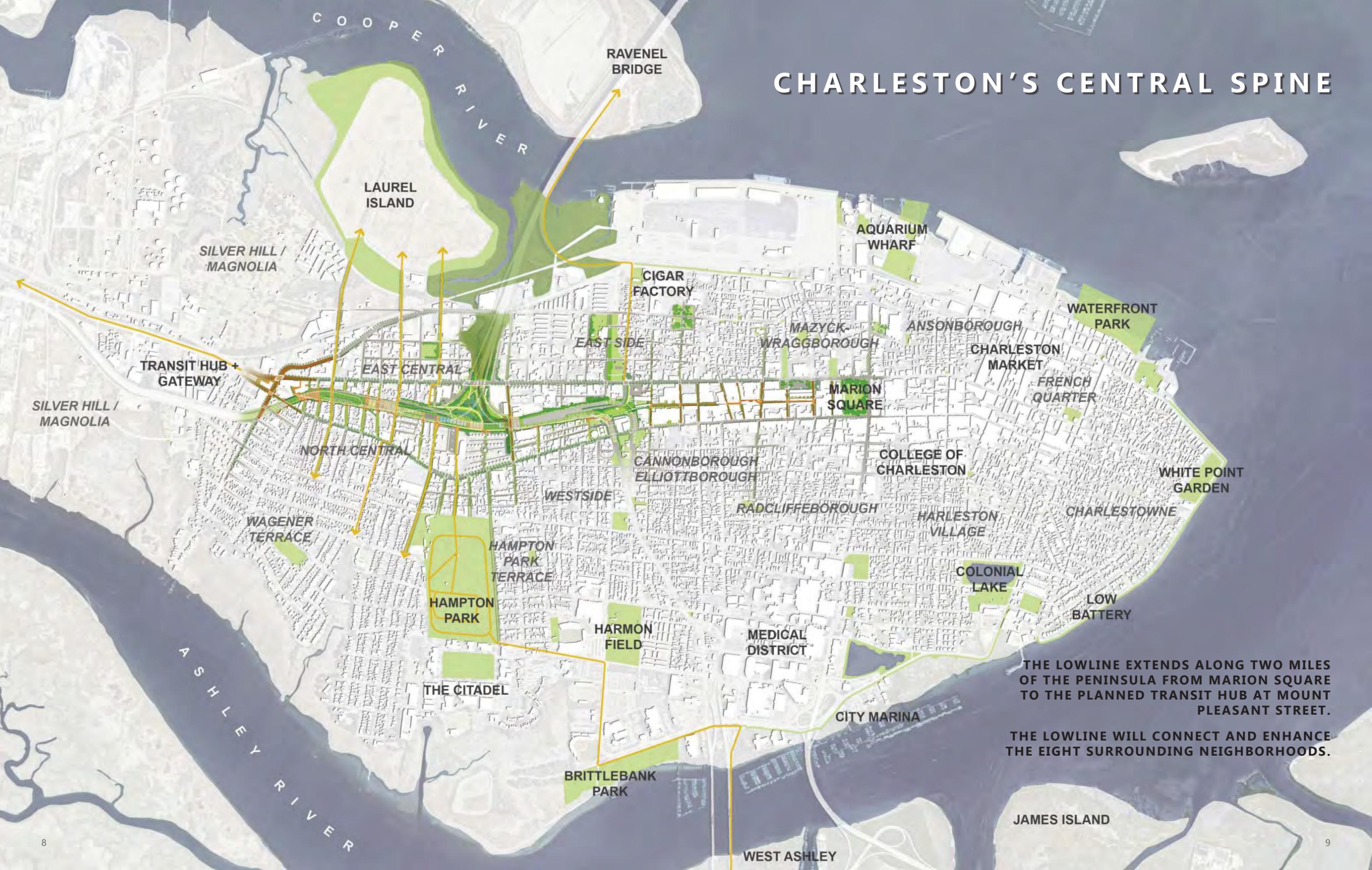
THE LOWLINE IS PART OF THE BROADER PARK SYSTEM ON THE CHARLESTON PENINSULA. IT WILL ADD SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE AND WILL PROVIDE IMPORTANT CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN EXISTING PARKS.

LOWCOUNTRY LOWLINE

CHARLESTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



CHARLESTON'S CENTRAL SPINE



THE LOWLINE EXTENDS ALONG TWO MILES OF THE PENINSULA FROM MARION SQUARE TO THE PLANNED TRANSIT HUB AT MOUNT PLEASANT STREET.

THE LOWLINE WILL CONNECT AND ENHANCE THE EIGHT SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS.

OWNERSHIP

The Lowline was originally intended to be a trail along the 40' wide former rail corridor that was purchased by the City of Charleston and the Friends of the Lowline in 2017. This purchase extended from Mt. Pleasant Street to the North, and to just below Spring Street on the South.

After studying the area further, it was clear that this area could be expanded through a combination of approaches.

In the 1970s, the City of Charleston entered into a lease agreement with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to lease land beneath parts of the overpass to create the "I-26 Linear Park" with paved trails, a playground, and sports courts. The plan shown in this conceptual master plan has expanded that leased area to include all of the area beneath SCDOT elevated highways. This plan more than doubles the acreage

of the original I-26 Linear Park and enables the Lowline to be a truly engaging park with multiple uses, not simply a linear greenway park.

Before the Friends of the Lowcountry Lowline (The Friends) secured the right to purchase the rail corridor from Norfolk Southern, some sections of the former line south of Spring Street were sold off to private owners. Working together with these owners through a combination of easement agreements, the Lowline can extend further south all the way to Marion Square, as a series of alleys that snake between buildings.

The pedestrian alleys that run parallel to King Street from Ann Street to Hudson Street are examples of where this type of development has already occurred. Hudson Alley is an especially great example of how businesses can engage with this newly created pedestrian street frontage.

THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH PRIVATE OWNERS AND SCDOT, THE LOWLINE IS ABLE TO REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL.

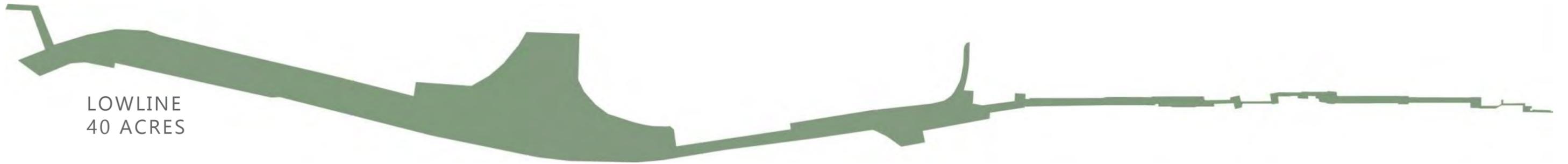
KEY

- SCDOT OWNED LAND
- CITY OWNED OR CONTROLLED LAND
- CITY OWNED LAND IMPORTANT FOR ACCESS
- PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

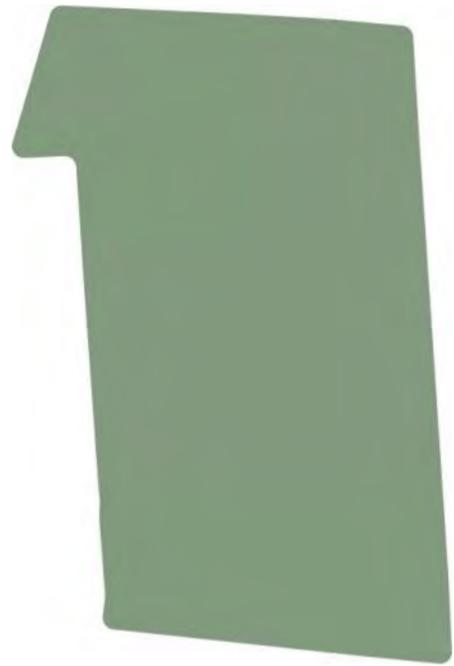


SCALE COMPARISONS: EXISTING PENINSULA PARKS

THE LOWLINE WILL BE THE SECOND LARGEST
PARK ON THE PENINSULA.



LOWLINE
40 ACRES



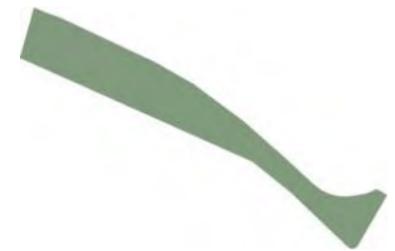
HAMPTON PARK
60 ACRES



BRITTLEBANK PARK
17 ACRES



MARION SQUARE
6 ACRES



WATERFRONT PARK
4 ACRES

THE HALSEY MAP, 1949¹

Known as The Halsey Map, the map at right was created in 1949 by Alfred O. Halsey. It shows the growth of the City of Charleston since its founding and includes mapped features of historical events through the years.

Over the years, many creeks have been filled to create new land for the growing City of Charleston. It is in these places where Charleston continues to face some of the most persistent flooding.

Since the Lowline traverses many of the drainage areas of these old creeks, it provides an opportunity to help with flooding in these areas - if the Lowline is able to infiltrate and store stormwater on site, it will be less total volume of water that drains towards these old creek beds at peak times and during storm events. This will help these areas to have less flooding over time.

The Halsey Map identifies two fortifications that the Lowline crosses - one from the Revolutionary War, just north of Marion Square, and one from the War of 1812 on modern day Line Street.



SITE HISTORY

THE RAILROAD

.....● **1827**

The South Carolina Canal and Rail Road Company is chartered by the state legislature. The company aims to connect inland markets to the port of Charleston by rail.

.....● **1830**

The "Best Friend of Charleston" takes it's inaugural journey down the rail line on Christmas Day. It becomes the first locomotive in the nation to have regularly scheduled passenger rail service.

.....● **1894**

The South Carolina Canal and Rail Road Company becomes the Southern Railway.

.....● **1982**

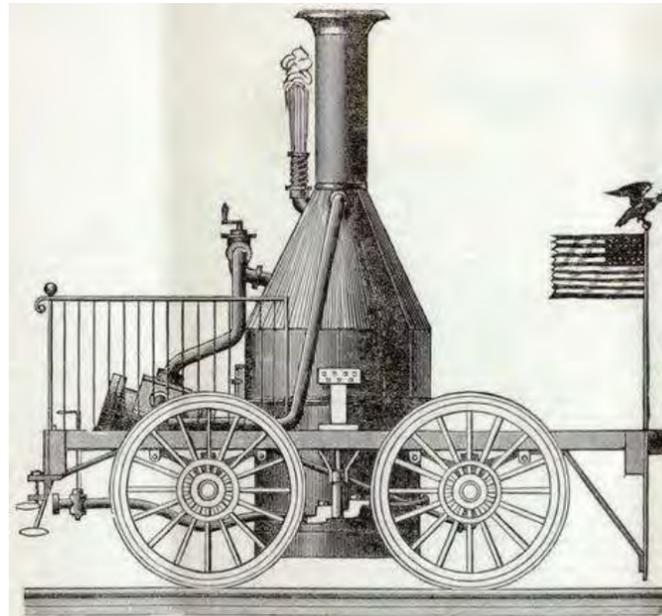
Southern Railway becomes Norfolk Southern Corporation.

.....● **2004**

The rail line is used for the last time to transport newsprint for the Post and Courier newspaper.

.....● **2017**

After years of negotiations, the City of Charleston and the Friends of the Lowcountry Lowline purchase the rail right-of-way from Norfolk Southern.



From Top: The Best Friend of Charleston, the first train to run on the tracks of the Lowline²; The Grove Street Station³; A bond for the South Carolina Railway Company⁴

SITE HISTORY

THE INTERSTATE

.....● **1957-1969**

Interstate 26 begins construction in Columbia, and progresses towards Charleston. The segment through downtown Charleston is one of the last to be completed, with many homes and businesses demolished to make room for the new highway.



Image of I-26 being constructed⁵



The images of houses were taken by SCDOT to document the structures and properties that would be affected by the construction of I-26. From Top Right: 693 King Street⁶; 82 Fishburne Street⁷; 35 Mount Pleasant Street⁸

SITE HISTORY

THE I-26 LINEAR PARK

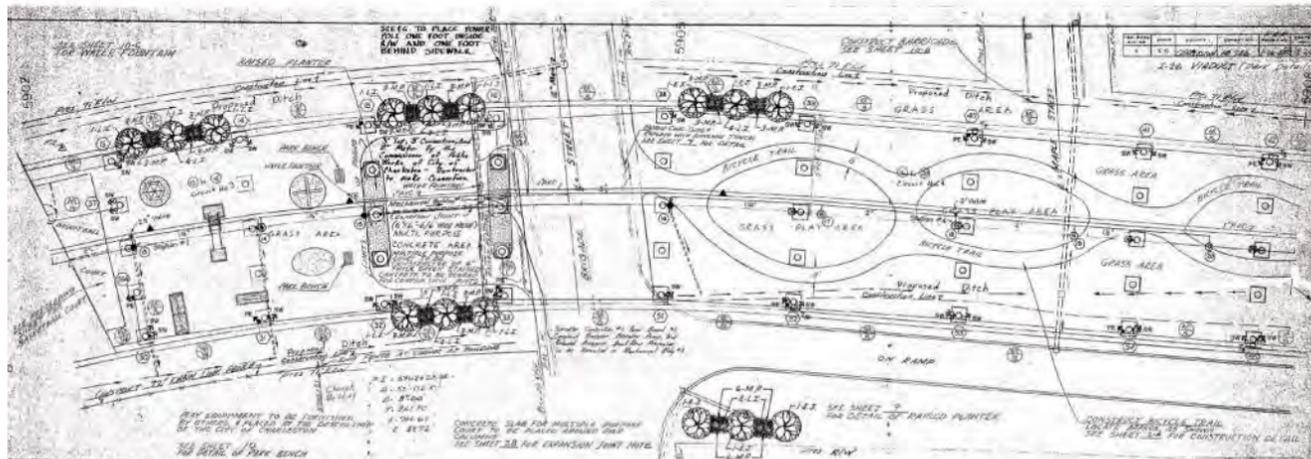
1976

The City of Charleston and newly elected Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. create the I-26 Linear Park beneath the interstate. Though underutilized this park provided sports courts, sidewalks, and a playground for neighborhood residents. The lease agreement between the City of Charleston and SCDOT is an important precedent for the lease that the Lowline is seeking for recreational use of the land beneath the overpasses of I-26.

'Unique' Park Will Be Built Under I-26 Ramp

14 C-1-15-76 p. 10B

A "unique" park is in the works for the City of Charleston. The almost one-mile long, 15.5-acre park will be constructed beneath the I-26 ramps between Mt. Pleasant and Huger streets. Work on the project has been under way for several years, but Charleston City Council Tuesday night made the final decision necessary to begin. The actual construction of the park will be funded by the federal government and the state highway department. The city was required, however, to provide up to \$25,000 when needed for such items as playground equipment. John Green, associate director of the county Parks, Recreation and Tourist Commission, which is coordinating the project, said bike trails, multi-purpose courts, tennis courts and passive recreational areas are included in the plans for the park.



INCOMPLETE, BUT FUN — Pre-schoolers from the St. Matthew's Church Head Start Center are delighted with the nearly complete park under I-26. The mile-long park between Mount Pleasant and Huger streets was designed by the Charleston County Park, Recreation and Tourist Commission, financed by state and federal funds and will be operated by the Charleston Department of Leisure Services. The park includes playgrounds, tennis and basketball courts, picnic grounds and landscaped areas. Lighting will make the area usable at night and in inclement weather. (Staff Photo by Johnson).

This page, from top: A clipping from the Charleston Evening Post, May 17, 1977¹¹; a clipping from the Charleston Evening Post, May 9, 1980¹².

Opposite page, from top: A clipping from the News and Courier, January 1, 1976⁹; original plans for the park by the City of Charleston; a clipping from the Charleston Evening Post, April 4, 1977¹⁰.

INTERSTATE PARK — Chris Barton, a Charleston city architect, watches as children play in a new city park created under Interstate Highway 26 between Huger and Mount Pleasant streets. The 15-acre park is believed to be the first in the nation to use areas under elevated interstates. Dedication ceremonies for the park scheduled for Monday were postponed and have not been rescheduled. (Staff Photo by Jordan)

City maintenance crews clean up broken glass and trash.

Riley Rebutts Charges Against I-26 Park

A 17-acre park under Interstate 26 has stirred community criticism and raised city officials' defenses. Critics have labeled the park a haven for drug pushers and other undesirables. Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. contends that the park has helped to lessen crime in the area rather than encourage it. Riley called a press conference Thursday afternoon to rebut charges made earlier in the week by local attorney Bernard R. Fielding. Fielding is acting as attorney to a retired schoolteacher who fears repercussions from construction of a similar park near her Radcliffeborough home. Speaking Tuesday before the city Real Estate Committee, Fielding said the I-26 park had deteriorated significantly since opening three years ago and that it has become a "haven for drug pushers and other undesirables." He said his client, Eletha M. Macbeth, feared that a proposed park near her property would be subject to the same deterioration and that her own safety would be threatened. Riley said Fielding was "very unfair" and called

See PARK, Page 2-B, Col. 1

NEIGHBORHOODS

The Friends and the City of Charleston recognize this is an important and transformative project that will affect all neighborhoods along the Lowline. However, as demonstrated in other cities, the introduction of significant public improvements like the Lowline can exacerbate challenges such as gentrification. While these neighborhoods are already experiencing gentrification, the City and several non-profit organizations are focused on providing affordable housing for all citizens and combating gentrification.

Addressing affordability in the communities surrounding the Lowline is critical to the success of the project. The City is constructing affordable housing on two sites near the Lowline, which will add to the significant number of affordable housing units in the area. The Lowline will reduce transportation costs by providing access to new cycling and pedestrian routes, which is one of many strategies for improving housing affordability. Currently, the vast majority of affordable housing on the peninsula is within a half mile of the Lowline.

The Lowline is committed to promoting affordable housing and resources as the project moves forward. The Friends are working collaboratively with the City and related community organizations to find better ways to inform residents of existing resources and to develop new strategies to address housing affordability and gentrification in the communities surrounding the Lowline.

To find out more about the City's affordable housing initiatives, visit <https://www.charleston-sc.gov/233/Housing-Community-Development>.



COMMUNITY VOICES

The Friends are committed to making the Lowline a park that is created by the community and for the community. In March 2020, the COVID pandemic derailed the traditional public engagement process. In the face of this, the Lowline debuted a new interactive website with all of the information that would have gone into public meetings. They released videos, created an online survey, activated their Instagram account,

reached out to community leaders, and went door-to-door in surrounding neighborhoods to distribute information.

The Friends continue to coordinate community clean up days for the future Lowline in partnership with local non-profit organizations. They are planning COVID-appropriate events that will activate the Lowline in the near term.



Megan Mills, a former founding board member, and current Executive Assistant to the Board. Above, she is shown facilitating a meeting with the skating community to talk about their skate park (left), and hosting an information session during a community cleanup event (right).

STAY CONNECTED!

-  <https://lowcountrylowline.org/>
-  @lowcountrylowline
-  @lowcountrylowline
-  @thelowline

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK REFLECTED IN THE CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN FOR THE LOWLINE INCLUDE:

WATER



"Water garden/flooding relief"

"Interactive water feature"

"Flooding remediation feature"

"I really hope the Lowline will equally serve walkers, runners, and cyclists, in part by keeping them apart from one another."

"I love the idea of splitting bikers and walkers, including splitting the bikers by direction. I agree that's a challenge on the bridge currently and see this design as very intelligent."

"Looking forward to having a safe walk/bike path for the peninsula."

TRANSIT



GREEN SPACE



"The green spaces that are shown in the renderings look really pretty. Please make sure they can stay green"

"I hope the focus of the Lowline will be nature and plant life, rather than business and making money. People need fresh air, and to spend time in nature."

"Some way to learn from the green space would be excellent as well as weaving in pollinator friendly plants."

"Please integrate the current skate park. It is beneficial to the youth community"

"Dog park! And generous amounts of trash cans."

"I prefer the passive activities to the active. But a playground would be great."

PROGRAMMING

