



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **City's largest federal grant in recent history will help reconnect communities**

The City of Knoxville and Knoxville's Community Development Corporation (KCDC) have been awarded a \$42.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to implement a civic infrastructure plan intended to begin the restoration of cultural and economic opportunity to communities impacted by urban renewal initiatives. The seven-phase project will create nearly 10 miles of connectivity improvements to link East Knoxville residents to economic, cultural and recreational amenities.

"This is the largest federal grant award in Knoxville's recent history, and it will make a significant impact by prioritizing disadvantaged communities, allowing residents to move safely to jobs, schools, healthcare and parks," Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon said. "This is an example of the transformative effect of President Joe Biden's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the tremendous impact it has on local communities. The City of Knoxville and KCDC are committed to historical investment in an area that historically has been deprived of sufficient economic opportunities to thrive."

The DOT's Neighborhood Access and Equity Program funds plans that reconnect formerly displaced communities, improve access to daily needs and foster equitable development and restoration.

The grant will significantly expand the greenway system to link East Knoxville, Morningside Park and the Old City to the Urban Wilderness, Baker Creek Preserve and neighborhoods of South Knoxville that were separated by past infrastructure projects, including the James White Parkway, that affected predominantly Black neighborhoods in downtown and East Knoxville.

"The greenway expansions funded by this grant will offer residents of East and South Knoxville sustainable connectivity to improve overall quality of life," KCDC Executive Director and CEO Ben Bentley said. "The civic infrastructure also will reestablish critical links that improve access to education, economic mobility and recreation. The improvements made possible by this grant will enable the creation of multi-modal transportation pathways that reconnect underserved communities and form the foundation for increased walkability and non-vehicular development patterns for the next hundred years of Knoxville."

The massive undertaking includes several phases and segments. A greenway will begin at the Old City and end at the Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum, traveling through neighborhoods and Harriet Tubman Park.

A Cultural Corridor will connect Summit Hill Drive, Dandridge Avenue, Hill Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to support elementary and middle school crossings, as well as churches, the Knoxville Family Justice Center and affordable housing sites.

"The connectivity will provide equitable access for East Knoxville residents to new economic centers and the downtown area," said Knoxville City Councilwoman Gwen McKenzie, who represents the Sixth District where much of the initiative will take place. "Also, we are working alongside the Beck Cultural Exchange Center to create a pathway that includes markers, maps and monuments to illustrate some of Knoxville's African American history which was impacted by Urban Renewal."

The Cultural Corridor plan outlines 10 historical sites along the greenway, including the only remaining ancestral home of renowned artists Beauford and Joseph Delaney. The plan also features curated exhibitions, which showcase digital storytelling that connects history and culture to the places that once housed a thriving Black community, complete with businesses, churches and schools.

The plan also provides a link to South Knoxville, including the Urban Wilderness and Baker Creek Preserve.

"The South Knoxville Bridge has been a critical connection between South Knoxville and downtown and East Knoxville for decades, and the Bridge Connector provides a new opportunity for safe connection for people on foot or bike," said Knoxville Vice-Mayor Tommy Smith, who represents the First District. "It will connect two communities and provide highly sought amenities to more residents."

The grant funds nearly half the cost of the project, the rest of which is covered by previously expended or allocated funds. Construction will be completed in multiple phases, with phasing determined by project readiness. Work is expected to begin in 2025.

### **About Knoxville's Community Development Corporation**

Since 1936, KCDC has been dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Knoxville. KCDC's mission is to improve and transform neighborhoods and communities by providing high-quality affordable housing, advancing development initiatives and fostering self-sufficiency. For more information, call 865-403-1100 or visit [kcdc.org](https://www.kcdc.org).

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Reconnecting Communities grant proposal materials: <https://www.kcdc.org/reconnectingcommunities/>

Project map:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/szjntqlbmnojlqk6pwj/h?rlkey=b0c51bb9sf61agc507v63ydnf&dl=0>