



RECONNECTING COVINGTON: CENTRAL RIVERFRONT HUB

**FY 2024 RAISE GRANT
APPLICATION**

CITY OF COVINGTON, KENTUCKY

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Covington Central Riverfront (CCR) Hub project transforms this prime location into a mixed-use, multi-modal center of regional activity. The 23-acre site, once occupied by a massive federally-owned IRS processing facility, now lays fallow.

The City of Covington is requesting \$25 million in FY24 RAISE grants to fund transportation aspects of Phase II of this project.

This public infrastructure project for Phases I-III, will restore the street grid (streets, alleys, and sidewalks) that were erased in the 1960's. It will create seamless connections with the surrounding neighborhoods of MainStrasse Village, Mutter Gottes, and the Central Business District. It will add much needed greenspace to the area and connect to the public transit center. Utility improvements will allow the replacement of antiquated utility systems, both public and private, including a 13,508 linear feet of combined sewer system servicing the site.

Please refer to “Figure 1” on the following page as a visual diagram of the following Phase descriptions:

- Phase I (Current/In-Progress) includes the earthwork, roadways, utilities, and complete construction of the Park Commons area between 3rd & 4th Streets, as well as the complete construction of sidewalks and streetscape along 4th Street. Partial construction of the streetscape within the development, including silva cells to promote tree vitality, electrical conduit for pedestrian lighting, bollards, and a concrete base for pavers will be installed as part of Phase I. Development of construction documents for Phase I are complete; a contract will be awarded in March 2024 with construction starting in April 2024 and being completed in 2025.
- Phase II (RAISE Request) is focused on the pedestrian-oriented area of the project by providing enhanced public spaces and streetscapes within the development. Completion of the streetscape between 3rd & 4th Streets will be a part of Phase II, including installation of wide sidewalks, brick pavers, irrigated planter beds, and landscaping. Phase II also includes the construction of a public parking garage with a podium (“deck”) structure that will support a curbside festival street and public park space that extends over Rivercenter Blvd via a land bridge to connect the site and the surrounding neighborhoods to the top of a levee along the Ohio River. Pathways down from the levee connecting to new sidewalks along Rivercenter Blvd., are also included. Construction documents for Phase II are complete and construction can begin as soon as Quarter 1 of 2025.
- Phase III (Future) of the CCR project includes extending the pathways constructed as part of Phase II down the river side of the levee to directly connect to the Riverfront Commons Trail, a shared-use trail spanning multiple cities. Schematic design documents were completed in the Fall of 2022. The City plans to pursue RAISE design grant funding to complete the design of Phase III. Construction would begin following permit approval from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), which would require a NEPA analysis and a Hydrologic and Hydraulic study.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CLICK FOR PROJECT FLY-THROUGH VIDEO

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THE CHALLENGE — RECONNECTING A LOST STREET GRID AND LOCAL COVINGTON NEIGHBORHOODS

Almost a year before the IRS center closed in 2016, the City reached out to Atlanta-based architecture and design firm, Cooper Carry, to create a conceptual design for the site. The Covington Central Riverfront Strategic Master Plan, [Reconnecting Covington](#), was created in 2019 after a full year of civic engagement, market studies, and engineering/design. Overwhelmingly, the public wanted to reconnect the site to the rest of the City.

As seen in “Figures 2 and 3” on the following page, construction of the IRS facility closed approximately 0.5 miles of public roads that made up approximately 8 city blocks in the dense urban core, impacting vehicular and pedestrian connection from east to west, as well as north to the Riverfront. The CCR development aims to address this transportation challenge by reconnecting a significant part of the City to create a place where people want to live, work, and spend time, that is walkable, safe, and reestablishes a connection to the riverfront through enhanced public spaces. Phase I (Current/In-Progress) mainly focuses on roadway and utility connection, while Phases II (RAISE request) and III (Future) focus on the pedestrian/bicyclist connections through public realm improvements.

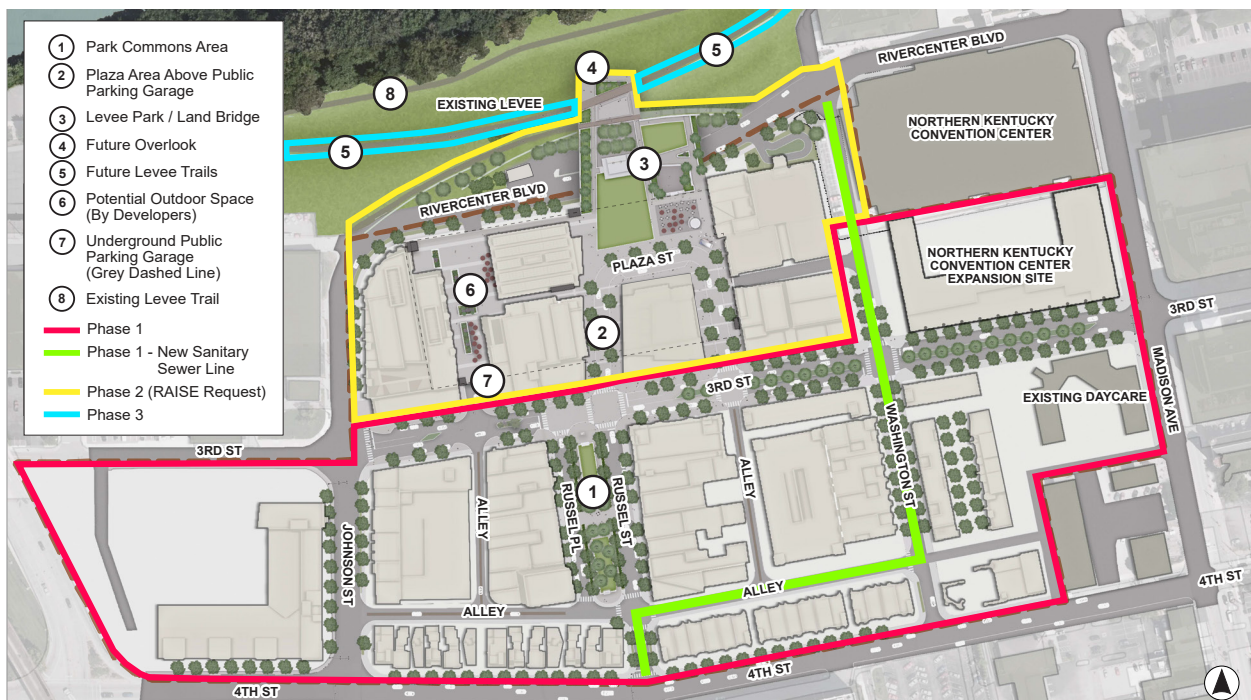


FIGURE 1 PLAN VIEW & PHASING DIAGRAM OF PROPOSED CENTRAL RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

KEY PROJECT FEATURES

Overall, the CCR development will feature:

- 6,228 linear feet of sidewalks
- 1,552 linear feet of off-road trails
- 260 trees
- 2 acres of public green space

TABLE 1: CITY INVESTMENTS 2019 TO TODAY

	Phase I	Phase II
Land Purchase Costs	\$15,152,174	\$5,347,826
Phase I & II Environmental	\$121,720	\$42,960
Legal Fees	\$100,009	\$67,300
Geo-technical Engineering	\$19,600	\$41,250
Master Planning Consulting	\$289,434	\$170,256
Project Management Consulting	\$516,566	\$303,863
Demolition and Abatement	\$956,283	\$337,512
Design and Engineering Consulting*	\$282,719	\$166,306
Cost-Benefit Analysis	\$0	\$38,450
Ongoing Maintenance	\$49,583	\$29,167
Structural Fill Soil Import	\$260,000	\$0
Total Investment	\$17,748,090	\$6,544,888

*80% covered by EDA Grant - total is \$2,245,132

SITE HISTORY

In 1962, the city assembled and cleared 161 individual light industrial and residential parcels for the construction of a new IRS tax return processing site at a cost of \$4.3 million, completed in 1965.

Consolidation of land into one uninterrupted parcel required the closure of multiple public streets and alleys, disrupting the street grid and normal flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the area. To be competitive and gain the \$6 million annual payroll from the federal jobs, the city sold the land to the federal government for \$1 dollar.

The IRS constructed a 10-acre, single story building, eventually surrounded by 13 acres of ground level parking lots and employing nearly 4,500 people. The facility was designed to process 12 million paper tax returns annually, including a cafeteria, infirmary, and a daycare facility. The volume of paper tax returns had steadily dwindled in recent years, and the IRS closed and abandoned the facility in 2019.

The General Services Administration deemed the property obsolete, and the City of Covington purchased the site for the full market value of \$20.5 million in 2020.



FIGURE 2 AERIAL PHOTO OF CCR SITE (1949)



FIGURE 3 AERIAL PHOTO OF CCR SITE (2017)

RECONNECTING COVINGTON: CENTRAL RIVERFRONT HUB

PROJECT CONTEXT

The Central Riverfront Hub project site is west of Covington's existing urban core, on the south bank of the Ohio River, across the river from the City of Cincinnati. Refer to "Figure 4" on the following page and further description below:

- Project is just across the Cincinnati riverfront with multiple attractions, including NFL and MLB stadiums, an indoor arena, and outdoor concert venue.
- Two antiquated two-lane bridges, Clay Wade Bailey (constructed 1974) and John R. Roebling Suspension Bridge (constructed 1874), flank the site to the east and west. The Clay Wade Bailey bridge has a pedestrian route on one side, while the John R. Roebling bridge has pedestrian routes on both sides, usable by cautious bicyclists.
- Adjacent buildings in Covington's urban core include the Northern Kentucky Convention Center, the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK) Transit Center, the Kenton County Justice Building, and several hotels.
- To the south, there are two one-way streets, part of State Route 8: 4th and 5th streets, that carry much of the east-west traffic flow on the Kentucky shore. Traffic attempting to enter or exit the bridges backs up onto city streets.
- Beyond 4th Street, older residential neighborhoods stretch four miles to the south. These neighborhoods have lost much of their population over the past few decades.
- To the west, there is a major north-south interstate freeway, I-75/71, carried over the Ohio River by the chronically congested four-lane Brent Spence Bridge, funded for replacement in the next few years. There are additional hotels, retail, commercial and light industrial sites adjacent to the site.

DETAILED GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

Covington Central Riverfront (CCR) is located at 39°05'14.5"N 84°30'50.8"W in the Covington Urban Core and can be located by GPS using the address 246 W Rivercenter Blvd, Covington, KY 41011. The site sits 500 feet above sea level, is topographically flat, and is located 50 feet up a developed bank from the Ohio River. Though near the large body of water, CCR is not in the 100-year floodplain as it is protected by a flood levee.

The project is located in Census tract 670, which contains about 1,900 households. The western end of the tract is currently unoccupied, while the central section contains Covington's urban core. The residential section runs along the south and eastern sides of the tract. About 21% of households

are below the poverty line and qualifies as a High Poverty Area. Census tracts 609 (Eastside) and 671 (Austinburg), containing about 2,000 households and located about one mile south-southeast of the Central Riverfront Project, have about 43% of households living below the poverty line. They earn about half the Kenton County household income. Tract 670 and adjacent 671 are Historically Disadvantaged. Tract 603 (Mainstrasse) 0.4 miles to the southwest of the Central Riverfront, is a persistent poverty tract, and has 21% of the population below the property line, and household incomes about 10% the median Kenton County Income.

Covington itself has experienced declining population over the past several decades. Current population is just over 40,000 people, of whom about 27,000 people live within four miles of the project site. Both in Covington and in adjoining communities, there are thousands more workers than jobs on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River, leading to chronic commuter congestion on the bridge crossings.

This project is part of a concerted effort to relieve bottlenecks on these critical Ohio River crossings. The key contribution of the Covington Central Riverfront is to permit convenient access to jobs, amenities, and recreation on both sides of the Ohio without the necessity of a vehicle crossing, and to encourage better non-motorized access for a larger population.

Other related, complementary projects in the immediate vicinity include :

- 1 The widening and renovation of the Brent Spence Bridge, carrying I-75/71 over the Ohio River, using Federal infrastructure funds. When completed, this project should be particularly attractive to long-distance through traffic. The bridge is half a mile west of the project site.
- 2 The 4th Street Road Reconfiguration on Kentucky State Route 8/4th Street West, running from I-75/71 West on ramp. This three-lane, one-way street runs along the southern edge of the project, and experiences more than a hundred accidents per year, as it carries much of the east-west traffic and provides access to the I-75/71 and other river crossings. The Covington Central Riverfront Project will open an alternative route for local traffic via 3rd Street and allowing safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings of 4th Street is critical to spreading the walkability benefits of the Central Riverfront Project to neighborhoods to the South.
- 3 The reconstruction of the State Route 8/4th Street Bridge over the Licking River will improve safety and pedestrian and bicycle crossings on this heavily trafficked route connecting Newport and other neighboring towns to the East with Covington. This bridge is 0.6 miles south-southeast of the Central Riverfront.

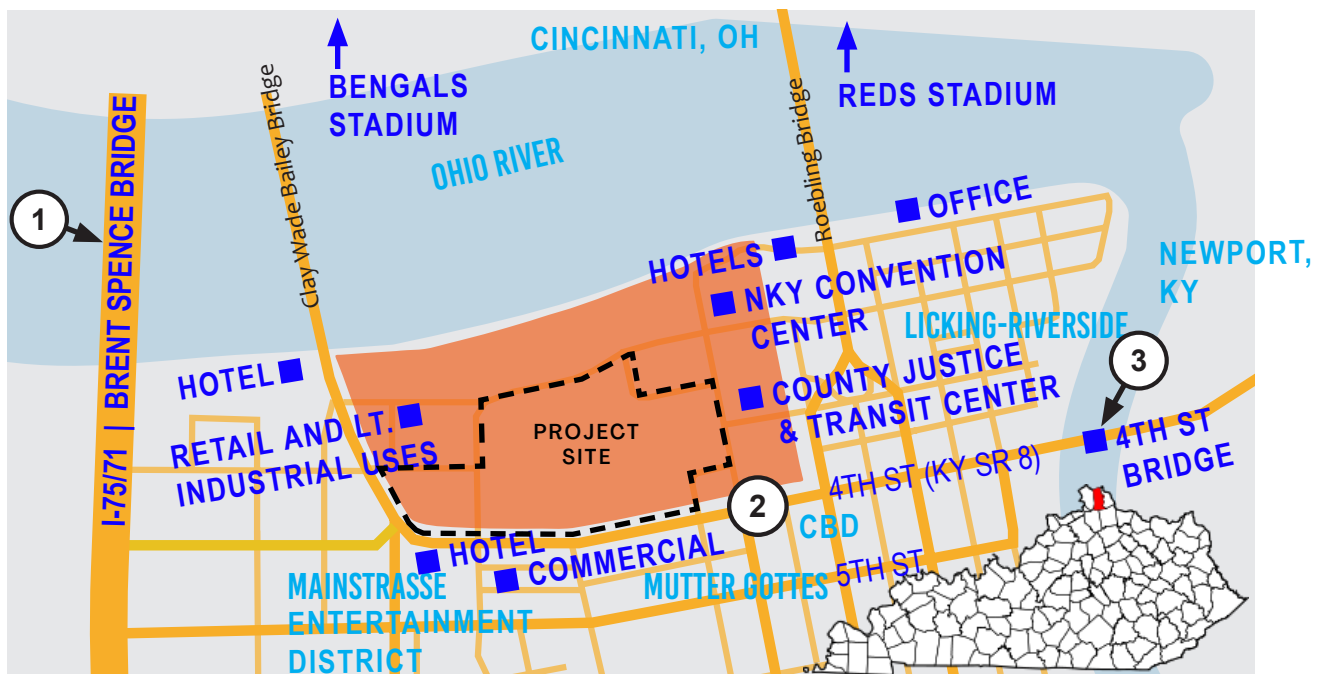


FIGURE 4 LOCATION MAP WITH KEY LANDMARKS AND FEATURES

PROJECT BUDGET

Significant investment has been made to the project site to date, including more than \$26 million in the site as outlined in Table 1 in the Project Description

Cost estimates are based on 100% Construction Documents from the engineering consultant team. See Cost Estimates Phase I and II in the Appendix.

TABLE 2: PROJECT BUDGET FOR CCR PHASE II TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE:

Funding Source	Component 1: Inter-modal facility with platform	Component 2: Complete Street grid with public greenspace	Total Scope of Phase II
RAISE Federal Funds	\$14,000,000	\$11,000,000	\$25,000,000
Other Federal Funds: 2024 EDA Construction Grant*	\$2,000,000	\$-	\$2,000,000
Non-federal Funds: 2020 City Bond Proceeds	\$-	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
Non-federal 2025 Bond Issuance (City and/or Covington Motor Vehicle Parking Authority)	\$20,000,000	\$-	\$20,000,000
Total:	\$36,000,000	\$14,000,000	50,000,000

*Applying for \$2M EDA construction grant in 2024. If not received, non-federal funds (Covington Motor Vehicle Parking Authority bond issuance) will fund gap

Phase II includes two components: (1) construction of an inter-modal transportation facility (\$36 MM), capped by a platform. Component 2 is a complete street grid with public greenspace will be constructed, as well as public utilities to support mixed-use development (\$14 MM). This estimate includes 10% design contingency, and escalation of 0.5% per month to March 2025. Construction of Phase II infrastructure is anticipated throughout 2025 and 2026. The estimated total budget is \$50 million.

Ongoing expenses to be incurred between time of award and obligation are general maintenance costs, such as mowing and upkeep, are encumbered and included in investments to date in Project Description. Refer to “Table 1”.

NON–FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

2020 Bond Proceeds of \$3,000,000 will be encumbered for Phase II; see “IRS Fund 43 Fund Balance” in Funding Commitments and “Order O-09-20 GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS IRS SITE” in [Appendix - Funding Commitments](#).

For Phase I construction, the City is issuing bonds as a match to the \$7.5 million general funds pending in the Kentucky State General Fund Budget.

Covington Motor Vehicle Parking Authority will issue bonds (\$20-22 million) as gap financing for the inter-modal transportation hub component of Phase II.

TABLE 3: CENSUS TRACTS

Census Tract(s)	Project Costs per Census Tract
670.00	\$50,000,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST	100%

BENEFIT–COST ANALYSIS

The benefit-cost analysis (BCA) conducted for the 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application compares the costs associated with the proposed investment to the benefits of the project. The BCA monetized the expected benefits generated by the future project that align with the RAISE Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) merit criteria. The analysis shows that the project generates significant benefits to society with a **BENEFIT-COST RATIO OF 1.59**. In other words, for each dollar spent in project costs, approximately \$1.59 worth of benefits will be generated by the improvements.

“Table 4” on the following page summarizes the monetization of the main benefits associated with the Reconnecting Covington project using undiscounted and discounted 2022 dollars.

PROJECT BUDGET

CONTINUED

TABLE 4: BENEFIT ESTIMATES (MILLIONS OF 2022 DOLLARS)

Benefit Categories	Undiscounted 2022 \$	Discounted 2022 \$
Pedestrian Amenity Benefits	\$0.4	\$0.2
Cycling Amenity Benefits	\$0.4	\$0.3
Health Benefits	\$3.6	\$2.3
Plaza Benefits	\$48.1	\$30.7
Emissions Savings	\$0.2	\$0.1
Parking Benefits	\$43.1	\$27.5
O&M and R&R Cost Savings	-\$0.8	-\$0.5
Residual Value	\$6.0	\$2.9
Repurposed ROW (Value of Air Rights Created)	\$8.7	\$7.5
Total Benefits:	\$109.6	\$70.9

Total discounted benefits amount to \$70.9 million dollars (\$109.6 million undiscounted) in 2022 dollars. Over 80 percent of benefits come from creating a public plaza and a parking garage structure. The BCA used the “travel cost method” outlined in the U.S.DOT’s December 2023 BCA Guidance, which assess the value of public spaces by estimating the travel cost reduction compared to the closest alternative option available.

The project is expected to start generating benefits starting April 2027. The period of analysis used in the estimation of the project’s benefits and costs includes preliminary engineering and design in 2024, construction between April 2025 and March 2027, and 20 years of operations (2027 – 2046)¹.

The Project’s total capital costs amount to \$49.0 million in 2022 undiscounted dollars (or \$44.6 million discounted). These costs also include previously incurred costs pro-rated to Phase II. The results of the BCA are presented in “Table 5”.

¹ The analysis also accounted for all the previously incurred costs.

TABLE 5: OVERALL RESULTS OF THE BCA (MILLIONS OF 2022 DOLLARS UNLESS SPECIFIED)

Project Evaluation Metrics	Undiscounted 2022 \$	Discounted 2022 \$
Total Benefits	\$109.6	\$70.9
Total Costs	\$49.0	\$44.6
Net Present Value	\$60.6	\$26.3
Benefit-Cost Ratio	2.24	1.59
Internal Rate of Return (%)	7.5%	

Considering all the monetized benefits and costs, the project produces a net present value (NPV) of \$26.3 million using a 3.1 percent discount rate with a benefit-cost ratio of 1.59.

TABLE 6: QUANTIFIED BCA METRICS (PROJECT LIFECYCLE)

BCA Metric	Unit	Value
Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) avoided ²	metric ton	534

The Benefit-Cost Analysis Technical Report and BCA Calculations are included in [Appendix - Benefits Cost Analysis](#).

²Due to expected mode diversion from auto to bike.

MERIT CRITERIA

1. SAFETY

Finding solutions for existing safety issues is a critical priority in the development of the Covington Central Riverfront (CCR). When the City purchased the parcels for the former IRS processing center in 2020, the streets that once ran through the site had been demolished and the surrounding 23 acres fenced off for nearly 60 years. This disrupted natural traffic patterns, increased traffic volumes, and created significant bottlenecks throughout the area. Existing travel conditions around the site are unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists due to high-volume traffic, compounded by inadequate sidewalk facilities, poor crosswalks, and hazardous intersections. During 2018-2022, 432 crashes were reported within the study area. This included two fatalities and 39 injury collisions. See p.3 of the “KYTC 4th Street Roadway Reconfiguration Report” in [Appendix](#).

HISTORIC & CURRENT CONDITIONS

Covington Police Department (CPD) traffic records show that the number of accidents in the Site area between 2013 and 2022 at the former IRS site. For the nearest neighborhood, Mainstrasse, CPD records show a similar level accidents with a total of 379 crashes in 2013 and 304 in 2022. The heat map below depicts Police Runs for Traffic Accidents 2013-2022 for the project site and for Mainstrasse. See “Figure 5”.

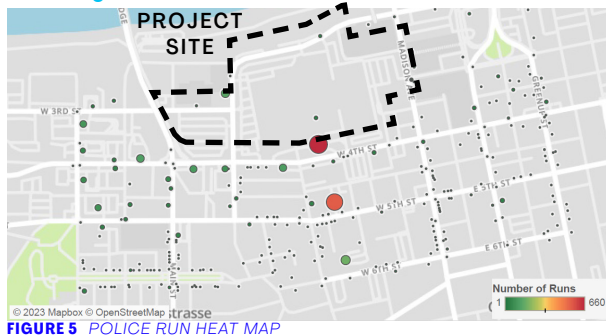


FIGURE 5 POLICE RUN HEAT MAP

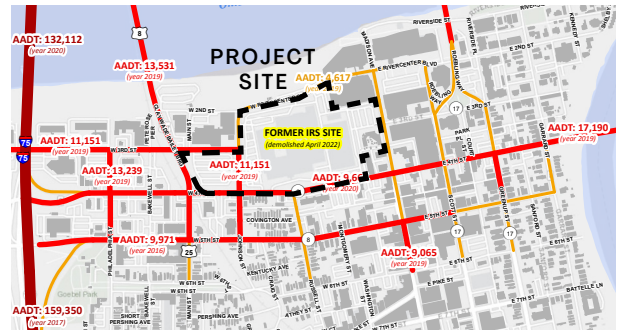


FIGURE 6 ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC ON CCR SURROUNDING ROADS

The site sits between two major highways and three bridges across the Ohio River. Through traffic on the two east-west streets on the southern edge of the site has an ADT 10,000 vehicles, forming an intimidating barrier to all modes of local traffic. Most recently, in March 2022, an accident took the life of a young father who was struck by a public transit bus at the intersection of 4th and Scott Streets. The project will create north-south and east-west routes with bicycle and pedestrian friendly safety features to make the routes safer, faster, and more appealing.

INCREASING SAFETY FOR ALL

One of the main objectives for the CCR project is to reintegrate the site back into the fabric of the neighborhood. The site is bounded by major thoroughfares – State Route 8 (4th Street) to the south and Madison Avenue to the east. The reestablished street grid will create more direct routes for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic to the City’s main transit center on Madison, the surrounding bridges, state routes, and an interstate. There will also be several new bus stops within the development on Rivercenter Blvd. under the land bridge and on Johnson St.

To ensure increased safety for motorists and non-motorists along these new routes and connections,

the CCR project implements principles outlined in the Department of Transportation's (DOT) National Roadway Safety Strategy Plan into the street network:

- Wide sidewalks (11' to 20'), separated from roadways by an amenity buffer zone.
- Refuge islands/medians and curb bump-outs to reduce roadway crossing distance.
- High visibility crosswalks.
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) where needed at mid-block crossings.
- Detectable warning strips along entire turning radii, in addition to bollards, seat-walls, and planters in curbside areas.
- Designated pedestrian-only spaces, including roadways that can be blocked off from vehicular traffic using demountable bollards for events.
- Direct connection to the levee and regional trail system via a wide, elevated land bridge to provide access without crossing roadways.
- Limited, designated routes for large vehicles.
- Pedestrian-scale lighting regularly spaced along all sidewalks and open spaces to provide ample illumination during the dusk to dawn hours.
- Appropriate speed limits for an urban area with a maximum of 25 mph recommended.
- Cameras to collect real-time traffic data via free public Wi-Fi, Covington Connect, and SkyFi portal to analyze and improve pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic.

In addition to the above elements of the CCR streetscape, the Covington Fire Department was consulted during the initial roadway, infrastructure, and garage design phase to ensure adequate clearance and first responder access within the site.

ADJACENT PROJECTS PROVIDING INCREASED SAFETY

The CCR project efforts complement three other major transportation projects that are aimed to improve safety on the adjacent federal highway and state routes. See "Figure 4" on page 5.

- Ohio/Kentucky/FHA Brent Spence Bridge Companion Bridge and Corridor improvements

– less than a quarter-mile from site.

- KYTC's State Route 8 (4th St) Bridge Reconstruction – less than a half-mile from site.
- Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) State Route 8 (4th Street) Roadway Reconfiguration – directly adjacent to site.

Ohio/Kentucky/FHA Brent Spence Bridge Companion Bridge and Corridor improvements

On December 29, 2022, the Department of Transportation announced a \$1.385 billion grant for construction of a Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This will include a companion bridge to segregate truck traffic from local commuter traffic on this critical supply chain highway, without tolls.

CPD data shows that from 2013 through 2023 there were 903 accidents on the Brent Spence Bridge. During that same time span, there were a total of 3,150 accidents on I-71/I-75 leading to the Brent Spence Bridge. See "[Brent Spence Corridor Accidents](#)" and "[Brent Spence Bridge Collisions](#)" in the [Appendix](#).

Recent relocation of the Brent Spence Bridge on-ramp from 4th St. has resulted in 40% reduction in traffic accidents at that location on the bridge. When the BSB companion bridge is complete, a permanent 4th St. local-only on-ramp is expected to reap similar benefit.

KYTC's State Route 8 (4th Street) Bridge Reconstruction

Following the two aforementioned hit-and-run fatalities on 4th Street, community leaders called for improved safety measures. Improvements to the 4th Street Bridge, include bicycle/pedestrian lanes on both sides and an additional lane for vehicular traffic. This will provide a safer connection between the adjacent City of Newport and Covington by separating motorists from non-motorists.

KYTC's State Route 8 (4th Street) Road Reconfiguration

As part of their Complete Streets policy, KYTC has

approved a road reconfiguration of 4th Street, from the Licking River Bridge to Interstate -75/71. The project will reduce the current three lanes of vehicle traffic to two lanes, with a dedicated bike lane. In conjunction with the state's efforts and as part of Phase I, the City will be widening the sidewalk along 4th St. at the CCR site, as well as extending the curb to increase the buffer between pedestrian and vehicles. When implemented, the improvements will increase safety along the southern boundary of the CCR development.

As part of the Brent Spence Bridge corridor project, the 4th St. Roadway reconfiguration, and Phase I of CCR, the City of Covington is working with KYTC to reconfigure the gateway intersection at the southern terminus of the Clay Wade Bailey Bridge, at the southwest corner of the CCR site. The current on-ramp from 4th St. to the bridge will be converted to a bike and pedestrian-only two-way track, slowing traffic along 4th St. by requiring vehicles to pass through the signaled four-way intersection; and providing protected pathways for all users.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The CCR project furthers sustainability and environmental justice goals held by local, state, and federal governments through efforts already made during the site reclamation process to a strategic land-use plan meant to seamlessly reintegrate the site back into the fabric of the City. The master plan creates an extension of the CBD that is a walkable, urban neighborhood, inspired by Covington's historic downtown and principles of mixed-use development.

Implementing these principles is critical given the vulnerability of the surrounding community. The project site is in Census Tract 670 qualifies as a Historically Disadvantaged Community according to the Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool created by the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Climate Policy Office.

This tract showed alarming scores related to air pollution, potentially hazardous and toxic sites, transportation infrastructure, preexisting chronic disease, and socio-economic status. See "Climate and Economic Justice Tool" in [Appendix](#).

The Reconnecting Covington: Central Riverfront Hub project has already made a positive impact through demolishing 23-acres of impervious surface. It is a city priority to continue to do so through conscientious development that focuses on reducing auto dependency and it's negative impacts to the environment.

Overall, the CCR project lifecycle's emission cost savings are estimated at \$0.1 million in discounted 2022 dollars.

This development offers multiple benefits to its residents and users, persuading them to choose fewer and shorter automobile trips, along with more transit, walking, and bicycle trips.

The adjacent TANK transit center is already a hub for bus routes in the region, so residents, employees, and visitors will have access to most available routes. The City and TANK are coordinating to add public bus facilities below the land bridge on Rivercenter Blvd. conveniently located to the public parking garage and another on the southbound side of Johnson St. Buses from the TANK Center offer regular service to the Cincinnati Amtrak station, some three miles in distance. Greyhound recently piloted service from Covington. The City is working with Greyhound to improve the location, quality and frequency of regional bus service, with CCR as a future Hub. The reduction in automobile travel will save travelers time, fuel, reduce air emissions, and crashes, and improve the health of those that choose to walk or bike.

SITE RECLAMATION **Environmental Mitigation**

During demolition and abatement, contractors removed long-standing environmental risks, including building materials (asbestos, corrosive

liquids, refrigerant, and other gases) as well as four underground storage tanks ranging in size from 550 gallons to 10,000 gallons. All abatement was in compliance with regulations as documented in “[Enviroworx City of Covington IRS Site](#)” and “[O’Rourke Hazards and USTs Former IRS Itemized List](#)” in [Appendix](#).

Recycling

O’Rourke Wrecking Company limited landfill tonnage during the demolition phase by recycling and salvaging almost 5,400 tons of concrete and metal. Additional items such as chillers, boilers, electric motors, and control panels were sold or recycled as listed in “[O’Rourke Hazards and USTs Former IRS Itemized List](#)” in [Appendix](#).

Water Pollution

Covington falls within the Northern Kentucky area subject to a federal consent decree (Civil Action No. 05-199WOB) related to historic violations of the Clean Water Act, primarily due to ancient sewage conveyance as outlined in “[SD1 Consent Decree](#)” in [Appendix](#). Improvements to the horizontal infrastructure on the CCR site are being designed to improve storm-water management, specifically separating the archaic combined sanitary and storm-water conveyance systems. Design also increases permeable surfacing at the site by over 19,000 square feet and includes better control of erosion and run-off which is especially important given the proximity to the Ohio River, the source of the region’s drinking water.

A CONSCIENTIOUS PLAN

In 2019, before the site was purchased by the City, the Covington Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution supporting discussion, policies, and steps aimed at reducing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and developing sustainable-based policies as outlined in “[R-03-19 Order to Promote Climate Change Polices](#)” in the [Appendix](#). Believing in the principle of the butterfly effect and that “every step counts,” the City is making design decisions on the site that will continue to make a positive impact.

Land Use

In addition to reconnecting the site through horizontal infrastructure improvements, the land use plan for the area reflects the existing development around it. The plan calls for mixed-use design that prioritizes public space and reduces auto dependency, resulting in less air pollution. Promoting pedestrian-only space is critical in moving the needle toward health equity. Moreover, the land bridge connecting the main plaza area above the public parking garage over Rivercenter Blvd. to the existing Levee not only provides direct access to nearby recreational amenities like the Riverfront Commons Trail and Ohio River. It is also the perfect platform for an elevated park offering new amenities and an event space with views of the Ohio River and Cincinnati. Throughout the site, there will be 84,000 square feet of public space, including 260 trees, approx. 19,350 SF of grass, and 9,980 SF of artificial turf. See “[CCR Greenspace Land Use](#)” in [Appendix](#).

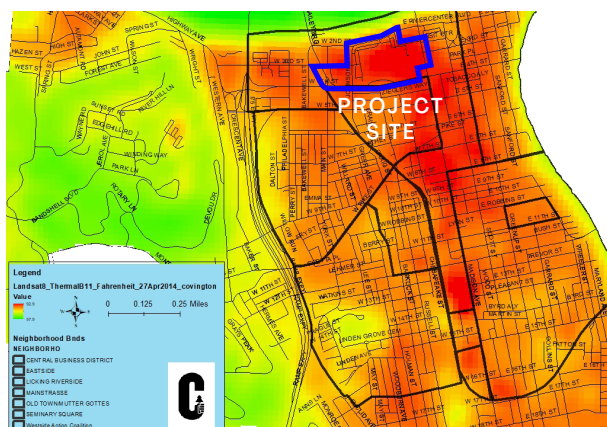


FIGURE 7 HEAT ISLAND MAP WITH SITE OUTLINED

Tree canopy and heat island maps, see “[Figures 7 & 8](#)”, provided by Covington’s Urban Forestry Department show a virtual death of trees in the site

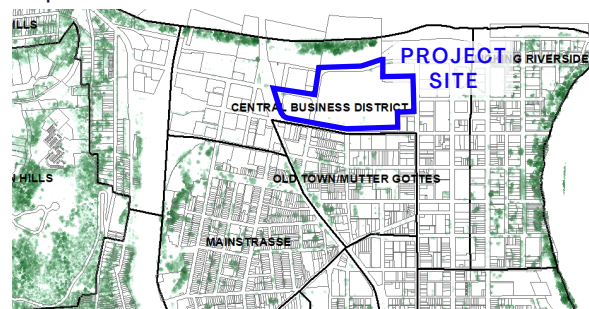


FIGURE 8 TREE CANOPY MAP WITH PROJECT SITE OUTLINED

prior to development and illustrate the impact - a virtual red core of “heat” ricocheting off asphalt and concrete. See “Former IRS Site Heat Island” and “Former IRS Site Tree Canopy” in [Appendix](#).

The City’s vision for the CCR neighborhood is to create a truly walkable destination. The large public parking garage in Phase II is meant to be within close proximity to and support the variety of uses in the development plan reducing the need for people to move around the development with a car. This, along with the site’s proximity to the main TANK public transit center and park-and-ride lot, as well as the new transit routes/stops planned within the development for both regular bus service and the Southbank Shuttle; see “Letter of Support – TANK” in [Appendix](#), will all have a significant impact on reducing vehicular use for those living, working, or visiting the area.

EV Infrastructure & Parking Technology

Public parking infrastructure at the site will incorporate EV charging. Charging stations will be installed in the parking garage and account for 1% of the spaces in the public parking garage at the time of construction with infrastructure in place for an additional 1% in the future. The City will also encourage EV charging be included in parking structures built by private developers and will apply for grant funds for this purpose.

The public garage will include technology for vehicle counting, pointing users to open parking spaces with signage and strategic wayfinding. The information will be integrated on websites and mobile apps to increase efficiency the potential for idling and unnecessary time spent trying to find

open parking, resulting in less air pollution caused by car emissions.

Eco-Friendly Materials

City-led development agreements will include provisions for eco-friendly design, construction, and use of materials, including street and LED pedestrian lighting, solar panels, green roofs, low carbon materials, and furnishings.

New private developments constructed on the site will conform to the latest energy efficiency standards. The City will encourage private developers to construct buildings that exceed current standards, reducing greenhouse gas emissions attributable to the site.

Native landscaping will be used throughout the site and artificial turf is planned for the large event lawn on the land bridge. These materials inherently require less water, less maintenance, less energy.

Climate Focused Thinking

Covington staff actively participate in regional partnerships. These partnerships include Green Umbrella, a multi-state, 10-county regional sustainability alliance, that recently created the Greater Cincinnati Regional Climate Collaborative. Covington is a founding member of this public-private partnership to create and implement policies to combat climate change. The City will receive technical assistance and access to federal grants in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The City will incorporate lessons learned and best practices in future phases of the CCR development.



FIGURE 9 BIKE TRAIL MAP FOLLOWING THE OHIO RIVER. CINCINNATI AND SURROUNDING REGIONS

3. QUALITY OF LIFE

Reconnecting Covington: Central Riverfront Hub exemplifies the idea of mixed-use, transit-oriented development. In addition to size, the location of the project site is one of its greatest strengths. The City recognizes the unique opportunity of restoring the old street grid, adding public amenities, and increasing coordination between the City, TANK and Greyhound to provide an increased quality of life for new and surrounding residents.

These quality-of-life benefits estimate the value of having a public plaza as \$30.7 million and the health benefits of induced cycling ridership as \$2.3 million in discounted 2022 dollars.

A TRUE LIVE WORK PLAY COMMUNITY

The plan for the CCR neighborhood calls for a mix of land uses on a site that bridges the gap between two areas of the City that have been divided for nearly 60 years. The development will encourage a live-work-eat-recreate-shop-in-the-same-area environment. See “Figure 10”.

This new dense, walkable, urban neighborhood near existing public transit will create a vibrant and well connected community that has the capacity for:

- 750 rental units
- 30 home ownership units
- 125,000 square feet of office space
- 70,000 square feet of retail
- 60,000 square feet of entertainment space

The RAISE funds will help enhance the newly reconnected 3rd and Russell Streets through construction of wide sidewalks and streetscape elements. These roadway segments have been closed to public traffic for more than 60 years. The new connections, enhancements, and bus stops will support more direct and safer routes to the main TANK transit center, located only a block away on Madison Avenue, for residents of the neighborhood and those nearby.

Three existing downtown streets – 3rd, Russell, and Washington – will extend into the site, with 3rd Street running through the development. A new curbless festival street, Russell Sq., which can be

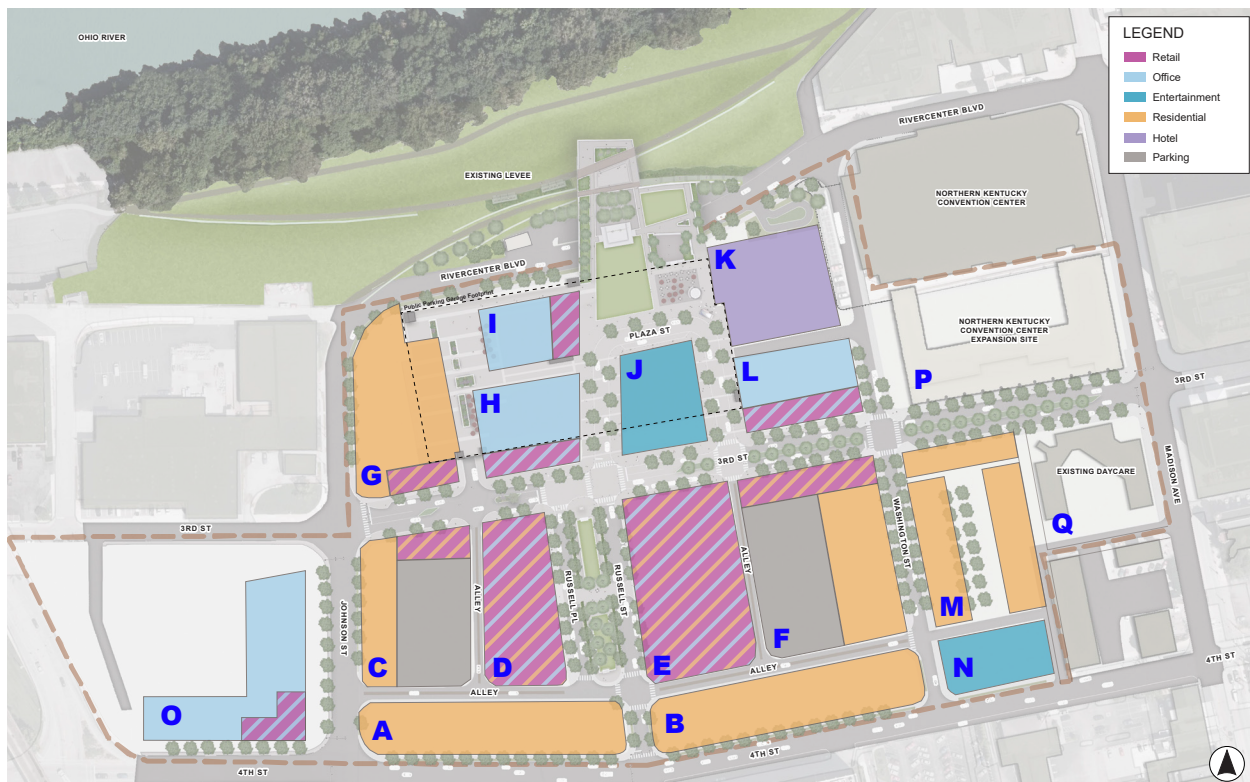


FIGURE 10 PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN OF CCR DEVELOPMENT WITH BLOCK LABELS



FIGURE 11 ARTISTIC RENDER OF RUSSELL SQ, LAND BRIDGE, AND RIVERFRONT PARK

blocked off for events, will continue north of 3rd Street bringing users on top of the public parking garage. From there, users have access to the new public park and greenspace that connect to the riverfront levee via the land bridge. Russell St. can also be closed for events and will feature a large median, creating the Park Commons greenspace. Several alleys will be added, including one alley from east to west connecting Johnson to Washington and creating access to apartments, town homes, and businesses.

This project will create 1,500 or more permanent jobs or more adjacent to new amenities and within convenient walking distance of nearby residential neighborhoods. Jobs that do not require crossing the Ohio River will greatly improve the quality of life of workers at CCR because their commutes will be shorter, healthier, more pleasant, and more predictable than previously.

The CCR sites proximity to public transportation will help eliminate barriers to access good paying jobs. Access to affordable transit choices reduces vehicle dependence and is a significant resource for the under-served and/or disadvantaged communities.

In addition to the 21% poverty rate at the project Census Tract 670, approximately 2,000 households are living in two census tracts 609 (Eastside) & 671 (Austinburg), about a mile from the project, and have 43% poverty rate. One is a “persistent poverty” and one is a “historically disadvantaged” tract. All of these households, along with new neighborhood residents, will benefit with access to good paying job opportunities and subsequent economic mobility, whether they utilize the local transit system to commute or work on-site.

Public transportation helps foster partnerships in communities that in turn support the development of affordable housing. The City will encourage mixed-income rental housing developments, and can provide gap financing as outlined in the “2020-2025 HUD Consolidated Plan” found in the [Appendix](#).

Residents will also have affordable access to essential destinations. In addition to groceries and markets within the CCR development, which were called for in the 2020 and 2022 Market Study. See “Noel Market Study 2019-2022” in the [Appendix](#). There are several small neighborhood groceries nearby as well as a weekly Covington Farmers Market. In addition, downtown Cincinnati is accessible via TANK and the Southbank Shuttle which now includes stops at Kroger in the Central Business District as well as historic Findlay Market in the OTR neighborhood.

- Healthcare (hospitals, urgent care centers, etc.) are accessible via TANK bus routes
- The City’s more than 20 places of worship, including five within a half-mile of the site.
- The City partners with over a dozen nonprofit agencies providing job training, workforce development and support services, and are all accessible via TANK bus routes. Details of these partnerships can be found in the Economic Competitiveness and Partnership & Collaboration sections that follow.

In addition to being within close proximity of the local public transportation system, residents and

visitors of the CCR development will benefit from access to healthier transit options. The design plan follows the Complete Street principles as outlined in the preceding Safety Section, giving pedestrians and bicyclists safe routes to work or for leisure. Wide, shaded sidewalks buffered from roadways create green ‘spines’ that will connect the site to the surrounding community on every side, including the Levee to the north. See “Figures 11 & 12”. The land bridge extending from the main public plaza creates a continuous park space that connects to the top of the existing Levee, providing access to the riverfront and adjoining trail system. A Red Bike station will be installed in the park to help encourage the use of the Riverfront Commons trail along the Ohio River. The City also partners with Life Learning Center and Good Samaritan Car Care who provide rental bikes and low-cost bike and car repair to area residents. In 2023, Southbank Partners was awarded \$3.8 million in federal funding through USDOT RAISE program to design and engineer the to-be-built trail route, with an expanded vision to traverse from Ludlow to Silver Grove. And just across the Ohio River, the Crown Trail is connecting several trail segments into a 34-mile urban loop through Cincinnati and neighboring jurisdictions. The City’s efforts to expand the regions off-road

bike infrastructure is explained further in the Mobility and Community Connectivity Section.

Public space has been a major component of the CCR project beginning in the Master Planning Process. The former IRS plant was a 10-acre one-story building on 13 additional acres of asphalt. There were a few trees in a center courtyard of the building site but no other shade fixtures or tree canopy. See “Figure 3”. Increasing the tree canopy and greenspace became an essential part of the plan to not only mitigate the existing urban heat island and protect the health of at-risk residents, outdoor workers, and others, but to also prioritize the quality of the life for future residents. Several streets within the development have been designed to be curbsless. This allows a large portion of the neighborhood and street areas to seamlessly transform into a large event/festival space when blocked off from vehicular traffic by demountable bollards that will engage the surrounding communities.

Recently, there has been a focus on public art that can be seen throughout Covington. The City sees an opportunity to utilize the CCR public space to help foster an identity that is unique to the site



FIGURE 12 ARTISTIC RENDER OF RUSSEL ST. AND THE PARK COMMONS AREA

and builds on what the City has already started. With that intent in mind, many items from the IRS building were salvaged for innovative public art at the project site. Salvaged items include: a fire alarm bell, clock, external metal lettering, internal signage, and the building cornerstone. Archaeological and cultural mitigation work at the site is revealing significant historical information and potential artifacts from the pre-Civil War era neighborhood that stood in this location before demolition for the IRS facility. Local artists will be asked to create public art installations for the project's public green space. Included in this will be an historic marker highlighting the significant businesses and land uses on the site. The City will engage the community in the public art project with a "call for Covington artists."

4. MOBILITY & COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

Even before it purchased the 23-acre site, Covington stated its goal: To integrate the property back into the community. This was further reiterated by the public during the 2020 master plans' community engagement process. The project will create new pedestrian and bicycle friendly routes with amenities between the east and west sides of Covington helping convert trips from vehicle trips to pedestrian, bicycle, or transit trips. Moreover, it connects the population to some of Covington's community hotspots like the Devou Park and Riverfront Commons Trail. This section covers benefits associated with improved mobility and community connectivity.

The CCR project results in discounted \$0.3 million cycling amenity benefits, \$0.2 million in pedestrian amenity benefits, and \$27.5 parking benefits.

Pedestrian safety is critical in the project design with ADA-compliant sidewalks that will be built along the streets within the interior of the site. In addition to

the oversized sidewalks, linear parks, connections to existing bike paths, and traffic calming elements, all sidewalks and public spaces will be constructed in accordance with ADA to increase mobility for individuals with disabilities. To the extent possible, universal design will be incorporated into the project to improve accessibility for all. Oversized sidewalks are planned for curbless areas to encourage sidewalk cafes, create more public space, and increase walkability.

Transit improvements, which have been highlighted in earlier sections, like connecting to TANK facilities and the park-and-ride lot, as well as adding new TANK and Greyhound bus stops and routes, will bring economic mobility to Covington residents who most need this access.

As an urban community, improving bike infrastructure is a game changer for residents and regional advocates. As outlined in prior sections, this project will connect the local street grid to make riding on city streets safer, as well as enhancing connections to regional transit and recreational trails. The City Commission recently entered into a partnership with Tri-State Trails to improve upon these efforts and develop a citywide bike plan as outlined in "ORD-10-23 Agmt Tri-State Trails" in [Appendix](#). A draft of the "Tri-State Trails Bicycle Transportation Plan for Covington & Newport" can be found in the [Appendix](#), as well.

In addition to public transit connections, the City is working with intercity and intermodal transit providers. Queen City Riverboats has expressed

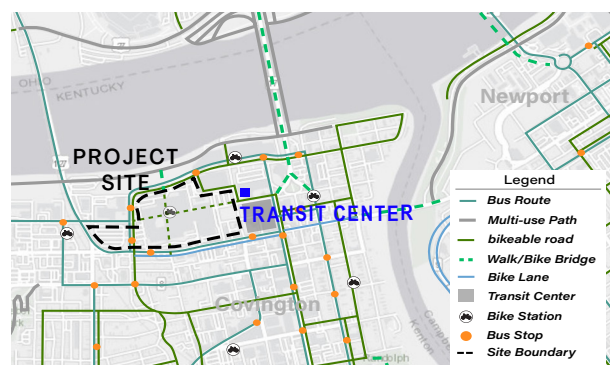


FIGURE 13 MULTI-MODAL MAP COVINGTON REGION

interest in expanding current boat taxi service between Cincinnati and Newport to include Covington at the Riverfront Commons. Greyhound Bus recently lost the main terminal in Cincinnati and has opened a satellite location in Arlington Heights. They have expressed interest in adding service at the TANK transit center as well. [See respective Letters of Support in Appendix.](#)

5. ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS & OPPORTUNITY

An East Coast commercial developer called the site one of “the most exciting land redevelopment opportunities between Baltimore and New Orleans,” and that Covington officials consider it their chance “to reshape the very identity and economics of Covington long into its future.”

Covington is looking to the project to build upon and accelerate the substantial momentum it’s experienced in creating jobs, building wealth, empowering families, and strengthening the local economy.

JOBS

At its height, the IRS center employed almost 4,500 full-time and seasonal workers, and its closing put a massive hole in the City’s budget. Using a model that foresaw development of the site in stages, consultants projected that as of 2030, the site will create 1,159 permanent jobs and 1,651 temporary construction jobs. Permanent jobs alone will bring

an estimated \$1.7 million in annual payroll taxes. Using the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator, this equates to \$2,082,972 in 2024 dollars. Subsequent development of the rest of the site would create even more jobs.

Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority approved a 30-year tax increment financing district and in May 2022, projected \$45.5 million in incremental tax revenue through 2050. [See “Executed Tax Incentive Agreement Covington Central Riverfront” in Appendix.](#) \$45.5 million in future revenues was obligated to the TIF district, 72% of which encompasses the CCR site with the balance covering the Convention Center. [See “CCR – TIF Application Review & Fiscal Impact Analysis,” page 216 in Appendix.](#)

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS AND OPPORTUNITY BY THE NUMBERS

Covington Central Riverfront Hub will generate additional:

- \$925+MM new direct, indirect and induced earnings by 2050
- \$94+MM new state tax revenue by 2050
- 1,984 permanent full-time jobs
- 1,651 full-time construction jobs
- 800 new housing units by 2030
- 125k sqft new office space by 2030
- 70k sqft new retail space by 2030
- 450 new hotel rooms
- 72,400 sqft convention center expansion

[See “CCR – TIF Application Review & Fiscal Impact Analysis,” page 216 and “Reconnecting Covington – Covington Central Riverfront Strategic Master Plan & Noell Market Study 2019” page 90 in Appendix](#)

JOB TRAINING & SUPPORT

The City is responsive to market changes and realized the shortage of skilled workers in part is caused by barriers to employment (transportation, training, soft skills, justice involvement, etc.). There is a significant population who are under-employed or unemployed and the City has established

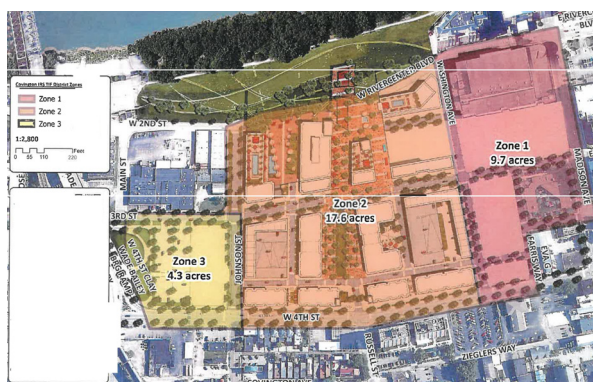


FIGURE 14 CCR DEVELOPMENT TIF ZONES

partnerships to create programs to spur skilled local talent.

Building Industry Association of Northern Kentucky: Construction Trades School & Heritage Trades Academy

The City entered into two job training partnerships with Building Industry Association (BIA) of Northern Kentucky for underserved residents. The City's Enzweiler Building Institute's Construction Trades School recently opened offering courses in welding, plumbing, HVAC, electrical, and more. The City also joined with BIA to develop the Heritage Trades Academy project to teach "lost skills" in restoring historic buildings. Both programs set aside spots for city residents with free tuition to learn in-demand trades and secure well-paying jobs. [See news release and "BIA - Letter of Support" in Appendix.](#)

New Covington Works Program

Partnering with the Northern Kentucky Area Development District, the City recently created Covington Works to eliminate barriers to employment in local businesses. Supportive services such as transportation, childcare, and job coaching, will help employees succeed in the workplace. Covington sees great success in attracting outside talent but will focus on developing the talent of its residents. See "NKYADD Letter of Support".

Greater Cincinnati & NKY African American Chamber of Commerce

In 2022, the City entered into a new [partnership with the Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky African American Chamber of Commerce \(AACC\)](#) and Northern Kentucky University's Collaborative for Economic Engagement to help nurture the creation and growth of Black-owned businesses by making available meeting space for free, consulting services, and other resources needed by entrepreneurs.

The City partners with additional job training and assistance programs including the Joseph U. Meyer Kentucky Center for Workforce Development,

Gateway Community College, Life Learning Center, Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission, and the Kentucky Small Business Development Center. ARPA funds are currently providing supportive services for stronger success at achieving economic mobility.

Supporting Local Businesses

Covington strives to put its small, local businesses first. The Economic Development Department has a history of helping local developers foster unique businesses making them thrive through its small business development rental and façade incentive program. In 2021, this dynamic program earned an International Economic Development Council award, the world's largest council of development professionals. Preference points are scored for disadvantaged business enterprises.

Since 2018, the Small Business Incentives Program has:

- Assisted 156 unique businesses.
- Leveraged \$208,183,352 of private investment.
- Created or retained 6,494 jobs.
- Developed or improved over 560,000 square feet of commercial space.
- Supported 35 minority owned businesses.

Engaging with Local Developers

The City has been meeting with local developers on a regular basis for two years, including hosting an open house to find out potential needs while the project was finalizing design. The City makes a point to include local women and minority owned businesses and developers, which ensures both the neighborhood and neighbors will be more sustainable. The varying sizes and uses of development blocks at CCR means up to 60 developers (small, mid, and large) are participating in it's future. These developers have strong track records of investing in Covington when others would not and have vested interests for the long term.

This has included successful groups like the Milburn Group, owner/developer of Odd Fellow Hall, Pickle Factory, Wenzel Whiskey, The Grand Ballroom,

and the Globe; and the Salyers Group, owner/ developer of Donna Salyers' Fabulous-Furs, The Madison Event Center, Hotel Covington and Donna Salyers' Fabulous-Bridal, and North by Hotel Covington. These entrepreneurs will create buildings and businesses with longer life cycle than outside developers for more sustainable development and high-quality buildings.

Currently, the City is working with four different developers to build out the first four blocks of the CCR neighborhood. Block A will contain several single family detached homes. Block B will host owner-occupied townhomes. Block O, the largest development site, will house a large commercial retailer providing amenities for our region. Block M&N may include mixed-use retail and housing. See "Figure 10" for block locations.

INCLUSION

The City is setting inclusion goals for the project with assistance from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) based on detailed industry cost estimates, and the availability of minority-owned, women-owned, or veteran-owned, or otherwise disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) to provide the needed trades.

- During public infrastructure construction: The City prioritizes W/MBE, SBE, and DBE inclusion in contract awards. The City's project owners' representative, JS Held, will reach out to local and regional DBEs.
- During marketing and selling parcels: The City and its consultants will subdivide parcels to match existing business districts to attract local business owners and developers with a focus on DBEs building upon existing partnerships to continue diversity, equity, and inclusion success.
- During Business Recruitment: Covington strives to put its small, local businesses first. That's why the City's new manifesto proclaims, "all character, no chains." It will build on the Small Business Incentives Program with preferences for local businesses and DBEs.

The CCR project will be centered in a community with a proven record of inclusion and equity. For instance:

- Covington has been a leader in equity and inclusion efforts since 1984 when they passed the Human Rights Ordinance as outlined on the website: <https://www.covingtonky.gov/about/inclusive>
- In 2003, Covington became one of the first Kentucky cities to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, resort, and amusement.
- Covington constantly seeks to become an inclusive, welcoming place for all persons. In 2020, the City passed an ordinance making it unlawful for anyone to advocate for changes to sexual orientation or gender identity.
- In 2021, the City again amended its nondiscrimination clause to include the banning of discrimination on the basis of natural hair textures. The effort aligns with the national organization CROWN Coalition (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) to ban discrimination based on hair style.
- The City is annually assessed by the nation's largest LGBTQ advocacy group, the Human Rights Campaign, for how well our laws, policies, and services treat LGBTQ people who live and work here. Covington's Municipal Equality Index (MEI) score increased to a perfect score of 100 in 2022, which was maintained in 2023. This is following scores of 96 out of 100 in 2020 and 2021.

TOURISM

The Northern Kentucky Convention and Visitors Bureau (NKVB) has committed to purchasing a 1.9-acre adjacent parcel to expand the Convention Center to meet projected tourism needs for the region. The Master Plan also includes an additional convention hotel between Rivercenter Blvd and the Center. Studies from NKCVB, the City and the Commonwealth identify the market gap in a later phase for a large, quality event space in the region

and to outgrow some of its smaller-size competitors; see “CCR – TIF Application Review & Fiscal Impact Analysis”, page 112-131 in [Appendix](#).

In the short term, the NKCVB will activate the parcel as green space and connect to the site while waiting for the market timing for an expansion. The convention center is included in the Kentucky TIF district and will benefit from the \$45.5 million in revenues for construction, maintenance, repairs, incremental tax, etc. Letters of support are included from the Northern Kentucky Convention Center as well as its marketing partner, meetNKY.

6. STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

The CCR project will restore and modernize the core infrastructure assets by restoring the project site to its original street grid, creating connectivity, increased mobility, community, and spurring economic growth.

MAINTAINING A STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

If the City did not invest in this project, the 23-acre stagnant site would wait for private development. The 10-acre building had no viable redevelopment uses and the fenced site would block connections to adjacent streets and surrounding neighborhoods. Design elements are being selected to ensure low maintenance features, such as artificial turf on elevated surfaces versus grass on terra firma surfaces, and native plantings in green spaces. Energy-efficient or solar lighting will reduce the frequency of replacement. Selecting sturdy hardscape materials, for elements such as benches and pathways will take more wear and tear from heavy use.

CCR public infrastructure will be added to the City’s capital asset management system. The average useful life of the City’s public infrastructure is 20 years; this figure is used for capital investment budgeting and forecasting. State and local TIF

revenues of \$45.5 million will provide some funding necessary to maintain the public infrastructure, and other public and private funding will be used to maintain, repair and replace assets as needed.

The Covington Public Works Department (CPW), staffed by over 40 AFSCME union members, will maintain the streets, landscaped medians, traffic signals, parking meters and kiosks, sidewalks, greenspace, landscaping and park amenities at the project site. The Covington Motor Vehicle Parking Authority will operate and maintain the public parking garage. When work is outside the scope of, or above and beyond the Parking Authority or CPW’s normal operations, the City engages with contractors to complete maintenance and upkeep. Covington Parks and Recreation staff will partner with public works to activate and maintain the greenspace at the site. This small but mighty team works with volunteers at local businesses and athletic groups to activate and maintain pools, parks and other assets throughout the City. This includes a public street hockey court, built from pro-hockey rink in Dayton, Ohio, with the Covington Street Hockey League in Barb Cook Park, as well as the largest mini-soccer pitch donated by the newest pro soccer team, FC Cincinnati, in Austinburg Park. These partnerships will continue with the activation and maintenance of the greenspace at CCR as witnessed in letters of support.

7. PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

MASTER PLAN BASED ON COMMUNITY WIDE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

As outlined in the Project Description and Economic Opportunity Sections, the City engaged extensively with residents, businesses, organization leaders and other stakeholders beginning in 2018 to create a master plan. After 12 months of communication via neighbors hosting neighbors for dinner chats, emails, website surveys, charettes in adjacent

neighborhoods, and community-wide meetings, the City developed a plan. The City was intentional in getting feedback from diverse people and communities. The City listened and is implementing what the community wants:

- Restoring the street grid and reconnecting with the surrounding business districts and neighborhoods.
- Creating jobs and rebuilding the jobs support tax base.
- Supporting minority-, women-, veteran-owned businesses.
- Supporting small and local businesses.
- Working with unions and workforce development providers.
- Collaborating with other public entities to improve the transportation network.
- In short, what is best for the community as a whole.

City leadership and staff continue to collaborate with all possible partners with transparency and proactive communication. Communications staff have shared more than 2 dozen news releases with updates on the project on the city website [here](#), and are shared via email to a robust list serve of more than 6,000. The City's economic development staff and KZF Design team continue to reach out to the community.

The success of this project is 100% dependent on existing and new partnerships that have been described throughout the prior merit criteria sections. The CCR project will set the stage for reimagining and reintegrating a vital part of the city, creating connectivity and energy for all of its residents throughout the city's neighborhoods.

COLLABORATION WILL CONTINUE TO REAP BENEFITS FOR THE BROADER COMMUNITY

The CCR project will provide new tourism opportunities, creating public and private land with Riverfront access and views, adding greenspace for community and private gatherings alike, and

attracting visitors and investment to the region. Access to public transportation and quality jobs will be life changing for Covington residents, particularly those in neighboring census tracts with 43% of the 2,000 households living below the poverty line. The City's proactive partnerships with job training and workforce development programs, coupled with supportive services to eliminate employment barriers are best practices to emulate elsewhere.

Covington's values of diversity and supporting small businesses will ensure continued growth in the local and regional economies, while complimenting existing business districts and connecting neighborhoods.

SYNERGISTIC COMPLIMENTARY PROJECTS BEING DESIGNED AND IMPLEMENTED SIMULTANEOUSLY

This project is one of many in a concerted effort to relieve bottlenecks on critical Ohio River crossings. The key contribution of CCR is to permit convenient access to jobs, amenities, and recreation on both sides of the Ohio without the necessity of a vehicle crossing, and to encourage better non-motorized access a larger population. Other related, complementary projects in the immediate vicinity include:

- Widening and renovation of the Brent Spence Bridge, carrying I-75 over the Ohio River, using Federal infrastructure funds. When completed, this project should be particularly attractive to long-distance through traffic. The bridge is half a mile west of the project site.
- Traffic calming on Kentucky State Route 8/4th Street, running from I-75 West on ramp. In addition to KYTC's road reconfiguration efforts, the CCR Project will open an alternative route for local traffic via 3rd Street and provide safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings of 4th Street which is critical to improving the walkability benefits of the neighborhoods to the South.
- Reconstruction of the State Route 8/4th Street

Bridge over the Licking River will improve safety, and pedestrian and bicycle crossings on this heavily used route connecting Newport and other neighboring towns to the East with Covington. This bridge is 0.6 miles from the site.

8. INNOVATION

CONTROLLING THE SITE AND CREATING PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE TO FOSTER DESIRED DEVELOPMENT

Arguably, the most innovative element of this project is the City's leadership in controlling the redevelopment of this critical land.

The City has taken decisive actions for the greatest good for the City of Covington and its residents to control what comes next with the Central Riverfront development including zoning the land prior to its purchase, demolition of the massive IRS building, engineering and design, and putting in place what is needed to attract businesses and public and private opportunities. City officials have called the project their "chance to reshape the very identity and economics of Covington long into its future."

The City approached the federal, state, and local regulations and partnerships with a proactive approach – as seen in KY TIF and success with the NEPA process and historic review. Consultant reports have said this transformational project "represents a rare and significant opportunity for the City of Covington and Commonwealth of Kentucky to enrich its presence along the Ohio River with a vibrant, mixed-use district."

ECO-FRIENDLY MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGIES

The City will include Buy America, low-carbon footprint materials, as well as electric vehicle charging stations with capacity for future needs in the public parking garage as outlined in the Environmental Sustainability merit criteria section.

LAND USE, PODIUM, LAND BRIDGE & UNDERDECKS

The project includes a podium and land bridge on top of a public parking garage to connect to the Ohio River, public green space, and Riverfront Commons regional trail. The project includes parking along Rivercenter Blvd for convention center idling freight trucks. Private and public partners, including the Commonwealth of Kentucky, CSX railroad, TANK, and the City will be improving the underdecks of the Clay Wade Bailey Bridge, CSX railroad bridge and the Brent Spence Bridge, and BSB companion bridge along the riverfront.

INNOVATIVE FINANCING THROUGH ALL PHASES OF PROJECT

The City of Covington is investing over \$100 million in this project. This includes a \$30 million bond issuance to purchase, prepare, and design the site, with current spending of nearly \$24 million, as well as Phase I public infrastructure.

The City has and is exploring all possible financial assistance including:

- Secured a \$1.7 million grant from the US Economic Development Administration for design and engineering/architectural team for the project.
- \$45.5 million in future revenues from the Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority.
- CCR development area has been approved as a State TIF district, enabling repayment of capital outlays using future tax revenue.

The Covington Motorized Vehicle Parking Authority will own the leasing air rights for building on top of the garage. The Parking Authority will be applying for \$1 million grants each over the next three years via OKI for electronic vehicle charging installation. The parking authority has bond issuing capacity that will provide gap-financing for structured parking within the multi-modal transportation facility at CCR.

PROJECT READINESS

ENVIRONMENTAL RISK AND NEPA

The City of Covington and its project partners are dedicated to the successful completion of the Reconnecting Covington: Central Riverfront Hub project. The NEPA process has been identified in the overall project schedule for Phase II and it is anticipated that all environmental approvals will be received in advance of project obligation. To ensure that this environmental milestone is met, the City will coordinate closely with FHWA, necessary officials with jurisdiction, and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection (DEP) for all NEPA documentation necessary to implement the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITS AND REVIEW

At this time, because the Central Riverfront Hub is a redevelopment project with a transportation pedestrian focus, the city anticipates C Level 3 environmental documentation with no EA or EIS. Since the property was acquired by the City of Covington from the federal government, the redevelopment of this site is considered a federal undertaking, triggering the section 106 review process under the National Historic Preservation Act. See “NEPA Completed To Date” in [Appendix](#).

Current completed and proposed environmental work on the site includes:

- Phase 1 and 2 Environmental and asbestos testing and hazardous material inventory completed related to demolition of the IRS facility. See “Phase II ESA Addendum - Former IRS Covington KY 01-06-21” in [Appendix](#).
- Section 106 and Kentucky Antiquities Act Compliance: Phase 1 and 2 below-ground cultural remediation, Phase 3 to begin in March



FIGURE 15 DEMOLITION PHOTO

2024. See “[Follow-Up Asbestos+Hazmat Inspection - Former Irs Covington KY 11-19-20](#)” and in [Appendix](#).

The demolition of IRS-associated buildings and site surfaces removal have been identified as adverse effects; therefore, the project area was divided into three sections for archaeological investigations. Preliminary investigations ruled out a majority for contributing archaeological resources. The city is working with heritage agencies to draft a Project Programmatic Agreement outlining mitigation.

Additionally, the city is also an active part of the [Intermodal Coordinating Committee \(ICC\)](#), which serves a technical advisory role for the [Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments](#), the MPO for the Greater Cincinnati region. The nature of the project is consistent with OKI’s [Long-Term Transportation Plan](#) and would not result in a delay for inclusion in the region’s [TIP](#). OKI is committed to this project and has provided a letter of support.

Based on C Level 3 documentation’s routine nature and incorporation into the TIP, the city expects timely NEPA clearance within a 9-month schedule, with a conservative 12-month allotment.

PROJECT READINESS

CONTINUED

KENTUCKY HERITAGE COUNCIL (SHPO), OFFICE OF STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST AND KENTUCKY ANTIQUITIES ACT

Since the project was seeking federal funding, and because it is a local government project, the City must comply with Kentucky Heritage Council (SHPO), Office of State Archaeologist and Kentucky Antiquities Act regulations.

In Fall 2021 the City of Covington completed a Section 106 Review Application which was submitted to the Kentucky State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as a component of our application to the EDA for engineering and design services. Approval was provided to proceed. In April 2022, the state SHPO office requested that a geophysical survey and/or archaeological monitoring of asphalt removal as appropriate levels of effort for identifying and assessing archaeological features within this project area after demolition is completed.

In September 2022, two concrete foundations were discovered during final stages of demolition. Terracon was on-site for soil compaction testing and had archaeologist available to conduct a site visit. They submitted geotechnical permit to Office of Archeology who requested additional data; [See “1909_Sanborn_Map_with_Cov-IRS-Site-Archaeology” in the Appendix.](#)

In November 2022, the City hired urban archaeologist firm, K&V Cultural Resources Management, LLC to conduct Phase I Archaeology Site File Review. A Proposed Archaeological Testing Plan was submitted for Kentucky Heritage Council approval which is eminent. (KHC Registration

#FY23-5143.) Once KHC approves plan, K&V will submit report to Archeology’s for approval. Covington will retain K&V for site testing as well as continued monitoring during construction. KHC initial feedback is included in [Appendix](#) as “KHC Former IRS Site Review”.

K&V Phase II Archaeological Investigation is complete, and Phase III begins March 2024. A Project Programmatic Agreement with KHC is underway, encompassing the agreed-upon scope of below-ground mitigation work by K&V as well as the above-ground cultural mitigation to be completed. [See “NEPA-Summary-To-Date” in the Appendix.](#)

CITY OF COVINGTON APPROVALS AND PERMITS

In December 2019, the City of Covington Board of Commission accepted the final conceptual design for the project site. In September 2020, the Covington Board of Commission approved an update of the Neighborhood Development Code approving the zoning of the project site as Central Riverfront Mixed-Use District.

NORTHERN KENTUCKY AREA DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (NKADD)

This eight-county regional planning district updated the Community Economic Development Strategy to include the Covington Central Riverfront District. This was required to receive the EDA planning grant. NKADD updated the Community Economic Development Strategy in 2022 to include the Covington Central Riverfront project which was required to receive the EDA planning grant for design and engineering.

KENTON COUNTY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (PDS)

PDS has granted a Waiver of Subdivision Regulations in February 2022. PDS will review private property building permits as development progresses.

SANITATION DISTRICT NO. 1 (SD1)

Approved Storm Water Management Plan prior to demolition; conducts monthly inspections to ensure compliance with Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control (EPSC) Plan. The proposed stormwater and sewer plans were developed while working closely with SD1. Applications for a Land Disturbance Permit, Request for Sanitary Sewer Capacity, and Sanitary Sewer Construction Permit were all submitted in January 2024.

NORTHERN KENTUCKY WATER DISTRICT (NKWD)

The proposed water utility plans are currently in final review with NKWD and permitting will continue through March 2024.

OHIO-KENTUCKY-INDIANA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (MPO)

OKI and the City are coordinating to identify available and eligible funding sources for CCR, both through the regional TIP and through the region's ThriveTogether CPRG Plan Steering Committee.

US ARMY CORP OF ENGINEERS (USACE)

During initial meetings with the USACE at their Louisville, KY office in the Fall of 2022, Corps staff expressed support for the proposed connection to the flood wall and levee. The geotech permitting process is currently underway for the levee area. The Section 408 Permit Application and Drilling and Invasive Program Plan (DIPP) was submitted in November 2023. The Risk Management Center (RMC) conducted a review and provided feedback in January 2024. Responses and a revised DIPP are expected to be submitted to the USACE and RMC in February 2024. The 100% construction documents were submitted to the USACE for

a preliminary review to begin the Section 408 permitting process for construction. The Consultants and the USACE are currently working to determine exact NEPA requirements. A Section 408 Permit application for construction is expected to be submitted after the final geotech report is complete.

KENTUCKY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY

The Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority approved the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in May 2022 and pledged \$45.5 million in future taxes to be directed to the project area. The funds may be used for bond debt, future improvements, repair, replacement, etc.)

KENTUCKY TRANSPORTATION CABINET (KYTC)

Will review and approve traffic study and signalization plan between August and June 2024 and will approve traffic light signalization in the site.

DETAILED PROJECT SCHEDULE

The project schedule is outlined below with construction bidding for Phase II ready to proceed in March 2025. Phase I bidding closed on February 7, 2024. The contract is expected to be awarded and approved by the end of March 2024, with construction beginning for Phase I in April 2024. All real property and right-of-way acquisition has been completed in accordance with 49 CFR part 24, 23 CFR part 710, and no additional right-of-way acquisition is necessary.

Phase	2024												2025	2026
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec			
Due Diligence-Site Investigation Phase														
Traffic Impact Study														
Phase I														
Permit, Bidding & Procurement														
Construction														
Phase II														
RAISE GRANT AWARD II NOTIFICATION														
NEPA Process														
Permit, Bidding & Procurement														
Construction														
USACE Permitting for Geotech at Levee Area														
Levee Area Geotech														
USACE Permitting / NEPA for Levee Area Sitework														

RAISE grant funds will be obligated well in advance of the administrative deadline of June 30, 2027, and construction would begin upon obligation of grant funds; funds will be spent expeditiously once construction starts, with all funds expended well in advance of the deadline September 30, 2032.

TIMING OF FUTURE PHASES

Phases are outlined in the Project Description section, as well as the Benefit Cost Analysis. Based on the City's market study and the Northern Kentucky Convention and Visitors Bureau study, the Convention Center expansion and new convention hotel will be in later stages; however, the Convention Center has obligated funds to purchase the 1.7 acres sooner and will activate the green space, then expand at a later date. \$4 million for the purchase of this land from the City of Covington is in the proposal for the FY 2025 State of Kentucky General Fund Budget.



FIGURE 16 OVERALL SITE RENDERING

ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The main risks to the project are typical of new developments as outlined in the Benefit Costs Narrative:

- Project construction may take longer and cost more than anticipated;
- Developers may misjudge future real estate markets in the region;
- The “spread” between construction and operating costs and rents may narrow from local or national causes before the project is completed;
- National or regional credit or economic conditions may affect the ability of private investors to finance subsequent phases of the project.

However, the time scale for such risks is relatively narrow, and much of the risk will be borne by private investors. The project generates sufficient benefits so that the successful completion of Phases I-II will justify the initial investment. If Phases III–VI look less useful in the future, they can be revised or deferred consistent with future economic conditions.

EXPERIENCE WITH DOT DISCRETIONARY GRANTS

The City of Covington and current staff have experience managing federal discretionary grants from the US Economic Development Administration, the US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Administration, and the US Department of Health and Human Services. The City and current staff also have decades of experience managing federal entitlement grants, including American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) grants from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Lastly, the City and current staff have extensive experience managing federal pass through grants via the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and OKI Regional Council of Governments.

COMPLIANCE FEDERAL GUIDELINES

The project will comply with all applicable Federal requirements including but not limited to Buy America provisions, ADA regulations, Civil Rights requirements, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), and/or the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR). The City’s policies and procedures are in compliance with these requirements and city staff have extensive experience with federal grants compliance.

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TO VIEW THE APPENDIX
SCAN OR VISIT:



<https://thecovky.gov/covington-central-riverfront/raise/>

TO VIEW THE CCR
PROJECT WEBSITE SCAN
OR VISIT:



<https://thecovky.gov/covington-central-riverfront/>