



# Wetland Park & Nature Trail

Community-Led Resilience in the Lower Ninth Ward



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING

JULY 8, 2021  
5:30 – 7:30 PM

ANDREW P. SANCHEZ & COPELIN-BYRD MULTI-SERVICE CENTER



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*Contact Info*

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## OVERVIEW

Sankofa Community Development Corporation (Sankofa) hosted a community meeting to envision the development of Wetland Park and Nature Trail in the Lower Ninth Ward. First, participants learned about the history of the Wetland Park and current plans to activate the full 40-acre area adjacent to the Bayou Bienvenue Triangle. Participants were then engaged in interactive activities to explore programming that would support full use of the site. The engagement process led to a shared understanding of preferred community options for relaxation, environmental education, economic development, and recreation for all to enjoy.

The aim of this engagement is to facilitate the co-creation of a vision that brings together the best ideas and resources for the Wetland Park that will connect residents and small businesses to outdoor recreation, STEM education, and green infrastructure job training. Based on stakeholder input, Sankofa will finalize an implementation plan that will aide in site planning, program prioritization, and will serve as a base line for fundraising efforts to underwrite the completion of the Wetland Park.

### Meeting Summary

The community meeting was held on Thursday, July 8, 2021, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. In total, nearly 50 community stakeholders were in attendance.

After a brief round of introductions, Rashida Ferdinand, Executive Director of Sankofa presented an overview of the organization inclusive of its history, mission, vision, and health-centered community and economic development program areas.

### About Sankofa CDC

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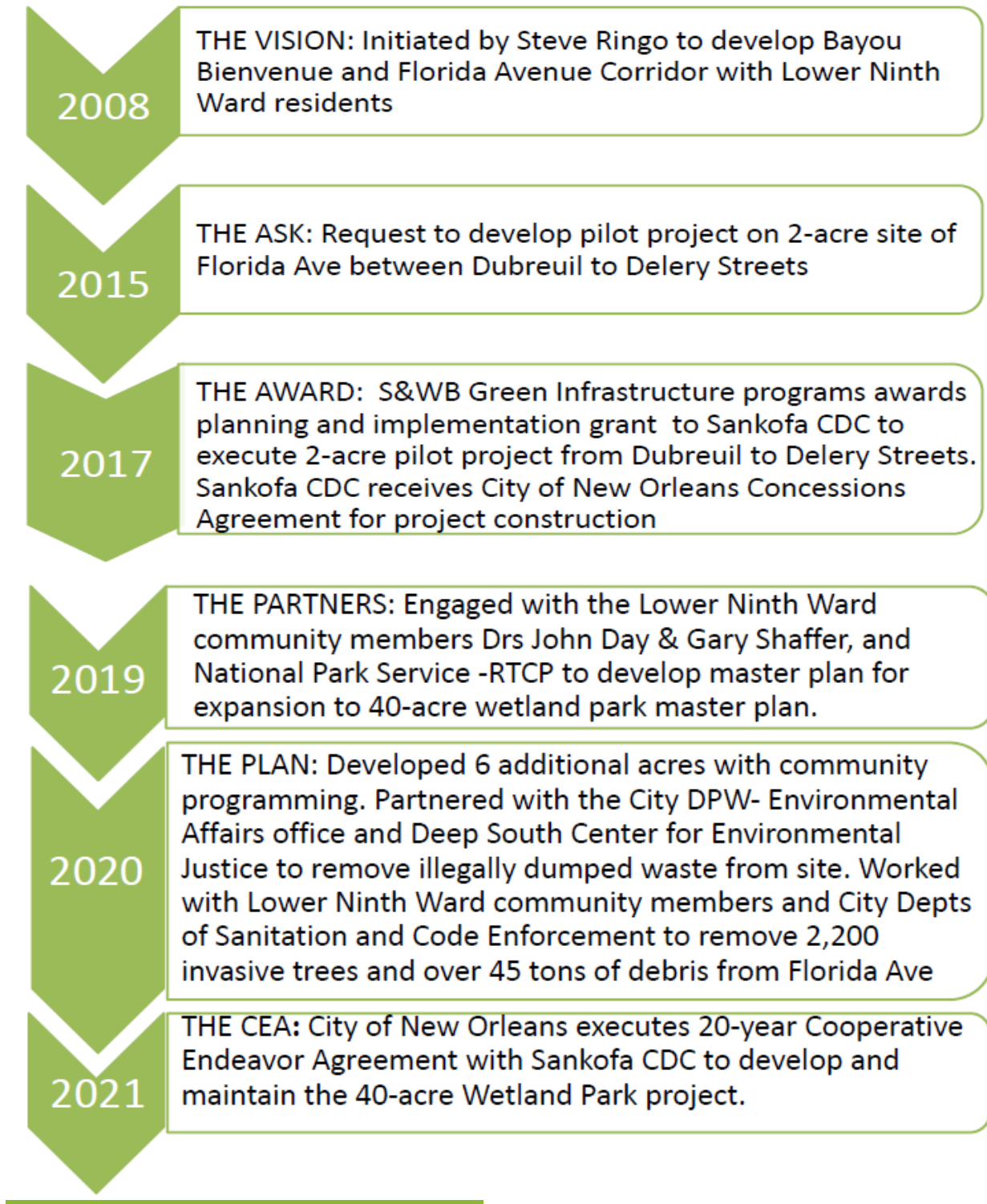
#### Building healthier communities for generations to come

- A 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2008 by Lower Ninth Ward residents committed to revitalization of the area
- Works with residents and other community stakeholders to identify locally-felt social challenges to address them in thoughtful, culturally-competent ways
- Addresses the social determinants of health to create a local environment that promotes positive health outcomes and builds healthier communities for generations to come

# HISTORY

The following development timeline of the Wetland Park was presented. It was noted in 2008, the first seed was planted to create the Wetland Park by Lower Ninth Ward residents.

## Development Timeline



# THE OPPORTUNITIES

The following opportunities are identified as the highest impact and best uses for the Wetland Park:



## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Green Jobs & Green Infrastructure**

*Promoting a workforce development pipeline of green infrastructure jobs supported by skills training and job retention programming.*

This opportunity is inclusive of groundskeeping, horticulture, gardening, marsh restoration, plant and lawn specialization and more. These jobs, related skills and infrastructure development are growing in demand as the City launches new green infrastructure initiatives.



## **ECONOMIC IMPACT: Filling the Gap**

*Levering investments in green infrastructure to circulate funds in the local economy to bolster housing development, small business development and ecotourism.*

This opportunity will increase the number of housing units, commercial storefronts, and visitors with spending power in the neighborhood.



## **RESILIENCY PLANNING: Comprehensive Recovery Opportunities**

*Developing green infrastructure that links resilience to community development.*

This opportunity will reduce the risk of flooding and increases the community's ability to recover.



**“Fishing saved us...just being out there with the older men made a difference in our lives.”**

*- Errol Joseph, Resident*

Economic data highlighted below is referenced from the 2021Sankofa CDC Workforce Development Plan: Economic Impacts and Co-Benefits prepared by Earth Economics.

## The Opportunity Green Jobs Training

Green Infrastructure  
job training with  
placement of 200  
trainees into green  
infrastructure jobs  
from 2022- 2025



Economic data highlighted below is referenced from the 2021Sankofa CDC Workforce Development Plan: Economic Impacts and Co-Benefits prepared by Earth Economics.

## Economic Impact Recreation Spending from Visitors to Wetland Park

Year	Visitors per year	Spending (Low)	Spending (High)	Annual Visitor Spending (Low)	Annual Visitor Spending (High)
2021	2,912	\$0	\$8	\$-	\$23,296
2022	5,200	\$0	\$8	\$-	\$41,600
2023	10,400	\$0	\$8	\$-	\$83,200
2024	13,000	\$8	\$21	\$104,000	\$273,000
2025	15,600	\$8	\$21	\$124,800	\$327,600
2026	18,200	\$8	\$21	\$145,600	\$382,200
2027	20,800	\$8	\$21	\$166,400	\$436,800
2028	23,400	\$8	\$21	\$187,200	\$491,400
2029	26,000	\$21	\$154	\$546,000	\$4,004,000
2030	28,600	\$21	\$154	\$600,600	\$4,404,400
2031	31,200	\$21	\$154	\$655,200	\$4,804,800



# PROGRAMMING & DESIGN

## CURRENT STATUS

Wetland Park Director, Tricia LeBlanc provided an overview of the current and planned highlights of the Wetland Park. She noted 400 invasive Chinese Tallow trees were removed and replaced with over 300 Bald Cypress and 200 herbaceous trees. This has allowed over 81,000 gallons of water to flow into the area and support a habitat for many types of plants, butterflies, birds and other wildlife.



## FUTURE EXPANSION

The development of the 40 acres of land presents the opportunity for students, local residents, and visitors to enjoy walking, jogging, canoeing, and other physical activities in a nature setting.







**“I am excited about the Sankofa Wetland Park’s development and the potential of this infrastructure and economic development project, and I support it 1000 percent.”**

*- Louisiana Senator Joe Bouie, District 3*





# ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

## INTRODUCTION

After the presentation, meeting participants were engaged in an activity to brainstorm opportunities to advance the strategic vision for the Wetland Park. Each table was equipped with activity sheets outlining the highest impact and best uses of the site. Participants were asked to discuss and prioritize their preferences for the Wetland Park. After the breakout discussions, the entire group came back together to share key takeaways from their conversations and to discuss next steps.

## TABLE ACTIVITY

The following activity sheets were developed outline each project opportunity:



### COMMUNITY USAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Kayak & Canoeing
- Fishing
- Picnic & Rest Areas
- Exercise Programs
- Bike Trails
- Walking Trails
- Nature & Meditation Walks
- Special Event Space



### YOUTH EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

- School Field Trips
- Nature Play Activities
- Fishing
- Nature Walks
- Exercise Programs
- Boy & Girl Scouts Activities



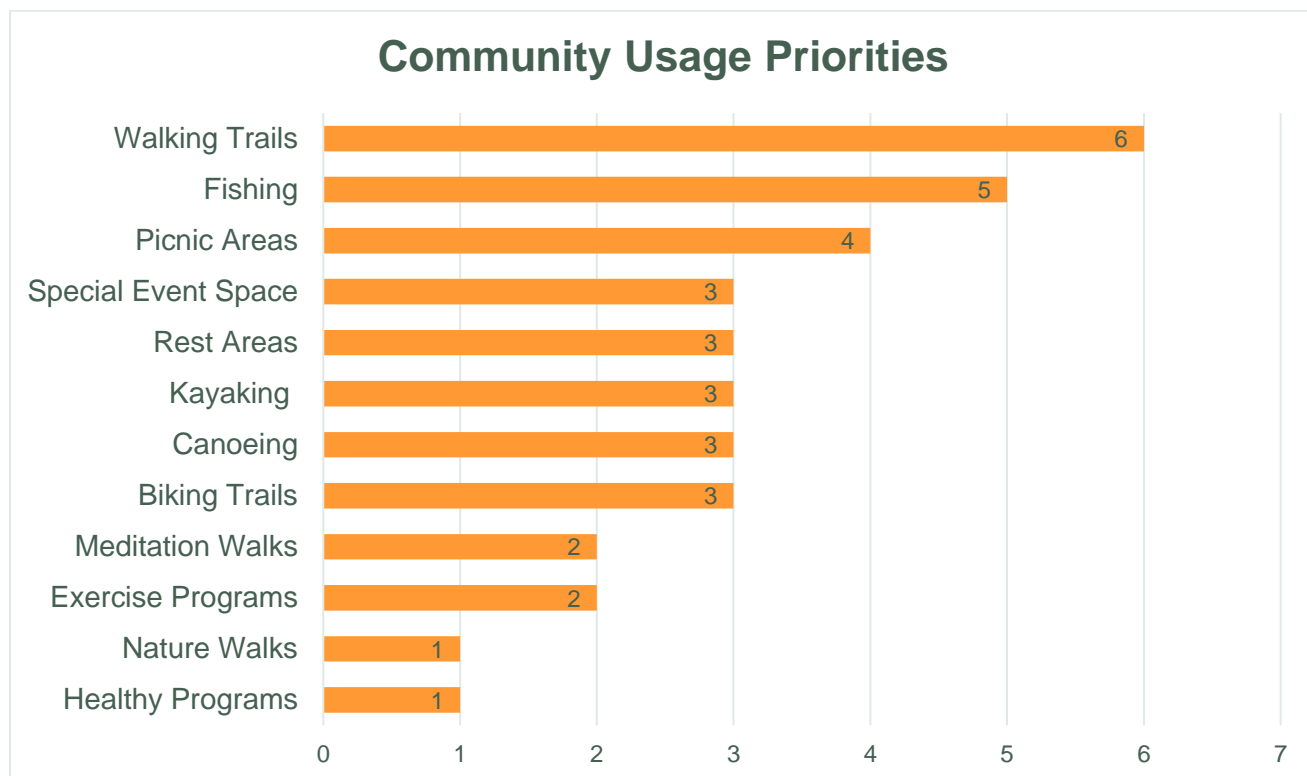
### ECONOMIC IMPACT OPPORTUNITIES

- Green Job Training
- Green Jobs
- Eco-Tourism
- Investment Funds
- Corridor Improvements
- Neighborhood Improvements
- Water Retention Improvements
- Small Business Partnerships

## COMMUNITY INPUT

### ***Opportunities for Community Usage at the Wetland Park***

Overwhelming when asked to identify what opportunities could support a culture of inclusivity and connection, participants prioritized uses of the Park that promoted walking trails, fishing and gathering in the form of picnicking. Next, participants envisioned special event spaces, rest areas and the opportunity to kayak, bike and canoe. Lastly health and exercise programming were also noted.

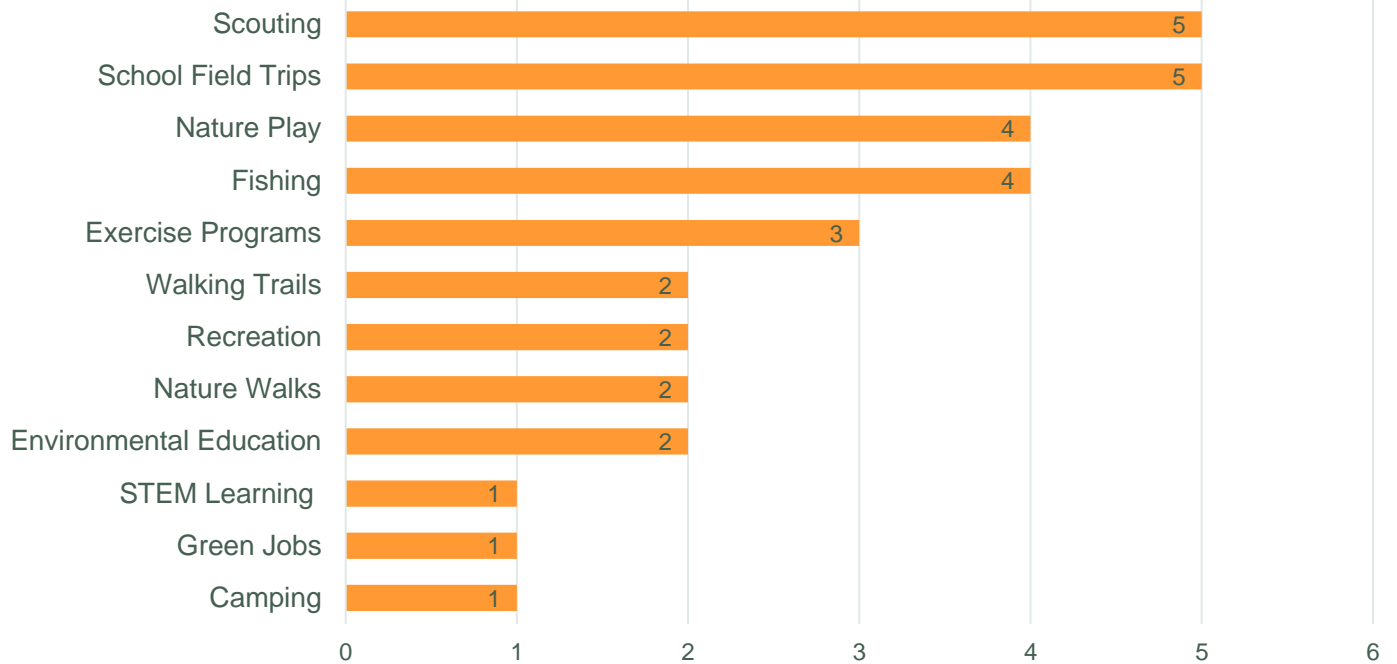


### ***Opportunities for Youth Education at the Wetland Park***

Overwhelming when asked to identify what opportunities could support children and youth education, participants prioritized uses of the Park that facilitate scouting activities and school field trips for grades K-12. Next, participants envisioned educational programming that promotes nature play and fishing. Lastly walking trails, nature walks, environmental education, STEM learning, job training and camping were also noted.



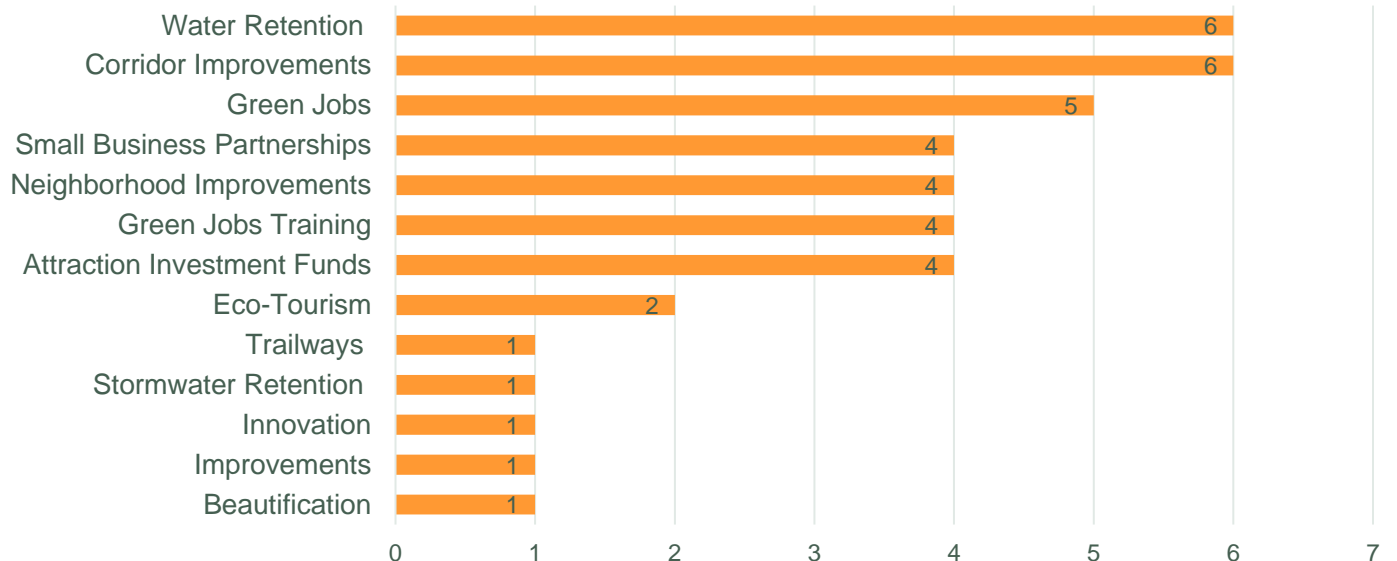
## Youth Education Priorities



## ***Opportunities for Economic Development Impact at the Wetland Park***

Overwhelming when asked to identify what opportunities could promote economic development at the Park, participants prioritized water retention uses and corridor improvements. Next, participants ranked green jobs, green job training, fund development and small business partnerships. Lastly, eco-tourism, trailways and area beautification was also validated.

## Economic Development Priorities



# THE VISION

## Florida Avenue Corridor



**“For decades, this section of Florida Ave was an eyesore in the Lower Ninth Ward. It was [an] area of blight and illegal dumping. Through Sankofa’s leadership, the area is being developed into [a] wetland park and nature trail. As a resident of the Lower Ninth Ward, I am thankful for the work Sankofa has completed in the transformation of [an] area of neglect into an area of beauty. I am excited about the future of the Wetland Park and the positive impact it will have on our community.”**

*– Dawn Davis Lower Ninth Ward resident*



# SUMMARY & TIMELINE

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this work thus far to brainstorm about project values and vision and programming. This engagement builds upon feedback collected from the previous meetings and culminate in the validation of final plans to activate the full 40-acre area adjacent to the Bayou Bienvenue Triangle. This final summary document will be shared and distributed directly to everyone who has participated in the process.



Below is a timeline of our projected engagement process:

