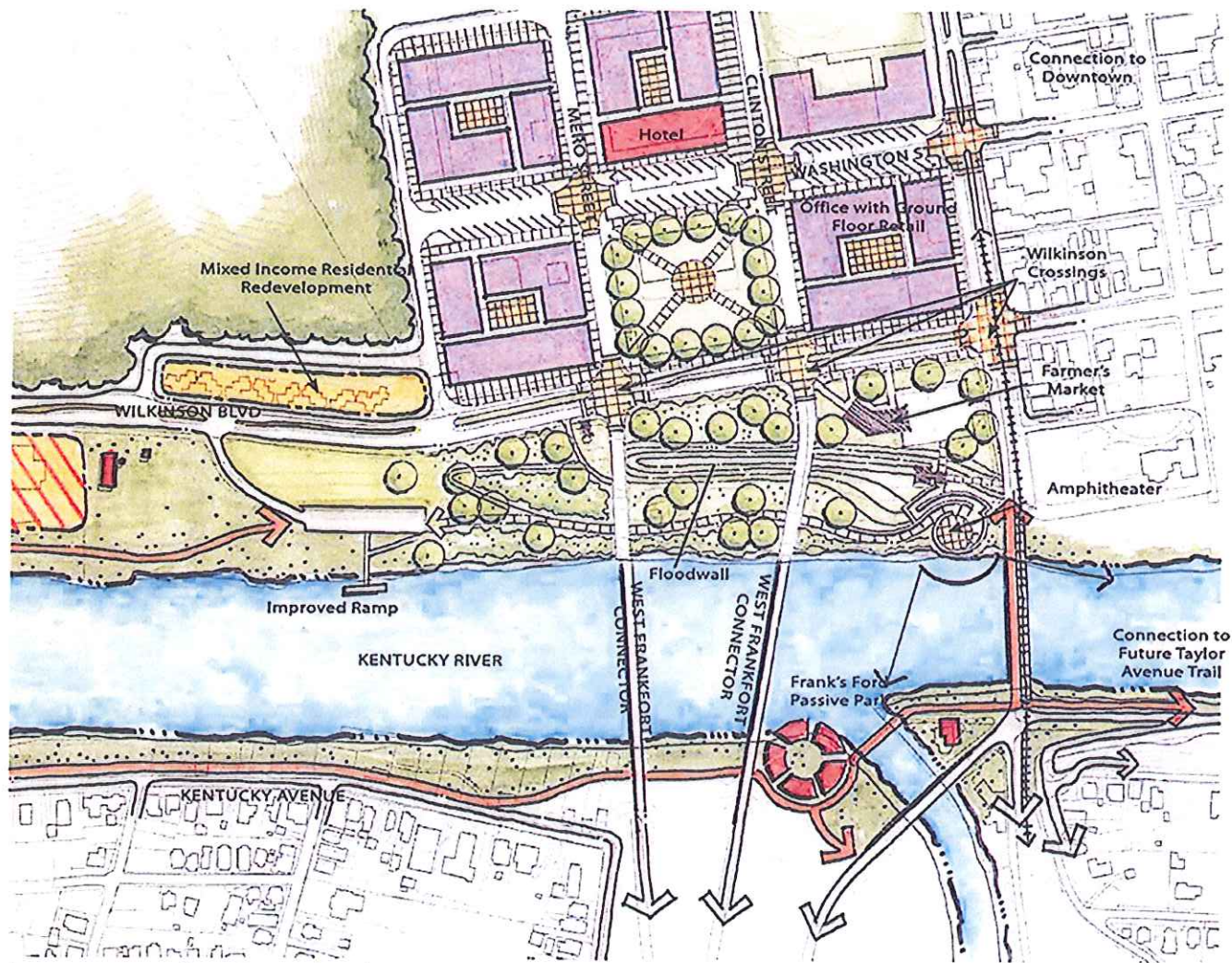


3.4 WILKINSON BOULEVARD/BELLEPOINT NEIGHBORHOOD

The Riverfront Development Committee's third priority is the northern end of the study area—from the Three Bridges to Buffalo Trace Distillery. Adjacent to downtown and extending along Wilkinson Boulevard, the area is a mix of public and private redevelopment parcels along Wilkinson Boulevard, River View Park, the Bellepoint neighborhood and Lock and Dam 4.

This plan recommends public investments in open spaces, private redevelopment of former industrial parcels on Wilkinson Boulevard, Bellepoint neighborhood revitalization and a connected multi-use trail system.



Improvements to River View Park and Capital Plaza Complex

River View Park and Capital Plaza

River View Park is Downtown Frankfort's largest open space—a front lawn that is adjacent to the Kentucky River, the Capital Plaza Complex, and a concentration of historic and cultural amenities. City and Commonwealth festivals such as the Kentucky Folklife Festival and the farmer's market occur within the park. Unfortunately, due the floodwall that runs through River View Park, the open space does not fully integrate the river with downtown. In fact, the majority of the park is not accessible to downtown Frankfort, and it does not serve as a downtown gathering space. Rather, the grounds of the Old State Capitol are the site of summer concerts and outdoor events.

This plan recommends strategic investments in River View Park and the Capital Plaza Complex to increase visibility and usage of River View Park. A central open space will also be created to provide a clear identity to the Capital Plaza Complex and serve as both a gateway and gathering space for downtown.

The floodwall provides physical protection for downtown from rising river waters. More importantly, the floodwall provides psychological protection for downtown residents and business owners, many of whom still vividly remember the destruction of past flooding. However, the floodwall splits River View Park in two, creating two open spaces that are disconnected and serve entirely different purposes. One-half of River View Park will address the river, the other half the Capital Plaza Complex. These recommendations accept this dual role and suggest methods to enhance the open space's effectiveness.

The open space on the river side of the floodwall should be improved to bring more people down to the river. Since the river and open space are out of sight, riverfront amenities must be destinations in themselves.

Downtown Frankfort does not have a formal performance space. The levee at the south end of River View Park provides an opportunity to create a riverfront amphitheater. The stage can be placed at the river's edge and informal seating created

Section Highlights

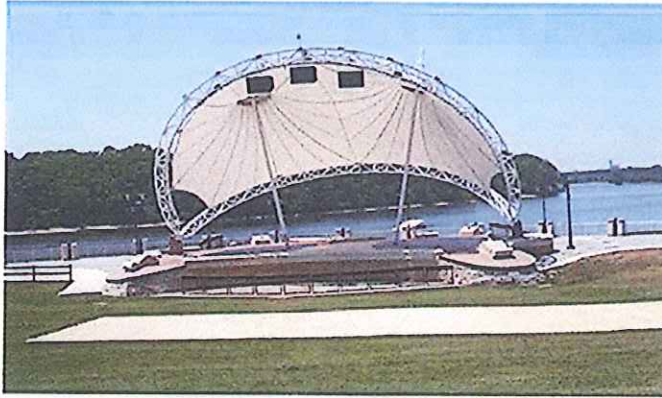
- *River View Park is in reality two parks split by the floodwall.*
- *River View Park should be programmed and improved with an amphitheater built on the floodwall.*
- *Capital Plaza Complex should be redeveloped with a central gathering space.*



Half of River View Park is inaccessible to both the river and downtown.



Indianapolis, Indiana



Montgomery, Alabama

Potential designs for riverfront amphitheaters: All are built within riverfront parks in state capitals and feature structures that can be removed during a flood threat.

Indianapolis, Indiana



This Des Moines, Iowa, amphitheater is located within a public riverfront park. The floodwall can be seen at the upper edges of the park.



through grassed terraces built as part of the levee. The summer concerts at the Old State Capitol are a tradition that should remain, but an expansion of the performance schedule should incorporate the river amphitheater. The amphitheater can host celebrations and festivals that feature both the river and that just use the river and the Three Bridges as a backdrop.

The amphitheater would be adjacent to the Corner in Celebrities Historic District and its cultural and historic destinations, thus it should support and connect to these amenities. Like the existing riverfront trail, the river amphitheater will be hidden from view by the levee. Elements to promote the amphitheater's location should be incorporated into signage along Wilkinson Boulevard and into the existing pavilion on top of the floodwall. The farmer's market parking lot will provide convenient parking for amphitheater events.

The backdrop for the river amphitheater will be the Kentucky River, multiple historically significant bridges and Frank's Ford. The Benson Creek Bridge, a Whipple trapezoidal truss built in 1871, was preserved in part through funding from the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act and reopened to pedestrian traffic in 1995.

Crossing the Kentucky River is the Broadway Bridge built in 1910. It was the only pin-connected Baltimore Petit truss bridge constructed on a Kentucky highway. Located immediately adjacent to the Broadway Bridge and sharing abutments is a substantial Pennsylvania Petit through-truss railroad bridge that is still in use. While the Broadway Bridge is open to pedestrian traffic, it is underutilized and under maintained.

Improvements to the Broadway Bridge related to preparations for the Equestrian Games should not only improve the bridge aesthetically but also functionally. The renovation of the bridge should maintain its historic character while improving the real and perceived safety of the structure. The Broadway Bridge should be improved to strengthen the pedestrian and bicycle connection from downtown to the Taylor Avenue area. Opportunities for Transportation Enhancements funding should



Amphitheater seating can be built onto the floodwall.



The Broadway Bridge will be the backdrop for amphitheater performances.

be explored with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and the Federal Highway Administration for improvements to the Broadway Bridge.

The view from the amphitheater will include the confluence of Benson Creek and the Kentucky River. It is thought that the original Frank's Ford was located at the northwest point of this intersection. An existing open space includes a trail and a bench. This park should be redesigned as a passive park along the riverfront trail that celebrates and interprets the founding of the City.

Improvements in River View Park along Benson Creek and at the Frank's Ford site have the potential of disturbing these historic sites and altering views of the Three Bridges. However, revitalizing this portion of the Kentucky River corridor will lead to increased use by the public and therefore greater public awareness of historic resources. All improvement to riverfront open spaces should be designed carefully to protect cultural and archeological resources.



Riverfront parks and trails are opportunities for public art, and historic and environmental education and interpretation.

On the other side of the floodwall, the open space along Wilkinson Boulevard looks attractive to those driving alongside, but it is neither usable open space nor contributive to the Capital Plaza Complex and downtown. The Capital Plaza Complex structures are inward focused, using Fountain Place Shops as its central gathering space. Fountain Place Shops is elevated from street level, appears to be private and is disconnected from both historic Frankfort and the Kentucky River. The paucity of retail at Fountain Place Shops and the few commuters that leave their state government offices for lunch or a walk confirm that it is not an effective open space.

The Capital Plaza Hotel is between the Kentucky River and Fountain Place Shops. Due to its location at the intersections of Wilkinson Boulevard and the West Frankfort Connector (Mero and Clinton Streets), the tower is the gateway structure for those entering downtown on these two arterials. The river is visible for those lucky enough to rent a room on the river side higher than the floodwall, but is otherwise not visible for the public on the east side of the floodwall.

The Commonwealth is considering a plan to incrementally reconstruct the Capital Plaza Complex, replacing the office towers with a series of medium height structures. The Capital Plaza Complex reconstruction offers an opportunity to better utilize the east half of River View Park, create a usable central gathering public square for the Capital Plaza Complex and create an attractive gateway for those entering downtown from the north and west.

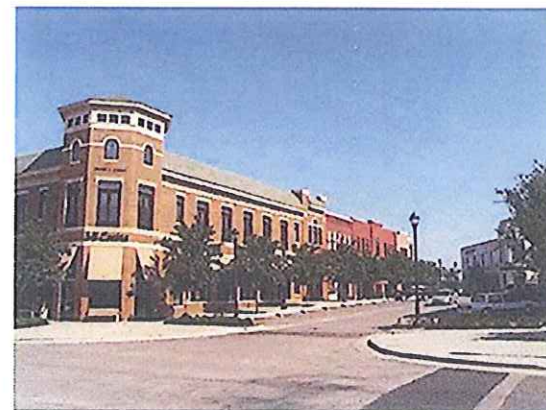
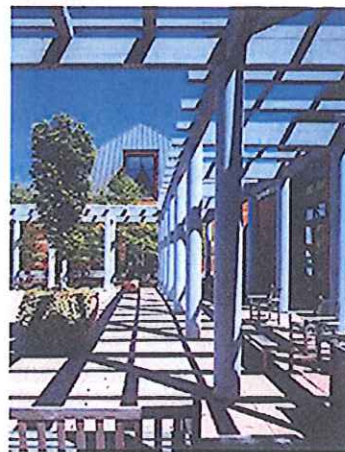
As the Capital Plaza Complex is redeveloped, Washington Street should be re-established, and the block bordered by Wilkinson Boulevard, Mero Street, Washington Street and Clinton Street converted to a public open space at the ground level. Like traditional urban squares, office structures with retail uses on the ground floor should ring the park. Retail around the public green will be much more visible and thus more successful. A hotel can front Washington Street and the square, still providing river views for those on the upper floors, but also taking advantage of a block-size front lawn.

The open plaza should be the site of riverfront festivals and other downtown events. The plaza should be highly programmed by the Tourist and Convention Commission, Downtown Frankfort, Inc., and other downtown programming groups. This space should be the location for activities that attract families and children, with amenities such as a play fountain or a carousel. Over time, the farmer's market may relocate to this more centralized site.

In order to entice downtown visitors, workers, and residents to walk to the new park's amenities and programming, the Capital Plaza Complex must be reconstructed with the pedestrian in mind. The Capital Plaza Complex's superblocks should be broken into walkable, smaller scale blocks that connect to historic Frankfort to the south. Sidewalks should be wide with significant streetscape trees. Intersections at all four corners of the public square must be designed to highlight the pedestrian and make them comfortable. Users of the new park should feel comfortable crossing Wilkinson Boulevard to visit the farmer's market site and River View Park.



Potential character for redevelopment in the Wilkinson Boulevard corridor; to be defined by corridor design overlay, a new building should address both the road and the river.



As noted earlier, all entrances to downtown are confusing and do not create a positive first impression. The new civic green will be an effective entry gateway for those entering downtown from the West Frankfort Connector and Wilkinson Boulevard. Tourists and visitors will first see that downtown Frankfort is an active, pedestrian-oriented, and mixed-use center and fountains, statuary or other civic monuments in the park will create a positive first impression.

Fountain Place Shops does not contribute to downtown. A new ground-level gathering space between Wilkinson Boulevard and Washington Street will be a centering and identifiable civic core of the Capital Plaza Complex redevelopment. The recommendations shift the non-taxable urban open space to a prominent location, but in turn increase the retail attractiveness and property values of the five blocks that front it.

Wilkinson Boulevard

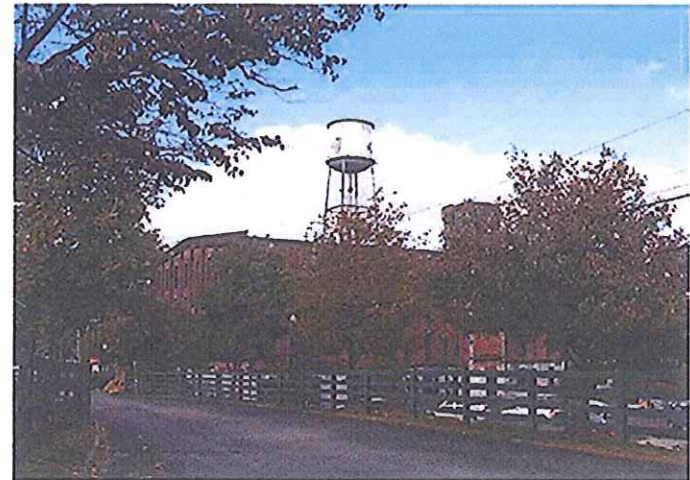
Along Wilkinson Boulevard between River View Park and the historic Glen Willis House are formerly river-focused industrial uses under both public and private ownership. These parcels present an opportunity for redevelopment that expands downtown's commercial core and leads to Buffalo Trace Distillery—a major employer and destination for community members and tourists alike.

Wilkinson Boulevard is the arterial with the greatest amount of traffic in the riverfront study area. Due to the minimal depth of developable land along this “strip” and the parking expectations of retailers, this section of Wilkinson Boulevard has the greatest potential for office or residential development or a mix of these uses.

The existing River View Park trail should be extended north along the river to Buffalo Trace Distillery. As redevelopment occurs on each parcel, the City should seek access for the riverfront multimodal trail. The trail should extend around Jim's Seafood Restaurant and the Kentucky River Mills historic site, along the riverfront behind the Frazier Road neighborhood to Buffalo Trace Distillery. This trail extension is a high priority of WalkBike Frankfort.

Section Highlights

- *The strip of land between Wilkinson Boulevard and the river should be residential, office or a mix of these uses.*
- *The Glen Willis House should be preserved and integrated into the redevelopment.*
- *A mid-corridor open space should be a focal point along the riverfront trail.*



Buffalo Trace Distillery Entry Road



Glen Willis House

Redevelopment along Wilkinson Boulevard will be visible to a great number of motorists. As an entry gateway into downtown, special care should be taken that redevelopment meets a higher design expectation. The City should create a design overlay for the Wilkinson Boulevard corridor that controls how development addresses Wilkinson Boulevard and the river, how multiple transportation modes are supported and how buildings should establish a higher baseline for building scale, materials, windows, and openings.

The Tourist and Convention Commission owns a parcel in the middle of the Wilkinson Boulevard strip and intends to keep it a form of open space and a use that will attract tourists. The Tourist and Convention Commission parcel will serve as an effective formal vehicular entry into the redevelopment strip, also ensuring views of the river from Wilkinson Boulevard. Seasonal flooding should be considered when designing this public open space.

At the northern end of the redevelopment corridor, the historic Glen Willis House should be preserved and incorporated into redevelopment plans. The Glen Willis House is a one and one-half-story brick dwelling built circa 1815. It was originally designed to face the Kentucky River, but was reoriented in the mid nineteenth century to face Leestown Pike (Wilkinson Boulevard) and was also expanded/ remodeled in the Italianate style. Recently a restaurant, the property can be a landmark destination along a riverfront trail that follows the banks of the Kentucky River towards Buffalo Trace Distillery. The riverfront trail will improve access to the Glen Willis House, since currently the only safe way to access it is by automobile.

Kentucky River Mills Company Site—Industrial Archaeology Site

The Kentucky River Mills site, located on the east side of Kentucky River Lock and Dam 4, provides unique insight into nineteenth century industries in Kentucky and along the Kentucky River in Frankfort, specifically. The hemp industry expanded rapidly during the first half of the nineteenth century, and the Kentucky River Mills Company complex represents the last vestiges of a facility built and operated for that purpose. It was one of the largest hemp manufacturing facilities in the state. The Kentucky River Mills Company continued to operate until 1950, long after most other hemp manufacturers had disappeared.

Several factors allowed the Kentucky River Mills Company to stay in business for so long. This company utilized water power as a cheap source of energy, processed sisal and jute to supplement its income, and was subsidized by federal orders for oakum and rope during World Wars I and II. All that remains of the mill are the foundations for the machinery created to harness the water power for the factory. This included the remains of a stone and concrete mill race, three wooden trash racks, and a turbine house and wheel.



Remains of the Kentucky River Mills Site

Section Highlights

- *A riverfront trail along Kentucky Avenue will better connect Bellepoint with downtown.*
- *The Lock Tender's House Complex should be renovated into a historic destination.*



The existing riverfront trail does not connect to Bellepoint in an accessible manner.

Bellepoint Neighborhood and Lock Tender's House Complex

With its location, historic character, and affordable prices, the Bellepoint neighborhood has the potential to be a surprising discovery for downtown workers and state government employees. Among other neighborhood revitalization efforts, Bellepoint should be better linked to downtown and the rest of the riverfront. Currently, the neighborhood is an effective peninsula, with only one connection off the West Frankfort Connector. Large trucks travel through the neighborhood on Kentucky Avenue to access the sewage treatment plant and humane society.

Bicycle and pedestrian access is difficult and intimidating. While pedestrians can access the neighborhood under the two West Frankfort Connector bridges, bicycles can only access the neighborhood by traveling on the West Frankfort Connector, a very busy highway. Within the neighborhood, walkers and bikers must share the narrow Kentucky Avenue with neighborhood vehicles and large trucks.

This plan recommends the extension of the existing riverfront trail north along the edge of the Bellepoint neighborhood. The right-of-way for the majority of the trail is already under City ownership. On the south end of Kentucky Avenue are a handful of residential structures located between Kentucky Avenue and the river. These are not considered historic structures, but they are of value and important to those living in them. As these structures become available according to the schedule of the parcel owners, the City should consider purchasing the parcels, demolishing the structures, and constructing a riverfront trail along the river.

Connecting the existing riverfront trail between the West Frankfort Connector bridges to the proposed Kentucky Avenue trail in an accessible manner for bicycles and those in wheelchairs will require redirecting the current trail along the river behind the structures at the corner of Kentucky Avenue and Benson Avenue. While not considered historic structures, these formerly commercial buildings are characteristic of the Bellepoint neighborhood and should be purchased by the City and repurposed. Potential new uses are neighborhood commercial uses such as retail or office.

Bellepoint Neighborhood

The Bellepoint neighborhood, which is located north of the West Frankfort Connector on the west side of the Kentucky River, contains a dense collection of mostly residential structures dating from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The oldest dwellings in the neighborhood are located along Kentucky Avenue facing the Kentucky River. Among the oldest are the J. Ziegler House, the John N. Crutcher House, the R.E. Grinstead House, the S.T. Pence House, the W.L. Pence House, 802 Kentucky Avenue and 804 Kentucky Avenue. All of these dwellings are estimated to have been constructed in the 1870s.

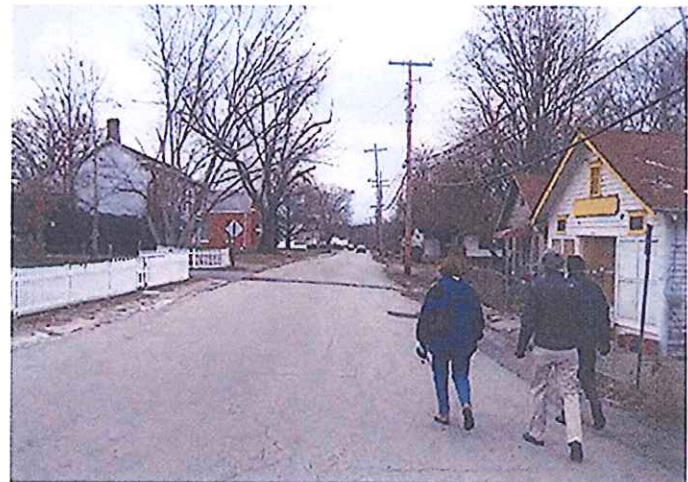
In some instances, non-historic residential structures have been built on the east side of Kentucky Avenue, blocking views of the river from a variety of historic sites. Despite such alterations to the historic viewshed, many of these properties maintain sufficient integrity to be considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

As a potential historic district, the Bellepoint neighborhood does not appear to exhibit the significance required for eligibility. Non-historic developments, alterations to and neglect of certain existing historic structures, demolition, and a wide range of construction dates reduce the neighborhood's general integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to varying degrees. Flooding has also been an issue over the years, and historic structures within the neighborhood have likely been inundated by the Kentucky River, leading to abandonment and demolition in some cases.

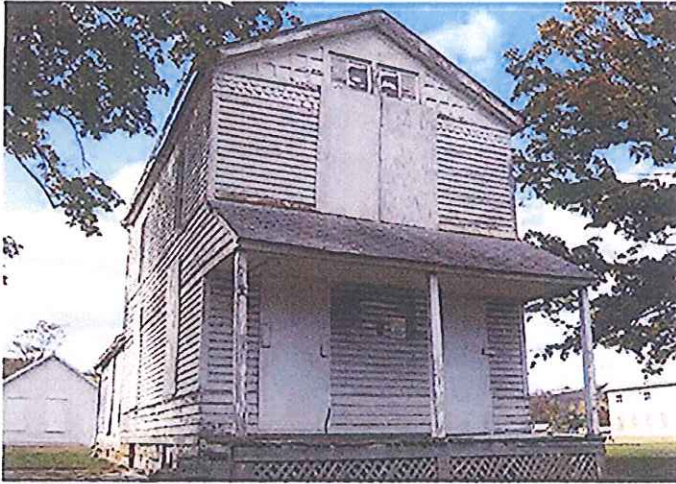
Opportunities for redevelopment in the neighborhood should be explored while being sensitive to individual National Register of Historic Places eligible historic sites.



Bellepoint Homes along Kentucky Avenue



Bellepoint Homes along Kentucky Avenue



Lock Tender's House



Lock Tender's House Complex

The riverfront trail improvements should be paired with other neighborhood revitalization strategies. The City and Bellepoint Neighborhood Association should prepare a full Bellepoint neighborhood revitalization plan, which should address the renovation of historic Kentucky Avenue structures and the integration of open spaces such as the high school football field and future recreational fields north of the neighborhood.

The riverfront trail should extend north along the river's west bank to the Lock Tender's House Complex, Lock and Dam 4, and future recreational fields. Lock and Dam 4 and associated lock tender's houses, storehouses, service buildings, and a barn are historically and functionally significant to Frankfort and the Kentucky River. Originally constructed by the Commonwealth between 1836 and 1842, the lock and dam system in Frankfort has been upgraded and improved many times over the course of its existence.

One of the most substantial upgrades occurred in 1880 when the Commonwealth granted control to the federal government over navigation and improvements on the Kentucky River. The federal government subsequently made substantial repairs to the system, essentially rebuilding Lock and Dam 4. Consisting of approximately 4.9 acres, the site was utilized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as a supply base for the entire Kentucky River lock and dam system, including a marine way (no longer extant) that was utilized for repairing the USACE work fleet. Buildings that were constructed on the site following its acquisition in 1880 include the lock tender's houses (circa 1890), concrete block service buildings (circa 1918), frame storehouses, and a frame garage/barn (circa 1930).

The Lock Tender's House Complex should be protected and preserved as another cultural resource that chronicles the history of Frankfort and the Kentucky River. The Lock Tender's House complex should be incorporated into the programming associated with the historical structures and museums of downtown Frankfort.

Connecting Wilkinson Boulevard and Bellepoint

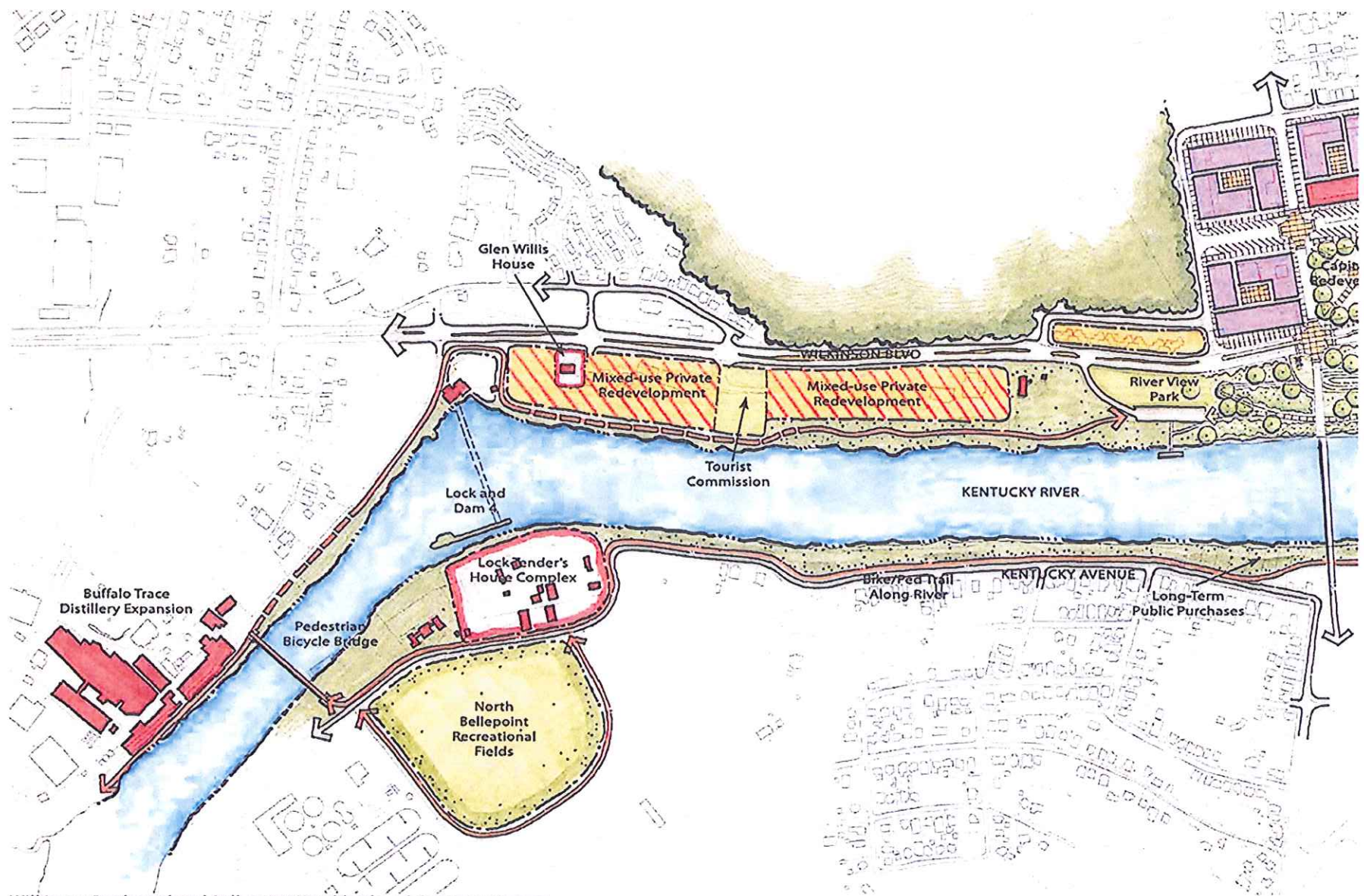
This plan recommends extending the existing River View Park trails north along both sides of the river along Wilkinson Boulevard and through the Bellepoint neighborhood. These trails should be connected by a pedestrian river crossing near Buffalo Trace Distillery to create a linked trail system.

A pedestrian/bicycle bridge should span from north of the Lock Tender's House Complex to the Buffalo Trace Distillery area, north of the dam. Like the river crossing between the Capitol Complex Parking Garage and Capital View Park, the Lock Tender's House Complex/Buffalo Trace Distillery pedestrian bridge should be above floodstage, allow for pedestrians and bicyclists to pass in comfort, and ideally be ADA accessible.

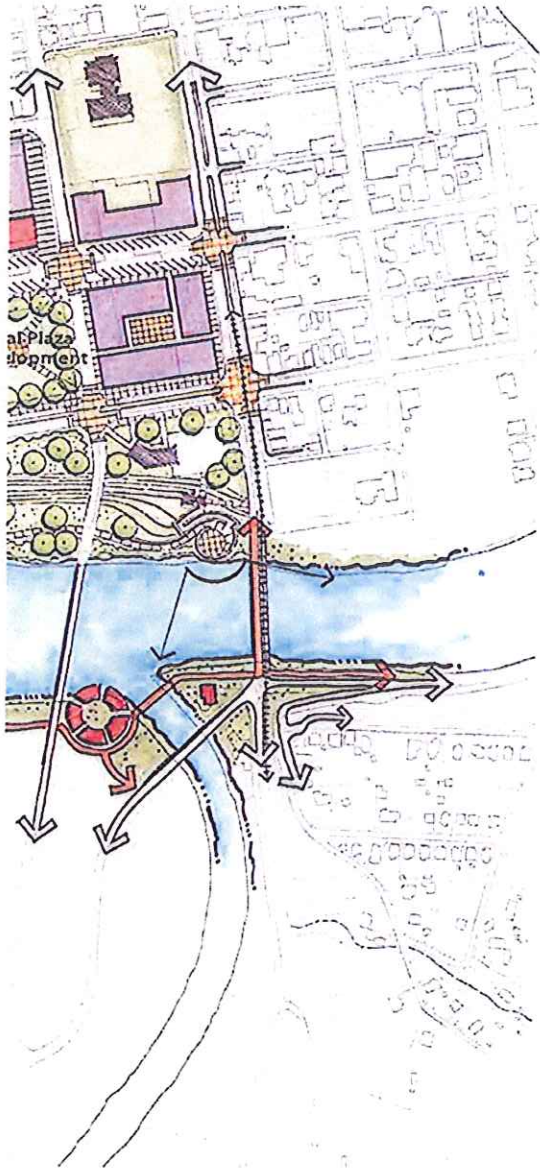
Frankfort's nineteenth and twentieth century industrial heritage is illustrated quite well in the relatively small geographical area between Lock and Dam 4 and Buffalo Trace Distillery. In this area, visitors can experience the lock and dam system, the Lock Tender's House Complex, the National Historic Landmark-eligible Buffalo Trace Distillery, its complex of industrial buildings and the Kentucky River Mills site. The riverfront trail will connect numerous cultural and archeological sites. There is a better chance of enhancing the aboveground historic sites than the potential adverse risks. A riverfront trail that links these sites and provides wayside signage that interprets this industrial heritage will create a strong recreational and educational opportunity.

Section Highlights

- *A pedestrian/bicycle bridge should connect the Lock Tender's House Complex with Buffalo Trace Distillery.*
- *The bridge will create a recreational and tourist walking loop.*



Wilkinson Boulevard and Bellepoint Neighborhood Concept Diagram



Wilkinson Boulevard and Bellepoint Neighborhoods