

## STAFF REPORT

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**Date:** September 25, 2024

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**Through:** Jackie Bryant, Interim City Manager

**Subject:** Staff Report (For Possible Action): Presentation, discussion, and potential approval of the Truckee River Vision Plan prepared by Dig Studio with regard to the cohesive plan of the Truckee River corridor and adjacent land within unincorporated Washoe County and the City of Reno from the California state line to the border of Sparks including direction to staff to pursue project opportunities outlined in the implementation plan including but not limited to safety, water and ecological systems, mobility and connectivity, parks and open space, land use and design, and public art.

**From:** Bryan McArdle, Revitalization Manager

**Department:** Public Works

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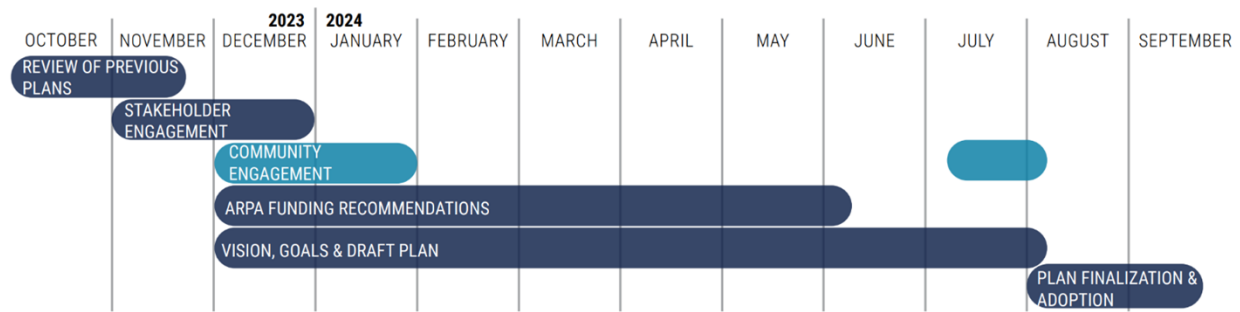
**Summary:**

On March 8, 2023, Council approved \$3M in State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) received through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to invest in the Truckee River Experience. On July 12, 2023, the City of Reno and Washoe County released the Truckee River Plan request for qualifications (RFQ) for a consultant to develop a cohesive plan for the Truckee River. The scope included land use and design, micromobility and connectivity, parks and open space, and safety and sustainability.

Dig Studio was the selected professional consultant to provide a cohesive plan of the Truckee River corridor and adjacent land within unincorporated Washoe County and the City of Reno from the California state line to the border of Sparks, Nevada. Council approved a contract in the amount of \$329,627 in SLFRF received through ARPA on May 19, 2021.

Through extensive review of previous plans, on-site analysis of the corridor, and over 30,000 points of engagement with stakeholders and the public, Dig has completed the Truckee River Vision Plan.

## PLANNING PROCESS



### Plan Overview:

- Truckee River Vision Statement:
  - The Truckee River Corridor will be a safe, clean, and vibrant source of joy and inspiration for the Reno and Washoe County community.
  - The river will serve as the heartbeat of the region, providing equitable access to all for recreation and enjoyment, ecological benefits to humans and wildlife alike, and acting as the front door to neighborhoods.
- What We Heard
  - 89 percent of participants ranked “Parks & Open Space” as extremely important.
  - The top three reasons people do not use the river are cleanliness and aesthetics, safety concerns, and lack of trail connectivity.
- Truckee River Vision Plan Goals
  - Goal 1: Encourage a clean and safe river
  - Goal 2: Build a connected river
  - Goal 3: Implement a cohesive plan for consistency in design and maintenance
  - Goal 4: Celebrate the river as a recreational asset
  - Goal 5: Prioritize the ecological function of the river
- Recommendations by Category
  - Safety, water, and ecological systems
  - Mobility and connectivity
  - Parks and open space
  - Land use and design
  - Public art
- Implementation plan with the level of priority, funding, and partnership recommendations, and estimated budget.

### Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Economic and Community Development

Arts, Parks, and Historical Resources

Infrastructure, Climate Change, and Environmental Sustainability

Public Safety

**Previous Council Action:**

June 5, 2024 – Council approved paint, Riverside Drive Park design, cantilever path design, and lighting design, purchase, and installation along the Truckee River Corridor using \$2,104,394 in SLFRF.

May 8, 2024 – Council approved trash cans, animal waste stations, and wayfinding projects along the Truckee River Corridor in an amount not to exceed \$266,000. Council also approved the allocation of \$300,000 of the \$3M in ARPA funding for activation, infrastructure, and maintenance at West Street Plaza.

October 25, 2023 – Council approved \$329,627 with a reimbursement of \$100,000 from Washoe County to hire Dig Studio to develop the Truckee River Vision Plan, including initial recommendations for \$2,770,373 in SLFRF for the Truckee River Corridor.

March 8, 2023 – Council approved the allocation of the remaining \$28,150,044.97 in SLFRF received through ARPA on May 19, 2021, including possible allocation to specific projects identified through the public, Council, and staff engagement process or general spending categories identified by Council as a priority for fund allocation by December 31, 2024.

**Background:**

Conducted over five months, the Truckee River Vision Plan is an effort to create a cohesive and strategic guide that will ensure the river corridor is a healthy, active, and beloved asset to the region for years to come. While many plans and policies have been created in the past, this project is the first time a corridor-wide strategy has been undertaken to prioritize the river as a place for recreation, an ecological asset, and a backbone for current and future development. This document does not replace previous efforts, but instead attempts to harness that energy and establish a shared community vision for a path forward, ensuring the Truckee River remains the heartbeat of the Reno and Washoe County region for years to come. These pages outline the planning process and the guiding vision, along with a full list of strategic recommendations.

The impetus for the Truckee River Vision Plan was an award to the City of Reno for infrastructure and design projects through ARPA. The Vision Plan process needed to quickly identify recommendations that could be contracted in 2024 and implemented with the \$2.7M allocated to the Truckee River. These ARPA funded recommendations are included in the full list of plan recommendations on the following pages. The ARPA projects include trash cans, animal waste stations, wayfinding projects, paint, Riverside Drive Park design, cantilever path design, and lighting design, purchase, and installation.

**Discussion:**

The overarching scope of the plan was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Truckee River

corridor and surrounding areas in unincorporated Washoe County and the City of Reno, extending from the California state line to the border of Sparks, Nevada. The analysis encompassed various aspects including **land use, design, micromobility, connectivity, parks, open spaces, ecology, and safety**. Collaborating closely with City of Reno staff, stakeholders, and the public, the plan establishes a unified vision for the future of the corridor and provides actionable recommendations along with a prioritized implementation plan.

The Truckee River Vision Plan recommendations are the culmination of months of stakeholder interviews, online and in-person community engagement, research on previous planning efforts, and an exhaustive study of the river corridor through Reno and Washoe County. Throughout the process, certain keywords and themes arose over and over, and these formed the basis for a future, cohesive vision and goals.

#### Plan Overview:

**Chapter 1:** Introduction sets the stage for the plan, explaining why it is needed, its vision, and the history of the Truckee River Watershed, and summarizes the planning process.

**Chapter 2:** A Vision For the Truckee River outlines the long-term goals for the 17.5-mile study area and introduces the four distinct Character Areas used to structure the plan recommendations.

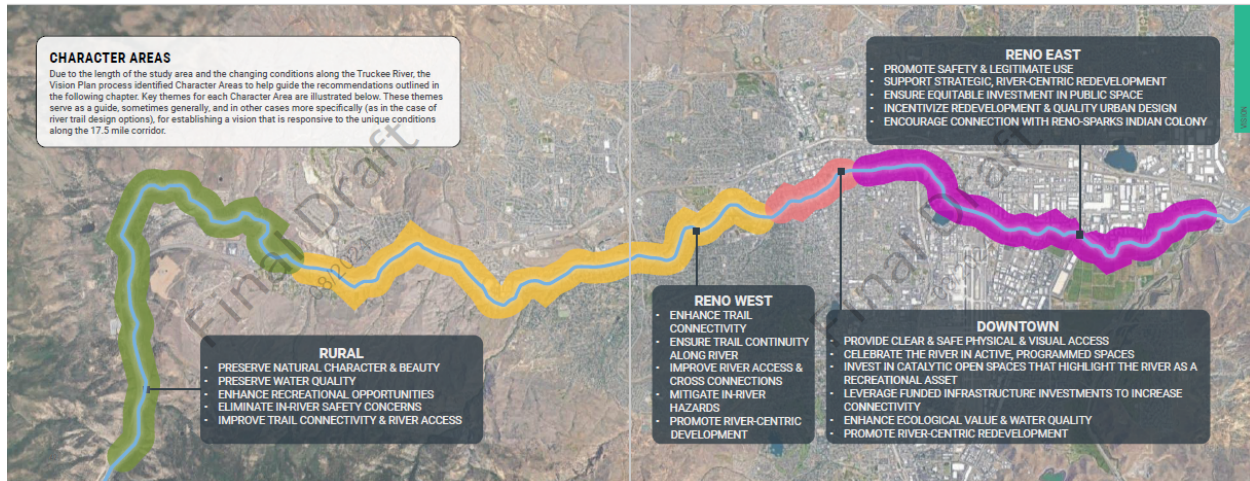
The Vision Statement provides a high-level aspiration for how the Truckee River should function and how it should serve the community for years to come. This Vision Statement secures the Truckee River's place in Reno and Washoe County for future generations.

Five Goals for the river outline topical areas that are of primary importance to stakeholders and the community. These Goals center on the key themes that emerged in previous planning phases - cleanliness and safety, connections, clarity and consistency, recreational amenities, and ecological benefits.

**Chapter 3:** Analysis & Recommendations lays out the detailed recommendations and catalytic or transformative projects within each of the five pillars of the plan: Land Use & Design, Mobility & Connectivity, Parks & Open Space, Safety, Water & Ecological Systems, and Public Art. Within each section is an analysis of existing conditions in an effort to clearly demonstrate the need for the recommendations.

**Chapter 4:** Implementation & Financing provides a detailed matrix of every plan recommendation, a proposed timeline for prioritization, and identifies potential responsible parties, funding sources, and partnerships.

The chart illustrates how the Vision Plan is organized.



## Five Pillars of the Plan

### Land Use and Design Key Recommendations

- **CREATION OF A TRUCKEE RIVER OVERLAY ZONE DISTRICT.** Work with staff to create a river overlay zone district within the City of Reno that encompasses parcels within 200 feet of the Truckee River's edge to guide future development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse.

- INCENTIVIZE REDEVELOPMENT of catalytic properties to create energy along the river corridor and illustrate the new river overlay zone design guidelines and standards.

#### Mobility and Connectivity Key Recommendations

- DEVELOP A DISTINCT AND CONSISTENT PATH DESIGN including standard trail widths, materiality, directional pavement markings, signage, and wayfinding to unify the Tahoe Pyramid Trail (TPT).
- DEVELOP A BLUEWAY PLAN to create additional connections to the Truckee River from the TPT. This plan should assist with river-based signage and wayfinding by providing a map and information on put-in and take-out locations, ramp accessibility at launches, adjacent park amenities (restrooms, picnic tables, etc.), hazards to be aware of at various water levels, portage options, and areas of interest.
- CREATE ADDITIONAL TRAIL CONNECTIONS to achieve a continuous TPT along the Truckee River.
- IMPLEMENT QUICK-BUILD IMPROVEMENTS including pedestrian crossing enhancements at critical trail locations and on-street trail improvements at critical segments.
- INSTALL MICROMOBILITY HUBS at existing Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) bus stops adjacent to the TPT that would connect nearby trails, existing and planned bikeways, and bus routes.

#### Parks and Open Space Key Recommendations

- ESTABLISH A SPECIAL PARKS DISTRICT for long-term management and funding for the Truckee River Corridor.
- INVEST AND TRANSFORM (REDESIGN) KEY CIVIC SPACES along the river corridor including City Plaza, West Street Plaza, and Riverwalk District.
- PROVIDE NEW COMMUNITY AMENITIES IN EAST RENO NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS including a new nature center / recreational kiosk and community garden at Brodhead Park, a new nature playground at John Champion Park, and expanding and amenitizing Fisherman's Park I and II.
- EXPAND PARK LAND: Identify opportunities to expand dedicated park land along the Truckee River Corridor.

#### Public Art Key Recommendations

- Create an icon or symbol for the river to use as a wayfinding tool throughout the trail system. It can be incorporated into murals, sculptures, signage, educational materials, benches, bridges, bike racks, etc. This will allow for users of the trail system to know they are on the right path when connectivity is fractured.
- Incorporate functional art along the trail system such as gateways, fence lines, benches, picnic tables, bike racks, and shade structures. Functional art helps create a sense of place and pride for the community while also serving a practical purpose for the public. It is a great tool for incorporating educational moments as well.
- Use artwork to spark joy, curiosity, and a sense of discovery while also ensuring a

welcoming, safe space in underpasses. Lighting is particularly important in these areas for the evening and winter months.

- Allocate a 1 percent minimum of project costs of projects within the Truckee River Overlay Zone to ensure funding for public art within this corridor. As infrastructure improvements unfold along the Truckee River, it is crucial to prioritize the integration of public art into the plans from the outset, ensuring seamless cohesion and allowing ample time for thoughtful incorporation into the revitalized landscape

#### Safety, Water, & Ecological Systems Key Recommendations

- **PROMOTE DESIRED RIVERSIDE LAND USE**
  - Install vandal-resistant, ecologically sensitive (dark sky compliant) trail lighting.
  - Enhance river visibility through long-term vegetation management strategies and funding.
  - Improve cleanliness and sanitation including the installation of new animal-resistant trash receptacles.
- **COLLABORATIVELY STEWARD THE TRUCKEE RIVER**
  - Improve water quality through the Truckee River Overlay Zone District standards and implementation of Green Infrastructure strategies within City parks.
  - Quantitatively prioritize bank stabilization and revegetation projects.
  - Identify multi-beneficial flood-mitigating restoration projects.
  - Support and fund the preservation and improvement of the quality of source water entering the Truckee River.
- **IMPROVE IN-RIVER SAFETY**
  - Design, construct, and maintain proposed new river access points. including access points for the Reno Fire Department Swift Water Entry Team.
  - Identify opportunities to create in-river recreational features.
  - Analyze and remove in-river hazards, including the detailed analysis of six existing low-head dams.

#### **Financial Implications:**

Potential projects costs are outlined in the implementation plan.

#### **Legal Implications:**

None at this time.

#### **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends Council approve the Truckee River Vision Plan and direct staff to pursue project opportunities outlined in the implementation plan and bring identified projects forward when action can be taken.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move to approve the Truckee River Vision Plan and direct staff to pursue project opportunities outlined in the implementation plan and bring identified projects forward when action can be taken.

**Attachments:**

Truckee River Vision Plan Final

Truckee River Vision Plan Graphic Summaries