

Ore Branch Floodplain Restoration Phase II - Community Scale Benefits



# Reimagining the Ramada Community Survey – Next Steps for Ramada<sup>1</sup>

## Background

In Spring 2022, the City of Roanoke purchased the Ramada Inn and Conference Center property (1927 Franklin Rd. SW) with plans to demolish the building and repurpose the land as permanent floodplain open space. Demolition of the hotel commenced in August 2022, and concurrently City staff began the process of envisioning the future of the site. This included a number of discussions amongst Stormwater, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development and Transportation staff, and the creation of a community input survey. A key aspect of this envisioning process is that the severe flood risk of this property is realized in two land restrictions:

1. A deed restriction to prevent future development that would impose flood risk – a condition of the FEMA program that co-funded the acquisition and demolition project.
2. The property is almost completely circumscribed by the regulatory Floodway, a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) that further limits development form and usage on the property.

As such, the purpose of the envisioning process is to converge on the highest and best use for the former Ramada property given the severe flood risk of the property and the related land restrictions. Staff devised the community input survey based on understanding of both the deed restriction and the Floodway zoning restriction, though it is important to understand that any proposed development on the site will need to gain approval from FEMA, regardless of whether it appears to conform with the deed restriction. The objective of the survey was to provide the community with a list of options that appear to conform with the land restrictions, and to gain insight on how the community envisions the future of the former Ramada property.

## Methods

The “Reimagining the Ramada” Community Survey was created using Google Forms and was advertised through four local news media outlets, social media and sign boards posted along the Greenway with QR Codes linking to the survey. The survey was published on September 30, 2022 and remained open until October 31, 2022. A printout of the entire survey is provided in Appendix A, but a general description is provided here.

Respondents were first given details about the extent of the property, and the previously described land restrictions. Several maps and figures were provided to better define the extent of the property and demonstrate the existing state of the land. Question 1 provided five pre-defined options with example photographs, plus an “Other” option in a “check all that apply” configuration. The five pre-defined options were divided into Phase I and II based on the level of effort required to implement the project. The five pre-defined options were:

1. Open Space (Phase I)
2. Canoe-kayak tube launch site (Phase II)
3. Flowers and trees (Phase I)
4. Stream/Wetland restoration (Phase II)
5. Pollinator/wildflower meadow (Phase I)

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<sup>1</sup> Survey, analysis and report by City of Roanoke Stormwater staff. Project file including original Word document is located in the server directory [here](#).

Question 2 simply read “Please submit any comments or concerns here:”, which allowed community members to provide any other information in an open ended format.

Survey results from the Google Form are dynamically linked to a Google Sheet, where they were read into the R scripting language for further analysis. The R script generates a summary bar graph and several summary tables. The bar graph was created by removing the “other” responses from Question 1 and counting the number of times each pre-defined choice was selected. Text mining was used to analyze open-ended comments from the community placed in Question 1 “Other” and Question 2. Text mining allows for rapid extraction of information from unstructured text by treating unstructured text as data frames of individual words and searching for common patterns. Tables were generated that summarized the most commonly used single words and bigrams (i.e. word pairs) in descending order.

## Results and Discussion

A total of 654 responses were submitted between 9/30/22 and 10/31/22, though no respondent tracking was imposed and it was therefore not possible to determine repeat respondents. While the total responses provided sufficient data for analysis, it should be noted that the number of responses only constitutes 0.7% of Roanoke City’s population and 0.2% of the metropolitan statistical area. The web-based survey delivery was designed to gain the broadest amount of input, though it is acknowledged that this creates selection bias against non-technology users. The use of the sign boards with QR code may also have biased results towards Greenway users, though it is not known what percentage of respondents accessed the survey through the QR code.

A summary of the results of Question 1 are shown in Table 1, with the percentages out of the total 654 respondents shown. These results indicate that the most desirable options of the menu provided are a pollinator/wildflower meadow and stream/wetland restoration, with a difference of only 8 total votes. The remainder of the options did not appear to be undesirable, though open space had the lowest number of votes at 163.

**Table 1 – Response to Question 1: “Please select any options that interest you”. Note that percentages do not sum to 100% as respondents were able to choose as many options as desired, and many respondents chose multiple options.**

Response	Count	Percentage
Pollinator/wildflower meadow	373	57.0%
Stream/wetland restoration	361	55.2%
Canoe-kayak-tube launch site	280	42.8%
Flowers and trees	236	36.1%
Open space	163	24.9%

The 208 unstructured comments that respondents placed in the “other” category of Question 1 and in Question 2 provided some additional context although only 32% of all respondents provided unstructured comments. The single word matches and bigrams provided a helpful starting point to organize the ideas in a systematic fashion. Several single word matches were not analyzed further due to the ambiguity with which they were used (“space”, “city”, “site”, etc.). With those exclusions, the most commonly used single word was “parking” (n = 38) with all but two requesting additional parking in the area, many to access the adjacent Greenway – the second most used single word (n = 33). Respondents that mentioned the Greenway generally asked for “connection to” or “extension of” the existing Roanoke River Greenway and/or adjacent parks – “park” was tied for second most used word (n

= 33). Park related ideas were numerous and did not converge on a single idea; 10 respondents asked for a dog park; 9 asked for a bike park or mountain bike course; others (n = 1 each) asked for Frisbee golf, futsal, amphitheater, skate park, etc. The term “launch” was the next most used (n = 21) with seven respondents noting either the logistical problems with placing a launch on this site or requesting that it be integrated with the broader whitewater park effort; all others provided additional details supporting the idea. The word “trees” was also used 21 times, with general support for tree planting with the caveat that appropriate spacing should be used to prevent vagrancy. The word “garden” was the next most used (n = 19) with reference to “community”, “children’s”, “flower”, “botanical”, “urban”, “beer” gardens.

The intent of the remaining high frequency terms [“access” (n = 15), “water” (n = 13), “wetland” (n = 12)] was captured as previously described, except for the term “homeless” (n = 11) with respondents variably requesting a shelter on this location or requesting that homeless camps not be allowed here. Analysis of bigrams further supports the previous discussion, with the most commonly identified word pairs being “green space” (n = 10), “Roanoke river”, “wetland restoration (n = 7 each), “dog park”, “kayak launch”, “launch site” (n = 6 each).

### **Summary**

The open-ended results suggest that a broader list of pre-defined options in Question 1 may have been desirable, however it was not possible to include many of these options because of the land restrictions on the property. The results of the survey generally point to a desire for thoughtfully landscaped open space and a restoration of Ore Branch to a more natural form, with connection to the Greenway and surrounding parks. The canoe/kayak/tube launch was also supported, though numerous respondents noted the practical problems with the placement of a launch site at this location. Overall, the survey provides a relatively clear community perspective on the property, though it is reiterated the final outcome is still subject to engineering due diligence, local floodplain ordinance and FEMA approval.

Virginia Runoff Reduction Method (VRRM 4.1) Water Quality Calculations

DEQ Virginia Runoff Reduction Method Re-Development Compliance Spreadsheet - Version 4.1

Project Name:

Ore Branch Phase II - Acquisition, Demolition, Floodplain Restoration

Date:

12/4/2024

CLEAR ALL

(Ctrl+Shift+R)

data input cells

constant values

calculation cells

final results

Site Information

Post-Development Project (Treatment Volume and Loads)

Enter Total Disturbed Area (acres) → 

0.48

Maximum reduction required:

10%

The site's net increase in impervious cover (acres) is:

0

Post-Development TP Load Reduction for Site (lb/yr):

-0.22

Pre-ReDevelopment Land Cover (acres)

	A Soils	B Soils	C Soils	D Soils	Totals
Forest (acres) -- undisturbed, protected forest or reforested land		0.00			0.00
Mixed Open (acres) -- undisturbed/frequently maintained grass or shrub land		0.00			0.00
Managed Turf (acres) -- disturbed, graded for yards or other turf to be mowed/managed		0.11			0.11
Impervious Cover (acres)		0.37			0.37
					0.48

Post-Development Land Cover (acres)

	A Soils	B Soils	C Soils	D Soils	Totals
Forest/Open Space (acres) -- undisturbed, protected forest or reforested land		0.12			0.12
Mixed Open (acres) -- undisturbed/frequently maintained grass or shrub land		0.36			0.36
Managed Turf (acres) -- disturbed, graded for yards or other turf to be mowed/managed		0.00			0.00
Impervious Cover (acres)		0.00			0.00
					0.48

Area Check

OK.

OK.

OK.

OK.

0.48

\* Forest & Mixed Open areas must be protected in accordance with the Virginia Runoff Reduction Method or other applicable DEQ guidelines

Post-Development Requirement for Site Area

TP Load Reduction Required (lb/yr)

-0.22

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TP LOAD REDUCTION NOT REQUIRED

Nitrogen Loads (Informational Purposes Only)

Pre-ReDevelopment TN Load (lb/yr)

5.36

Final Post-Development TN Load

0.69

LAND COVER SUMMARY -- PRE-REDEVELOPMENT

Land Cover Summary-Pre		
Pre-ReDevelopment	Listed	Adjusted <sup>1</sup>
Forest Cover (acres)	0.00	0.00
Weighted Rv(forest)	0.00	0.00
Weighted Loading Rate(forest)	0.00	0.00
% Forest	0%	0%
Mixed Open Cover (acres)	0.00	0.00
Weighted Rv(mixed)	0.00	0.00
Weighted Loading Rate(mixed)	0.00	0.00
% Mixed Open	0%	0%
Managed Turf Cover (acres)	0.11	0.11
Weighted Rv(turf)	0.20	0.20
Weighted Loading Rate(turf)	0.68	0.68
% Managed Turf	23%	23%
Impervious Cover (acres)	0.37	0.37
Rv(impervious)	0.95	0.95
Weighted Loading Rate(impervious)	0.86	0.86
% Impervious	77%	77%
Total Site Area (acres)	0.48	0.48
Site Rv	0.78	0.78

Treatment Volume and Nutrient Load

Pre-ReDevelopment Treatment Volume (acre-ft)	0.0311	0.0311
Pre-ReDevelopment Treatment Volume (cubic feet)	1,356	1,356
Pre-ReDevelopment TP Load (lb/yr)	0.39	0.39
Pre-ReDevelopment TP Load per acre (lb/acre/yr)	0.82	0.82
Baseline TP Load (lb/yr) (0.26 lb/acre/yr applied to pre-redevelopment area excluding previous land proposed for new impervious cover)		0.12

LAND COVER SUMMARY -- POST DEVELOPMENT

Land Cover Summary-Post (Final)	
Post ReDev. & New Impervious	
Forest Cover (acres)	0.12
Weighted Rv(forest)	0.03
Wgt. Ld. Rate(forest)	0.06
% Forest	25%
Mixed Open Cover (acres)	0.36
Weighted Rv(mixed)	0.11
Wgt. Ld. Rate(mixed)	0.34
% Mixed Open	75%
Managed Turf Cover (acres)	0.00
Weighted Rv (turf)	0.00
Wgt. Ld. Rate(turf)	0.00
% Managed Turf	0%
Impervious Cover (acres)	0.00
Rv(impervious)	0.95
Wgt. Ld. Rate(imperv.)	0.00
% Impervious	0%
Final Site Area (acres)	0.48
Final Post Dev Site Rv	0.09

Treatment Volume and Nutrient Load

Post-ReDevelopment Treatment Volume (acre-ft)	0.0036
Post-ReDevelopment Treatment Volume (cubic feet)	157
Post-ReDevelopment TP Load (lb/yr)	0.13
Post-ReDevelopment TP Load per acre (lb/acre/yr)	0.27
Max. Reduction Required (Below Pre-ReDevelopment Load)	10%
TP Load Reduction Required for Redeveloped Area (lb/yr)	-0.22

Land Cover Summary-Post

Post-Development New Impervious

New Impervious Cover (acres)	0.00
Rv(impervious)	--
Post-Development Treatment Volume (acre-ft)	--
Post-Development Treatment Volume (cubic feet)	--
Post-Development TP Load (lb/yr)	--
TP Load Reduction Required for New Impervious Area (lb/yr)	0

<sup>1</sup> Adjusted Land Cover Summary:  
Pre-ReDevelopment land cover minus previous land cover (forest, mixed open or managed turf) acreage proposed for new impervious cover.  
  
Adjusted total acreage is consistent with Post-ReDevelopment acreage (minus acreage of new impervious cover).  
  
Column 1 shows load reduction requirement for new impervious cover (based on new development load limit, 0.26 lb/acre/year).