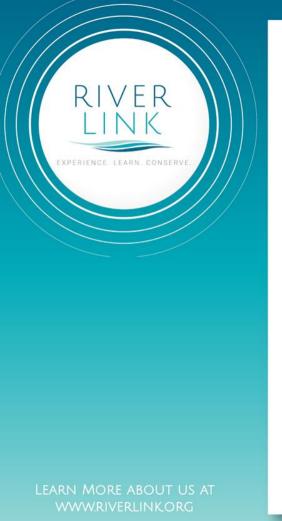


A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT RIVERLINK'S 30+ YEAR HISTORY WITH THE FRENCH BROAD RIVER



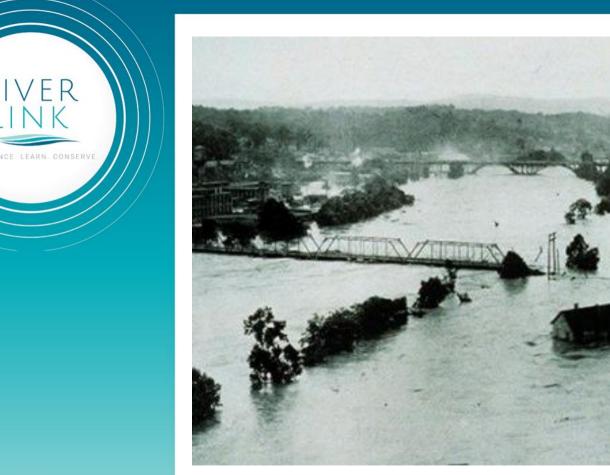
Riverlink

- Lisa Raleigh & Renee Fortner
- **RiverLink** was founded 30+ years ago to promote the **environmental** and **economic vitality** of the French Broad River and watershed.
- Today, we do that through our **youth education**, **water resources** and **land resources** programs and ongoing public **river access**, **parks** and **greenways**.



FRENCH BROAD RIVER

- One of the oldest rivers in the world (~300 million years)
- One of a few rivers that flows North
- Over **4,000 miles** of tributaries feed serving **~400,000** people in **8** counties in NC
- The French Broad River is ~ 219 miles long
- Joins the Holston, Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi Cherokee names for the river include: *Tah-kee-os-tee –* 'racing waters' | *Agiqua –* 'Long Man'
- Author Wilma Dykeman
- Flood of **1916**





KAREN CRAGNOLIN (1949-2022)



"The story of the French Broad River is the story of the American river in microcosm, full of paradise and paradox." ~ Karen Cragnolin



CONVERGENCE IN THE LATE 80S

- **Deferred** infrastructure maintenance & **struggling** city center
- A **neglected** river encroached by **abandoned** industry & **isolated** from city.
- Land of Sky Regional Council created **FBRF**
- Chamber of Commerce || "One More Day" Campaign
- Creation of "City of Asheville 2010 Plan"
- A series of community **charettes**
- The Asheville Riverfront Plan emerges (1989)



LEARN MORE ABOUT US AT WWW.RIVERLINK.ORG



"The Asheville riverfront is where all the issues start to come together. The river is where economic development, land use planning and environmental concerns meet and marry." – Karen Cragnolin



THE TRANSFORMATION CONTINUES

- RiverLink **bus** tours and **artists** arrival
- **Partnerships** and multiple **funding** partners and donors
- New businesses and French Broad River Park (1994)
- Arson inspired fires of 1995
- Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Plan (2004) 17 miles

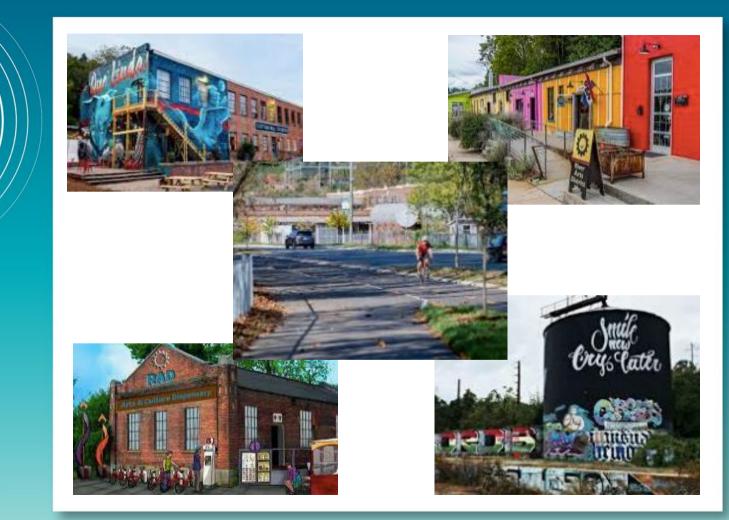
"There is rare consensus in our community in support of the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Plan, which sees our river corridors as future highdensity, mixed-use, mixed-income multimodal transit corridors – our next development frontier" ~ Karen Cragnolin



CONT . . .

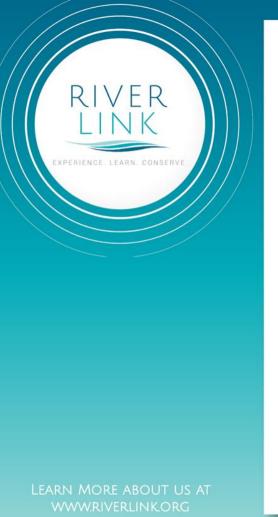
- New Belgium's arrival (2014)
- From parks and greenways to artists and breweries
- **RADTIP** ~\$30MM infrastructure (completed 2021)
- The River Arts District (RAD) is born and thriving

"This colorful neighborhood, which was once full of bustling mills, is now home to **250+** working artists and offers an eclectic mix of dining, vibrant murals, and easy access to the French Broad River."



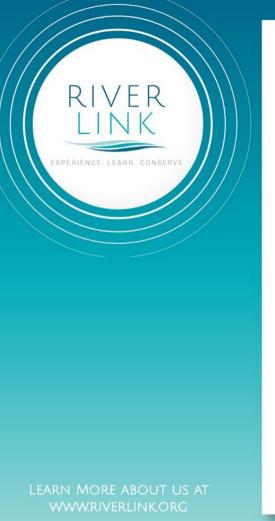
APERIENCE, LEARN, CONSERVE.

P



TODAY - ECONOMIC ENGINE

- French Broad River Partnership supported a new study to survey the **economic impact** of the river.
- \$3.8 billion annually.
- The watershed receives **6.9 million** river-influenced visitors each year resulting in **\$2.7 billion** annually in spending.
- River-reliant businesses create or maintain 38,554 jobs each year (~\$273 million in annual federal tax revenue).
- "Existence" value of additional \$2.4 billion



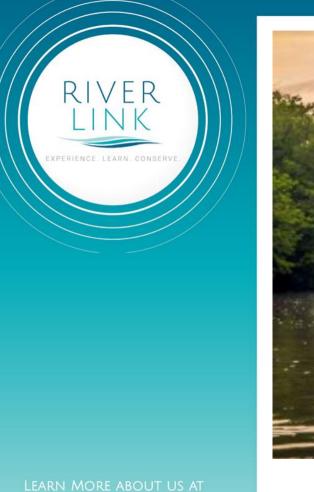
Today – Riverlink's Focus

- **3 programmatic areas** and commitment to **greenways**, **parks** & public **river access** throughout the watershed.
- Woodfin Greenway & Blueway
 - Ambitious ~\$23MM project: 2 parks, in-river Wave and 5 miles of new greenway
 - WGB has raised \$16.6MM (including NCDOT, TDA, BC, NCDEQ, ToW) and the voters who approved a \$4.5MM bond referendum in 2016.
- Infrastructure and Environmental Justice
 - Southside Community Stormwater Project



TOMORROW - CHALLENGES

- Blue Ridge Mtns are home to incredible **biodiversity** as a temperate **rainforest** with a **subtropical** climate.
- Popularity of area and ongoing development placing increased pressure on the watershed & infrastructure.
- French Broad River and several of its main tributaries to be **classified as impaired** (2022 NC Draft 303(d))
 - Includes a **19-mile** stretch through the heart of Asheville







TOMORROW - OPPORTUNITIES

- Reinforces that river conservation is **never "done"**
- The value of the river is **significant economically**, **environmentally**, and **recreationally** to the area.
- Creates opportunity for ongoing awareness, partnership and investment by stakeholders and agencies.
- "Because, just as the river belongs to no one, it belongs to everyone and everyone is held accountable for its health and condition." – Wilma Dykeman



THANK YOU || QUESTIONS?

