Community Proposal · West Palm Beach, FL

STUB CANAL GREENWAY

A Conceptual Vision for Neighborhood Greenway Improvements

Conceptual rendering of the improved Stub Canal Greenway looking east toward the I-95 overpass.

Prepared for the City of West Palm Beach
May 2026

Executive Summary

The Stub Canal corridor is one of West Palm Beach's most underutilized public assets — and one of its most historically significant. The canal was completed in 1917 as part of the forty-mile West Palm Beach Canal connecting Lake Okeechobee to the coast, and its 1918 "stub" extension once carried barge traffic from the Glades farmland directly into the city's business district. The Stub Canal Turning Basin was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1997.

Today the corridor is largely an open, lightly maintained grassy easement: no defined path, sparse canopy on the canal-facing side, a steep and bare canal bank, and no programmed gathering space. It is functional as a drainage easement but offers very little to the surrounding neighborhood as a public amenity.

The Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association is proposing a coordinated set of landscape improvements that would transform the corridor into a true neighborhood greenway: a shaded multi-use path framed by native plantings, a vegetated and ecologically functional canal bank, and a sequence of small gathering nodes that invite walking, cycling, and informal community use — while honoring the canal's role in the city's founding history.

This document presents a conceptual vision for that transformation. It is intended to give the City, neighborhood stakeholders, and prospective design partners a clear shared picture of what could be built, the design principles behind it, and the next steps required to move from concept into design development.

What we are asking

This proposal is structured as a four-phase approach. The Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association will lead Phase 1 — a coordinated canal cleanup of the corridor — beginning immediately, with no City funding required. The Association then asks the City to support Phases 2 through 4: jurisdictional coordination, commissioning of a Florida-licensed landscape architect to develop schematic design with community input, and ultimately funding, permitting, and phased construction. Full details are in Section 9.

1. A Brief History of the Stub Canal

The Stub Canal is not just a drainage feature — it is a piece of West Palm Beach's founding infrastructure, and one of the few visible reminders of the city's early role as the commercial gateway between Lake Okeechobee's farmland and the Atlantic coast.

In 1911, local businessman George Currie petitioned Florida Governor Albert Waller Gilchrist on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce for a canal connecting Lake Okeechobee to Lake Worth. The forty-mile West Palm Beach Canal was authorized by the state in 1913 and completed in 1917, opening up the agricultural communities along the southeastern shore of Lake Okeechobee to coastal markets for the first time.

In 1918, a short extension — the "stub" — was constructed to bring the canal directly into the West Palm Beach business district. For decades, barges used this stub canal and its turning basin to move fruit and winter vegetables from the Glades into downtown warehouses and onward to markets across the United States. The Stub Canal Turning Basin, designed by architect Harry Fugate and built in 1918, was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1997, and a Florida historical marker was erected at the site in 2001.

Today the canal no longer serves commercial shipping, but it remains a continuous public waterway threading through the heart of the city. The proposed Stub Canal Greenway is an opportunity to honor that history by reactivating the corridor as a community space — one that connects neighborhoods to a piece of West Palm Beach heritage that most residents walk past without ever knowing it is there.

Source: Florida Memory, State Archives of Florida (Photographs of the West Palm Beach Stub Canal & Turning Basin); Historical Society of Palm Beach County.

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2. Jurisdiction and Stewardship — Open Questions

Before any design work moves forward, the ownership, easement, and operational authority over the Stub Canal corridor must be clearly established. Initial research suggests that responsibility is layered across several public agencies and historic drainage entities, with neighborhood stewardship provided by a registered nonprofit. None of the items below should be treated as confirmed; each is a question the Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association would like to work through with the City and the appropriate agencies as a first step.

Public agency jurisdiction

- Palm Beach County Property Appraiser (PAPA). Parcel-level ownership and easement records for the corridor should be pulled from the PAPA system (papa.pbcgov.org) at the start of the project. This is the authoritative source for identifying who holds title to each parcel along the north bank between Old Okeechobee Road and the I-95 overpass.
- City of West Palm Beach. The City has an active Capital Improvement Program and a published list of ongoing pedestrian and bicycle projects, including the Clear Lake Trail Project (a multi-use trail and boardwalk along a comparable urban water feature). Question: where would a Stub Canal Greenway improvement fit within the City's CIP, and is there an existing project in this corridor — for example, work that has been

informally referenced as a "Caroline Street pedestrian access" effort — that this proposal could complement or build on? This should be confirmed directly with the City Engineering department.

- Palm Beach County Parks & Recreation. The County operates a separate "Stub Canal Park" at 2140 Oglethorpe Road, near the historic turning basin at the western end of the canal system. This is a different parcel from the corridor in this proposal, but the County's existing involvement with the canal is worth confirming — particularly whether any County jurisdiction or programming extends to the proposal segment.

Drainage and water-management authority

- South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The West Palm Beach Canal is designated as canal C-51 and listed by SFWMD as a "Work of the District" — the modern regulatory successor to the original Everglades Drainage District authorized in 1905. Any improvements within the canal right-of-way will likely require an SFWMD Right-of-Way Occupancy Permit. The exact width of the SFWMD right-of-way along this segment, and the limits of allowable improvements within it, should be confirmed with SFWMD early in the design process.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Historic flood-control works along the West Palm Beach Canal also involve the Corps, primarily through the Central and Southern Florida Project. Whether the Corps retains any active interest in this specific segment should be confirmed.

Utility easements

- Local utility infrastructure (for example, equipment near Market Street) is typically located on land owned by or leased to utility providers. Where that infrastructure overlaps with the proposed greenway, a title search and easement review will be needed before plant placement, lighting, or grading work can be designed in that area.
- Underground utilities (water, sewer, fiber, gas) along the corridor must be located by a Sunshine 811 ticket and confirmed through a survey before any planting, grading, or path construction begins.

Neighborhood stewardship

The Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association, Inc. (PPNA) is a Florida not-for-profit corporation, registered with the Florida Division of Corporations (originally filed November 2, 1999, currently active). Its stated mission is to encourage and promote the safety, welfare, and quality of life of Pineapple Park residents, and to preserve the natural beauty and historic significance of the neighborhood and its surrounding area.

The Association is led by an elected board (President Shad Goetsch, Vice President JP Farrell, Treasurer Giuseppe Colella, Secretary Roxanne Cicchino, with Directors Autumn Gurrola, Victor

Russo, Pete Glocker, Dr. Sal Colombo and Francine Pelligrino). It operates on a household membership model, holds regular neighborhood meetings at the Howard Park Community Center, publishes a digital newsletter, and runs an active engagement and advocacy board. PPNA can be reached at info@pineapplepark.us or through www.pineapplepark.us.

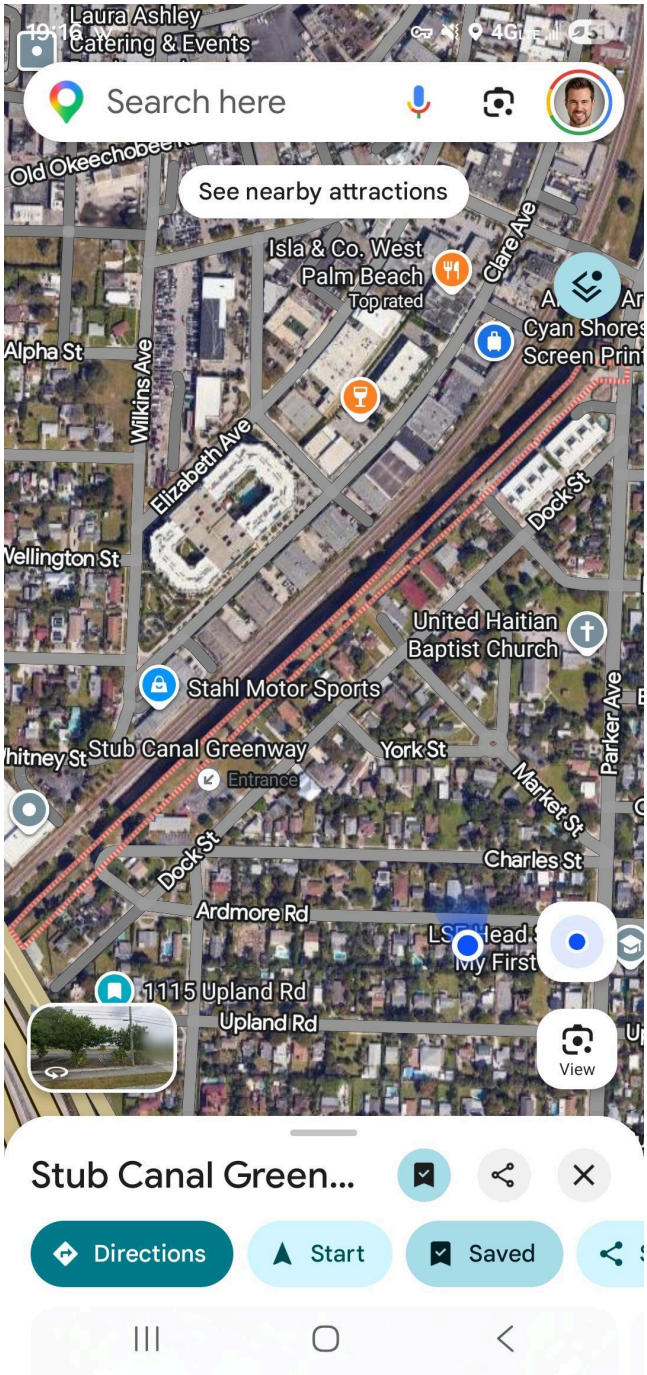
PPNA does not own the public greenway land, but it is the recognized community partner for this corridor. The Association is committed to remaining involved as the primary advocate for the greenway's redevelopment, the convener of community design input, and a long-term partner in stewardship — including potential ongoing roles in volunteer cleanups, plant establishment, and programming once improvements are in place.

Recommended first action

Before design work begins, the Association recommends that the City convene a short coordination meeting — including City Engineering, City Parks & Recreation, the Palm Beach County Property Appraiser's office, SFWMD right-of-way staff, and Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association representatives — to confirm the items above and produce a single page summarizing who controls what along this segment of the canal. That document then becomes the jurisdictional basis for everything that follows.

3. Site Context

The Stub Canal Greenway runs along the north bank of the Stub Canal between roughly Old Okeechobee Road and the I-95 overpass, paralleling the FEC rail corridor. It serves a mixed neighborhood of single-family homes (Whitney St, Dock St, Upland Rd) and adjacent commercial uses, and it is one of very few continuous public open spaces in the area.



Site location, Stub Canal Greenway, West Palm Beach. Source: Google Maps.

Existing conditions

The corridor today is largely an open grassy easement between the residential edge and the canal. There is no formal pathway along most of the alignment — only a wide expanse of mown (and in dry season, brown and stressed) turf running between scattered mature trees on the neighborhood side and a steep, mostly bare canal bank. The far side of the canal is bounded by

an active FEC rail corridor and a chain of light-industrial parcels, which limits visual relief from across the water.

Existing conditions facing northeast toward the I-95 overpass. The corridor is wide and open but unprogrammed: dry turf to the canal edge, no defined path, no shade or seating along the bank, and minimal native vegetation.

Existing conditions facing southwest. The canal bank drops directly to the water with little stabilizing vegetation; the FEC rail corridor and adjacent industrial parcels are visible across the canal.

Water-quality conditions at a stormwater outfall along the corridor. Dense floating duckweed mat covers most of the visible water surface — a common indicator of elevated nutrient loading from urban runoff. Plastic and foam debris is collecting in the same low-flow zone where the duckweed accumulates. The riprap structure in the foreground is the discharge point of a stormwater outfall draining the surrounding neighborhood.

Strengths to build on

- Existing right-of-way is generous (approximately 90+ feet between the residential property line and the canal centerline on the north bank).
- Several mature shade trees are already in place on the neighborhood side and should be preserved as design anchors.
- The canal provides a strong linear water feature — a rare amenity in this part of the city, and a direct historical connection to the West Palm Beach Canal.
- Adjacent neighborhood density supports walk-up use without major parking infrastructure.
- The existing pedestrian bridge near the I-95 overpass provides a natural eastern terminus for the greenway.

Constraints to address

- Visible water-quality concerns at stormwater outfall points along the canal — dense duckweed mats consistent with nutrient loading, accumulated plastic and foam debris, and (per Association observation) tires and other large items resting in the canal bed.

These are the most immediately visible problems and the most readily addressable in the near term (see Phase 1 in Section 9).

- The canal bank is steep and sparsely vegetated, with visible erosion potential and no stabilizing native plantings.
- Turf grass extends to the canal edge in most segments, contributing nutrient runoff directly into the water and exacerbating the conditions visible at outfall points.
- There is no continuous, defined path — pedestrians and cyclists currently traverse open lawn or beaten dirt tracks.
- Shade is concentrated on the residential side; the canal-facing portion of the corridor is fully exposed.
- Views across the canal are dominated by the FEC rail corridor and industrial parcels; planting on the north bank should soften this without blocking sightlines for safety.

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4. Design Vision

The improved Stub Canal Greenway should feel like a continuous, shaded, layered landscape — closer to a linear park than to a maintenance access path. The rendering below illustrates the target experience.

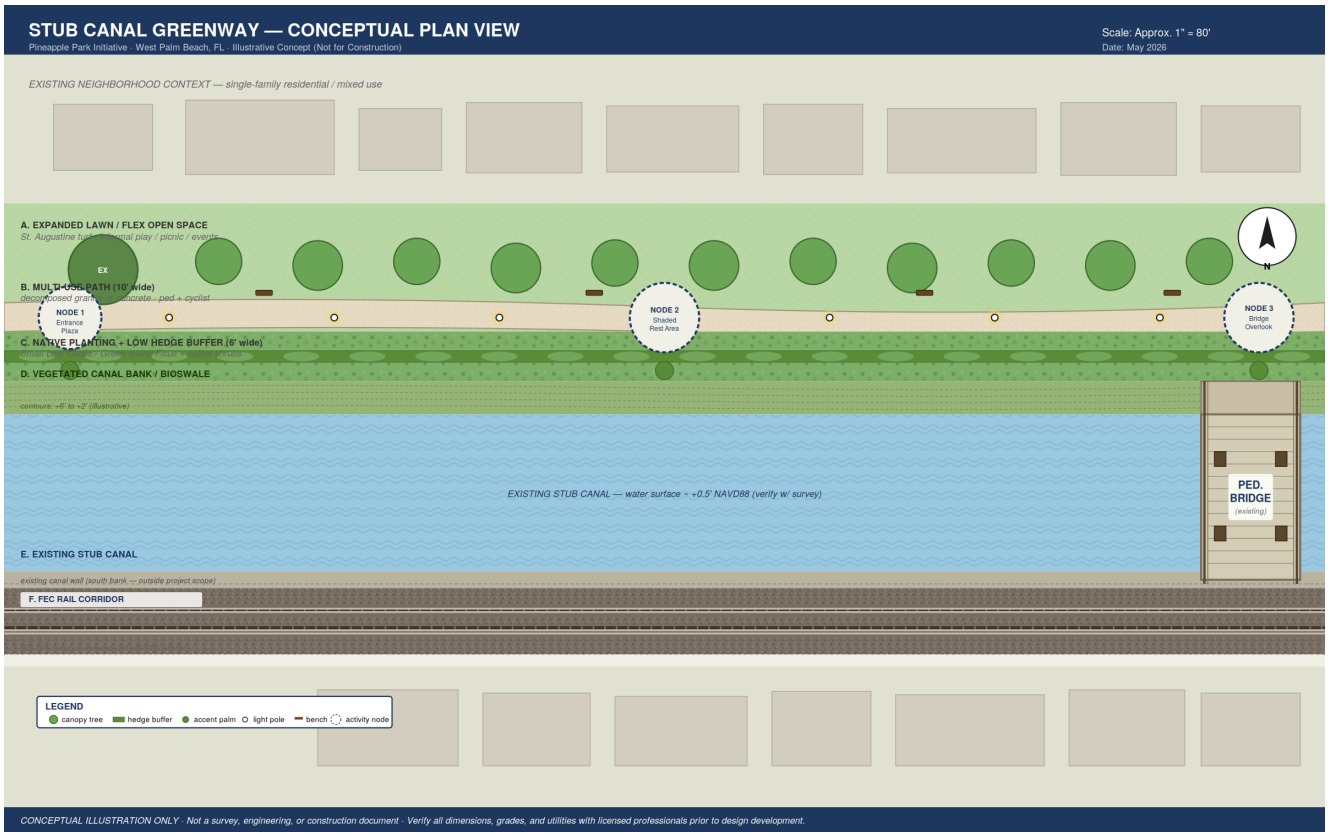
Conceptual rendering of the proposed Stub Canal Greenway. New continuous multi-use path, full shade canopy, vegetated canal bank, integrated lighting, and frequent seating where today there is only open turf.

Core design principles

- Shade first. Continuous tree canopy along the path is the single most important upgrade. South Florida's climate makes unshaded paths essentially unusable for half the year; shade is what turns a path into a destination.
- Native and Florida-friendly planting. All new plantings should be drawn from a native or Florida-friendly palette to minimize irrigation, support pollinators and birds, and reduce long-term maintenance cost.
- Layered canal edge. The canal bank should transition from mown turf to a vegetated, gently sloped buffer that improves water quality, stabilizes the bank, and provides habitat — without compromising sightlines for safety.
- Pedestrian-scale lighting. 12-foot dark-sky-compliant LED fixtures every ~80 feet, on the path's neighborhood side, to extend usable hours into evening without light pollution into residential windows or the canal.
- One continuous material. A single path material (decomposed granite or crushedgravel) the full length of the corridor reads as one greenway rather than a patchwork.

5. Conceptual Plan View

The diagram below is an illustrative top-down representation of a typical segment of the improved corridor. It shows the relationship between path, planting zones, lighting, seating, and the canal edge. It is not a survey or a buildable drawing — actual alignment, dimensions, and grades must be developed by a licensed landscape architect using a current topographical survey.



Conceptual plan view of a typical Stub Canal Greenway segment showing zones A (lawn), B (path), C (planting buffer), D (vegetated canal bank), and E (canal). Three activity nodes anchor the corridor.

Corridor zones

- Zone A — Lawn / flex open space (~22'). St. Augustine turf, kept open for informal play, picnics, and small gatherings. Anchored by mature canopy trees retained from existing conditions.
- Zone B — Multi-use path (10'). Decomposed granite or concrete, sized for two-way pedestrian and cyclist use. Continuous along the full corridor.
- Zone C — Native planting buffer (~18'). A planted strip between the path and the canal bank. Mix of palms, low shrubs, and seasonal flowering natives that provide visual interest without blocking sightlines to the water.

- Zone D — Vegetated canal bank (~33', 3:1 max slope). The most ecologically significant change: replace mown turf-to-edge with a stabilized, deep-rooted native planting that filters runoff and prevents erosion.
- Zone E — Existing Stub Canal. No work proposed in the canal itself; treatment is limited to the bank above the water line.

Activity nodes

- Node 1 — Entrance Plaza (west end). A small paved gathering area with wayfinding signage marking the start of the greenway.
- Node 2 — Shaded Rest Area (mid-corridor). Cluster of benches under existing canopy, ideal halfway pause point.
- Node 3 — Bridge Overlook (east end). Railing detail at the existing pedestrian bridge, framing views of the canal and overpass.

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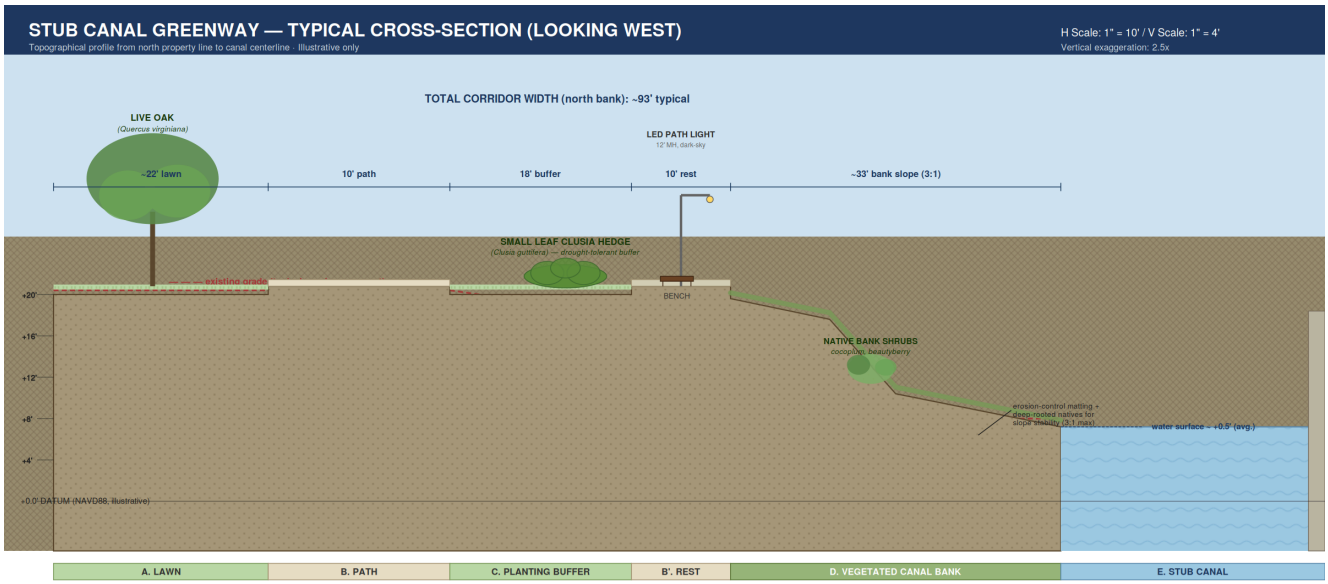
6. Topographical Cross-Section

The cross-section below shows the proposed grade profile across a typical corridor segment, from the residential property line at left to the canal water surface at right. The dashed red line indicates the existing grade for comparison; the solid colored bands show proposed surface treatments and slope.



Typical cross-section, looking west. Vertical scale exaggerated 2.5× for readability. Elevations are illustrative; actual grades must be verified against a survey.

Key grade and elevation notes

- The path remains at approximately existing grade — no significant cut or fill is proposed in the path zone.
- The canal bank is regraded to a maximum 3:1 slope (3 feet horizontal for every 1 foot vertical), which is gentle enough to vegetate stably without retaining structures.
- Bank stabilization uses biodegradable erosion-control matting at installation, planted with deep-rooted native shrubs (cocoplum, beautyberry, muhly grass) that take over erosion control as they establish.
- All elevations shown are illustrative and referenced to a placeholder NAVD88 datum. A current survey is required before any design development.

7. Suggested Planting Palette

The Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association has asked that the planting palette be built around species that, once established, require minimal supplemental watering. The list below is organized accordingly. Each plant has been selected for low irrigation needs after a roughly 12-month establishment period, durability in South Florida's USDA Zone 10 climate, and visual contribution to the corridor. The list mixes Florida native species with well-behaved non-native species commonly used in established South Florida landscapes; native status is noted in the table. Final selections should be made by the project landscape architect.

This palette is consistent with the South Florida Water Management District's published Waterwise South Florida Landscapes guide, which is the authoritative xeriscape reference for the region — a useful alignment given that SFWMD also holds permitting authority over canal C-51 (see Section 2).

Shade trees (low water once established)

Common name	Scientific name	Water need (established)	Native to FL
Live Oak	*Quercus virginiana*	Very low	Yes
Gumbo Limbo	*Bursera simaruba*	Very low	Yes
Mahogany	*Swietenia mahagoni*	Low	Yes
Pigeon Plum	*Coccoloba diversifolia*	Low	Yes
Green Buttonwood	*Conocarpus erectus*	Very low	Yes

All five are heat-tolerant, hurricane-resistant, and well documented by UF/IFAS as drought-tolerant once established. Live Oak and Gumbo Limbo together can carry the entire shade canopy for the corridor.

Palms

Common name	Scientific name	Water need	Native	Lethal Bronzing risk
Cabbage Palm (Sabal Palm)	*Sabal palmetto*	Very low	Yes (FL state tree)	Susceptible
Saw Palmetto	*Serenoa repens*	Very low	Yes	Not currently known
Florida Thatch Palm	*Thrinax radiata*	Very low	Yes	Not currently known
Royal Palm	*Roystonea regia*	Low to moderate	Yes	Not currently known
Coconut Palm — see note	*Cocos nucifera*	Moderate	No	Susceptible

Note on Coconut Palms: *Coconut palms are an iconic part of the South Florida landscape, and the Association has expressed a clear preference for including them. The Association also wants the City to be aware of one important risk: Lethal Bronzing Disease (LBD), a phytoplasma disease spread by the palm cixiid planthopper, has been causing significant losses across Palm Beach County in recent years. Coconut palms, Cabbage palms, Queen palms, and Canary Island date palms are all known to be susceptible. There is no cure once a palm is symptomatic; preventative oxytetracycline injections every three to four months can protect healthy palms in affected areas. Saw palmetto and a small number of other palm species are not currently known to be susceptible. The Association recommends that the project landscape architect and the City's certified arborist discuss this trade-off and decide whether to (a) include coconut palms sparingly as accent specimens at the entrance plaza and bridge overlook nodes, with a long-term preventative treatment plan budgeted; (b) substitute non-susceptible species such as Saw palmetto for the same low-maintenance, low-water character; or (c) blend both approaches.*

Shrubs and hedges (low water, low maintenance)

Common name	Scientific name	Water need (established)	Native to FL
Small Leaf Clusia	*Clusia guttifera*	Very low	No (well-behaved)
Green Island Ficus	*Ficus microcarpa 'Green Island'*	Low	No (well-behaved)
Cocoplum	*Chrysobalanus icaco*	Low	Yes
Firebush	*Hamelia patens var. patens*	Very low	Yes
Beautyberry	*Callicarpa americana*	Low	Yes
Simpson's Stopper	*Myrcianthes fragrans*	Very low	Yes
Wild Coffee	*Psychotria nervosa*	Low	Yes

Small Leaf Clusia and Green Island Ficus, both expressly requested by the Association, are well established as low-water, low-maintenance choices in South Florida and are appropriate for the path-side and screening roles in this corridor. Although they are not native to Florida, both are well-behaved (non-invasive) when used in a managed landscape. The native species above (Cocoplum, Firebush, Beautyberry, Simpson's Stopper, Wild Coffee) provide ecological value —

pollinator and bird habitat — and can be interplanted with the Clusia and Ficus to give the corridor both structure and biodiversity.

Grasses and groundcovers

Common name	Scientific name	Water need (established)	Native to FL
Muhly Grass	*Muhlenbergia capillaris*	Very low	Yes
Sunshine Mimosa	*Mimosa strigillosa*	Very low	Yes
Coontie	*Zamia integrifolia*	Very low	Yes
Sand Cordgrass	*Spartina bakeri*	Very low	Yes

Muhly Grass produces a striking pink bloom in fall and is one of the lowest-maintenance ornamental grasses in South Florida. Sunshine Mimosa is a Florida-native lawn alternative that closes its leaves when touched, making it a delight for children. Coontie is the host plant for the rare atala butterfly, an important regional pollinator. Sand Cordgrass is excellent for the canal-bank stabilization role described in Section 6.

Establishment and irrigation expectations

Even drought-tolerant plants need consistent water during their first growing season. The Association recommends a temporary drip-irrigation system installed at planting and operated for the first 12 months, after which it can be decommissioned or retained on a minimal cycle for emergency use only. After establishment, the corridor should require no routine irrigation under normal South Florida rainfall — only occasional supplemental watering during prolonged drought.

8. Community Benefits

The Stub Canal Greenway improvements deliver measurable benefits across five areas the City has prioritized in its open space, resilience, and historic preservation planning.

Public health and recreation

A continuously shaded, well-lit multi-use path makes daily walking and cycling a realistic option for surrounding residents — particularly for older adults and families with young children, both of whom are sensitive to heat exposure on unshaded surfaces.

Stormwater and water quality

Replacing mown turf-to-edge with a vegetated bioswale-style canal bank captures and filters runoff before it enters the canal, reducing nutrient and sediment loading. The water-quality

conditions documented in Section 3 — particularly the dense duckweed mats at outfall points — are exactly the kind of nutrient-driven response that vegetated bank treatments are designed to mitigate. This approach is consistent with South Florida Water Management District best management practices for urban canals.

Habitat and biodiversity

A native planting palette converts roughly two acres of monoculture turf into pollinator and bird habitat — a small intervention individually, but a meaningful one as part of the larger urban green corridor connecting West Palm Beach's parks and waterways.

Heritage interpretation

Modest interpretive signage at the Entrance Plaza and Bridge Overlook nodes can tell the story of the West Palm Beach Canal's 1917 completion, the 1918 stub extension, and the canal's role as the original commercial link between the Glades and the city. This costs little to add but transforms the greenway from a recreational amenity into a heritage corridor that connects residents to the city's founding.

Neighborhood identity

A defined, named greenway with consistent design language gives surrounding residents a shared public space to identify with — supporting the City's broader goals around walkable neighborhoods and quality of life.

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9. Next Steps — A Phased Approach

This document is a conceptual vision, not a buildable design. Rather than asking the City to commit to a single large undertaking, the Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association proposes a phased approach that allows the community to begin demonstrating stewardship immediately while the City and partner agencies work through the longer-horizon design and funding steps. The four phases below are ordered by what can begin soonest at the lowest cost.

PHASE 1 Canal Cleanup & Baseline Documentation

Near-term · 0–6 months · Lead: Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association (volunteer-led)

Before any design work begins, the most visible and immediately addressable problem along the corridor is the accumulation of trash, plastic and foam debris, tires, and other discarded items in the canal and along its banks (see photo evidence in Section 3). The Association proposes leading a coordinated cleanup effort as the first concrete action of this proposal.

- Apply to the Solid Waste Authority of Palm Beach County (SWA) Adopt-A-Spot program for the corridor between Old Okeechobee Road and the I-95 overpass. SWA provides

cleaning supplies, vests, and pickup of bagged debris, and the program has supported community-led cleanups since 1999.

- Coordinate in advance with SFWMD right-of-way staff and the City of West Palm Beach to give notice of the cleanup, confirm scope and access, and arrange separate handling of large or non-standard items (tires, large appliances, suspected hazardous materials) which require specialized disposal beyond what volunteers can handle.
- Photograph the corridor before, during, and after each cleanup. The before/after documentation establishes a visible baseline of community involvement that can be presented to the City alongside this proposal — and provides a measurable indicator (volume of debris removed, areas covered) that supports the case for further investment.
- Establish a recurring cleanup cadence (the SWA program requires at least two cleanups per year). Each subsequent event reinforces the Association's role as the corridor's long-term stewardship partner.

PHASE 2 Jurisdiction, Survey & Coordination

Short-term · 3–12 months · Lead: City of West Palm Beach + SFWMD + PPNA

- Convene a jurisdictional coordination meeting (City Engineering, City Parks & Recreation, Palm Beach County Property Appraiser, SFWMD right-of-way staff, Pineapple Park Neighborhood Association) to confirm ownership, easements, and permitting authority for the corridor — see Section 2.
- Commission a topographical and utility survey of the corridor between Old Okeechobee Road and the I-95 overpass.
- Confirm SFWMD Right-of-Way Occupancy Permit requirements and pre-application meeting scheduling.

PHASE 3 Schematic Design & Community Input

Mid-term · 6–18 months · Lead: Florida-licensed Landscape Architect (commissioned by City) + PPNA

- Engage a Florida-licensed landscape architect to develop schematic design and probable cost based on this concept, the survey, and the jurisdictional findings.
- Hold one or more community design workshops with surrounding residents and PPNA members at the Howard Park Community Center to refine the schematic design and confirm priorities (e.g., locations of activity nodes, specific planting choices, lighting approach).
- Produce schematic-level drawings, planting plan, lighting plan, and a probable cost opinion suitable for use in funding applications.

PHASE 4 Funding, Permitting & Construction

Long-term · 18+ months, phased · Lead: City of West Palm Beach

- Identify funding sources — including potential SFWMD water-quality cooperative funding, FDOT shared-use path or Transportation Alternatives funding, the City's Capital

Improvement Program, and private/foundation grants tied to historic preservation (the canal's National Register listing) and community greening.

- Advance to design development, construction documents, permitting (SFWMD Right-of-Way Occupancy Permit, City building/site permits, ADA review), and phased construction starting with the segments most ready to build.
- Establish a long-term maintenance partnership in which PPNA continues volunteer cleanups, plant establishment monitoring, and programming, while the City retains responsibility for path, lighting, and structural maintenance.

Important disclaimer

All drawings, dimensions, elevations, planting recommendations, and corridor descriptions in this document are conceptual and illustrative only. They are not surveyed, engineered, or stamped by a licensed design professional and must not be used for permitting, bidding, or construction. Any actual implementation requires a topographical survey, design by a Florida-licensed landscape architect, and engineering review for stormwater, structural, and ADA compliance.