



COMPASS

COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION

of Southwest Idaho

REGIONAL WATERWAY-PATHWAY TOOLKIT



SPRING 2026

ADA COUNTY AND CANYON COUNTY, ID

Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit

The Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit is designed to guide jurisdictions, developers, and other stakeholders through the process of planning and implementing pathways along waterways. Because pathway projects may occur along both irrigation waterways and natural waterways, and they often involve multiple partners, regulatory considerations, and funding sources, the process can be complex.

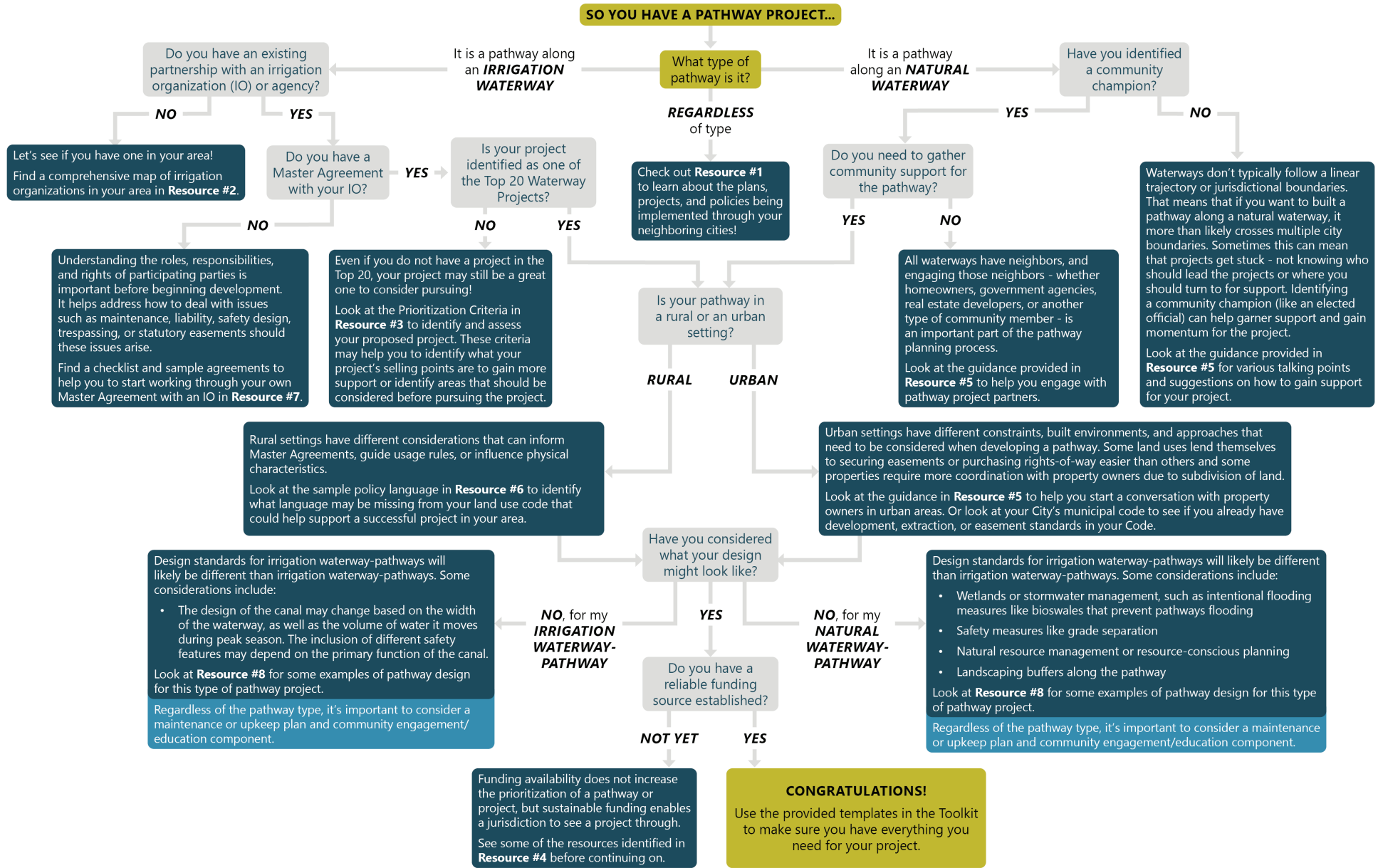
The Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resource Flowchart is displayed on the next page (Figure 1). The flowchart is a step-by-step framework to guide project champions in identifying key decision points, determining appropriate coordination steps, and connecting to relevant resources in the Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit. By following this process, project champions can better understand project feasibility, engage the appropriate partners early, and navigate the planning and implementation of waterway-pathways more effectively.

There are eight resources included in the Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit. The following pages provide a brief overview of each resource and a link to the page where each resource is located. Use the links in the bulleted list to jump to the resources.



Bicyclists at the Hill Road Roundabout (Source: Kittelson & Associates, Inc.)

Figure 1: Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit - Resource Flowchart



Resource #1 Policy and Plan Matrix for Pathways in Ada and Canyon Counties

This resource provides a succinct overview of the plans, studies, policies, and other documents that address waterway-pathway planning in the Treasure Valley. The matrix is available as a sortable spreadsheet on the COMPASS website for its member agencies to use for identifying examples that can inform early planning efforts for pathways.

- *Use this resource to find example policy language for the initial stages of waterway-pathway planning.*

Resource #2 Key Project Partners Database

An online, interactive map was developed for COMPASS and its member agencies to easily visualize and access information about the Top 20 Waterway-Pathway Projects, as well as see the data that were used to analyze and prioritize the potential projects. The [interactive map](#) is available online.

- *Use this resource to visualize the data behind the Top 20 Waterway-Pathway Projects and find key information about each project.*

Additionally, to assist COMPASS and its member agencies in moving waterway-pathway projects forward, a Key Project Partners Database for the Top 20 Projects is available on the COMPASS website. This table contains contact information for City, County, highway district, and irrigation organization staff who would likely be involved in the development of each Top 20 Project. This spreadsheet is intended to be a living resource, updated by COMPASS annually, as possible.

- *Use this resource to identify key planning partners and initiate conversations about waterway-pathway projects.*

Resource #3 Waterway-Pathway Project Prioritization Criteria

The prioritization criteria developed for this plan capture the various considerations associated with irrigation waterways and natural waterways. This resource is intended to assist COMPASS member agencies in understanding the prioritization process and supporting local decision making. For example, even if a community does not have a project identified in the Top 20, other waterway-pathway projects may still be worthwhile to pursue. The prioritization criteria can be used as a tool to evaluate and assess the potential of any project.

- *Use this resource to evaluate potential projects outside of the Top 20 Waterway-Pathway Projects.*

Resource #4 Waterway-Pathway Potential Funding Sources and Probable Costs

Waterway-pathways are intended to provide safe, accessible facilities for active transportation and recreation. Because of this dual purpose, funding sources for waterway-pathway projects can emerge from transportation and recreational programs that can be accessed from federal, state, regional, and local sources. To help COMPASS and its member agencies identify the most appropriate types of funding sources to pursue, planning-level estimates of probable costs, such as crossings and maintenance, are included.

- *Use this resource to understand potential project component costs and identify potential funding sources for waterway-pathway projects.*

Resource #5

Best Practices for Engaging with Waterway-Pathway Project Partners

Effective collaboration is foundational to the successful planning, design, and implementation of pathways along waterways. Engagement strategies vary depending on whether a project is located along an irrigation waterway or a natural waterway and on public property versus private property. Because these waterway systems operate under different legal, operational, and regulatory frameworks, agencies must tailor their coordination approach accordingly. This resource provides guidance and information on how to best engage with different project partners for a waterway-pathway.

- *Use this resource to prepare for conversations about your waterway-pathway project with irrigation organizations, property owners, real estate developers, and other planning partners.*

Resource #6

Sample Policy Language for Development-Driven Waterway-Pathways

For many communities in Ada County and Canyon County, the creation of pathways along waterways could be part of the development or redevelopment of adjacent land. This resource outlines sample policy language to assist COMPASS member agencies in crafting development review processes to spur the creation of pathways along waterways. The sample policy language draws from successes in the Treasure Valley and nationally.

- *Use this resource to update the development review process to encourage and condition the creation and maintenance of waterway-pathways as part of adjacent land development or redevelopment.*

Resource #7

Irrigation Organization Master Agreement Checklist

To enter into a formal partnership with an irrigation organization for the planning and implementation of waterway-pathway projects, it is often necessary to develop a Master Agreement that guides the process and outlines roles and responsibilities. This resource provides guidance on key topics to discuss with irrigation organization staff when developing a Master Agreement. The checklist is based on best practices from around the Treasure Valley.

- *Use this resource to prepare for conversations about your waterway-pathway project with irrigation organizations.*

Resource #8

Waterway-Pathway Cross-Section Visualizations

Pathways along waterways can take shape in different ways depending on waterway type, land use context, maintenance needs, and other considerations. This resource illustrates several options to guide the planning and development of waterway-pathway projects.

- *Use this resource to visualize the waterway-pathway project and prepare for conversations with local elected officials, irrigation organizations, property owners, real estate developers, and other planning partners.*

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Resource #1: Policy and Plan Matrix for Pathways in Ada and Canyon Counties

The Policy and Plan Review Matrix includes information from a review of over 45 documents, including local, county, and regional policy plans. These documents were reviewed for their relevant policies, priority projects, and implementation frameworks that may support the regional pathway and waterway network in Ada County and Canyon County. The review process involved:

- Organizing documents by county, with 13 from Ada County and 19 from Canyon County, as well as reviewing neighborhood plans.
- Searching documents using keywords (e.g., “canal,” “greenbelt,” “pathway,” “river,” “trail,” “water”), resulting in over 180 potentially relevant pathways. Some documents lacked relevant policies but are included for reference.
- Compiling identified policies into the Policy and Plan Matrix spreadsheet, noting the document source, adoption year, page/policy number, and keywords.
- Flagging policies as potential model codes for the Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit based on criteria related to land use, connectivity, regional partnerships, accessibility, pathway management, stewardship, and resource management.

The Policy and Plan Matrix spreadsheet contains several tabs, including “How to Use the Matrix,” “Policy Review,” and “Priority Projects.”

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The following key themes emerged from the document review:

- There has not been a consistent approach across jurisdictions to implementing pathways along waterways. Several plans identified the need to reduce duplicative efforts and create a unified approach.
- Related to irrigation waterways:
 - The inclusion of irrigation districts is critical for the success of a sustainable and interconnected network.
 - Proximity to canals is seen as a critical consideration for the success of a sustainable and interconnected pathway network.
- Related to natural waterways:
 - Several jurisdictions have overlay districts or zones (e.g., Greenbelt Overlay or Recreational Overlay) that promote and protect certain land uses near pathways that run along waterways.
 - Multiple jurisdictions identified the Boise River Greenbelt as a key opportunity for reducing trail gaps and increasing urban–suburban and cross-county connectivity. Recommendations include:
 - Promoting the Greenbelt and increasing connectivity across jurisdictions
 - Increasing access points
 - Coordinating trail standards
 - Developing a joint management group to oversee system maintenance and identify funding for priority projects
- Regardless of waterway type, protecting cultural resources, considering natural resources and environmental impacts, and cultivating and investing in regional and Tribal partnerships were seen as important pieces of the puzzle.

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Policy and Plan Examples for Development-Driven Pathways

One highly effective method for reserving space, creating maintenance partnerships, and allocating developmental resources for waterway-pathways is the integration of policies that promote the development of waterway-pathways into plans and code. Policies can inform and direct local and regional priorities and investments. Clear policy direction can also improve communication and coordination with neighboring jurisdictions on a shared commitment and vision for regional connectivity.

This resource identifies sample language from neighboring jurisdictions that an agency or organization can adapt or incorporate in regulations and planning documents to promote development-driven pathways. It accompanies the Policy Review Matrix, which summarized over 45 documents, including local, county, and regional policy plans and ordinances.

Policy Topics and Considerations

From the various plans employed across Ada County and Canyon County (and several outside of the region), key topics were identified as being highly supportive policy language for waterway-pathways, that could be adapted across agencies. These topics include:

- **Land use:** Related to easements along pathway-adjacent parcels and overlay zones or districts
- **Development standards:** Related to tread width by pathway type, setbacks, landscaping, and access and circulation standards
- **Design principles:** Related to furniture and lighting, safety, accessibility, wayfinding and signage, user type, and supporting facilities
- **Roles and responsibilities:** Related to pathway or license agreements with surrounding irrigation districts, bureaus, organizations, or private landowners
- **Rules and enforcement:** Related to crime reduction, increasing users' perception of safety, and ownership over trails

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- **Connectivity:** Related to gap reduction and the creation of a robust regional trail system and active corridor
- **Pathway maintenance and management of high-traffic areas:** Related to increasing trail longevity, reducing expenses, and maintaining access for visitors and residents
- **Natural resource management:** Related to the preservation and protection of the Boise River (as well as other natural waterways) and adjacent wetlands, wildlife habitats, scenic views, and ecosystems
- **Climate-specific responses:** Related to snow removal, wildfire management, and design considerations
- **Regional partnerships:** Related to creating an aligned vision and shared responsibilities
- **Public education and community stewardship:** Related to engaging community members, generating support, and investing in low-impact usage of trails and pathways

Further information about each of these topics is available in the following sections, which include relevant plans, codes, and policies.

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Land Use

Topic	Plan	Example Language
Easements	<i>City of Boise Pathways Master Plan, 2021</i>	Whenever a tract of land within any proposed development includes a pathway designated in the Boise Pathways Master Plan, the pathway shall be required as part of the public right-of-way or as a separate, platted easement. Required easement widths will differ depending on context and whether the path is a neighborhood connector (25–30 feet) or multi-use path (30–50 feet). Required easement widths should account for clear zones and landscaping, including shade trees.
Overlay Zones or Districts	<i>Canyon County Parks, Pathways, and Cultural Resources Plan, 2024</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider creating a recreational overlay district that can help protect and fund open space and recreational opportunities in the County. • Utilize a land trust approach to protect and acquire undeveloped and open space in Canyon County.

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Development Standards

Topic	Plan	Example Language
Tread Width	City of Eagle, Code Chapter 4, Section 9-4-1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails tread shall be a minimum of 10 feet wide. • Community types and transitions shall be eight feet wide unless otherwise approved by the City. • Neighborhood types shall be six feet wide unless otherwise approved by the City.
Layout	City of Eagle, Resolution No. 23-19	Layout must facilitate access for maintenance, construction, and emergency vehicles (e.g., turn radius and slope suitable for full-size pickup and 15-foot-long trailer) for City-maintained pathways. Consideration of vehicle access from public roadways, vehicle turnaround, and materials staging will be evaluated by the City.
Setbacks	Garden City, <i>Master Parks Plan, 2016</i>	Establish a 70-foot minimum setback from the 6500 cubic feet per second line prohibiting development and a “no-mow” zone along the Boise River. Under unusual circumstances, the City Council may consider adjusting the setback. Allow only native plantings within the setback.
Landscaping	City of Eagle, Code Chapter 4, Section 9-4-1-6; Resolution 23-19	For all pathways maintained by the City, a minimum of a four-foot-wide landscaped area, natural open space, or area/building and fence setback (as measured from both edges of the path) shall be required. The area will be owned by either the abutting property owner(s) or a homeowners' association (HOA) unless accepted by a public entity. The four-foot-wide landscaped area on either side of the pathway may be decreased to a minimum of two feet wide (as measured from the edge of the tread to the easement line) when used in conjunction with a meandering pathway. However, the total width of the landscape area shall not be less than eight feet (i.e., two feet on one side of the path and six feet on the other). For safety purposes, planting material in this area is limited to three feet in height. Exceptions may be granted by the City based on site limitations or alternative management guidelines.
Access and Circulation	City of Boise, <i>Pathways Master Plan, 2021</i>	New developments shall provide paved pathway connections (micro paths) to existing and planned public pathways located within or adjacent to the development. Such access points should be constructed no less frequently than every 900 feet along the adjacent pathway corridor. The design and

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Topic	Plan	Example Language
		construction of these connections shall be consistent with the guidelines contained in this plan, including easements wide enough to accommodate medium and large maturing trees.

Design Principles

Topic	Plan	Example Language
Pedestrian Amenities	City of Meridian, <i>Pathways Master Plan, 2020</i>	Locate trailheads at or in conjunction with park sites, schools, and other community facilities to increase local access to the pathway system and reduce duplication of supporting improvements. Furnish pathway systems with trailhead improvements, including interpretive and directional signage systems, benches, drinking fountains, restrooms, parking and staging areas, and other services.
	Outside of Ada and Canyon Counties	The <i>Truckee Meadows Regional Trails Plan</i> introduces the idea of “trail hubs” that would serve multiple connecting trails at one central point for access, seating, signage, and other amenities.
Accessibility	City of Meridian, <i>Pathways Master Plan, 2020</i>	Develop a pathway system for people of all abilities, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized pathway users. Link it to a complementary system of on-road bicycle and pedestrian routes to provide connections between city facilities without pathway corridors.
	Ada County, <i>Ridge-to-Rivers Management Plan, 2016</i>	Improve the Ridge-to-Rivers (R2R) experience for people with disabilities and adaptive recreationists. Conduct periodic consultations with adaptive recreation community members to ensure that R2R is responsive to community needs.

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Topic	Plan	Example Language
Wayfinding	City of Star, <i>Comprehensive Plan, 2022</i>	Incorporate a wayfinding and interpretation system along the south side of the Boise River to educate users on wildlife, wildlife habitats, Boise River hydrology, and cultural history of the area.
	Outside of Ada and Canyon Counties	The <i>Klamath Falls Trail Signage Plan</i> (2020) includes several sign type recommendations, including gateway signs for entry and access points; directional information and signage; mile markers; safety and circulation traffic signs; interpretive signs, stories, and messages to connect people to the land on which they are recreating; and “pageantry” signs that are intended to be decorative in nature. The unified imagery and language in these signs help create a throughline in the corridor.
User Type	City of Boise, <i>Blueprint Boise Comprehensive Plan, 2023</i>	Encourage a diversity of trail types and uses throughout the Barber Valley, from paved, flat trails like the Greenbelt to steep, natural surface trails. Work with Idaho Fish and Game and R2R to identify the appropriate seasons for use and closure.

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Roles, Responsibilities, Rules, and Enforcement

Topic	Plan	Example Language
License Agreements	City of Boise, <i>Blueprint Boise Comprehensive Plan, 2023</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design paths and trails in accordance with the standards and policies identified in the <i>Comprehensive Park and Recreation System Plan</i>. • Continue to work with irrigation districts to provide multi-use pathways along canals.
	City of Star, <i>Comprehensive Plan, 2022</i>	Coordinate with irrigation districts to allow for pathway connections along irrigation canals and ditches.
Unified Approach to Design Principles	City of Boise, <i>Pathways Master Plan, 2021</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural access control uses both real and symbolic barriers—including fences, berms, and vegetation—to define and limit access to an adjacent building or other use along pathways. • Territorial reinforcement uses physical elements that reinforce that the space is public, including branded elements, wayfinding signage, and public art. • Maintenance involves immediately removing graffiti, repairing vandalism, and maintaining the landscape to limit areas of concealment.

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Connectivity

Topic	Plan	Example Language
Greenbelt Focus	City of Boise, <i>Blueprint Boise Comprehensive Plan, 2023</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the Greenbelt west of Orchard to provide a connection to the Boise Towne Square Mall and to expand biking opportunities to and from the Central Bench. Continue to expand the network of trails and bike paths within the Central Bench, exploring opportunities for trails that parallel the canals.
	City of Kuna, <i>Comprehensive Plan, 2019</i>	Identify locations and opportunities to link Greenbelt to other pathways, trails and commercial and residential areas to increase connectivity.
	City of Star, <i>Comprehensive Plan, 2022</i>	South of the River Subarea, provide pathway connectivity throughout the area, utilizing buffers between existing and future neighborhoods, natural resource areas, the extension of the Boise Greenbelt, and existing irrigation canals and ditches.
	City of Boise, <i>Blueprint Boise Comprehensive Plan, 2023</i>	<p>Connect R2R trails to each other and with the Greenbelt. Specific connections include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect the east-west trail designated in the Barber Valley plan (SP02) behind the Terraces neighborhoods to the Homestead Trail on the west and to the West Highland Valley Trail on the east. Extend the Greenbelt eastward from the current dead-end at Barber Dam. Provide a safe crossing across Warm Springs at two points: from Highland Valley Road to the Greenbelt and from the Homestead Trail to the Greenbelt.
Other Corridors	Canyon County, <i>Canyon County Parks, Pathways, and Cultural Resources Plan, 2024</i>	Create a recreational pathway or corridor connecting the Sunnyslope area to the Snake River and other recreational destinations.

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	City of Parma, <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> , 2004	Develop a master plan for a 6.4-mile natural trail from Parma to the Fort Boise Monument on the Boise River.
	City of Boise, <i>Blueprint Boise Comprehensive Plan</i> , 2023	Make connections between Barber Valley trails, new developments, existing developments, and the Greenbelt. Link gaps in the existing sidewalk system to provide connectivity and public safety along Warm Springs Avenue.
Future Growth	City of Caldwell, <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> , 2025	Develop a plan for a citywide network of trails and paths that strategically links services and amenities to neighborhoods and can be implemented in existing and new areas as the city builds out.

Pathway Maintenance

Topic	Plan	Example Language
Routine Maintenance	City of Eagle, <i>Pathways and Trails Plan</i> , 2019	Adopt and implement a routine maintenance schedule for trails and pathways that protects the City’s investment and extends its longevity.
High-Trafficked Areas	Ada County, <i>Ridge to Rivers 10-Year Management Plan</i> , 2016	Identify and implement techniques to manage high-use areas sustainably, and to accommodate a variety of users. Currently, high-use areas in the Ridge to Rivers system are trails within and connecting to Camel’s Back and Halls Gulch Reserves, Military Reserve, Castle Rock, and Table Rock Reserves. See the High-Use Trails and Areas map for the location of existing high-use areas. These strategies may be employed in other areas as use patterns change.

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Natural Resources and Resiliency

Topic	Plan	Example Language
Habitat Protections	City of Kuna, <i>Comprehensive Plan, 2019</i>	Ensure that Greenbelt use and land development along or near Indian Creek does not negatively impact natural resources or habitats. Maintain Indian Creek’s ability to provide ecosystem benefits, such as floodwater control and water purification.
	Ada County, <i>Ridge to Rivers 10-Year Management Plan, 2016</i>	Locate, design, and maintain trails in concert with other natural resource management values and objectives.
	City of Star, <i>Comprehensive Plan, 2022</i>	Adopt ordinances, site plan reviews, subdivision regulations, and/or overlays to address land issues in or near wildlife, water resources, scenic views, steep slopes, and unique habitats.
Trail Design	City of Star, <i>Comprehensive Plan, 2022</i>	Incorporate a wayfinding and interpretation system along the south side of the Boise River to educate users on wildlife, wildlife habitats, Boise River hydrology, and cultural history of the area.
Wildfire Management	Caldwell County <i>Comprehensive Plan, 2022</i>	Work with Canyon County Emergency Management to implement the <i>All-Hazard Mitigation Plan</i> .
		Require that all new developments be accessible, and regularly maintain roads for fire protection and emergency service purposes.

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Building Partnerships

Topic	Plan	Example Language
Community Organizations	Ada County, <i>Ridge-to-Rivers Management Plan, 2016</i>	Offer programs that encourage new and infrequent users to access the trails and use them responsibly. Partner with community organizations to offer events and programs that encourage new users to become familiar with the R2R trails. For example, “New Trail User Day” events and trail ambassador programs provide guided outings for people who might be apprehensive about venturing into the R2R system. Continue to work with existing programs such as City and County recreation programs to offer a variety of outdoor recreation and education classes for varying experience levels.
Community Support	City of Garden City, <i>Garden City Master Parks Plan, 2016</i>	Implement a parks satisfaction survey every five to ten years to solicit citizen input and identify potential parks and Greenbelt needs.
	Ada County, <i>Ridge-to-Rivers Management Plan, 2016</i>	Establish measurable benchmarks. Based on goals developed through this plan, select benchmarks and annually evaluate the growth of the trail system and trail use. Examples of benchmarks could include the number of visitors from outside the county and the state, number of trail miles, number of volunteer hours, number of trail-related community events, and economic impact of trails on the local economy. Share this information as part of annual State of the Trails Report and annual community celebration. Identify resources needed to meet benchmarks, including costs for additional R2R program staff, capital investment, and other management costs.
	Canyon County, <i>Canyon County Parks, Pathways, and Cultural Resources Plan, 2024</i>	Seek input from users and user groups regularly to monitor use patterns, identify emerging needs, and engage users in caring about, planning, and investing in amenities and programs.

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Topic	Plan	Example Language
Government Entities	City of Eagle, <i>Pathways and Trails Plan</i> , 2019	<p>Work with public agencies to plan, coordinate and implement projects. Methods may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining or putting in place joint agreements or memoranda of understandings as needed with trail management partners, including Bureau of Land Management (BLM), R2R, Ada County, and adjoining jurisdictions. • Working with Ada County Highway District to engage in an update to the <i>Eagle Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan</i> to assess needs and make determinations about on-street and right-of-way facilities. In particular, identify and include bike and pedestrian connections on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Linder Road ○ Locust Grove Road ○ Ballantyne Road • Working with Idaho Transportation Department to identify pathway projects and needed crossings on state highways and roads. • Working with COMPASS to assess, develop, and fund regionally significant pathway projects. • Engaging irrigation districts in discussions about developing pathways and easements along canals.
Developers	City of Boise, <i>Blueprint Comprehensive Plan</i> , 2023	<p>Provided trailheads with public parking and buffer them from the surrounding uses. Incorporate access for people with disabilities into the designs for trailheads and parking areas. Avoid the loss of allowable density where property is transferred to public ownership. A state or local government may sell or exchange density from its property to developable property.</p>
	City of Eagle, <i>Pathways and Trails Plan</i> , 2019	<p>Establish pathways adjacent to canals wherever possible. Methods may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As land adjacent to canals is developed, working with developers to incorporate pathways into their projects.

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Topic	Plan	Example Language
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining parcels and/or easements and developing City-owned pathways or trail sections. • Engage irrigation districts in planning and work to obtain easement agreements as needed.
Community Buy-In, Trail Stewardship, and Volunteer Commitment	Ada County, <i>Ridge-to-Rivers Management Plan, 2016</i>	<p>Actively engage with citizen groups, partner agencies, private developers, and related organizations on an ongoing basis to assess trail and pathway needs and implement projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide educational materials and programs to promote stewardship and low-impact use of the trails system. • Expand opportunities for community members and groups to participate in volunteer opportunities for trail maintenance, construction, and clean-up efforts directed and guided by R2R partnership staff. • Offer programs that encourage new and infrequent users to access the trails and use them responsibly. Partner with community organizations to offer events and programs that encourage new users to become familiar with the R2R trails. For example, “New Trail User Day” events and trail ambassador programs provide guided outings for people who might be apprehensive about venturing into the R2R system. Continue to work with existing programs such as City and County recreation programs to offer a variety of outdoor recreation and education classes for varying experience levels.

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Resource #2: Key Project Partners Database

Planning and implementing waterway-pathways requires coordination among many partners, including cities, counties, highway districts, irrigation organizations, and, in some cases, state and federal agencies. Across Ada County and Canyon County, project stakeholders consistently identified a major barrier to project success is early uncertainty about who should be involved in the project. This lack of clarity can delay coordination, slow momentum, and hinder early feasibility discussions.

To address this challenge, COMPASS developed the Key Project Partners Database as a companion to the Top 20 Waterway-Pathway Projects identified in this plan. The database compiles known points of contact for city, county, highway district, and irrigation organization staff associated with each priority project area. The database is intended to support early outreach, relationship building, and information sharing as jurisdictions explore pathway opportunities and move projects from concepts toward implementation.

The database is designed to help identify relevant partners and initiate conversations about feasibility, roles, and next steps early in the project development process. Users can search by waterway, jurisdiction, or irrigation organization to understand the coordination landscape for a given project area. This resource is not exhaustive or prescriptive but provides a practical starting point for collaboration. As with other toolkit resources, it is intended to be a living document and may be updated over time as partners, staffing needs, and project needs evolve.

Resource #3: Waterway-Pathway Project

Prioritization Criteria

The Coordinated Regional Waterway-Pathway Plan identifies and prioritizes potential shared-use pathway opportunities along irrigation waterways and natural waterways to address gaps in the regional active transportation network. To address the varying ownership, operational constraints, environmental sensitivity, and planning context of pathways along waterways, a structured and transparent prioritization process was developed. The prioritization process is intended to provide a consistent, transparent, and regionally informed approach to evaluating locations for pathway projects. The process should result in projects that are the most feasible, impactful, and supportive of the local and regional community.

The prioritization criteria used reflect stakeholder input, jurisdictional priorities, and project feasibility. For irrigation waterways, the prioritization criteria emphasize:

- Irrigation organization interest in publicly-accessible pathways
- Connectivity to regional and local active transportation networks
- Access to essential destinations
- Equity considerations
- Alignment with existing plans

Additional criteria capture opportunities for connections via unopened right-of-way or subdivision common areas, as well as distinguish potential projects based on jurisdictional priority.

To recognize the distinct environmental and regulatory considerations associated with natural waterways, a separate set of prioritization criteria was developed for them. It accounts for:

- Land use context
- Connectivity to regional and local active transportation networks

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- Access to essential destinations
- Equity considerations
- Alignment with existing plans

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Irrigation Waterways Prioritization Criteria

The maximum possible score for an irrigation waterway was 14 points. While no segments of irrigation waterways received the maximum score, 11 segments scored as “High Priority.” These segments are primarily located in Nampa, Caldwell, Star, Middleton, and Garden City. To view the datasets that informed the prioritization process, [an interactive map is available online](#).

Criterion	+2 Point	+1 Point	0 Points	-1 Point
Irrigation Organization Interest in Publicly-Accessible Pathways along Waterways: Determined via stakeholder outreach conducted in September 2025 – January 2026	Irrigation organizations that have indicated a willingness or existing practice of implementing publicly-accessible pathways along waterways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boise City Canal Company Pioneer Irrigation District Middleton Mill Irrigation Association 	Irrigation organizations that have indicated they are “Interested but Cautious” about implementing publicly-accessible pathways along waterways (None Interviewed)	Irrigation organizations that did not respond to outreach attempts (All irrigation organizations not otherwise listed)	Irrigation organizations that have indicated they are “Uninterested or Against” implementing publicly-accessible pathways along waterways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boise Board of Project Control (Boise-Kuna Irrigation District, New York Irrigation District, Wilder Irrigation District, part of Nampa-Meridian Irrigation District) Farmers Union Ditch Company
Regional Routes Active Transportation Network Connectivity	Existing to Existing Facility	Existing to Proposed Facility	Proposed to Proposed Facility	N/A
Local Active Transportation Network Connectivity	Existing to existing facility	Existing to proposed facility	Proposed to proposed facility	N/A

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Criterion	+2 Point	+1 Point	0 Points	-1 Point
Connectivity with Unopened Right-of-Way or Subdivision Common Areas: Potential access points or local connections to the irrigation waterways that are publicly or communally held within 100 feet	N/A	Intersects (within 100 feet) with either unopened right-of-way or subdivision common areas	N/A	N/A
Support Existing Planning Efforts	N/A	Identified in a previous plan	Not identified in a previous plan	N/A
Essential Destinations: Schools, libraries, parks/open spaces within 0.5 mi	2+ destinations	1 destination	0 destinations	N/A
COMPASS Communities in Motion 2050 Regional Equity Index¹	Highest 25% of index scores	Next 25% of index scores	N/A	N/A
Cross-Jurisdictional Alignment	N/A	Two or more jurisdictions	One jurisdiction	N/A
Jurisdiction Priority: Each community's top priority for pathways along waterways	N/A	Indicated as the top priority for the community	N/A	N/A

¹ The Regional Equity Index aggregates 23 societal, environmental, and transportation factors to score and map the level of equity/inequity by geographic locations, relative to the region as a whole. A high index score indicates higher inequity relative to the region as a whole. COMPASS. (December 2022). *Communities in Motion 2050 Regional Equity Index*.

<https://compassidaho.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/minimalist/index.html?appid=f9fc986e99554b6b944b319319408184>

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Jurisdiction Priority (Feedback from Work Group Meeting #2 and Meeting #3)

The jurisdiction priority criteria were added to the prioritization criteria for irrigation waterways, following the feedback received from Work Group members after Meeting #2 in November 2025 and Meeting #3 in January 2026. The following table outlines these priorities. All jurisdictions were afforded the opportunity to provide input.

Agency	Feedback for Prioritizing Segments
ACHD Bicycle Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segment 189 and 949 Ridenbaugh Canal from near Cole Rd to Emerald St • Segment 243 and 996 and 1001 Farmer’s Union Canal, west of Whitewater Park to north of State Street, parallel to Catalpa Dr • Segment 438 and 31 Farmer's Union Canal, near Beacon Light Rd along Homer Rd to east of Highway 16
Boise State University	Segment 227 Ridenbaugh Canal from near Shoshone St to S Broadway Ave
City of Kuna	Segment 413 and 795 Indian Creek from near W Escondido St & W 4th St to near N Cranesbill Ave & W Trout Lily St
City of Nampa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segment 664 10-Mile Drain • Segment 668 9-Mile Drain • Segment 291 Elijah Drain • Segment 403 Mason Creek
City of Boise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segment 84 and 967 New York Canal from I-84 to Lucky Peak State Park • Segment 103 Ridenbaugh Canal from near S Broadway Ave to Eckert Rd • Segment 227 Ridenbaugh Canal from near Shoshone St to S Broadway Ave • Segment 926 Farmers Lateral from near I-184 to Philippi St • Segment 949 and Segment 189 Ridenbaugh Canal from near Cole Rd to Emerald St • Segment 965 and Segment 962 and Segment 815 New York Canal from near W Wright St to S Maple Grove Rd • Segment 938 and Segment 942 Settlers Canal from near W Abram Ln to W Ustick Rd • Segment 992 and Segment 993 Spoil Banks Canal from near Horseshoe Bend Rd to N Eugene St
COMPASS	Segment 746 and Segment 747 10-Mile Creek from near N Can Ada Rd to N Ten Mile Rd

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Natural Waterways Prioritization Criteria

The maximum possible score for a natural waterway was eight points. While no segments of natural waterways received the maximum score, several segments of Indian Creek in the City of Kuna and the Boise River west of the City of Eagle were scored as “High Priority.” View the [prioritization datasets online](#).

Criterion	+2 Point	+1 Point	0 Points
Regional Routes Active Transportation Network Connectivity	Existing to existing facility	Existing to proposed facility	Proposed to proposed facility
Local Active Transportation Network Connectivity	Existing to existing facility	Existing to proposed Facility	Proposed to proposed facility
Connectivity with Unopened Right-of-Way or Subdivision Common Areas: Potential access points or local connections to the natural waterways that are publicly or communally held within 100 feet	N/A	Intersects (within 100 feet) with either unopened right-of-way or subdivision common areas	N/A
Support Existing Planning Efforts	N/A	Identified in a previous plan	Not identified in a previous plan
Adjacent Land Use: Zoning data to inform the potential land ownership, which indicates the feasibility of purchasing right-of-way or securing easements to construct pathways	Environmental, green space, or public/civic	Agricultural, commercial, healthcare, industrial, mixed-use, office, planned/overlay	Enclave, none, residential

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Resource #4: Waterway-Pathway Potential Funding Sources and Probable Costs

Potential Funding Sources for Waterway-Pathway Projects

Waterway-pathways are intended to provide safe and accessible facilities for active transportation and recreation. Funding for waterway-pathways is available through transportation and recreational programs at all levels of government.

Federal Funding Sources

Transportation Alternatives Program

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a federal competitive grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation¹ (USDOT) and distributed in Idaho by the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC) in cooperation with the Idaho Transportation Department, except in Ada County, where the grants are administered by COMPASS.² TAP provides funding for a wide range of alternative transportation projects, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities and Safe Routes to School infrastructure. Approximately \$7.5 million in TAP infrastructure funds is available annually in Idaho. Standard TAP awards are capped at \$500,000 in federal funds and require a 7.34% local match, though jurisdictions may also submit one non-scalable application for up to \$1 million in federal support. Projects must be located within the public right-of-way and primarily serve transportation purposes.

Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Grant Program

The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program is a nationally competitive discretionary grant administered by the USDOT to fund surface

¹ Transportation Alternatives. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/

² Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): 2026 Application - Infrastructure Projects. https://lhtac.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/TAP-Infrastructure-Application-2026-SG_Revised-December-2025-1.pdf

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transportation infrastructure projects.³ Eligible projects include roadway, transit, rail, port, and multimodal improvements and may include bicycle and pedestrian facilities when they serve a clear transportation purpose and have safety, mobility, and economic benefits. Award amounts vary annually and are typically several million dollars per project. Most awards require a minimum 20% non-federal match, though match flexibility may apply for rural projects. Projects must demonstrate strong transportation outcomes and benefit–cost justification to be competitive. This funding program is authorized through Fiscal Year 2026 and may change through the next federal transportation funding legislation.

State Funding Sources

Recreational Trails Program

The Recreational Trails Program is a federally funded program that provides annual funding to states for recreational trail projects.⁴ In Idaho, the program is administered by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) and typically distributes approximately \$1.5 million per year. Eligible projects include maintenance and restoration of existing trails, construction of new trails (with some restrictions on federal lands), development of trailheads and trailside facilities, and purchase of trail construction or maintenance equipment.

Projects must be identified in or referenced by the *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*, and planning-only projects are not eligible. The program requires a 20% match, with at least 5% coming from non-federal funds. Funding is structured to ensure balance across trail types, with minimum allocations for motorized and non-motorized uses. Eligible applicants include governmental entities, Native American Tribes, and nonprofit organizations, and applications are reviewed by the Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee.

³ Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>

⁴ The Recreation Trails Program. <https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/grants-and-funding/the-recreational-trails-program/>

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Waterways Improvement Fund

Administered by the IDPR, the Waterways Improvement Fund distributes approximately \$1.2 million annually to support boating safety and waterway access improvements.⁵ Eligible uses include the construction and improvement of boat ramps, parking areas, moorings, waterway markers, search and rescue infrastructure, and other resources associated with public waterways.

For waterway-pathway projects, program funding may be applicable when improvements directly support boating access or water safety. This can include ADA-accessible pathways connecting parking areas to boat launches, circulation improvements within boating access sites, and installation of “waterway hazard” or “no entry” signage to prevent unsafe canal access. While the program is not intended to fund general pedestrian or bicycle trail construction, it can support pathway elements that are clearly tied to waterway safety, access, and boating-related infrastructure.

Regional Funding Sources

Communities in Motion Implementation Grants

The Communities in Motion Implementation (CIM) Grants program is administered by COMPASS to help member agencies implement projects identified in the region’s long-range transportation plan, *Communities in Motion*.⁶ The grant program provides financial assistance to agencies within Ada and Canyon Counties for projects that advance regional transportation goals, including improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit access, roadway safety, and development within activity centers and existing communities.

CIM grants are intended to move priority projects from planning to implementation and are awarded through a competitive process open to COMPASS member agencies. Projects must demonstrate consistency with regional policies and support multimodal transportation, safety, and mobility objectives. Funding levels vary by cycle and currently

⁵ Waterways Improvement Fund. <https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/grants-and-funding/waterways-improvement-fund/>

⁶ *Communities in Motion* Implementation Grants. <https://compassidaho.org/cimi/>

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require a minimum match of 7.34%. Projects are evaluated based on their alignment with adopted regional priorities and readiness for implementation.

Foundation for Ada/Canyon Trail Systems Fundraising

The Foundation for Ada/Canyon Trail Systems (FACTS) is a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to developing a connected pathway system between Boise and the Snake River.⁷ The organization focuses on advancing multi-use trail connectivity throughout Ada and Canyon Counties, working to promote active transportation, recreation, and regional access. Their mission closely aligns with waterway-pathway and greenway initiatives that enhance mobility and community connectivity.

FACTS can serve as a valuable project partner by supporting advocacy efforts, assisting with fundraising, mobilizing volunteers, and collaborating on grant applications.

Partnering with a nonprofit such as FACTS can also strengthen funding proposals by demonstrating community support. Partnership may help leverage private grants or meet local match requirements for state and federal funding programs. Recently, FACTS partnered with Garden City and Ada County to secure a \$1.9 million grant to build a pedestrian bridge.

Local Funding Sources

Impact Fees

Impact fees are charges assessed on new development to help fund infrastructure needed to serve growth. Transportation impact fees can be used for roadway, intersection, and multimodal improvements that address capacity or mobility needs created by new development. If a waterway-pathway improves multimodal connectivity or mitigates transportation impacts of growth, eligible portions may be funded through adopted impact fee programs, consistent with local ordinances and capital improvement plans.

⁷ Foundation for Ada/Canyon Trail Systems (F.A.C.T.S.) <https://factsidaho.org/>

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Recreational Improvement Districts

Recreational Improvement Districts (RIDs) are special assessment districts created to fund the construction and maintenance of parks, pathways, and recreational facilities within a defined geographic area. Property owners within the district contribute through assessments or fees to support improvements that directly benefit the area. For waterway-pathways, an RID could fund trail construction, maintenance, lighting, and access improvements where adjacent properties receive a measurable benefit. An RID must be created before it can be a viable mechanism for funding pathway projects.

Community Infrastructure Districts

Community Infrastructure Districts (CIDs), sometimes referred to as Community Improvement Districts, are authorized under Idaho law to finance public infrastructure associated with new development. A CID is typically established during the early stages of a development project and allows infrastructure improvements to be funded through bonds or assessments repaid by property owners within the district. Eligible improvements may include roads, utilities, parks, and other publicly owned facilities that support community growth. For waterway-pathway projects, a CID could be used to finance path segments, bridges, and access improvements constructed as part of a new development, particularly where the infrastructure will serve both the development and the broader public network. A CID must be created before it can be a viable mechanism for funding pathway projects.

Urban Renewal Districts

Urban Renewal Districts use tax increment financing to reinvest increased property tax revenues within a designated redevelopment area. Funds can be used for public infrastructure improvements that stimulate economic development, including streets, sidewalks, plazas, and sometimes multi-use pathways. If a waterway-pathway lies within or directly supports a redevelopment area, urban renewal funding may be an appropriate local funding source. An urban renewal district must be established by an urban renewal agency before it can be a viable mechanism for funding pathway projects.

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Business Improvement Districts

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are locally designated areas where commercial property owners pay an additional assessment to fund improvements that enhance economic activity. Funds can support streetscape enhancements, pedestrian infrastructure, lighting, branding, and public space improvements. For pathway projects, BIDs may contribute to trail segments that increase foot traffic, improve access to commercial districts, and enhance waterfront redevelopment areas. A BID must be created before it can be a viable mechanism for funding pathway projects.

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Planning-Level Opinions of Probable Costs for Waterway-Pathway Project Components

To understand the relative magnitude of the construction and maintenance of a waterway-pathway project, high-level opinions of probable costs for project components were approximated from several resources and recently completed projects in the Treasure Valley. The information contained in **Table 1** is intended to help COMPASS and its member agencies converse with local and regional decision-makers or advocate for feasibility studies, supplemental plans, or concept designs for waterway-pathway projects.

The opinions of probable cost have been increased from their respective construction years to 2026 dollars. Where possible, ranges are provided to demonstrate the variation possible depending on project-specific conditions. This information should not be interpreted as definite cost estimates for specific projects. The development of projects included in the Coordinated Regional Waterway-Pathway Plan did not include any of the following activities: right-of-way acquisition, design, quantification, or engineering.

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Table 1. Planning-Level Opinions of Probable Costs for Waterway-Pathway Project Components

Project Component	Unit	Opinion of Probable Cost		Description
		Low	High	
Construction—asphalt pathway	1 mile	\$850,000	\$5,280,000	Typically for 10–12-foot paths, including other construction and engineering elements
Construction—concrete pathway	1 mile	\$1,630,000	\$7,200,000	
Construction—gravel/natural surface pathway	1 mile	\$200,000	\$440,000	
Pavement maintenance—asphalt pathway	1 mile	\$125,000	N/A	Includes site clearing and patch repairs over a five year timeline
Pavement maintenance—concrete pathway	1 mile	\$270,000	N/A	
Pavement maintenance – gravel/natural surface pathway	1 mile	\$80,000	N/A	
General maintenance (annual)—asphalt pathway	1 mile	\$30,000	N/A	Includes site clearing, vegetation management, and waste removal (depends heavily on whether government staff or volunteers perform maintenance activities)
General maintenance (annual)—concrete pathway	1 mile	\$30,000	N/A	
General maintenance (annual)—gravel/natural surface pathway	1 mile	\$2,100	N/A	
Standard crossing for walking/biking (signs/pavement markings)	Each	\$30,000	N/A	Typical for a shared crossing, with ADA-accessible curb ramps between 10–12 feet wide
Enhanced crossing for walking/biking (Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon)	Each	\$34,000	\$96,000	Includes ADA-accessible curb ramps, pavement markings, and rectangular rapid flashing beacons

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Project Component	Unit	Opinion of Probable Cost		Description
		Low	High	
Enhanced crossing for walking/biking (Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon)	Each	\$104,100	\$245,000	Includes ADA-accessible curb ramps, pavement markings, and pedestrian hybrid beacon
Pedestrian-bicycle bridge	Each	\$515,000	N/A	A manufactured bridge capable of holding pedestrian and bicycle traffic on a shared-use pathway over an irrigation waterway

Resource #5: Best Practices for Engaging Project Partners

Developing publicly-accessible pathways along waterways often requires coordination among multiple entities with distinct legal authorities, operational responsibilities, and risk considerations. This resource provides guidance for agencies and project sponsors on how to engage key partners early, clarify roles and responsibilities, and establish agreements that support pathway access and long-term operations. The best practices outlined here are intended to complement the related resources in the Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit and to reduce uncertainty during early project planning. Because pathways may be located along irrigation waterways or natural waterways, this resource is organized to reflect the different coordination needs, constraints, and decision points associated with each context.

How to Use this Resource

Pathway projects along waterways can move quickly once momentum builds, but early missteps in coordination can create delays later—particularly when projects involve multiple jurisdictions, irrigation organizations, private property, or regulatory constraints. This resource is intended as a practical guide for city staff leading pathway development to decide who to engage, when to engage them, and what to clarify early.

This resource works best when used alongside the Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Flowchart, which helps determine whether a project follows the irrigation waterway or natural waterway coordination pathway and what key decision points should be addressed first. When there is a reference to another toolkit resource, it should be treated as a go-to support document that can be opened immediately to guide next steps.

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Quick Navigation

- For projects along an **irrigation waterway** (canals, laterals, drains operated by an irrigation organization), start with *Collaboration for Pathways Along Irrigation Waterways*.
- For projects along a **natural waterway** (rivers, streams, riparian corridors), start with *Collaboration for Pathways Along Natural Waterways*.
- When unsure which type applies or if both apply, start with *Waterway-Pathways Readiness Check* and the Toolkit Flowchart.

Collaboration for Pathways along Irrigation Waterways

Why Irrigation Waterway Projects Require a Different Approach

Pathways along irrigation waterways require close coordination with irrigation organizations. Irrigation facilities often exist within statutory easements, and irrigation organizations retain legal rights and operational responsibilities that must be preserved through planning, construction, and ongoing operation of a publicly-accessible pathway. Irrigation organizations exist to deliver water safely and effectively; pathway use is secondary and must not impede water delivery or required maintenance activities.

When this matters most: Early project definition and before design assumptions are set

Prior to Outreach, Start with Internal Alignment

Before engaging an irrigation organization, it is often helpful for the leading City department to clarify internal capacity and decision points so that early conversations are productive and realistic. This is especially important because coordination with irrigation organizations frequently involves maintenance access, liability, and long-term operations and maintenance expectations. Many agencies find it useful to clarify:

- Which internal departments need to be involved (e.g., planning, engineering, parks and recreation, public works)
- Whether the lead agency can assume pathway maintenance responsibilities (e.g., surface, landscaping, repairs) over time

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- Whether the lead agency is willing and able to assume liability for pathway operations, as this may be central to any agreement structure
- What the lead agency can offer as incentives (e.g., funding safety upgrades, maintaining the corridor, helping address maintenance impacts)
- Which community stakeholders may need to be involved later (e.g., HOAs, neighborhood groups)

Related Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resources

- **Resource #2: Key Project Partners Database:** Used to identify likely points of contact across agencies and organizations
- **Resource #4: Waterway-Pathway Costs and Funding:** Used to anticipate funding needs tied to maintenance, crossings, or agreements

Initial Coordination with Irrigation Organizations

As noted in the Resource Flowchart for irrigation waterways, the leading agency is advised to determine whether an existing partnership or Master Agreement exists with the irrigation organization. If not, early outreach to discuss key topics is critical before the project advances.

Early conversations are most productive when they acknowledge operational realities, including the irrigation organization's maintenance obligations. Irrigation maintenance may involve dredging, debris removal, and organic material management, which can all require pathway closures and create odors, noise, and temporary access limitations. Setting expectations early helps reduce conflict later.

Master Agreements and Written Commitments

Where publicly-accessible pathways are proposed adjacent to irrigation facilities, formal written agreements are strongly encouraged. Agreements are most useful when they clearly define:

- Pathway maintenance responsibility (e.g., surface, landscaping, upkeep)
- Waterway access rights for routine and emergency maintenance

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- Liability provisions and expectations for risk management
- Responsibility for repairing damage to pathways caused by maintenance activities or equipment
- Authority and protocols for temporary closures during maintenance
- Design expectations (e.g., fencing, buffer zones, separation strategies)

Related Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resource

- **Resource #7: Irrigation Organization Master Agreement Checklist:** Used for agreement topics and structure

Protect Operations and Maintenance Access Through Design and Communication

Preserving irrigation operations is the foremost consideration for pathways along irrigation waterways. Routine and emergency maintenance activities—such as trash rack clearing, dredging, weed control, spoil hauling, equipment staging, and repairs—may require full use of the easement and temporary closure of adjacent pathways. In some cases, dredged material may remain on-site to dry, which can create odor and visual impacts. This is both a **design issue** (for space, separation, and access points) and a **communication issue** (for closure protocols and public expectations). Many successful partnerships anticipate these operational realities in both agreements and public messaging.

Related Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resource

- **Resource #8: Waterway-Pathway Cross Section Visualizations:** Used for example configurations that separate public paths from maintenance corridors

Development-Driven Opportunities

In growing communities, many pathway opportunities arise through subdivision or redevelopment. Municipalities are encouraged to integrate irrigation organization coordination into development review processes and to condition recreational easements at the time of development approval. Clear maintenance responsibility

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assignments can strengthen partnerships with irrigation organizations, which often do not have resources to maintain recreational pathways. The long-term success of pathways implemented through development is supported when:

- Easements are secured and recorded during development.
- Maintenance responsibilities are formally transferred from developers to HOAs or the local jurisdiction.
- Pathways connect to publicly-accessible roadways instead of terminating in private subdivisions.
- Anti-encroachment expectations are communicated early and consistently.

Related Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resource

- **Resource #6: Sample Policy Language for Development-Driven Waterway-Pathways**

Collaboration for Pathways along Natural Waterways

How Natural Waterway Projects Differ

Pathways along natural waterways (e.g., rivers, streams, riparian corridors) are generally governed by land ownership patterns, environmental protections, and floodplain regulations, rather than the operational, maintenance, and access concerns typical of irrigation facilities.

When this matters most: Early feasibility scoping before alignment decisions are made or public commitments are implied

Ownership and Regulatory Coordination

Project sponsors are advised to verify land ownership and determine whether the pathway lies within a floodplain or floodway before advancing planning or design. Early coordination with floodplain administrators, public land managers, and relevant regulatory entities helps avoid late-stage redesign or permitting barriers.

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Related Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resources

- **Resource #1: Policy and Plan Matrix:** Used to identify applicable local and regional plans and regulations
- **Resource #4: Waterway-Pathway Costs and Funding:** Used to understand potential funding and mitigation implications

Engaging Private Property Owners, When Applicable

Where pathways are proposed on or adjacent to private property, early and transparent engagement with landowners is essential. Topics often include access, privacy, liability, maintenance responsibility, and easement options. Because landowner concerns and willingness can determine project feasibility, this step is typically most effective when initiated after basic ownership and regulatory constraints have been confirmed, but before a preferred alternative is selected.

Setting and Context

Natural waterway settings vary widely. Rural contexts may involve different land uses and fewer formal public access facilities, while urban contexts can involve complex ownership patterns and competing needs. Considering context early helps shape outreach approach and alignment expectations.

Related Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resource

- **Resource #6: Sample Policy Language:** Used if a jurisdiction is considering code updates to support future easements or access standards

Environmental and Resilience Considerations

Pathways along natural waterways should be planned with seasonal flooding, erosion risk, and habitat disturbance in mind. Materials, setbacks, and alignment decisions are often shaped by long-term resilience considerations and disturbance minimization. Collaborating with federal and state agencies that operate in these realms, such as the Idaho Department of Lands, the Idaho Department of Water Resources, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Federal

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Emergency Management Agency, will help agencies leading natural waterway-pathway projects to incorporate environmental and resiliency best practices into the planning and development process.

Related Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resource

- **Resource #8: Waterway-Pathway Cross Section Visualizations:** Used for design examples suited to natural waterway contexts

Waterway-Pathways Readiness Check

Before making initial outreach calls or scheduling partner meetings, many agencies find it helpful to confirm a few foundational items. Taking the following steps improves coordination efficiency, reduces confusion, and signals preparedness to partners:

- Confirm whether the project is best treated as an **irrigation waterway** or **natural waterway** project.
- Confirm land ownership and easement status at a planning level (enough to inform who should be at the table early).
- Identify likely partners using the **Key Project Partners Database** (Resource #2).
- Develop an initial working assumption about **pathway maintenance responsibility** (even if it will be refined later), since this topic often drives feasibility conversations.
- Review agreement considerations using **Resource #7** if irrigation organizations are involved.
- Be prepared to discuss how maintenance closures may occur and how the city would communicate them, recognizing that maintenance realities are central to both irrigation operations and public expectations.

Using this resource in a modular way—paired with the Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit Resource Flowchart and the supporting Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit resources—can help project sponsors reduce conflict, clarify expectations, and build early momentum toward successful pathway implementation.

Resource #6: Sample Policy Language and Guide for Development-Driven Pathways

Setting Up Plans, Code, and Development Review to Secure Public Recreational Easements for Waterway-Pathways

This resource is intended for city planners and zoning administrators who want to secure public recreational easements for pathways when land is developed or redeveloped along waterways. It provides a practical roadmap describing where cities typically place requirements (plans vs. code), how those requirements are triggered during development review, and what should be documented to make easements enforceable over time. This resource is designed to complement related Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit resources on partner coordination and agreements.

This resource includes two parts:

1. A how-to guide for establishing enforceable development-driven easement requirements
2. A short design standards summary compiling commonly used technical standards that are frequently referenced during development review

Note: This resource provides example language and process guidance. Cities are encouraged to coordinate with legal counsel when adopting or applying easement dedication requirements through development approvals.

Establish Policy Support

Plans that Justify Easement Requirements

Cities are often most successful when pathway easement requirements are supported by adopted plans (e.g., comprehensive plans, pathways plans, parks plans). While plan language is not always directly enforceable on its own, it provides the policy foundation

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that supports code updates and development conditions. A strong policy foundation typically includes:

- A mapped, planned pathway network or corridor map that identifies where future pathways should exist
- A clear statement that when development occurs along a mapped corridor, the pathway should be provided either in public right-of-way or as a separate platted easement
- Basic expectations about public access and long-term implementation through development

The City of Boise's *Pathways Master Plan* (2021) provides a key example of policy guidance:

"When a tract of land within any proposed development includes a pathway designated in the [Pathways Plan], the pathway shall be required as part of the public right-of-way or as a separate, platted easement..." (with easement widths ranging by path type).

Cities commonly place this policy language in planning documents such as:

- Comprehensive Plan (in transportation, parks, or open space elements)
- Pathways or Active Transportation Master Plan
- Parks, Pathways, and Open Space Plans

Other examples include the Canyon County *Parks, Pathways, and Cultural Resources Plan* (2024) and the City of Star *Comprehensive Plan* (2022).

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Create Enforceable “Regulatory Hooks” in Code

To make development-driven pathway easements consistent and defensible, cities typically add clear requirements to subdivision code and/or zoning code. The goal is to make requirements predictable so that staff can apply them consistently during review.

1. Define When an Easement is Required

Cities commonly use one or more requirement triggers in code. Examples include:

- **Mapped corridor trigger:** If a mapped, planned pathway corridor crosses or abuts a development site, require the applicant to dedicate a public pathway easement consistent with adopted plans.
- **Waterway frontage trigger:** If a development includes frontage along a waterway corridor identified for future connectivity, require dedication of a public recreational easement along the corridor, subject to feasibility and constraints.
- **Connectivity trigger:** If a development creates new blocks or streets near the corridor, require connections or access points so the future pathway links to public streets and does not become isolated.

One example of a mapped corridor trigger is in Milwaukie, Oregon. The City of Milwaukie's *Transportation System Plan (2026)* includes future needs and improvements for transportation facilities across the city, including trails.¹ Two of the main trails, the Trolley Trail and Springwater Trail, offer regional connectivity. For this reason, the city has included Rough Proportionality as a trigger for pathways easements ([Section 19.705](#)). Their approach to design standards and maintenance code standards is explained later in this document.

¹ City of Milwaukie. (March 3, 2026). *Transportation System Plan Update 2023-2025*. https://www.milwaukieoregon.gov/departments/planning/transportation_system_plan_2023_25_update/index.php

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2. Define What Must Be Dedicated as Part of the Easement

Code language is most useful when it clearly defines:

- **Easement type and purpose:** Public recreational pathway easement should grant public access.
- **Minimum easement width:** Easement width should reflect the facility type and context.
- **Location and connectivity requirement:** Easements should connect to publicly-accessible roads to support regional connectivity, rather than ending at private HOA streets where the path functions as an internal amenity.
- **Recordation requirement:** Easement dedication and recordation should occur prior to (or concurrent with) final plat approval.

The City of Boise's *Pathways Master Plan* (2021) provides example ranges for different easement standards, including path types, and notes the need to account for clear zones and landscaping.

The City of Star, as well as the City of Ferndale, Washington, include language and requirements for easement purpose and dedication or recordation. The City of Star requires pathways as a dedicated easement for all new residential and commercial development in their Development Code ([Section 8-4A-13](#)). The City of Ferndale requires specific easement width and dedication schedule of pathways based on the type of pathway or project ([Section 19.10.040](#)).

3. Assign Long-Term Maintenance Responsibility

A frequent implementation challenge is a lack of clear delineation of long-term maintenance responsibility (e.g., surface upkeep, landscaping, repairs). Code can reduce this risk by requiring a maintenance plan at the time of approval and ensuring the responsibility transfer is documented. Common approaches include:

- Requiring a maintenance responsibility statement during development review (who maintains what)

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- Where the HOA will maintain the facility, requiring the easement to be placed within a common lot and requiring recorded documents that transfer maintenance responsibility from the developer to the HOA

As previously highlighted, the City of Milwaukie has robust code language outlining pathway standards in their municipal code. Part of this includes a Maintenance Agreement requirement ([Section 17.24.010](#)). The agreement must be approved by the city prior to the Final Plat approval and filed with the County Recorder. The city also includes anti-encroachment provisions, as detailed below.

4. Include Anti-Encroachment Expectations

Even when an easement is dedicated, long-term function can be undermined by encroachments, like fences, landscaping, and private improvements. Cities often include a short anti-encroachment standard, such as:

- Prohibition of private structures within the easement
- Requirements that any safety barriers or fencing preserve public access and are approved through the city's standards

Jefferson County, Idaho ([Section 53-55](#)) and Pierce County, Washington ([Section 17B.10.121](#)) both include specific language prohibiting the placement of obstructions or materials within an easement right-of-way, including hardscapes, yard debris, or fixtures. [Idaho Code Section 42-1209 \(2025\)](#) protects easements along irrigation canals or owned by irrigation districts, so these pathways will require additional agreements. See **Resource #7: Irrigation Organization Master Agreement Checklist** in the Regional Waterway-Pathway Toolkit.

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Apply the Requirement During Development Review

Operationalizing the Recreational Easement

Even strong code relies on consistent development review practice. Cities often operationalize easement requirements through three points in the process, detailed in the following subsections.

Pre-Application: Discuss Easements Early

When a development is near a planned waterway-pathway, cities are encouraged to raise the topic of easement dedication early during pre-application meetings. This reduces surprises and gives applicants time to incorporate the easement into site planning.

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- **Resource #2: Key Project Partners Database** can help staff identify who should be involved early (e.g., planning staff, parks and recreation, highway districts, irrigation organization contacts).

Application: Require the Right Submittals

Cities can often avoid issues by requiring submittals, such as:

- Conceptual pathway alignment within the easement
- Draft easement exhibit and draft language
- Preliminary maintenance responsibility plan
- Documentation of early partner coordination where applicable

If irrigation organizations are involved, cities should consult the coordination topics and agreement needs described in:

- **Resource #5: Best Practices for Engaging Project Partners**
- **Resource #7: Irrigation Organization Master Agreement Checklist**

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Conditions of Approval and Plat Recordation

Conditions of approval are often the point where easements become finalized. Cities commonly condition:

- Easement dedication and recordation prior to final plat
- Required construction (or phased “rough-ins”) where applicable
- Maintenance responsibility transfer language
- Any required agreements for irrigation organization coordination where applicable

Design Standards Summary: Technical Reference for Development Review

While Resource #6 focuses on securing easements through development, city staff often need to reference common design standards that appear in regional code and plans.

Examples of commonly referenced standards from regional precedent include:

- **Pathway tread width by facility type:** Establish minimum widths by trail/path type, as done in the City of Eagle’s Code, Chapter 9-4-1-6, Resolution 23-19.
- **Access point spacing within developments:** Micro-connections to adjacent public pathways should occur no less frequently than every 900 feet, with easements wide enough to support trees and long-term corridor function, as included in the City of Boise’s *Pathways Master Plan* (2021).
- **Maintenance and emergency vehicle access:** Include layout considerations that ensure access for maintenance and emergency vehicles and allow for staging, as done in the City of Eagle’s Code, Chapter 9-4-1-6, Resolution 23-19.
- **Setback examples for waterways:** Indicate minimum setback/no-mow zone examples where applicable to natural waterway contexts, as included in the City of Garden City’s *Master Parks Plan* (2016).

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- **Landscape buffers adjacent to paths:** Provide minimum landscaped area requirements and planting height constraints for safety, as done in the City of Eagle's Code, Chapter 9-4-1-6, Resolution 23-19.

Cities may adapt these standards to fit the local context, facility type, and operational constraints. For design configurations that address separation between public pathways and irrigation maintenance access, see **Resource #8: Waterway-Pathway Cross Section Visualizations**.

Resource #7: Irrigation Organization Master Agreement Checklist

Understanding the roles, responsibilities, and rights of the participating parties is important before beginning development. This helps establish balance in providing connectivity between neighboring jurisdictions; ensuring access for maintaining the existing infrastructure; and protecting privacy, safety, and utility or infrastructure access.

How to Use this Checklist

This checklist is intended to help lead agency staff who are working with irrigation organizations to plan or implement publicly-accessible pathways along irrigation waterways. It is designed to guide early conversations and agreement drafting, not to serve as prescriptive legal language. Not every item below will apply to every project. However, experience across Idaho shows that addressing these topics early—ideally before designs are finalized or development approvals are issued—reduces conflict, clarifies expectations, and improves long-term operations for both irrigation organizations and local jurisdictions.

This resource should be used alongside:

- **Resource #5: Best Practices for Engaging Project Partners** to understand sequencing and coordination
- **Resource #6: Development-Driven Waterway-Pathways** when pathways are delivered through private development

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When Master Agreements are Most Useful

Master Agreements are particularly valuable when:

- A jurisdiction expects to implement multiple pathway projects along facilities operated by the same irrigation organization.
- Pathway access is expected to be delivered incrementally through development or redevelopment.
- There is a need to establish consistent expectations around maintenance access, closures, liability, and communication that apply across projects.

Project-specific agreements, licenses, or conditions of approval can then reference or build upon the Master Agreement framework.

Master Agreement Checklist

The following checklist identifies common agreement topics that irrigation organizations and cities often find important to address. Items are grouped to reflect typical negotiation priorities. Topics described as **core operational considerations** are often essential for irrigation organizations, while **project-specific considerations** may vary by context, facility, or delivery mechanism. The items mentioned in the following subsections are not requirements, but they do support best practices, are reflected in examples used across Idaho, and help to create a collaborative and clear agreement between parties.

Core Operational Considerations

These topics are frequently non-negotiable for irrigation organizations and are best addressed early.

- Protections for Irrigation Waterway Operations:** Public pathways must not interfere with irrigation operations or statutory maintenance responsibilities. Considerations often include:

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- Whether the pathway will function as a shared corridor with maintenance vehicles or a separate maintenance route will be required
 - Clear affirmation that irrigation operations take precedence over public access
 - Ability to monitor and adjust water flows, remove sediment, maintain banks, and perform routine or emergency repairs in accordance with Idaho statutes
 - Anti-encroachment language consistent with Idaho Code (e.g., ID Statute 42-1209)
 - Emergency access provisions allowing immediate entry when needed
- Safety, Liability, and Responsibility:** Agreements typically clarify how the parties allocate responsibility for safety and liability, including:
- Identification of locations where constraints, maintenance needs, or safety concerns may limit pathway feasibility
 - Responsibility for enforcing pathway rules and protecting public users
 - “Hold harmless” and indemnification provisions
 - Liability considerations for environmental or groundwater impacts associated with public access (see Senate Bill No. 1020 for state-level context)
 - Contract duration, amendment procedures, and termination conditions

Project-Specific and Implementation Considerations

These topics often vary by project and may be resolved through project-specific agreements or conditions of approval.

- Pathway Design and Development Expectations:** Agreements may outline when and how pathway construction occurs, including:
- Submission timelines for pathway proposals (e.g., minimum notice prior to construction)
 - Construction phasing or project schedules
 - Minimum clearances needed for operations and equipment

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- References to adopted pathway standards for materials, structures, landscaping, access points, and safety features
- **Pathway Maintenance and Landscaping Responsibilities:** Clear maintenance responsibility is critical for long-term success. Agreements often specify:
 - Which party is responsible for pathway surface maintenance, landscaping, lighting, snow removal, trash removal, signage, and repairs
 - That irrigation organizations typically are **not** responsible for recreational pathway maintenance
 - Requirements for fencing or additional safety treatments in higher-risk areas
 - Prohibitions on dumping, littering, or unauthorized use within the easement area
 - Hours of operation and permitted uses (if applicable)
- **Communications and Relationship Management:** Successful agreements often include communication protocols, including:
 - Identification of primary points of contact for both parties
 - Expectations for regular coordination meetings (e.g., annual reviews)
 - Procedures for raising and resolving issues related to maintenance, safety, or user behavior
 - Clarification of which party's legal counsel is responsible for drafting or revising agreements

Development-Driven Pathways: Additional Considerations

When pathways along irrigation waterways are delivered through private development, Master Agreements often establish the overall framework, while project-specific agreements or conditions of approval implement the requirements. In these cases, agreements may need to address:

- How maintenance responsibility transfers from the developer to the HOA or other entity

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- Requirements that easements be placed within common lots
- Consistency between subdivision conditions, easement documents, and the Master Agreement

See **Resource #6** for detailed guidance on development-driven easements.

Agreement Execution

- Signatures:** To be valid and enforceable, agreements must be signed by authorized representatives of all parties and, where required, notarized or recorded.

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Master Agreement Examples

The following examples include varying levels of agreements. The first three agreements place the maintenance responsibility for future pathways on the City. In the fourth example, the City delegates that responsibility to the subdivision's HOA through their conditions of approval. The final example includes an agreement between the City and District, though development will be managed by the City's Urban Renewal Agency.

1. Idaho Irrigation District with the City of Idaho Falls (Bonneville County): City assumes pathway maintenance responsibilities
2. Middleton Mill Ditch Company and the Middleton Irrigation Association, Inc. with the City of Eagle: Master framework supporting multiple future projects
3. Ada County Drainage District #2 with the City of Eagle: City-maintained pathway example
4. Ada County Drainage District #2 with the City of Eagle (Everton Subdivision example): Development-driven pathway with HOA maintenance transfer
5. Boise City Canal Company with the City of Boise's CCDC for the Grove Street Pathway: Urban renewal-led implementation with agency-managed development

Resource #8: Waterway-Pathway Cross-Section

Visualizations

Identifying the primary design elements of a pathway early in a project is important for both community engagement and stakeholder alignment. This resource includes several cross section visualizations illustrating common pathway configurations along both natural and irrigation waterways, based on examples from Ada and Canyon counties.

Pathway Examples and Precedent Imagery

These cross sections illustrate conceptual ways that pathways may be configured within different physical and operational contexts. The visualizations vary by waterway type, pathway surface materials, and the overall footprint associated with each configuration.

There are four pathway examples, including:

- **Cross Section 1: Asphalt Pathway Along a Natural Waterway**
 - This cross section reflects conditions similar to segments of the Boise River Greenbelt and represents a natural waterway that was prioritized into the Top 20 Waterway-Pathway Projects (Regional Priority Project #1).
- **Cross Section 2: Concrete Pathway Along an Irrigation Waterway**
 - This cross section illustrates an urban context where the pathway is developed within a constricted built environment. Of the three pathways along irrigation waterways, this pathway has the smallest footprint and is modeled after the Boise City Canal Multi-Use Path.

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- **Cross Section 3: Asphalt Pathway Along an Irrigation Waterway**
 - This concept includes a publicly-accessible asphalt shared-use pathway on one side of the waterway and a restricted-access maintenance path on the opposite side. Due to the inclusion of two types of pathways, this cross section has a medium footprint. It is modeled after development-driven pathway types, similar to the Ridenbaugh Canal in Meridian (part of the Sutherland Downs HOA).
- **Cross Section 4: Asphalt Pathway Adjacent to Irrigation Waterway Maintenance Facilities**
 - The largest footprint of all the pathway types, this section includes both a shared-use pathway and maintenance pathway on each side of the irrigation waterway. As with Cross Section 3, the shared-use pathway would serve public users, and the maintenance pathway would be restricted to irrigation organizations and maintenance teams.

Additional Considerations

Some additional features and considerations included in the cross section renderings include:

- **Safety Features:** Particularly adjacent to irrigation waterways, safety measures and access-restricting elements, such as fencing, are often necessary. See **Resource #7** for example language addressing access restrictions and safety considerations.
- **Maintenance Access:** Cross sections 3 and 4 include designated pathways for maintenance vehicle access. As discussed in **Resource #7**, maintaining reliable maintenance access is critical to irrigation infrastructure operations. While the inclusion of an additional pathway can increase the overall footprint and expense of the pathway, it is worth considering the layout and access for maintenance crews in the design of the pathway. Cross section 2 assumes that the publicly-accessible pathway is closed for maintenance access.

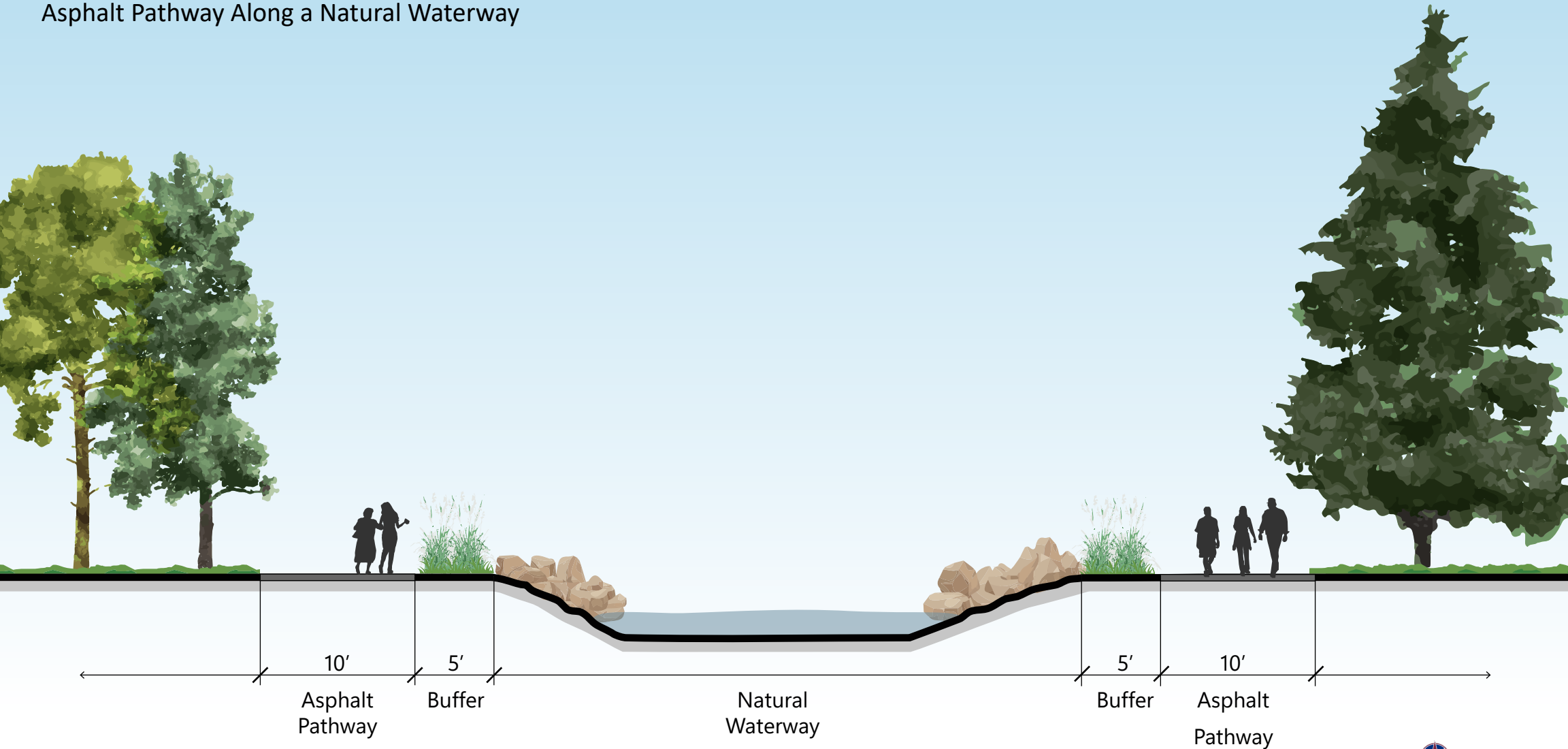
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- **Pathway Landscaping:** The cross sections include landscaping opportunities, including trees and plant buffers. Design considerations may include long-term plant maintenance, use of native species, impacts to waterways, stormwater management, and maintaining clear access to the pathway.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossings:** The visuals do not include elements representative of standard crossings, enhanced crossings, or bridges. These elements may need to be considered as part of a specific project, depending on the location, surrounding land use, and pathway segment characteristics.

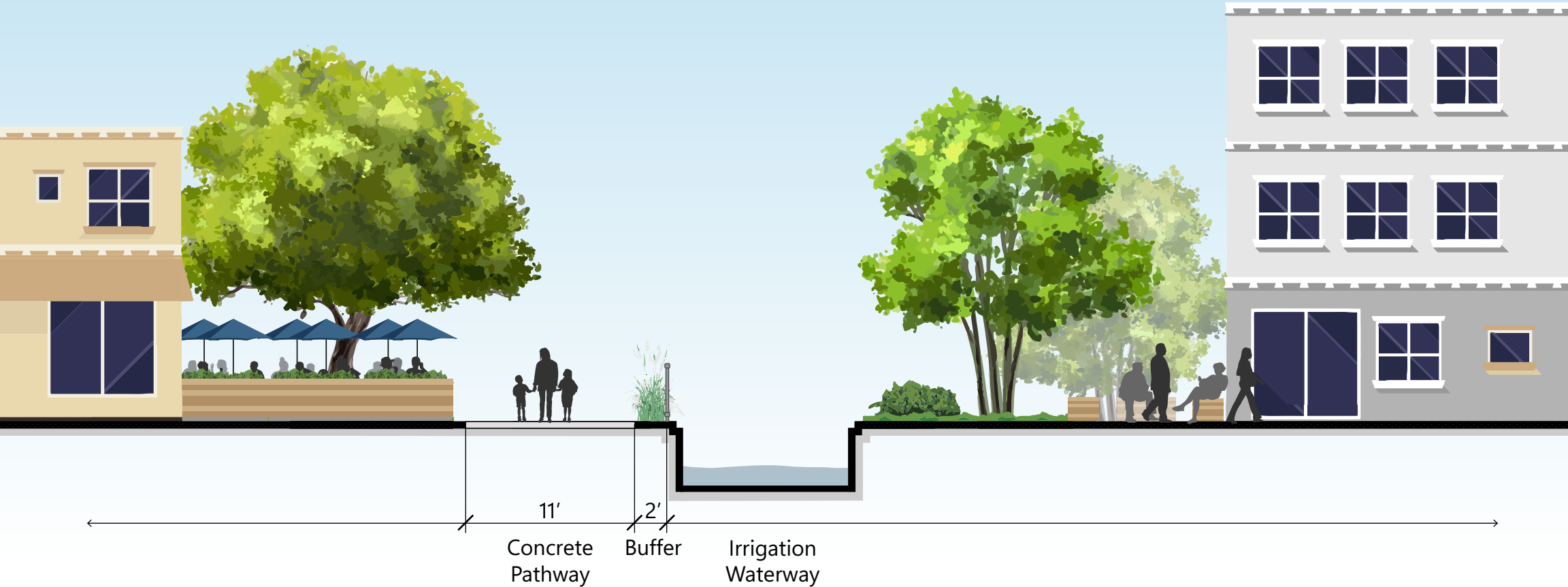
Cross-Section 1:

Asphalt Pathway Along a Natural Waterway



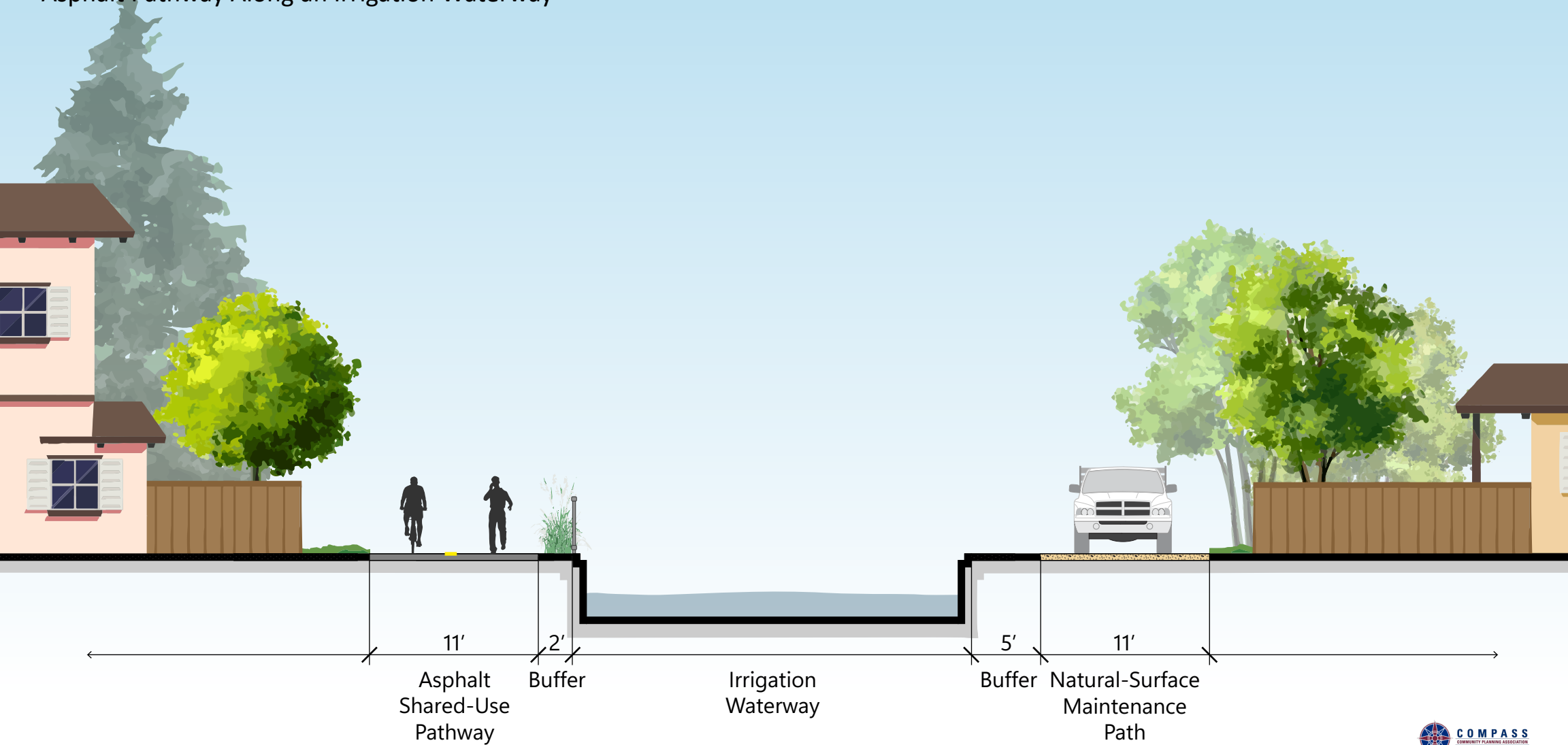
Cross-Section 2:

Concrete Pathway Along an Irrigation Waterway



Cross-Section 3:

Asphalt Pathway Along an Irrigation Waterway



Cross-Section 4:

Asphalt Pathway Adjacent to Irrigation Waterway Maintenance Facilities

