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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

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RISE UP

Jamaica Bay, and elsewhere,
in the stormy future

STUDIO ON SITE

Tokyo has more trees than it might

ALL ARE WELCOME

A Vancouver park has it down

RICHARD HAAG

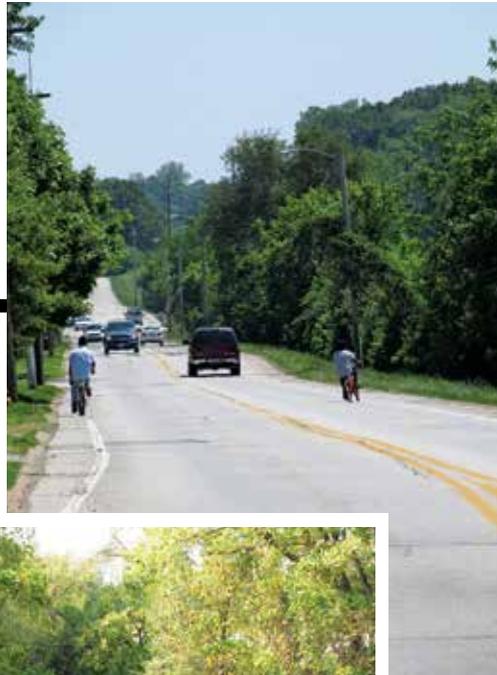
An obscured force in the Northwest



WHAT MIGHT UNITE FERGUSON

**A SPINE OF GREEN SPACE MIGHT
HELP EASE THE DIVISIONS IN
FERGUSON, MISSOURI.**

BY ZACH MORTICE



TOP

Bicyclists ride along the shoulder of the road in Ferguson. The Maline Greenway will give residents a safe way to travel across the St. Louis suburb on foot or bike.

INSET

Maline Creek runs from west of Ferguson to the Mississippi River.

Two years ago, Scott Emmelkamp, ASLA, a principal at the St. Louis planning and landscape architecture firm Planning Design Studio, was on a site tour for his Maline Greenway project in northern St. Louis County, Missouri. Camera in hand, he noticed a distinct lack of bike trails and sidewalks, typical of automobile-centric suburbs everywhere. On one street, someone walked along the shoulder of a busy suburban street; on the other side of that street, a bicyclist rode on the shoulder. He took photos of people walking in the streets. If he had had his camera out on August 9, 2014, he could have easily crossed paths with 18-year-old Michael Brown doing the same thing on Canfield Drive in Ferguson, Missouri, a few minutes before attracting the attention of a police officer, Darren Wilson, for not using the sidewalk. In an altercation that followed, Wilson shot and killed Brown.

The protests, riots, and federal investigations that followed Wilson's shooting of Brown transformed "Ferguson" into

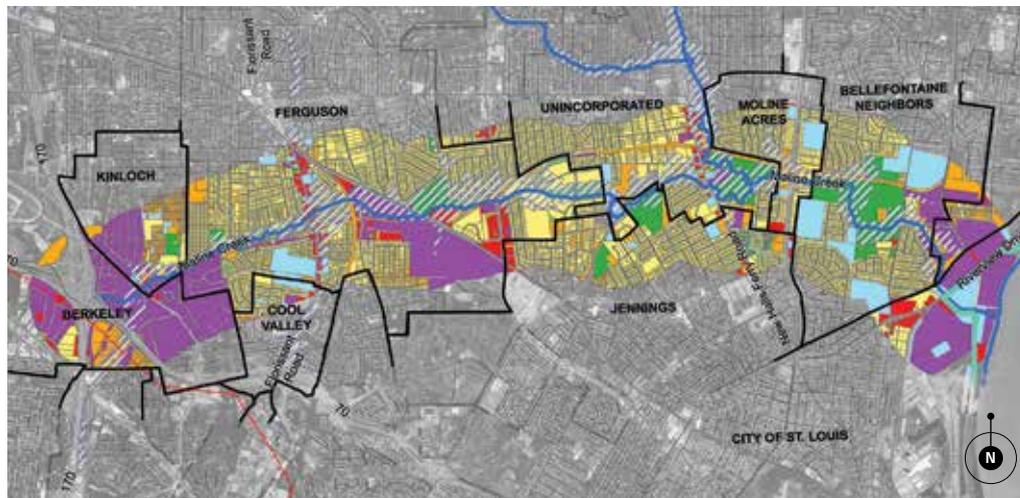
a metonym for "long-simmering racial and economic tensions."

And it's reasonable to guess that Emmelkamp's Maline Greenway trail might have made things different. It will go where Brown was heading. One of its phases runs along the same axis that he was walking. "It would literally be a block away from Canfield [Drive]," Emmelkamp says.

No park space can forestall an explosion of mistrust and tension like that seen in Ferguson. But parks, especially greenway trails that link public spaces in intensely segregated communities like St. Louis County, can act as connective tissue that helps to build civic consensus where it's needed most. That's Emmelkamp's intention for the Maline Greenway. Through the community input process, neighbors made it clear that they wanted the trail to offer as many linkages to the neighborhood as possible, and Emmelkamp's site studies revealed a need to connect existing parks and other public amenities with pedestrian and bike trails.

The seven-mile trail will run east to west along Maline Creek and surface roads. "[It'll] really give them an option they don't have now," Emmelkamp says, "to have a safe alternative for biking and walking." The trail begins just west of Ferguson, almost reaching the Mississippi River. Construction on a one-mile section in Ferguson near Forestwood Park and a section farther east will begin next year, with later sections (including the trail near where Michael Brown was killed) to follow. Planning Design Studio's plan for the trail includes 10-foot shared pedestrian and bike paths, separated from the road by rain gardens and bioswales.

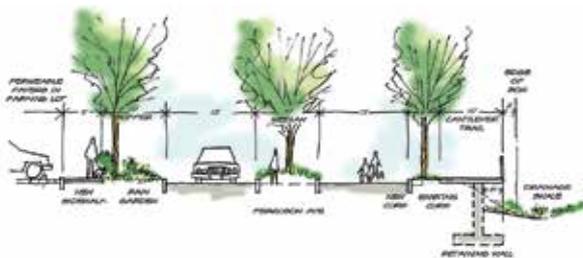
The trail's planned route through Ferguson takes it through the town's recent litany of violence. It's four blocks from the Ferguson Police Department,



LEGEND

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Parks/Recreation
- Vacant
- 100-year Floodplain
- Maline Creek
- Metrolink
- Riverfront Trail

where two police officers were shot in March as a protest wound down. And it banks up against a charred QuikTrip gas station, one of the buildings destroyed during the unrest in August. Emmelkamp and his client, the nonprofit Great Rivers Greenway, say there have been no formal discussions about redeveloping the site, but they hope that the former gas station could become a public amenity that complements the trail. “That would be a silver lining in this tragedy,” Emmelkamp says.



TOP

When complete, the Maline Greenway will be seven miles long.

ABOVE

The Maline Greenway will feature 10-foot-wide pedestrian and bike paths that run parallel to rain gardens and surface streets.

The Great Rivers Greenway has developed 110 miles of greenways in the St. Louis region, with the ultimate goal of completing a 600-mile ring of greenways that connect the Mississippi, Missouri, and Meramec Rivers. But the unrest in Ferguson has helped drain energy and effort from larger, more ambitious greenway projects. The group’s elevated rail project, called the Trestle, in north St. Louis has been hamstrung by the unrest, a fact revealed when it hired a group of consultants in late summer to assess the fund-raising feasibility for the project. After polling the local philanthropic community, the group heard back that the instability in northern St. Louis County was making potential donors question the timing and need for the Trestle. It was a generalized anxiety, but Great Rivers Greenway’s director of planning, Todd Antoine, says that, as a direct

reaction, donors asked that future projects focus on social equity.

Currently, the Trestle is on hold. Other factors played as large a role in impeding the Trestle’s fund-raising, specifically its lack of access to residential neighborhoods. It runs through an area near downtown St. Louis that is almost exclusively industrial, next to grocery shipping warehouses and a scrap yard.

The Maline Greenway will have a large residential constituency, and organizers hope that it and other trails will bind together a city regularly chastised as one of the most racially and economically segregated in the nation. “We’re trying to improve the quality of life for residents of the region, and we’re trying to do it through creating this interconnected system so folks can go out and connect with their neighbors, and they can use different transportation options,” Antoine says.

For instance, the Great Rivers Greenway is currently developing the St. Vincent Greenway, which will run from the city’s largest park, Forest Park, northward, through the University of Missouri–St. Louis campus. It’s only seven miles long, but in the day-to-day life of most St. Louisans, the two ends of the trail could be worlds apart. It will eventually join up with the Maline Greenway, connecting some of St. Louis’s most affluent areas to the predominantly African American (and poorer) neighborhoods to the north.

By crossing borders with public space that residents seldom cross in their private life, Great Rivers Greenway hopes to create a consistent shared civic space in communities balkanized by municipal borders and class and ethnic divisions. “It connects a lot of folks who normally don’t interact or relate to one another, not just from a racial standpoint, but from an economic standpoint,” Antoine says. “It gets people thinking differently about their region than they have before.” ●