

# What Makes an Exceptional Urban Multi-Use Trail? Stories from the Atlanta BeltLine



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- Non-structural ramps and switchbacks
- Low impacts to existing park and trees



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### **Session Marketing Statement**

**Trails are valuable infrastructure for catalyzing positive change in our cities. The Westside Trail Extension, part of the Atlanta BeltLine, is the first SITES-registered multi-use urban trail to prioritize carbon impact reduction, equitable placemaking and restorative landscapes. Achieving these goals creates a fascinating web of solutions that deliver transformative results.**

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Discover lessons learned from original sustainability goals set by Atlanta BeltLine Inc.(ABI) to present day context, and how this evolution has shaped overall sustainability for the BeltLine trail at large.
2. Learn how the ABI's approach to design and construction of the newest urban multi-use trail section addresses climate change, improved social equity outcomes, ecosystem services and performance measures.
3. Explore design strategies for addressing urban trail corridor challenges that involve green stormwater infrastructure, grade changes, accommodation of existing and future transit, and compatibility with adjacent development.
4. Understand how the SITES certification process has adapted to a linear project and is supporting the use of the Climate Positive Design Pathfinder tool to address carbon impacts.

### **Content Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The BeltLine story is one of a vibrant, dynamic, and transformative opportunity: a ribbon circumnavigating Atlanta, envisioned not only as a transportation corridor, but also a community asset built to provide positive social, economic, and environmental benefits to the City of Atlanta and its residents. The BeltLine provides a place that Atlantans are proud of, a place that highlights the community through landscapes, history, its people and its function. The BeltLine has the potential to break down barriers and connect people, communities, and cultures by advancing the project in a way that ensures residents have the chance to participate in and benefit from its implementation. The Atlanta BeltLine has its origins in the grassroots efforts of community members, and it is critical that public involvement continues to play a prominent and active role in the planning, design, and implementation of the Atlanta BeltLine. This legacy can only be accomplished through intentional design, authentically listening to all voices, and sensitively balancing project limitations within the local context.

### I. Introduction: History & Context of Atlanta BeltLine

#### A. Atlanta BeltLine Overview / BeltLine 101

1. Multi-Use, Urban Trails
2. Light Rail Transit
3. Parks/Green Space
4. Streetscapes
5. Environmental Clean Up
6. Affordable Workforce Housing
7. Jobs
8. Public Art

#### B. Current Status of Goals

#### C. Sustainability Goals + Arboretum Stats

### **Atlanta Beltline Project Development**

- A. Trail Design and Construction Approach / Project Process
  - 1. Typologies and Material Choices
  
- B. Design and Construction Evolution - Lessons Learned in the Field
  - 1. Grading and Soil Remediation
  - 2. Utilities
  - 3. Hardscape Construction
  - 4. Planting
  - 5. The evolution of the Typologies: 2013 - Present
  
- C. Westside Trail Extension
  - 1. ABI and SITES decision
  - 2. Owner's perspective on using SITES for Trails

### Westside Trail Extension Design

- A. Project Context
  - 1. Research/History
  - 2. Constraints
- B. Setting a Design Approach Framework
  - 1. Process
    - a. BeltLine typologies
    - b. Global goals of ABI
    - c. SITES
    - d. CD preparation (GDOT standards)
    - e. Goals of Westside Trail Extension
    - f. Best practice for sustainable urban trail design
  - 2. Plan
    - a. Collaborative Interdisciplinary Design Team
    - b. Accountability
    - c. Proactive approach to design

### Westside Trail Extension Design (cont'd)

#### C. Outcome

1. Washington Park/Lena St
2. Washington Manor
3. Kudzu Line
4. Hollowell

#### D. Tools

1. SITES Consultant
2. Interdisciplinary Design Team
3. Modulate the Design Program
4. Integrate and Collaborate

### **SITES Process for Trails + Climate Positive Design Tool**

- A. ABI and Sustainable SITES certification
- B. Benefits of SITES for large team projects - accountability, sustainability goals, commitment to performance metrics
- C. Adapting SITES to a linear project
- D. SITES Credit focus for Westside Trail project
  - 1. Redevelop degraded sites
  - 2. Manage stormwater beyond baseline + design stormwater features as amenities
  - 3. Protect + maintain cultural + historic places
  - 4. Tree protection
  - 5. Innovation
    - a. Reduced Carbon Concrete
    - b. Climate Positive Design + New SITES Pilot Credit 3: Assess + Improve Site Carbon Performance



### **References:**

**The Atlanta Beltline:** <https://beltline.org/the-project/>

**Atlanta Beltline Typologies:**

[https://beltline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20120405\\_BCD\\_Typologies-Book.pdf](https://beltline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20120405_BCD_Typologies-Book.pdf)

**Sustainable Sites Initiative + Resources:** <http://www.sustainablesites.org/>,  
<http://www.sustainablesites.org/resources>

**Climate Positive Design + Pathfinder Tool:** <https://climatepositivedesign.com/>

**ASLA Federal Transportation Resources (Performance Measures, Tools + Data):**  
<https://www.asla.org/activetransportation.aspx#toolsandmeasures>

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### Other Atlanta Beltline References:

Alex Garvin & Associates, Inc. (2004). *The Beltline Emerald Necklace: Atlanta's New Public Realm* (Rep.). The Trust for Public Land. <https://beltline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Emerald-Necklace-Study.pdf>

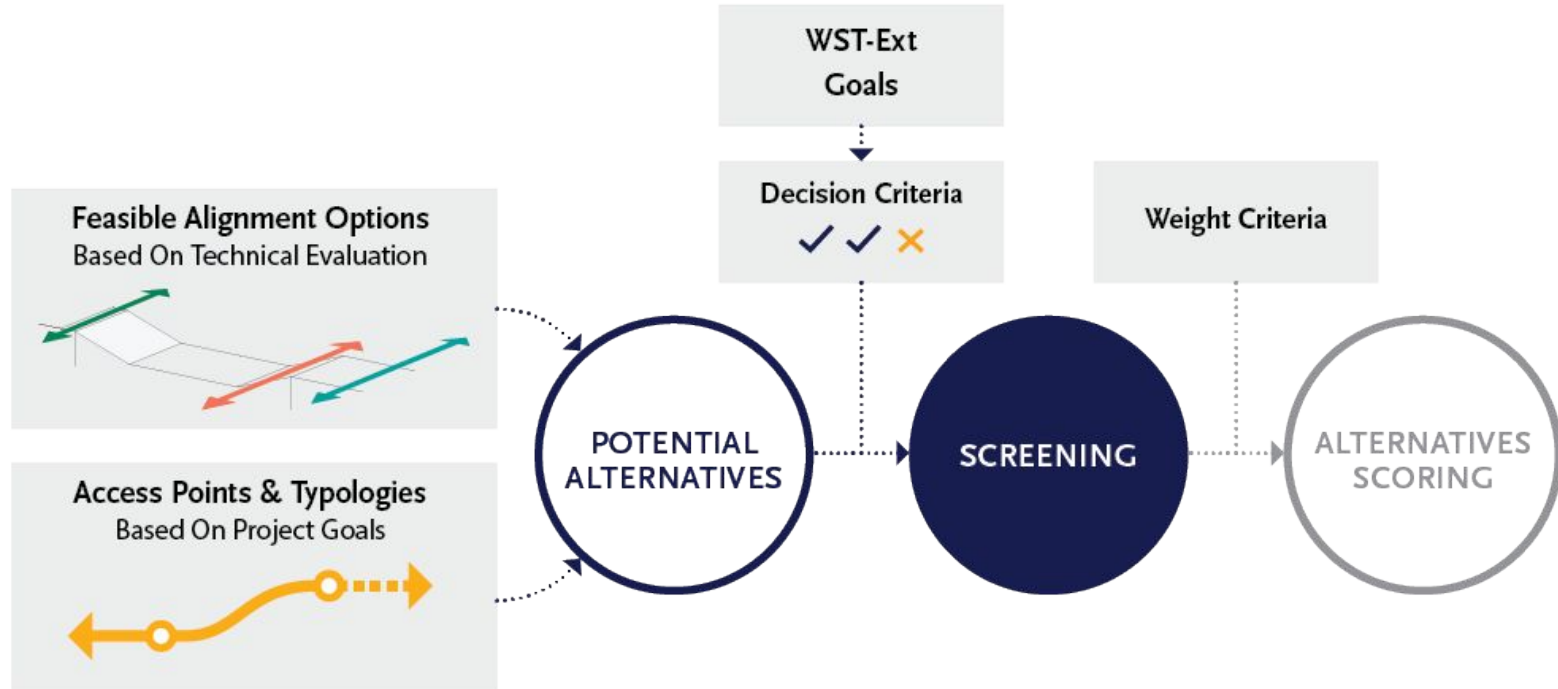
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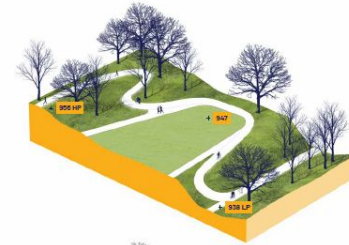
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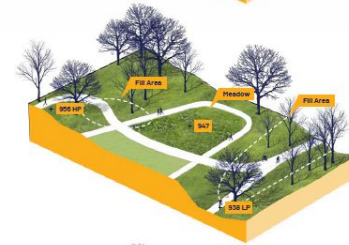
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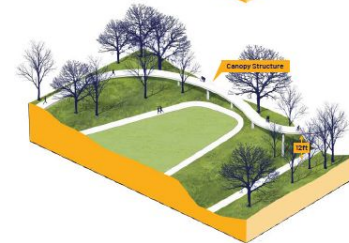
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