



Welcome

Roots to River Community Advisory Board Members

*Designing for Place, People &
Ecology: Public Art + Urban
Design in Environmental
Justice Contexts*

Welcome

Welcome yourself to the refreshments

Presentation by:

- Marlana Adele Vassar
- East Hills Consensus Group, Diane Daniels

6:20–6:25 PM – Introductions

6:25–6:35 PM – Neighborhood overview with East Hills Consensus Group

6:35–7:00 PM – Garden tour, project history, and art process discussion

7:00–7:20 PM – Walking tour of Dornbush and nearby project sites

7:20–7:30 PM – Regroup, reflections, and preview of next session



Our Collective Agreement

NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIES

The Roots to Rivers cohort is grounded in a shared commitment to learning, collaboration, and collective care. As participants, we agree to engage with openness and curiosity, honor diverse lived experiences, and contribute to a respectful and supportive environment. Together, we take responsibility for co-creating a space where all voices are valued, ideas can be explored, and collective action toward environmental and community wellbeing can grow.



We collectively agree to:

- **Make space and hold space for people so that there is an equal distribution of roles, responsibilities and collective contribution.**
- **Only one person speaks at a time.**
- **No one knows everything; together we know a lot.**
- **Respect each others' opinions even, or especially, if you don't agree with them.**
- **Acknowledge the difference between intent and impact.**
- **Be conscious of time.**
- **Stay grounded in the written project goals.**
- **Maintain the confidentiality of this discussion.**

NEIGHBORHOOD **ALLIES**



Roots to River..... So, what
are we?? You're the....

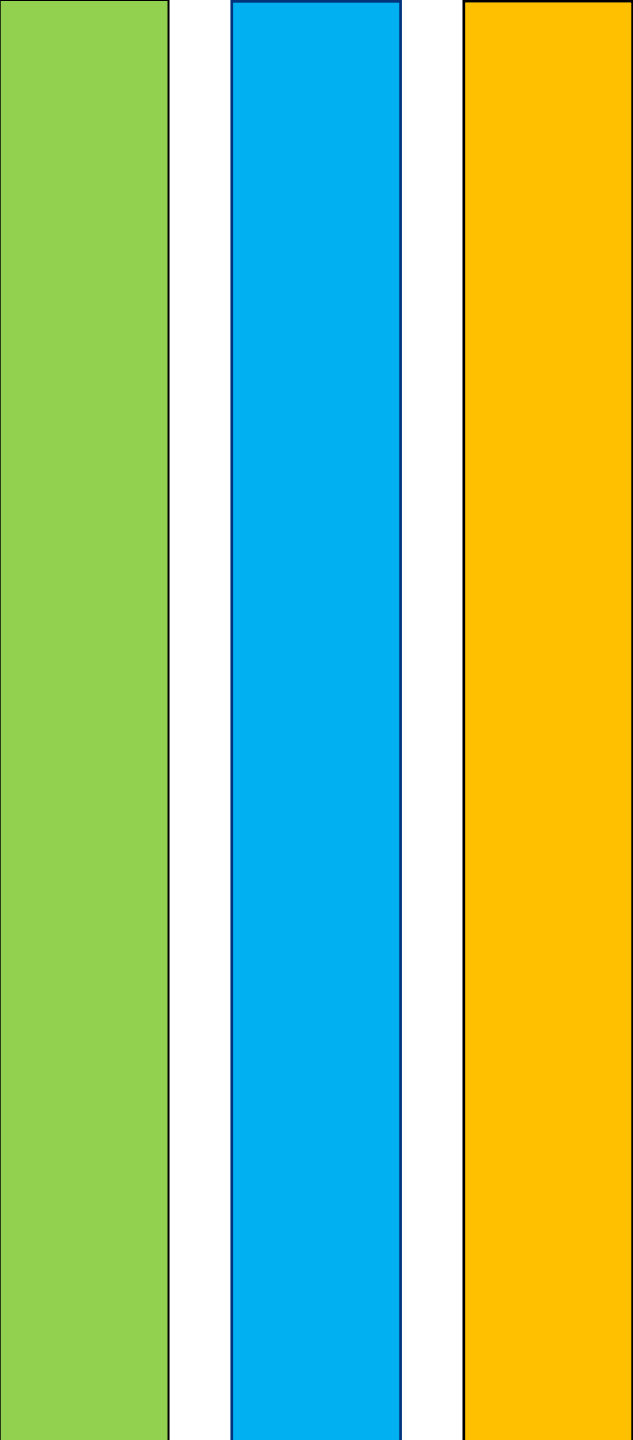
Community Advisory Board (CAB) Member

Goals and Expectations

- Guide the program by sharing lived experience, lifting up neighborhood priorities, and shaping activities and conversations over the course of the cohort.
- **Shape and co-develop Community Action Plans that are driven and strengthened by Resident Leaders.** Your role is to guide this work through **dialogue, ideas, lived-experience insights**, and **direct feedback** that ensures each plan reflects what the community truly needs and wants.





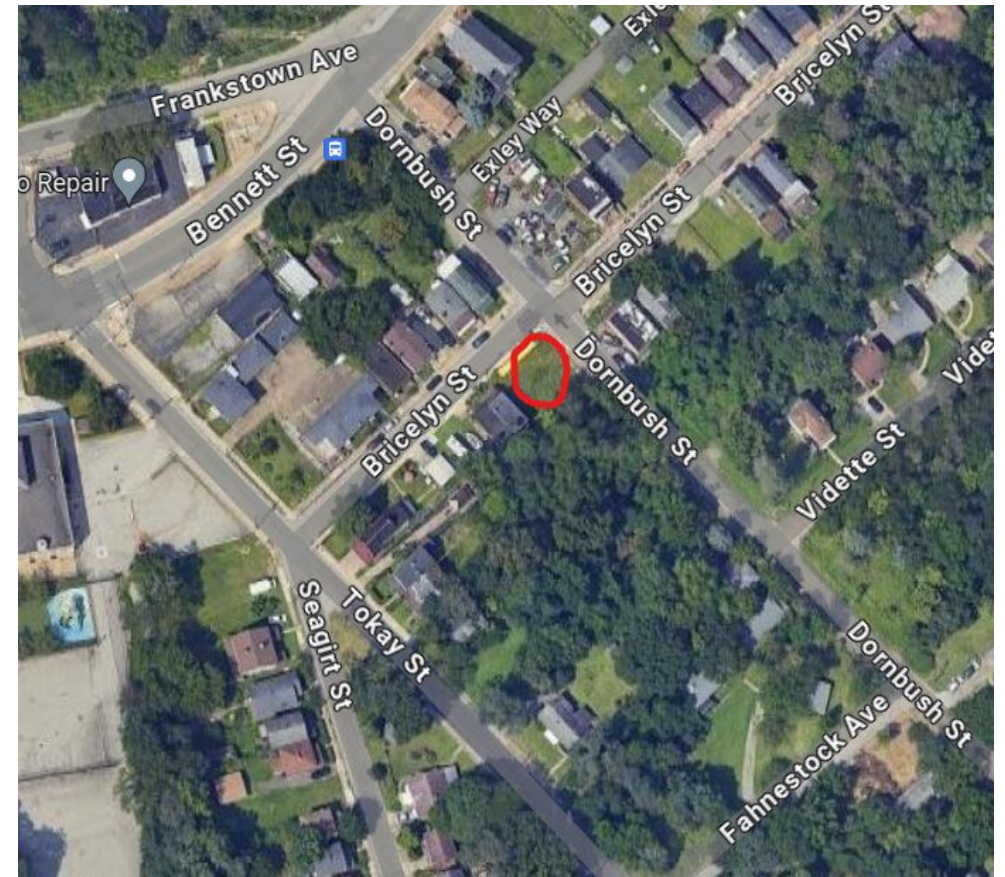
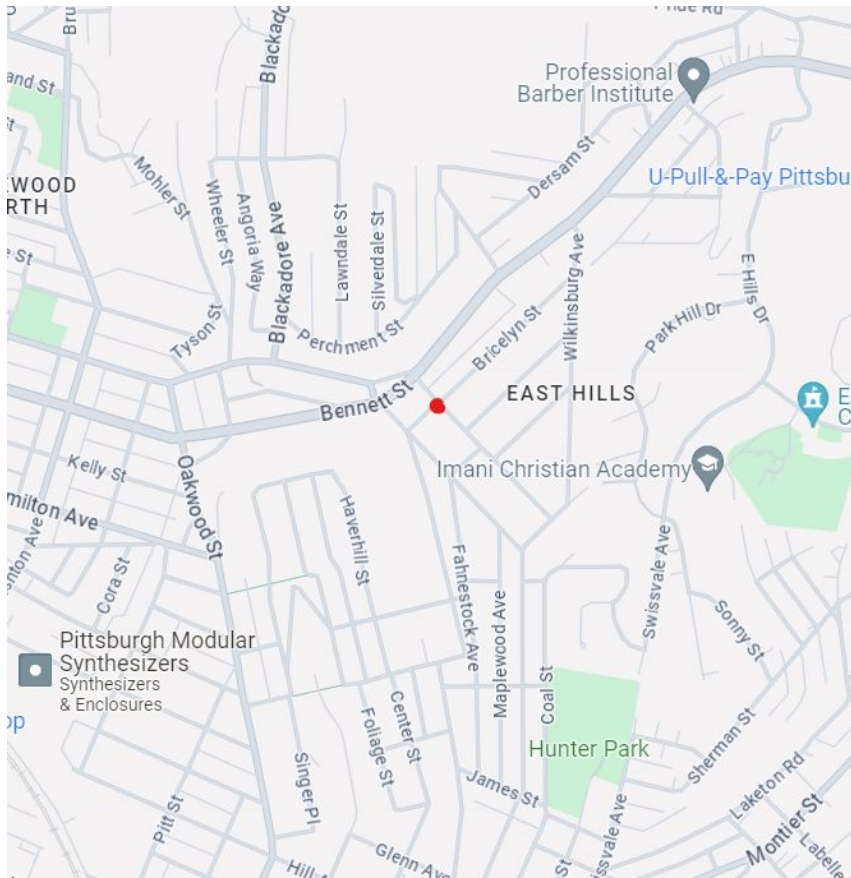


Sankofa Garden

Roots to a Brighter Future

This project is led by UpstreamPgh, East Hills Consensus Group, and artist Marlana Adele Vassar

Project Location: Map



Project Background

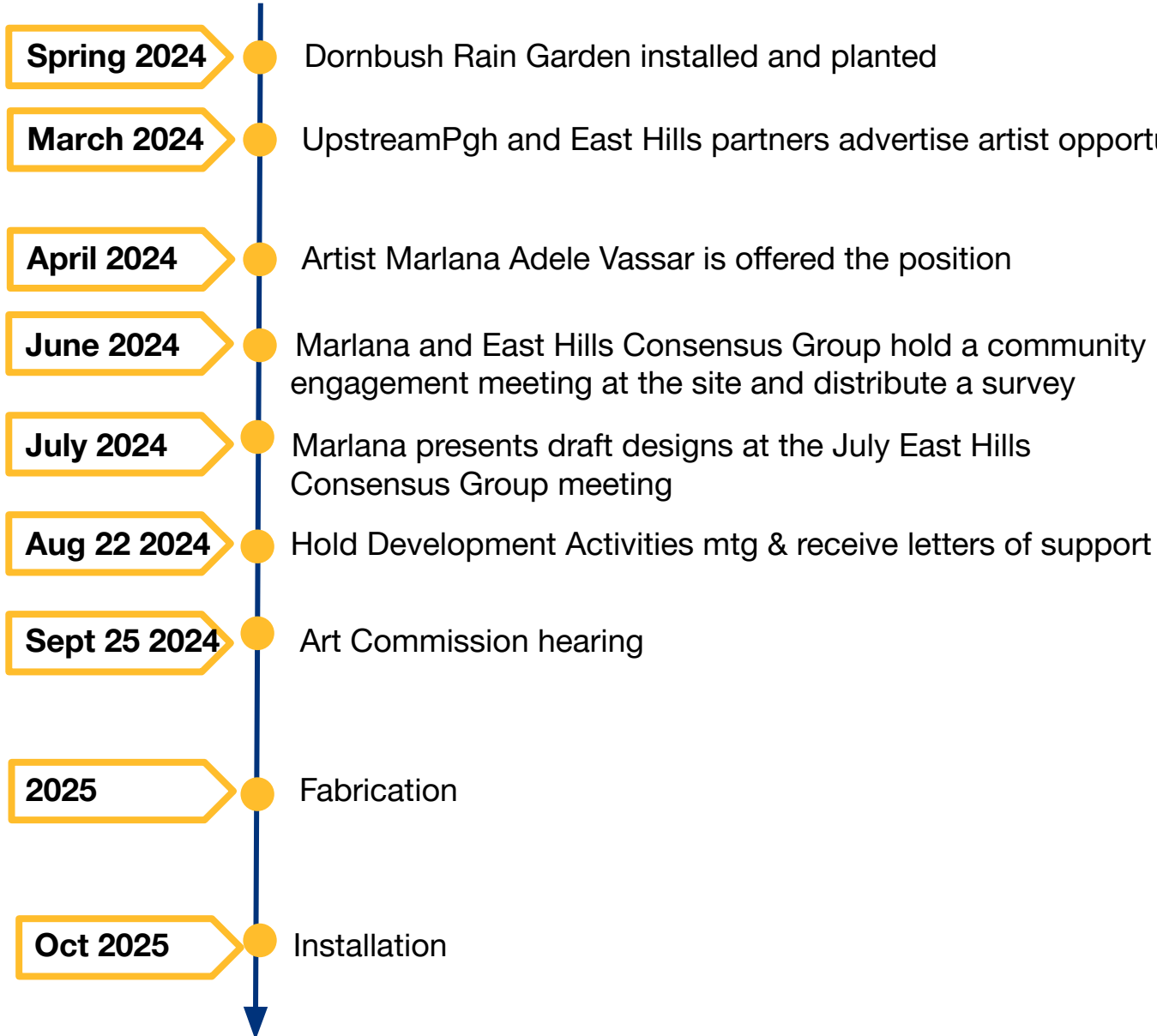


GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

In the Nine Mile Run Watershed

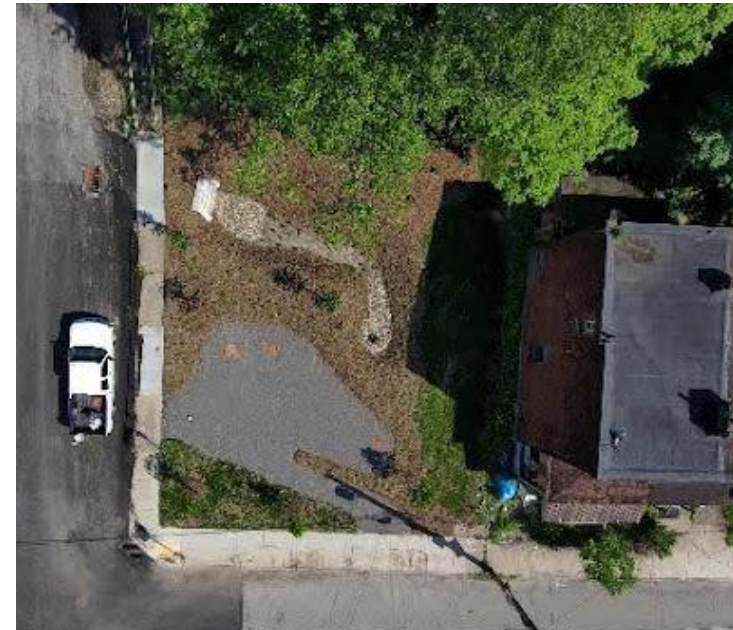
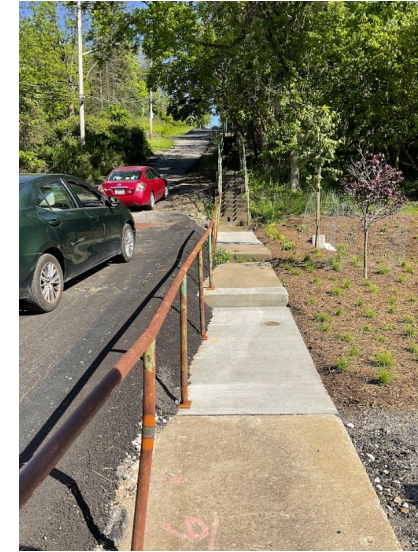
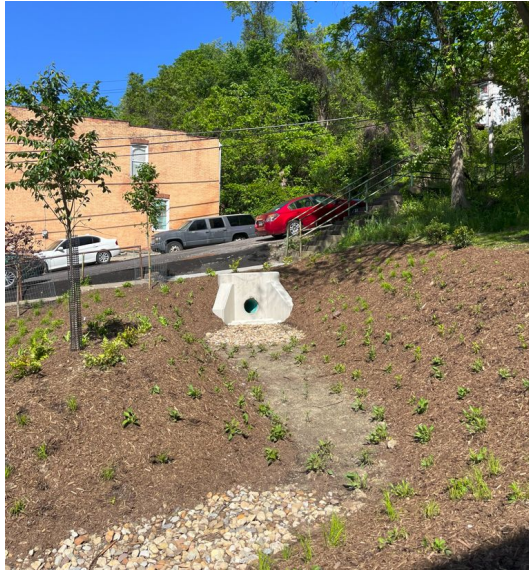


Project Timeline



A photo of one of our East Hills Consensus Group (EHCG) engagement meeting on June 20, 2024

Site Context

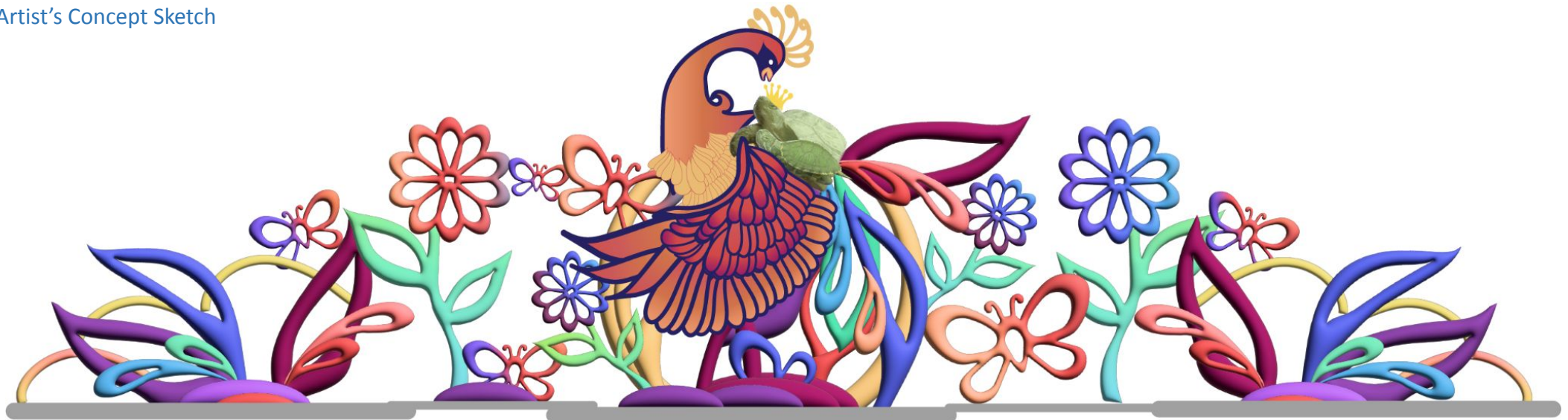


Translating Environmental Justice

Residents shared feedback requesting artwork that would highlight the natural elements of the garden, and reflect the cultural identity and history of the neighborhood. Marlana Adele Vassar created a design inspired by folktales and native flora and fauna to represent the various age demographics and aspirations of the East Hills Community.

The bird is a colorful, stylized version of a Sankofa bird coming to life, paired with elder and younger tortoise characters. The Sankofa bird represents learning from our past. The bird is shown crowning the wise tortoise, acknowledging the contributions of our elders, while the younger tortoise admires and respectfully learns from their ancestor. All of the characters are surrounded by stylized flora and fauna shapes that are designed to be harmonious with the landscape.

Artist's Concept Sketch



Scale Rendering,
Full size is 18' wide by 6' tall

Community Engagement





Behind the Scenes

Project Proposal: In Situ

In-situ view, facing Bricelyn Street at the back of the lot.









Lessons Learned

- Lesson 1: Flexibility is essential
- Lesson 2: Community engagement works best when it is specific
- Lesson 3: Existing resident networks matter
- Lesson 4: Environmental infrastructure can also be cultural infrastructure
- Lesson 5: Public art must balance meaning with responsibility



Public art like this has several goals. Pick one that resonates with you, and discuss questions:

- **Art that encourages reflection and pride in a neighborhood**
 - What are people proud of in your neighborhood? What encourages people to stop and reflect on their neighborhood's history?
 - Do you have examples of art that demonstrates this goal? Art could be physical like a sculpture or mural, performance-based like music and theatre, or functional like the design of a park.
 - How can we use art to support local advocacy efforts?
- **Art that makes climate and environmental issues visible**
 - What are the environmental or climate issues you see in your neighborhood, and who can take action on these issues?
 - How could we use art to support environmental campaigns?
 - Do you have examples of art that demonstrates this goal? Art could be physical like a sculpture or mural, performance-based like music and theatre, or functional like the design of a park.
- **Art that encourages gathering**
 - What are current gathering spaces in your neighborhood? How does their design help or hurt this function?
 - Do you have examples of well designed gathering spaces in your neighborhood?

See you on Thursday, July
9th

Who Controls the Land? Tools for Resident Action & Environmental Change



What to expect? Scan here for updates and information.

Cohort webpage: [R2R Cohort Member page](#)



Thank You!!