

SAVE GADSDEN CREEK

SOCIAL

The WestEdge proposal to fill Gadsden Creek continues the **systematic disenfranchisement of the African-American community in Gadsden Green Homes**, by seizing the last remainder of a resource they once had.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Gadsden Creek is a navigable waterway home to rich animal and plant life. But **used for decades as a City landfill**, the creek's drainage capacity is weakened - **leaving Gadsden Green residents vulnerable to flooding and storm damage.**

ECONOMIC

At the **expense of Charleston taxpayers** who are subsidizing an expensive development built on filled marsh, **only WestEdge investors will see the enormous profits that come with the filling of Gadsden Creek.**

TRUE VS. FALSE

False narratives and misconceptions about Gadsden Creek issued by WestEdge

FALSE

WestEdge claims that Gadsden Creek is a worthless "ditch," and that filling it will help alleviate tidal flooding in the area.

TRUE

Gadsden Creek is "not a ditch."¹ It is a **navigable waterway and essential fish habitat², appearing on multiple surveys** that date back to 1973.³ The very reason that flooding is so extreme in this area is because beginning in 1952, the **City dumped fill into Gadsden Creek and its surrounding wetlands to create valuable land**. Expert reports adopted by the City, including **the Dutch Dialogues⁴ and Stormwater Design Standards Manual, strongly advise against filling Gadsden Creek**, which will worsen tidal flooding.

FALSE

No one cares about Gadsden Creek.

TRUE

Gadsden Creek has a rich and intimate history with Charleston's African-American community. **The Gadsden Green community (or Back Da Green) has lived alongside Gadsden Creek for generations**. Former residents recall fond memories of enjoying the creek as a **place for swimming, fishing, baptisms, and exploration**. Today the Creek is used as a **nature preserve and outdoor classroom for nearby schools**.

FALSE

Filling Gadsden Creek will bring economic growth and prosperity to the area.

TRUE

The WestEdge development is designed to benefit the already-wealthy, as evidenced by what has been created so far (ex: Caroline Luxury Apartments). **Filling Gadsden Creek will give developers four additional acres of land** to develop, namely luxury apartments and commercial spaces. Further, building on landfill is expensive, so the City has helped to subsidize the WestEdge development by creating a TIF (Tax Incremental Financing) district, **diverting taxpayer dollars from local schools to pay for infrastructure like roads and plumbing for the development. Meanwhile roads and infrastructure in and around Gadsden Green public housing are failing.**

FALSE

Gadsden Creek is filled with dangerous toxic waste and must be filled.

TRUE

A 2000 report confirmed NO toxins or public safety concerns.⁵ A 2021 City-financed environmental study found that "surface water quality in **Gadsden Creek does not appear to be significantly degraded and is similar to the Ashley River**"⁶.

1 Dept. of the Army, Charleston District, Corps of Engineers, "Letter to First Piedmont Mortgage", Aug 25 1981.
2 Dept. of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. "Letter to Army Corps. re: WestEdge Development". May 30, 2018.
3 Dept. of the Army, Charleston District, Corps of Engineers, "Joint Public Notice to Ashley Square", 1973.

4 Waggoner & Ball, "Dutch Dialogues". 2019. p. 193, 205
5 JBM Properties LLC and ARM Environmental, "Letter to SC DHEC Re: Ashley Tower Voluntary Cleanup", August 14, 2000.
6 GEL Engineering LLC, "Surface Water Assessment of Gadsden Creek", July 27, 2020.

TIMELINE OF CITY’S ABUSE OF GADSDEN GREEN COMMUNITY

	CITY OF CHARLESTON	GADSDEN CREEK + GADSDEN GREEN COMMUNITY
1870s-1910s	City refers to the area surrounding Gadsden Creek as “Butcher Town”, populated by African-Americans and immigrants. After constant complaints about boys swimming in different waterfronts, Gadsden Creek is designated as a place for this activity. ¹	A thriving community grows around Gadsden Creek and becomes known as Gadsden Green. The Creek is used for fishing docks, baptisms, youth bathing and exploration ² . Gadsden Green becomes “the largest group of Colored property owners in any single area in the City of Charleston.” ³
1938-1952	City uses 1938 Tornado as an opportunity to seize private property and homes from Gadsden Green residents , using federal funding to demolish homes in good repair in order to erect Gadsden Green public housing (1941) a segregated “project” for Black residents – a popular national trend known as Urban Renewal.	Gadsden Green residents have their homes and properties seized by the City, despite clear opposition voiced in a 1940 letter to Mayor Lockwood by John Harris and 39 Gadsden Green residents . The chance for generational mobility and private home ownership is taken from over 50 families in Gadsden Green.
1952-1972	City initiates an aggressive “land reclamation program” and begins to fill Gadsden Creek and surrounding wetlands (violating the Rivers and Harbors Act) with no regard for drainage or residents. Mayor Morrison refers to the new land creation as “money in the bank.” ⁴	Gadsden Green residents are subjected to stench of landfill, rats, and mountains of trash. A rich resource is stolen in order to create new land for speculative real estate investors . Residents are surrounded by a highway to the south, and a landfill to the west.
1971-1981	In 1971, the Department of Justice + Army Corps threatens legal action against the City’s illegal dumping . The City receives an after-the-fact permit that bans any activity that would forbid the free use of navigable waters adjacent to the landfill. Months later the City tries to further fill, but is denied by the Army Corps.	Gadsden Green residents are neglected. The landfill diminishes quality of life. Gadsden Green Resident Shirley Chavis files a lawsuit against the City for nuisance, citing horrible conditions like rodents and stench . Speculative developers make several attempts to build on the filled land.
2012-2013	Mayor Joe Riley revives development attempts and creates Horizon Foundation, Inc. (now WestEdge) to manage development as a proposed biomedical community. Gateway is hired as the developer.	The Gadsden Green community is not meaningfully engaged in the decision-making process . Gentrification, displacement and further disenfranchisement are impending.
2015-Today	June 2015: WestEdge permit application is opposed in Public Hearing by community and environmental organizations. WestEdge appeases environmental orgs. by donating \$1.5 Million to preserve the former King’s Grant Golf Course in Summerville. ⁵ 2018: Environmental orgs. cede and WestEdge resubmits permit application to fill and develop Gadsden Creek. 2020-21: City “adopts” Dutch Dialogues, Stormwater Design Standards Manual, City Plan, and Climate Action Plan, which all call for the restoration of Gadsden Creek. 2021: SCDHEC approves the permit request by WestEdge to destroy Gadsden Creek.	Friends of Gadsden Creek emerges , engaging supporters, organizations and media to oppose the WestEdge’s plan to fill and destroy Gadsden Creek. Gadsden Green community witnesses a boom of construction next door, including Caroline Luxury Apartments, a hair salon, barre gym, and expensive restaurants - catering to higher-income citizens. 2019: In an August Public Hearing, the community overwhelmingly opposes the filling of Gadsden Creek. 2021: South Carolina Environmental Law Center, representing Friends of Gadsden Creek, files a suit against WestEdge and SCDHEC.

OUR CALL TO ACTION: Revitalize Gadsden Creek as a first step in a larger plan that repairs the social, environmental, and economic harm that has been inflicted upon the Gadsden Green community.

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1 Fulmer, Nate. “Tracing Gadsden Creek’s Lost Meander”, University of South Carolina, Maritime Research Division.
 2 Charleston News, Board of Health. “Excellent Sanitary Condition Reported - Free Baths for the Boys.” July 25, 1872.
 3 Harris, John A. “Letter to Mayor Lockwood on behalf of Gadsden Green” March 25, 1940.

4 “Mayor’s Statement.” August 1957
 5 Open Space Institute, “OSI Conserves Land in the South Carolina Lowcountry for Marsh Restoration, Riverfront Trail Addition.” April 12, 2018.