

Section 1. Planning Greenways and Trails

Section at a Glance

- *Making the Case for Greenways and Trails*
- *Identifying and Involving Key Players*
- *Identifying Locations for Greenways and Trails*
- *Getting the Job Done*
- *Resources for Planning Assistance*

Whether you are establishing an entire network of greenways and trails or developing a single project, thorough planning is critical to ensure a well conceived and supported effort. This section provides a brief overview of the major steps of a typical planning process. While factors and issues vary from one location to another, the main needs for planning are often the same. The Office of Greenways and Trails, along with other

organizations, can provide formal and informal assistance regarding the planning process.

Making the Case for Greenways and Trails

Nationally, greenways and trails are becoming integral components of community design and planning. This trend stems from the multiple benefits that greenways and trails can bring not only to an individual community, but to its broader regional context, as well. The core appeal of greenways and trails lies in the connectivity they provide for both conservation and recreation. They multiply the benefits of conservation areas, parks and open spaces by linking them together. Among the noted benefits are:

- ☑ increased economic activity through local spending by recreational users
- ☑ reduced costs to government through lower infrastructure spending in areas where greenways and trails take place of development
- ☑ increased revenues to government by sales taxes associated with local spending
- ☑ increased property values near greenways and trails
- ☑ a broad range of environmental benefits, including protection of ecological corridors to help support wildlife and protection of watersheds
- ☑ enhanced quality of life through increased alternative transportation opportunities
- ☑ increased public health benefits through recreational use
- ☑ increased access to cultural and historical resources

Promoting the benefits of greenways and trails is critical to creating buy-in for your planning effort. Get people excited about your project by speaking at public meetings, workshops, events, community service organizations, and chamber of commerce meetings. Resources are available from the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) to support your communication effort. Your OGT regional coordinator may also be available to attend major meetings to provide your group with experience from similar greenways and trails projects around the state.

➔ For more detailed information regarding the benefits and costs of greenways and trails, see *Appendix F, Thinking Green*.

Other Ways to Get the Word Out...

- Create and maintain a mailing list of all potentially interested individuals and groups
- Involve media in meetings, presentations, activities and events
- Conduct greenways and trails presentations and events to educate businesses and the public
- Publish and distribute brochures, newsletters, fact sheets, hotlines, posters, bumper stickers, decals, calendars, and t-shirts
- Work with other organizations to include greenways and trails articles in their publications
- Develop and use displays with maps and exhibits
- Create a home page on the World Wide Web

Identifying and Involving Key Players

Before communicating your message, it is important to identify the target groups and important players. Your target audiences and players throughout the planning process are likely to be many and may include your organization's leadership, the general public, private organizations and environmental and recreational user groups. The key is to begin including various stakeholders up front so they are involved throughout the process. Network with advocates from local, state and national greenway and trail groups. If possible, form a greenways and trails advisory committee that meets on a regular basis to research, define and draft a greenway and trail planning process for your community or project.

Greenways and trails planning provides excellent opportunities for conservation and recreation groups, public agencies, landowners, businesses, and dedicated individuals to partner on community projects. **Partnerships** are critical to the success of any greenway or trail project or master planning effort. Private/public partnerships can be formed at the local level where different groups sharing a common interest join together to plan and manage individual greenways and trails projects in your community. Community pride and the desire to improve quality of life encourage people to preserve urban green space, restore river floodplains, link community parks, provide alternative transportation and become active in greenways and trails initiatives. Greenway and trail opportunities can be promoted in the comprehensive planning process resulting in credibility and increased chances to fund the acquisition and development of your system. Finally, including elected officials throughout the process is critical since they often become the biggest champions of projects.

Finally, a critical question to answer during the planning process is who will manage your project(s). A greenway and trail project can be managed by a governmental entity,

a non-profit group, a community support group, and in some cases may even be partially managed by private contractors. Some of the most successful projects have a volunteer citizen support or advocacy group that raises funds for maintenance and performs routine cleanups and repairs. Don't wait until the project is established to determine a management entity. Identify and involve the proposed manager throughout the planning process. It will be critical to the success of the project once it is complete.

Identifying Locations for Greenways and Trails and Creating a Master Plan

Consider the various corridors or land areas that may be appropriate for establishing and delineating your greenways and trails network. Some opportunities include:

- ☑ Public lands currently managed for conservation and recreation
- ☑ Planned public land acquisitions
- ☑ Conservation easements through private lands
- ☑ Public road right-of-ways
- ☑ Canal and drainage easements
- ☑ Abandoned railroad corridors
- ☑ Utility corridors

Don't underestimate the important role of **private landowners**. Farmers, timber companies, gas and power utility companies, developers, and others can be influential proponents of greenways and trails. Educate representatives from these groups about the potential benefits of greenways and trails. If a private group formally designates their property as part of the Statewide System of Greenways and Trails, they will even receive special liability protection.
➔ See *Section 4, Designation*, for more details.

When developing a master plan or planning for a single project corridor, it is important to consider all existing and proposed recreational and ecological connections. There is greater value added to a given plan or project when interconnectivity is maximized (see inset). OGT and the University of Florida have developed the Florida Trails Network website (<http://ogt.geoplan.ufl.edu/>) which provides extensive mapped information for the entire state, including important greenways and trails data. The Florida Trails Network website is an excellent starting point, particularly if you do not have mapped information readily available to you. Remember that if any areas are delineated on private lands, the property appraiser's office in your community can provide specific information regarding ownership. Landowners should be the first to know if their land is within your planning corridor.

➔ For more information, visit the website at <http://ogt.geoplan.ufl.edu>.

Greenways and trails can vary from protected areas of native vegetation to altered lands such as abandoned railroad corridors and road rights of way. Decide early in the planning process what types of greenways and trails will best serve your community's conservation, open space and recreation needs.

Greenways and trails can be planned to accommodate multiple uses. Compatibility issues may be addressed by physically separating the most intensive human activities from the most important conservation areas. The level of human use and infrastructure development should be based on a site's ecological characteristics and the capacity to sustain human use. Base your efforts on "responsible" public access. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection Division of Recreation and Parks has developed visitor carrying capacity guidelines, which can be downloaded at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/planning/forms/CarryingCapacityGuidelines.pdf>. The National Park Service has also developed the *Visitor Experience and Resource Protection* framework to serve as a tool for addressing user capacities. For more information, visit <http://planning.nps.gov/document/verphandbook.pdf>.

Remember to Think Connectivity

Many things can move along greenways and trails, from wildlife, water, and soil nutrients, to recreational users on a variety of trails. While most greenways and trails in Florida are limited to non-motorized uses, national and state forests may accommodate motorized uses in some areas, as well as some paved trails in urban settings. In addition to providing connections between native ecosystems, landscapes, parks, historic sites, and residential areas, greenways and trails provide a means of connecting people to the environment.

Keep in mind that the components of greenways and trails systems should not be connected simply for connection's sake but should be connected based on careful planning. What is your community trying to connect? Who will use the connection and what recreational user groups will be encouraged or disallowed? Try to plan for both wildlife and human needs when designing a greenway or trail. Many wide-ranging wildlife species cannot be conserved and managed within isolated preserves or conservation areas, but require large, connected landscapes for their preservation.

A key step in your process is creating the map that will be your guide. If the map is for an entire network, it will become your master plan. Locate and plot the existing and planned greenways and trails on maps and then hold charrettes to plot all potential greenways and trails opportunities for your system. These meetings should be highly publicized. Invite everyone on your mailing list and the general public to these mapping charrettes. Involvement breeds advocacy.

At the charrettes, have several table sized copies of your opportunity maps for groups of six to eight to draw and catalogue their ideas (i.e., color code corridor alignments as environmental or recreational, number and identify points of interest and trailheads, etc.) Have the contributors use color-coded dot stickers to identify their additions to the maps. Encourage everyone to locate and map all existing and potential lands, connectors and points of interest, even if they are not sure of the importance of an idea. Each individual citizen knows a little more about their section of the community and can suggest routes and connectors that will join ecological areas, neighborhoods, parks, libraries, schools and businesses.

Once these ideas are mapped, you can produce a workable opportunity map for your jurisdiction that connects to other greenways and trails in the region. Present the map to the public again, making sure all know that it will be an evolving document. Then bring the map to your governing body for approval. Your approved Greenway and Trail Plan and approved Opportunity Map become your Master Plan.

→ For further guidance on mapping greenways and trails see *Resources for Planning Assistance* and *Data Sources for Planning* at the end of this section, or contact your OGT regional coordinator. OGT regions and coordinator contact information can be found at http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/community/refguide/pdf/region_map.pdf.

Getting the Job Done

Once you have your plan, set your goals high and strive to meet them. Support the plan by incorporating related goals and objectives into the applicable local government comprehensive plan. Identify priority projects and work towards developing or establishing those first. Whether you have a full time greenways and trails coordinator or a citizen driven planning team, much can be done over time through individual accomplishments. But project implementation will require many resources and extensive information to get the job done.

The remainder of this guide provides resources and information to assist you with establishing and developing greenways and trails...

Identify funding sources to purchase the lands that will become part of your system and to develop and maintain projects.

→ For more information on possible funding sources, see *Section 2, Funding Resources*, which is available for download at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/community/refguide/default.htm>.

Utilize appropriate design guidelines to ensure that your project is safe, enjoyable and accessible.

→ For more information on design, see *Section 3, Project Design*, which is available for download at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/community/refguide/default.htm>.

Designate your greenway or trail as part of the Statewide System of Greenways and Trails to enhance future funding opportunities and visibility for the project.

→ For more information on Florida's Designation Program, see *Section 4, Designation*, which is available for download at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/community/refguide/default.htm>.

Resources for Planning Assistance

The **Office of Greenways & Trails** provides technical assistance for community groups and local governments. The office can provide information on greenway projects throughout the state. OGT has an excellent 9-minute video on the importance and benefits of the Florida Greenways and Trails program to Florida's communities. There are also PowerPoint presentations and literature available from OGT. All these resources are available for training purposes and to enhance presentations.

The **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)** of the National Park Service provides assistance to local governments and organizations, as well as state and federal agencies, to plan greenways, protect rivers, develop trails, conserve the character of the landscape, and help groups achieve their conservation and recreation goals.

→ For more details, see RTCA in *Section 2, Funding Resources*, or visit <http://www.nps.gov/rtca>.

The **Conservation Fund's American Greenways Program** is a national non-profit program devoted to all aspects of planning and implementing greenways and greenways systems. The organization has published a number of books on greenways and can be contacted for information on numerous greenway planning topics including the initiation of community greenways activities and the economic benefits of greenways. The organization also has a tremendous amount of in-house information on statewide, regional and community-based greenway initiatives across the country that may be useful in planning your local project.

→ For more details, see the American Greenways Program in *Section 2, Funding Resources*, or visit <http://www.conservationfund.org/>.

The **Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC)** is an organization devoted to converting abandoned railroad lines into multi-use trails for public use. RTC is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with citizen groups, public agencies, railroad companies and other organizations carrying out a program of technical assistance, public education and advocacy.

→ For more details, visit <http://www.railtrails.org/> or contact the RTC Florida Chapter at (850) 942-2379.

The **Trust for Public Land (TPL)** is a national, non-profit conservation organization that protects land for people. TPL's Conservation Services Program is a full-service greenway and scenic assessment program that offers technical assistance, public education and outreach, community organizing, and acquisition expertise to local governments, land trusts, citizen groups, private landowners and public agencies. TPL also assists local governments with the financing of natural, historic, cultural and

recreational resources through programs such as Lease/Purchase, Buy and Hold, and Phased Acquisition.

→ For more details, visit <http://www.tpl.org>.

National and statewide non-profit organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and the National Audubon Society have their own preserves and sanctuaries to protect significant habitat areas. Local land trusts also effectively conserve community natural resource lands. These groups can help your community plan your greenway network.

American Trails is a national, nonprofit organization working on behalf of all trail uses. American Trails supports local, regional, and long-distance trails and greenways, whether they are in backcountry, rural, or urban areas. Its goal is to support trails efforts by finding common ground and promoting cooperation among varied trail interests. Among the important efforts undertaken by the group are its national biannual symposium and its promotion of trail-related training through the National Trails Training Partnership.

→ For more details, visit <http://www.americantrails.org/>.

GREENWAYS AND TRAILS Related Listservers
Compiled by the Office of Greenways and Trails

Listserver Name	Internet Address	Comments
Trails and Greenways Clearing House	www.trailsandgreenways.org	"The Clearinghouse provides technical assistance, information resources and referrals to trail and greenway advocates and developers across the nation."
Cultural Commons	www.culturalcommons.org	The Cultural Commons was created by the Center for Arts and Culture, a Washington based think tank that seeks to inform and improve the decision that affect our cultural life.
Creative City Network	www.creativecity.ca	The Creative City Network is an organization of people employed by municipalities across Canada working on arts, cultural and heritage policy, planning, development and support.
The Trust for Public Land	www.tpl.org/	"TPL pioneers new ways to finance parks and open space; helps generate federal, state, and local conservation funding; and promotes the importance of public lands."
National Center on Accessibility	www.ncaonline.org/	"Through the comprehensive services, NCA focuses on universal design and practical accessibility solutions creating inclusive recreation opportunities for people of all abilities."
United States Department of Health and Human Services	www.smallstep.gov/	Provides information about health and different activities you can do to improve health. Related examples: helping prevent childhood obesity.
Florida Bicycle Association	www.floridabicycle.org	FBA is a not-for-profit member-driven organization created to inspire and support people and communities to enjoy greater freedom and well being through bicycling.
Project for Public Spaces	www.pps.org/	PPS has helped over 1,000 communities in 44 states and 12 countries improve their parks, markets, streets, transit stations, libraries and countless other public spaces.
American Trails	www.americantrails.org	American Trails is the only national, nonprofit organization working on behalf of ALL trails interests.
Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center	www.pedbikeinfo.org/	"The PBIC is a clearinghouse for information about health and safety, engineering, advocacy, education, enforcement and access and mobility."