Great Greenways, Trails and Water Trails Vision

This map illustrates interconnected network of greenways, trails and water trails throughout the County.

Description of general area for recreation opportunities not site specific.
Benefits of Greenways and Water Trails

Transportation Alternatives
Greenways can give people options other than driving. Whether it’s going to work or doing a quick errand, the decreased dependence on cars improves air quality, alleviates road congestion, and provides a safe environment for children to walk or bike to school.

New Recreational Opportunities
A recent trend in recreation is that people are more interested than ever in "linear" forms of exercise: jogging, biking, rollerblading, kayaking, etc. These forms of recreation thrive in corridors and pathways, and encourage healthy lifestyles through easy access to the resource.

Higher Property Values
Numerous studies have shown that homes near greenways and trails are worth more money and thus increase the tax base. For example, the estimated premium of a property along the Santa Ana River Corridor in California is estimated to be $139 to $201 million in property values.

Protection and Celebration of Natural Resources
Greenways and Water Trails not only connect people to nature, but can also be pivotal corridors for the movement of wildlife. Greenways also provide buffers against harsh views, filter non point source pollution sediment and help to control runoff into streams and rivers.

Opportunity for Tourism and Business Development
Greenways and Water Trails have the ability to connect places of interest that may be thematically linked but not geographically adjacent. The aesthetics of greenways and its recreation opportunities also contribute greatly to quality of life, which in turn enhances the ability of Miami-Dade County to attract more business and jobs.

Snake Creek Canal

The Snake Creek Canal is a South Florida Water Management District waterway that winds its way into the City of North Miami Beach. As part of the City’s new Urban Design Plan, the Canal will become a public waterfront near the densest commercial area. As one travels west and the land use becomes more residential, the treatment of the area around the Canal decreases in intensity and provides a place for community recreation.

Biscayne Everglades Trail

The new Biscayne Everglades Trail is comprised of 49 miles of greenways and multi-purpose paths. It is the only trail in the United States that connects two National Parks. What makes it particularly unique, however, is that the trail travels through the community, creating opportunities for tourism and greater visitation to the parks.
The Economics of Great Greenways, Trails, and Water Trails

Research of trails, greenways, and blueways show that the introduction of these features to a community can spur a variety of positive economic and social benefits. These benefits, discussed below, include increased property values, tourism growth, desirability for corporate relocation, and improved communities.

CASE STUDY: Maryland's Greenways and Blueways

To date, Maryland has over 1,500 miles of protected greenway corridors, including over 600 miles of land trails and over 350 miles of water trails. Maryland's Northern Central Railroad Trail (NCRT) extends 20 miles, stretching from Hunt Valley, a Baltimore suburb, to the Maryland-Pennsylvania state line and receives over 1,000,000 visitors per year. The Greenways and Blueways Services Division of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources reports that in 1993, the budget for The Northern Central Rail Trail (NCRT) in Maryland was $191,893 and the direct economic inputs to the State via tax revenue were $303,750. The value of goods purchased because of the NCRT for 1993 was estimated to total more than $3,380,000. The trail received 10,000 visitors annually in 1984 and grew to over 450,000 in 1992, a compound annual attendance growth rate of 53 percent per year.

In a survey of community residents, two-thirds of respondents liked greenways better than traditional, more confined parks. Almost 94 percent of survey respondents felt the trail is a good use of state funds. Over 95 percent of respondents view the trail as an asset to their community. Almost two-thirds of those surveyed liked greenways better than traditional parks and felt that the trail enhanced nearby property values. Almost two-thirds of users report that, if buying a new home, they would consider proximity to a similar trail a factor.

While the Northern Central Rail Trail was primarily used by locals in its early years, the emergence of tourist related businesses from the very beginning showed that the trail's tourism market had potential to grow. Before it was a greenway, it was a well-known area for illegal dumping, vandalism, and general ill behavior. According to a 1994 study for the Maryland Greenways Commission by PKF Consulting, the once derelict corridor was once a popular location for nuisance crimes such as underage drinking, illegal car dumping, illegal car and motorcycle racing, and vandalism. Since its conversion to a trail, residents have taken ownership of the trail and police the area, and, "reports of crime and vandalism along the corridor have dropped appreciably."

Trail users who had purchased goods for use on the trail spent an average of $203 in 1993. Similarly, users who purchased soft goods such as food before or after using the Trail spent an average of $6.30 per visit. A number of races, walkathons, and community events have taken place on the trail.

A 2000 initiative among states bordering the Chesapeake Bay led to Maryland's creation of a Blueways program, to increase public access to the water. Lisa Gutierrez, Director of Greenways and Blueways Services Division of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, reports that it is often challenging purchasing public access points to water, because waterfront real estate is at a premium. However, they have been supported by Maryland's land preservation department that works with the Blueways division to acquire new property. Gutierrez reports that all signs (increases in boat sales, traffic at access points, and tourism reports) have pointed to the program being a great success.

OTHER EXAMPLES

- Along the Santa Ana River Corridor, in Santa Ana, California, a partially completed trail was estimated to have a positive effect on property values within one-eighth of a mile of the trail. Based on similar studies of premiums next to parks and trails, a premium of 6.5 percent was estimated for property along the proposed trail extension. Counting only private properties on 6,050 acres in Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties, total property values were estimated between $2.15 billion (low estimate) to $3.1 billion (high estimate), yielding an increase of $139 to $201 million.

- The Virginia Creeper Trail runs 35 miles through Southwestern Virginia to the North Carolina State Line. According to University of Georgia researcher John Bergstrom, Virginia's Creeper Trail, "... generates, conservatively, $670,000 worth of local income. In terms of industry, there is a significant economic impact to this community. It's a clean industry. People who use the trail are good visitors. They don't leave a lot of trash and they don't cast local government a lot of money. It's low-impact. It's also sustainable. As use of the trail grows, the economic impacts will grow as well.”

- The Monon Rail Trail a 15 mile trail through Indianapolis and Carmel, Indiana has been a major economic catalyst for the area. The trail now receives 1.2 million visitors per year. A 2001 survey conducted by Indiana University showed trail users view the trail as an important part of their active lifestyle. 82 percent of users reported that they walk, run, cycle, or skate more because they have trail access. The Indianapolis Parks Department has counted at least 20 new businesses that have located along the trail since 2001, including eight of which are named after the trail. According to a 2003 study by the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment at Indiana University, each of the 9,000 homes within one-half mile of the trail receive an estimated $13,059 sales premium, totaling a $116 million increase in property values due to the presence of the trail.
The most ambitious component of the Greenways, Trails and Water Trails Vision is the establishment of a Western Greenway along the County’s western edge. Conceived as a 1 - 5 mile wide corridor of conservation and recreation land buffering the Florida Everglades, the Western Greenway would:

- Connect the Lake Belt area to the north and the Southern Glades Wildlife Management Area to the south for both wildlife habitat and recreation
- Provide new fresh water lakes and beaches for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, swimming and other passive, resource-base recreation facilities and activities, providing a western alternative to long drives to the beach
- Provide a 40-mile multi-purpose trail corridor that connects to the County’s greenways and trails network
- Enhance the rural character of the Redland and other rural areas
- Create a transition between farmland and the Everglades
- Provide opportunities for the enhanced treatment of stormwater run-off from the east

Like much of the Parks and Open Space Vision, the Western Greenway can be implemented over a long period of time through development agreements, recreation and conservation easements, land donations, conservation and recreation lands acquisition and other techniques.

**Western Greenway**

**CASE STUDY:** Boulder, Colorado Greenbelt

The City of Boulder is a fast-growing community outside of Denver, Colorado. Since the 1800’s, the City has been steadily acquiring land to form a Greenbelt. Using The Open Space Acquisitions and Management Plan 2005-2011 to guide the process, the City has a long-term target of acquiring an additional 11,000 acres. Though some of the land is under easement, most is purchased at market price by the City for fee simple ownership. Funded by sales tax dollars (88%), Boulder continues to successfully build its buffer that provides identity to the community, a scenic entry to the city, and a tangible framework for guiding development.
Western Greenway

This map illustrates the establishment of a Western Greenway connecting the Lake Belt Area to the north with the Southern Glades Wildlife Management Area to the south. The greenway alignment is conceptual and does not depict specific boundaries.
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