

Greenprint for Growth

Ancient, wrinkled oaks and young popplers are just a hint of the vast and varied landscape. Natural, beautiful vegetation and shrub life abound, serving as a home for numerous varieties of wildlife. This place isn't a community park or even a wildlife conservation ground, but as stated by the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation, these are pathways that "...provide connections...they link nature preserves, parks, historic sites, schools and neighborhoods...connect communities to each other, and all of us to the natural world..."¹ Overall, they help to create a higher quality of life within a community. These safe paths that can be used for walking, bicycling, and other forms of recreation or transportation are simply titled "greenways". Providing more benefits than just a reviving connection with nature, greenways are green infrastructures, including biking and hiking paths, conservation corridors, and habitats among and between communities. Their purpose is broad and different for each community in which they are located. A greenway system *in Hendersonville* would clearly create many important opportunities for the entire community—a fact that Sumner County seems to be among the last to realize. These benefits spoken about enthusiastically by those who already use greenways include an appreciation for nature and environmental awareness, a better opportunity to form healthier and more active lifestyles, and a means of increasing the overall dollar value of the city.

After glancing up and seeing the dark hue of scattered trees and birds, forming a silhouette resting over the rising sun, who can help but stare in awe and delight? Greenways naturally create a way for people to form a deeper respect for nature. As

¹ Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation, <<http://www.tenngreen.org/greenwaysandtrails.htm>>

Hendersonville quickly grows, leaving behind lush landscapes and replacing them with houses and buildings, the environment gradually diminishes. Greenways can provide a means for people to enjoy the increasing number of hard-to-find natural areas without traveling far from home. They also improve the quality of the environment by protecting plant and animal habitats. By dedicating sensitive areas to such low-impact uses, greenways can even help clean Hendersonville's water and air.

Greenways are more than just a connection between man and nature. They also serve as a wonderful place for people to exercise. By forming a long, paved or gravel trail that is safe and convenient, the "close to home" outdoor recreation opportunities will encourage people to go biking or running. Safety and convenience are two attributes of the greenway loved by Jen Wimberley, a Nashville citizen living close to the Richland Creek Greenway at McCabe Park. As stated by Jen, "I use the greenway near my home several times a week. It is beautiful and safe—I never worry about traffic, and there are always people out walking, riding, and taking their dogs for an evening stroll." Another benefit of this grand opportunity is its use for alternative transportation. In other words, people will not just be making themselves more fit, but they will be saving money and helping Hendersonville's environment. Greenways provide more than just a means to make an individual more fit, though—entire families can come and enjoy the company of each other. If a greenway is known for its safety, beauty, and convenient location, families may also meet other families. Eventually, community or school activities, such as races and other gatherings, are planned to take place in that area! Greenways clearly create a more healthy and active *community* in an abundant number of ways.

Besides the most noticeable benefits of greenways (a way for people to connect to

nature and pursue healthy, alternative transportation methods), there is a final advantage of a city having a greenway system—it adds a cash value to the entire community. There are many economic benefits of greenways. One of these benefits is the value of property. According to the *Rails to Trails Conservancy*, “...they have been shown to bolster property values and make adjacent properties easier to sell.”² A great example of this is reflected in New York City’s Central Park. Within 15 years of its completion, property values doubled and the city raised millions of dollars through taxes.³ Greenways also provide business opportunities and locations for commercial activities. The jobs then created would help increase local employment opportunities. Finally, there would be a reduction of public cost. The conservation of greenways by public agencies reduces any costs resulting from flooding and other natural hazards. If located along rivers or other bodies of water, greenways can help reduce the cost of repairing flood damage and improving water quality. For example, the city of Tulsa has developed a system of greenways linking multi-purpose flood control structures along Mingo Creek. As a result of Tulsa’s struggle to reduce flood losses, the community’s flood insurance rates have dropped by 25 percent and are now the lowest in the nation.⁴

A greenway system in Hendersonville would affect the city in many positive ways. Just a few of these advantages includes a vital, community appreciation for the dwindling environment, a better opportunity to form healthier and more active lifestyles, a stronger sense of community, and a means of aiding the economy of the city. Because

² Rails to Trails Conservancy, <http://www.trailsandgreenways.org/resources/benefits/topics/tgc_economic.pdf>

³ Neighborhood Open Space Coalition, *Urban Open Space: An Investment that Pays*, New York City, 1990

⁴ American Rivers, “Reducing Flood Damage Naturally in Tulsa”, <http://www.americanrivers.org/site/PageServer?pagename=AMR_content_aaba>

of all of these benefits, greenways have caught the attention of almost every major city in Tennessee (such as Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville)⁵, helping their local communities to truly develop and improve the overall quality of life. Hendersonville should truly consider this “green”print for growth!

⁵ Bikin’ Hville, <<http://bikinville.homestead.com/Greenway.html>>