

Greenway Commission Board 2011 Annual Report

The Greenway Commission meets the second Thursday of each month at 3:30 p.m. in the first floor conference room of City Hall.

Mission

To promote the establishment of linear park areas known as greenways; to recommend steps for implementation of the Master Plan; to foster communication and coordination with individuals and community groups; to identify potential sites for acquisition; to conduct continuing research, planning, and feasibility assessment; and to advise City Council, the City Manager, and the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts.

Key Accomplishments

Community Outreach Sub-Committee Report

The Community Outreach Sub-Committee of the Greenway Commission was established. The sub-committee met with number community groups throughout the municipality to promote and provide information regarding the greenway system. A brochure was developed by Commission members and for circulation at these meetings.

Street Closures

The Commission reviewed three street closure proposals during the course of the year and made recommendations and motions for each one which was coordinated by the Public Works staff. The Commission also made recommendations and worked with staff to implement improvements to the street closure process.

CIP and Planning Update Process

The Greenway Commission reassessed the greenway system in light of the forthcoming Capital Improvement Project budgeting. In order to reconsider the greenway priorities, the Commission held a major public meeting to gather input from the community. The data from this meeting was analyzed and it was determined that four additional, potential greenways needed to be considered (along Smith Mill Creek, Beaverdam Creek, Canie Creek and within Montford Complex property). Staff developed reports for each of these corridors as a further resource for the Commission who subsequently felt these potential greenways needed to be included in Capital Improvement Project list.

Reed Creek Greenway:

Staff presented an update on the development the Reed Creek Greenway. Phases III and IV of the project necessitate securing several greenway easements, one of which is owned by Buncombe County. The Commission voted to support accepting the deed from the County. The Commission also made recommendations and worked with staff to implement improvements to the street closure process.

River Arts District Transportation Project.

A consultant on the RADTP project provided an overview of the project as well as its status. The consultant highlighted the different plans that overlap with the Wilma Dykeman plan such as the Greenway Commission Master Plan, Transportation Master Plan and the City of Asheville 2025 plan as well as the various groups that have had presentations such as the public, share holders, and NCDOT. The Commission made a motion that stated that the selected alternative should include a greenway along the entire length of the corridor that is separated from the road wherever possible, that the selected alternative should provide a pedestrian bridge connection across the French Broad River to the future greenway on the west side and that no single option stands out as the clear favorite

from the greenway perspective and that no option, other than the no-build option, is clearly unacceptable.

Presentations to the Commission

Update on Friends of Hominy Creek:

Doug Barlow of the Friends of Hominy Creek provided an update on Hominy Creek project which has included an agreement with the City to perform limited site clearing of invasive plants, community meetings, plant identification and historical research. and historical research.

Pearson Bridge Presentation:

Karen Cragnolin described Riverlink's vision for the Pearson Bridge property in the context of future development her organization would like to manifest in this locale.

Lake Craig Project:

McCray Coates from the Public Works Department explained that the Hurricane Recovery Act which enabled the City to study the Swannanoa flooding event that occurred several years ago and address flood mitigation. The discussion included the potential impacts on Azalea Park, Recreation Park and the Swannanoa River Greenway.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Barb Mee of the Transportation Department gave an overview of the Bike/Pedestrian Plan that takes into consideration the criteria such as zoning, community destinations, transit stops, major thoroughfares, missing segments or safety concerns, and feasibility of construction. She also spoke to its integration with greenway development.

Momentum Tract Update

Staff provided an update regarding the Health Adventure's Momentum project site and its declaration of bankruptcy. The original agreement between the Health Adventure and the City included a commitment from Health Adventure to build the greenway by 2009. This did not occur and the City's legal staff was exploring options.

Park Authority Legislation

The chair reported that a placeholder bill was filed to create a park authority, which would be effective when it becomes law. The Commission discussed what role, if any, the Greenway Commission might play and how the bill would impact greenways.

Smith Mill Creek Tour

Commission members discussed a tour of the proposed Smith Mill Creek greenway that was led by the Asheville Design Center. They described the location and length of the creek. Staff and Commission members discussed its possible inclusion into the department's master plan.

Buncombe County Planning Process

Don Kostelec, project planner for Buncombe County greenways, gave the background on the County's greenways planning efforts and upcoming Greenway Commission public comment sessions.

Master Plan Update Process

Staff presented the Master Plan Update process developed with director of the department. They explained that the Master Plan will likely be updated at the next accreditation (all master plan subjects will be updated at the same time, not the greenways component alone).

Board Profile and Operations

Board training

Staff demonstrated the new board orientation online presentations and explained the overarching board development program. Staff also stated that the Commission Chair and staff liaison can work with new members on any other specific trainings requested.

Greenway Commission Transition:

Staff provided an overview of the transition of the Greenway Commission from the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department to the Transportation Department in 2010. This transition will further the integration of greenways corridors with other bicycle, pedestrian and roadway improvements and utilize a departmental team approach in developing the system.

Community Outreach Sub-Committee Establishment

The Community Outreach Sub-Committee of the Greenway Commission was established to promote and provide information regarding the greenway system.

Commission Member Changes

Marc Hunt was recognized by staff and the Commission when he stepped down as chair and a member of the Commission after many years of dedicated service.

Board roster at the close of 2011:

- Jim Grode, Chair
- Marcia Bromberg, Vice Chair
- Stephanie Pankiewicz
- Glen Locascio
- Stephen Jones
- Susan Barlow
- Esther Manheimer, City Council Liaison