

## SECTION III - RESEARCH

### INTRODUCTION OF GREENWAYS

The planning process for the Kankakee County Greenways and Trails Plan was started more than three years ago and has included seminars, public forums, and the building of interest groups and citizens into structured committees. Suburban sprawl and the growing realization that a unified open space initiative among all governmental entities is needed. This has been the primary factor that spurred this planning effort. As the population continues to move from urban areas to once rural agricultural lands, the establishment of a quality greenway network will address some of the concerns associated with sprawl by:

- ☐ Providing continuity to plant and animal species in fragmented areas;
- ☐ Providing better recreation and natural amenities for residents; and,
- ☐ Providing a cost-effective and coordinated approach to regional resource management and recreation planning.

The term “Greenway” is often used to categorize many different projects that all relate to creating better open space in the County. Greenways are often synonymous with:

- |  |   |                                      |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Linear Park                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Parkways/Boulevards          | <input type="checkbox"/> Trails      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ribbons of open space                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Rivers, creeks, shorelines   | <input type="checkbox"/> Floodplains |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Undeveloped corridors                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned railroad corridors |                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Undeveloped utility easements and corridors |   |                                      |

There are many words for a “Greenway”, but the idea is quite simple. A greenway acts as the “green infrastructure” of the area. It serves environmental, recreational, and aesthetic purposes.

### **Environmental**

Since greenways act as linear parks, or the linkages between parks, the greenway provides necessary links to natural systems to function properly. Greenways along waterways act as filter strips to trap sediment from contaminating the water feature. Greenways protect the urbanizing or developing areas from flooding by providing a natural storm water retention corridor. Greenways conserve, protect, and enhance lands which provide habitat for wildlife, especially habitats for threatened and endangered species.

### **Recreation and Access Opportunities**

Greenways can be used for recreation purposes. Hiking and biking trails not only provide relaxing recreational opportunities, but can also be used for transportation purposes by providing bike and pedestrian access between homes, schools, employment centers, and shopping. Today’s busy American lifestyles are changing the way in which people participate in outdoor recreation. Strangely, while people increasingly understand that enjoying the outdoors and nature is part of a healthy lifestyle and can bring a sense of serenity to otherwise hectic days, it is difficult for most to find time to break away from daily routines. Local and convenient parks and

recreation areas therefore have become more important in providing opportunities that people can more readily take advantage.

### **Aesthetic**

Greenways also provide an aesthetic improvement to the area by enhancing the community's image, increase spending on recreational activities, support tourism, and reduce landscape maintenance costs. Greenways have also been proven to increase property values of nearby homes.

## **PRINCIPLES OF GREENWAY DEVELOPMENT**

There are three basic principals that should be considered when developing a comprehensive trail/greenways plan.

### **Continuity**

Facilities should be continuous and interconnected. While this may seem obvious, many trails in urban settings often end abruptly and do not connect to others. The relationship between continuity and trail use is direct. It is crucial that the greenway is fully connected to make a meaningful environmental impact as well. Disjointed trail systems, no matter how aesthetic, will not be as effective nor serve an effective purpose to the community.

### **Potential Use Destinations, & Economic Impact**

Natural greenways and multi-use trails should be located along corridors that assume maximum use by the intended use group. The trail system must lead and connect facilities that the intended user would frequent without the trail system such as open spaces, parks, malls, schools, job centers, and civic attractions. Greenway systems promote a balanced environment, regionally attract individuals to use trail systems and support local business, and stabilize and improve housing values in proximity of the greenway.

### **Safety, Climate, & Related Perceptions**

Natural greenways and multi-use trails should strive to create a system that meets both the utilitarian and recreational needs of a diverse populations. Safety on the trail network should be given high priority. The route should avoid crossing busy intersections and steep grades. The system should be patrolled by law enforcement or volunteer courtesy patrols, preferably on bikes, and be well lit if intended to be used into the night time hours. Trails should avoid crossing directly through busy centers of activity like plazas, transit stops, and heavily used recreational sites such as playgrounds. The system should be designed for year around use and, when allowable, make attempts to integrate snowmobilers, bicyclist, cross-country skiers, pedestrians, equestrians, and other activities deemed important by the community.

### **IMPACTS OF GREENWAYS - PROPERTY VALUES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The popularity of greenway plans to enhance recreational amenities, lower landscape cost, provide natural flood protection, protect the environment and improve the aesthetic value of a community continues to grow. Various projects have been implemented across the country and some of the studies on these greenways and their findings are summarized below. Each case shows how the greenway project made a meaningful contribution to the community related to the three principles discussed on the previous page.

## **Property Values**

### ***Statistical***

The effect on property values of land near a park or open space amenity has been the subject of several studies. It is sometime difficult to isolate open space from the other variables that affect a resident's property values; nevertheless many studies have revealed increases in property values where park property, trails, or reserved open space is adjacent to a homeowner's property. The following are three studies that support this theory.

□ In Boulder, Colorado, a City that has a large greenway situated near it's central business district, found that housing values declined an average of \$4.20 for each foot of distance away from the greenway up to 3,200 feet. In the same study, it was proven that with all other variables equal, the property values of a home adjacent to the greenway system would be 32% higher than those 3,200 feet away. It should be noted that the greenway was an active piece of park property. (Correll, Lillydahl, and Singell, 1978)

□ Two studies in Ohio showed that housing values in the proximity of the Cox Arboretum in Dayton were 5% higher than the average selling price. In another study, it was estimated by the real estate industry that housing values in the Whetstone Park area of Columbus, proximity to the park accounted for 7.35% of selling prices. (Kimmel, 1985)

□A study found that the three most important factors for a greenway to have a positive effect on property values were those that are: (1) composed of open space rather than highly developed facilities; (2) have limited vehicular access, but some recreational access; and, (3) have effective maintenance and security within the system. These points were derived from a study that proved that highly used parks with a large amount of vehicular traffic can cause a nuisance and actually have a negative effect on property values immediately adjacent to the park property while still having a positive effect on property values nearby. (Lyon, 1972)

A greenway project in Kankakee County should consider these statistical case studies. There must be a concerted effort to minimize conflicts between the park users and adjacent property owners. The greenways should be developed primarily as open space, with limited recreational access such as a trail or path. The trail heads or parking locations where one can access the system should be selected carefully and involve already existing park or publicly owned property.

### **Property Values - Survey Date/Perceptive Views**

The perception of a greenway in a neighborhood may often be more important than the actual statistical facts that it represents. There have also been various studies that primarily used surveying techniques rather than the statistical comparisons to gauge the effect or perception of greenways on property values. The following three studies that investigate these views.

□A study involving the Lafayette/Moraga Trail in California, the Heritage Trail in Eastern Iowa, and the St. Marks Trail in Florida surveyed residents that lived along the trail system. A majority of all of the property owners near the trails felt that their trail would increase their property values and helped in the selling of

their homes. (Penn State University, 1992)

☐ Surveys conducted with real estate agents regarding the 12-mile Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle found that homes near the trail often sold for 6% more than a comparable home away from the trail. A survey of the residents along the trail showed that 60% of the homeowners felt that the trail would have either a positive or no effect on their property values. (Seattle Office of Planning, 1987)

☐ Surveys conducted of landowners adjacent to the Luce Line Rail - Trail in Minnesota showed that 87% of the residents near the trail felt it had a positive or no effect on property values. (Mazour, 1988)

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Local Economic Impact***

Documentation suggest that trails and greenways have little, if any, negative impact on adjacent property values. Trails have also been proven to spur economic development if implemented properly. There are an estimated 26 million day-hikers in the US and over half of the American public said they walk for pleasure. (Little, 1990) Bicycling also attracts people of all ages. In the United States, the rate of participation in bicycling has tripled since the 1960's. By the end of 1993, there were more than 100 million bicyclist in the United States. That means that just under half of all Americans consider themselves to be "bicyclist". (Bicycle Federation of America, 1994) Bicycle commuting has also become increasingly popular, as an estimated 2.7 million commuters rely on bikes.

☐ Studies have proven that trails often generate economic multipliers for the local economy. User spending is one way that trails generate money for the local economy the Heritage Trail in Iowa estimated that each user spent an average of \$9.21 a day. The St. Marks Trail in Florida estimated spending at \$11.02. The

Lafayette/Moraga Trail in California found users spending \$3.97 per day as a result of the use of the trail. This study shows that many users of the system also patronize local businesses and services. (Moore, 1992)

□ Maryland's North-Central Trail was estimated to have 450,000 visitors in 1993. The goods purchased in the local economy for uses related to the trail were valued at \$3.36 million in 1993. (Maryland Greenways Commission, 1994)

□ The Hart-Montague Bike Trail which runs along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan is estimated to have increased business for several local owners by 25 to 30% after it opened. The trail also uses a pass system which generated \$40,000. (Aadema, 1992)

Locally, Kankakee County has seen significant growth in bicycle related sales in the last five years. This growth is due to new and better trails being constructed in the area. It is clear that a quality multi-purpose trail system could tap into a large number of potential users: pedestrians; in-line skaters, bicyclists, cross country skiers, equestrians, and others.

## **Tourism**

An effective greenway cannot only affect the local citizens, but can also be a regional and even national attraction for tourists to visit. Although it is assumed that most of the activity on the system will be from local residents, it is important to note the ability of the trail to attract tourists. The Kankakee River is very scenic and its proximity to the Chicago Metropolitan Area could make it an even bigger draw than it is today. In additions, the Kankakee River State Park's ability to link trails to the Midewin National Tall Grass Prairie in Will County could spawn tourist activity in the region. Once the trail is linked to the Midewin National Tall Grass Prairie in Will County, Kankakee County will



be joined to the 475-mile Grand Illinois Trail which travels from Chicago to Rock Island.

The Grand Illinois Trail is a segment of the American Discovery Trail which would extend from coast to coast between Delaware and California. The Trail will enter Illinois near Dyer, Indiana utilizing the Old Plank Road Trail and will exit through the Quad Cities into Iowa. This link has an amazing ability to attract potential users from all over Northern Illinois to the system, the State Park, Perry Farm, and other parks in the area linked by the system, as well as to local businesses.

Figure 3 - Map of Grand Illinois Trail



### Quick Tourism Facts

□ Tourism is predicted to be the world's and the United State's leading industry by the year 2000. Tourism is a high multipliable economic factor, meaning that tourism more than almost any other industry positively affects other related industries like transportation, lodging, food services, retail, and other services. The travel-tourism industry has consistently outperformed the overall economy in creating new jobs, higher personal income, and contribution to governmental entities through taxes. (U.S. Travel Data Center, 1990)

□ A poll done by the President's Commission on American Outdoors found that

natural beauty was the single most important criterion for tourist in selecting a site for outdoor recreation. (Scenic America, 1987)

Travel-tourism should be defined as any trip more than 50 miles and/or involves an overnight stay. Parks and open space can be an important draw to tourists in the Kankakee River Valley. The region is already known for its fishing and wildlife amenities. Many of the promotional organizations for the County spend most of their resources advertising the County's natural amenities. A greenway plan will surely identify and enhance the potential of the natural amenities of the County, allow it to boast even better recreational activities, add to tourism, and bring new tax dollars into the region.

Tourism is one of the few industries that truly adds directly to the local economy. For example, a new localized attraction in the County will compete with the other owners of a comparable business in the local area. But if the attraction is a regional draw and brings new people into the area, the tourist are "new" money to the region as a whole. The greenway system should concentrate its attractions in central or connected locations so that they can be marketed as a package to attract more visitors. The State Park has the greatest potential to attract regional visitors and the links to it should be enhanced to promote its accessibility and use. Attractions and promotional material, such as quality bed & breakfasts, a lodge at the State park, and brochures about the greenway and park system in the County, can all help to make the system a success.

## **Safety**

The myth of crime and vandalism often surrounds the implementation of a trail system. Some residents are often concerned that the implementation of a recreational trail will encourage vandalism, crime, and other disturbances. There is little evidence from case studies that support the fear of crime.

❑The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 1980 compared landowners opinions on a set of proposed trails and a set of existing trails. Seventy-five percent (75%) of homeowners along the proposed trail were concerned that the trail would cause increased crime and vandalism. But, by contrast, the homeowners along the existing trail system disagree that the trail caused crime or vandalism (0% and 6% respectively). (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 1980)

❑A 1992 National Park Service study of the impacts of rail-trails on nearby property owners found that “a majority of landowners reported no increase in problems since the trails opened. That living near the trails was better than living near unused railroad lines before the trail was opened.” (National Park Service, 1992)

❑A study by the Appalachian Trail Conference of crimes on the Appalachian Trail found that despite its use by 3-4 million persons per year, there was only 0.05 per 100,000 or 1 in 2 million crimes were associated with the trail. This means that if you used the Appalachian Trail on a regular basis you would be more likely to be struck by lightning than accosted as a hiker on the trail. (Appalachian Trail Conference - Harpers Ferry WV, 1990)

## **Illinois Greenway Facts**

There has been unparalleled momentum in public, taxpayer-financed acquisition of land for open space in other Illinois counties. Despite critics who content that there are better methods, the past couple of years have yielded historic gains for open space referendums. Taxpayers seem willing to spend money to preserve open space. For

example:

- ❑ In November, 1998, DuPage County residents voted to approve the spending of \$75 million to buy about 2,300 acres. On a typical \$200,000 home, taxes would be raised by approximately \$21 per year.
- ❑ The McHenry County Conservation District in June, 1998, approved \$18 million to buy about 1,500 acres over three years. That decision came after the district spent about \$4 million earlier in the year to buy nearly 240 acres of open land.
- ❑ Surveys show that 65% of voters would support the Kane County Forest Preserve District's \$70 million land purchase plan, even though each of those voters would pay \$1.70 more in taxes each month for the extra green acres. Bolstered by those polls, forest preserve commissioners voted unanimously in January 1999 to put the issue on the April ballot.
- ❑ According to Illinois Outdoor Recreation Activities (1992), the report of the 1991 Illinois Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey, 42.6% of Illinois' adult population participate in bicycling for a total of 143.5 million annual activity days.
- ❑ At the national and state level, President Clinton included \$1 billion for land purchases in his 2000 budget proposal, and Governor George Ryan pledges to spend up to \$40 Million a year to acquire open land in Illinois.

### **Bicycle Fatalities and Accident Data**

Even though traffic fatalities in the County and the State of Illinois have dropped considerably over the past decade, the amount of deaths associated with bicycles and bicycle - vehicle accidents have increased significantly. In 1998, Kankakee County had four accidents that involved automobiles and bicycles colliding. Of the four, only one resulted in a fatality.

With the proper signage and striping, it is generally safe to travel by bicycle on roads. There is a proposed Bicycle Safety Restoration Bill that is pending approval at the state capitol which suggests that bicyclists are intended users of all streets and

highways in Illinois except those where bicycles are legally prohibited and signs to that effect are posted. By restoring “intended user” status to bicyclists on Illinois roadways, it removes the disincentive of local governments to provide bicycle safety improvements for fear of increased liability.

The development of a comprehensive trail and greenway system in Kankakee County will not only provide important recreational amenities but can also improve the safety of pedestrians, motor vehicles drivers, and bicyclists. The table below shows automobile/bicycle related accidents during the past few years.

**Table 3. Bicycle Related Accidents**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF FATALITIES</b>
1995	2	2
1996	6	1
1997	3	0
1998	4	1

## **SECTION IV - INVENTORY**

### **EXISTING CORRIDOR INVENTORY**

Existing corridors are those that are already preserved for a reason unrelated to local regulation. These would include pipeline and utility easements, and railroad right-of-way. These corridors are often the easiest to delineate as greenways since no land acquisition may be needed.