CHAPTER 2 Greenway Development Benefits

Benefits of Greenway Development

The numerous benefits of Greenway Development can range from personal health, to tighter knit communities, to a stronger economy.

Increased Property Values

One of the more obvious benefits of this type of development is the increase in property values. Not only is there an increased visual quality to the surrounding neighborhoods but Greenway development is much more appealing to potential home buyers. Respondents to Consumers’ Survey on “Smart Choices for Home Buyers” ranked proximity to walking/jogging/bike trails as second in importance concerning community amenities; second only to highway access.

Studies by realtors have shown that being adjacent to parks or trails to parks can increase property values by as much as 20%. According to a survey conducted by the National Association of Home Builders walking/jogging/bike trails were the top rated amenities with 62% of the respondents saying that these features would have an influence on their home purchase.

A 2007 study of properties in the Austin, Texas area identified that there was a $10.60 to $13.51 per lineal foot decrease in the price of residential property for every foot away from the greenbelt that a property was located. These increases in property value
directly impact the property taxes collected by the local government as well.

**Inexpensive Flood Area Development**

A growing concern in any type of development, be it residential or commercial, is developing within a Flood Hazard Area. Not only are the costs associated with developing in this area astronomically higher, but it also unsafe. Since development within a floodplain area is more costly and potentially dangerous, using designated floodplain areas for Greenway development is an attractive alternative. Instead of homes or businesses that could incur thousands if not millions of dollars in property damages developing the property to incorporate parks, or inexpensively maintained trails is a much better alternative.

In addition to being a safer, more cost effective alternative, the USDA provides limited funding for green space properties being developed within flood hazard areas. In an attempt to improve water quality and cut down on property damaging erosion, the Federal Government does on occasion have funds that help communities develop these areas in a safe and productive way that appease all parties involved.

**Industrial Development**

A constant concern for any and all communities is the need for industrial development. At one time inexpensive labor and proximity to commerce avenues (highway, rail, etc.) were the key concerns for newly emerging or relocating industries.

Recent market research has shown that industries looking to locate within communities are taking a much harder look at the communities themselves. Not only are industries wanting to locate in areas that can help them thrive, but they also want to locate in communities that will offer people-friendly amenities that will make the industries attractive to potential employees. In a job market where quality employees are valued more and more being able to offer prospective employees an attractive and enriching lifestyle has become extremely important.

Factories and other industries are flocking to communities that have a clear and concise means of providing a better quality of living for its residents. Healthier, more active and generally happier employees are always more productive employees.

**Encourages a Healthier Lifestyle**

Perhaps the most important aspect of an implemented Greenway Development plan is the healthier lifestyle that the surrounding areas residents would enjoy.

Studies indicate that regular physical activity can exponentially add to a person’s life. Research within the health community suggests that people who engage in seventy minutes of moderate exercise per week are less likely to be overweight. Not only are people who partake in exercise living healthier lives
but they are also living longer lives. Studies indicate that for each mile walked or jogged by an individual, that individual would add an extra 21 minutes to his/her life.

In addition to the obvious health benefits, mental well being is also a key factor in this type of development. Studies suggest that symptoms of depression and anxiety decrease and in general moods are improved. Contact with the natural world has been credited with reducing stress and improving work performance. Evidence also shows that natural contact enhances emotional and cognitive development in individuals. Not only are individuals positively affected by this development but greenway areas and trails provide increased opportunities for social interaction.

**Lowered Transportation Costs**

Of the citizens surveyed (survey located within the appendix) most polled citizens say that they pay an average of $400 to $500 dollars per month in fuel costs. While there are those who will have to drive no matter what, due to the rural nature of the surrounding community in Barren County, citizens of Glasgow could save the majority of their fuel costs. Nearly 30% of trips are a mile or shorter; 40% are two miles or shorter and 50% are three miles or shorter. This gives the impression of how much of our daily travel involves distances that can easily be walked or biked.

The majority of people who live in an area where their errands could easily be done walking or biking refrain from doing so due mostly to the lack of options which would allow for safe and convenient travel.

**Increased Tourism**

An often over looked advantage of green space and trail development is the potential to attract tourism dollars. Currently Glasgow has no infrastructure to accommodate large scale jogging and biking events such as marathons or races.

While these aren’t everyday events, the small amount of time that these events could be hosted by this community would produce a major boost in the local economy; everything from motels to eating establishments would benefit from the influx of visitors. Situated where Glasgow is, it is the perfect location in regards to proximity to the interstate and scenic background to host such events. However, infrastructure must be in place in order to accommodate functions such as these.

**Decreased Criminal Activity**

Contrary to popular belief linking the community together using trails is not a breeding ground for criminal activity, but instead a deterrent for the criminal element. There is little evidence to support the fear that greenway trails will produce disturbance to private landowners. In fact the evidence is to the contrary.

Citizens that are more closely knit and joined together by trails usually look out
for one another and are more prone to report any suspicious activity.

A 1980 study by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources compared landowner’s attitudes on a pair of proposed trails with landowner attitudes along a pair of similar trails already established. On the proposed trails 75% of landowners thought that if a trail was constructed it would mean more vandalism and other crimes. By contrast, virtually no landowners along the two constructed trails (0% and 6%, respectively), agreed with the statement "trail-users steal". (Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, 1980)