

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. E(3)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, November 11, 2003

TITLE: Follow-up to Report on Greenway Planning

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Patricia McGuire – 918-7327

PURPOSE

A report on greenway planning was provided for the Board of Aldermen on October 28, 2003. Additional information was requested and is provided. A resolution that accepts this follow-up information is recommended for the Board's adoption.

INFORMATION

The October 28th report on greenways concluded that "for a number of years the Town has utilized a coordinating policy and implementing regulatory approach to deciding how to proceed with most of its activities" related to greenway planning. Though the policy-regulatory approach has characterized greenway planning to date, efforts to acquire land, easements and funds have been fairly successful. The ongoing process of land development has yielded dedications for corridor development along both Bolin Creek and Morgan Creek, with these acquisitions emphasizing the provision of public access for recreational and transportation purposes. The Town's expanded open space requirements have largely increased the natural areas set aside along streams and creeks and likely result in corridor widths that are consistent with other greenway functions. In some instances, such as the recently approved Winmore development, the conditional use permit indicates that the entire open space areas of the project are to be offered for dedication to the Town.

The report also noted that funds are available (\$40,000) to the Town in the current Federal fiscal year, via the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization's adopted funding schedule for planning the Morgan Creek West greenway. This project follows on Chapel Hill's recent planning for the eastern portion of the Morgan Creek East greenway, construction of which is to occur is planned in the near future. The Morgan Creek West Greenway planning project will require a match from the Town of approximately \$ 8,000.

Upon receiving the report, the Board of Aldermen requested the following follow-up information:

- 1) Provide more detail on 'next steps,' including how to involve the public and a plan for working with UNC to begin acquisition of land around Bolin Creek.
- 2) Determine if Orange County Lands Legacy would be able to assist with the Morgan Creek greenway master plan development

- 3) Determine if greenway master plan development can be folded into Recreation and Parks master plan update.
- 4) Invite Friends of Bolin Creek and mountain bike group to participate in master plan development.

Responses to these requests are noted below.

- 1) A summary of the next steps associated with greenways was provided as a handout at the October 28th meeting. It should be noted that the next steps noted there were identified based on the expectation that greenway planning would proceed as it has occurred in the past – as a combination of policy and regulation and that acquisition of public access easements would occur in conjunction with development activities. The handout focused on the next steps that were expected in conjunction with funding identified through the MPO. Because the funds for planning the Morgan Creek West greenway are available in the current federal fiscal year, the following steps are noted:
 - a) Budget funds for match to STP-DA funds.
 - b) Assign TAB and EAB as principal advisory boards to assist a consultant in developing the Morgan Creek plan. As the Town has already acquired easements along the bulk of the corridor, the planning effort will focus on designing the trail, including alignment, surface material(s), crossing locations, identifying access points, maintenance issues and costs, and compatibility with Chapel Hill's portion of the trail.
 - c) While the TAB and EAB could serve as principle advisory boards, there is a need for participation by the Recreation and Parks Commission, Board of Aldermen, staff and others. It is anticipated that the planning effort would include wider community input, as well, with the particulars of this specified in the project's scope of services.

When Chapel Hill initiated its planning efforts for the Morgan Creek Greenway in May 2002, a conceptual plan committee was appointed with participation from existing boards, neighborhoods, the school board, Duke Power, Carrboro and Orange County. The committee worked directly with the consultant in scheduling community meetings on the greenway to determine the best alignment in light of the trail's intended users and level of use. Chapel Hill's Greenway master plan had already determined that the trail was to be 10-foot wide and paved to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic between Frank Porter Graham Elementary a tributary of Morgan Creek near Merritt's Pasture.

To date, the funds for planning and constructing greenways in Town have been secured from our regional transportation planning organization, with the match needed for construction approved in the Bond referendum of November 4, 2003. Staff has been investigating whether there are any parameters for trail development using these funds. The following comments are from Tom Norman of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Division of the North Carolina Department of Transportation:

The MPO has some flexibility with its STP-DA funds. The intent of federal transportation funds is to use nationally accepted standards for the given facility type. The AASHTO bike guidelines and NCDOT bicycle planning and design guidelines provide the state & national standards applicable to trails for transportation purposes.

The 8-mile urban section of the ATT in Durham is a paved 10-ft asphalt surface with 2-ft wide stone shoulders. If you watch how people use the trail - riding bikes side-by-side, walking dogs on leashes, and two or more pedestrians walking beside each other - you will see that a narrower trail would not be as enjoyable to use.

The southern end of the ATT in Wake County is a rural crushed stone trail 10-ft wide. Time will tell how satisfactory this trail width and surface will be as trail use increases and areas along the trail develop in new subdivisions. Storm events can pour down large volumes of water in a short period of time and create costly maintenance needs on crushed stone surfaced trails. Over decade maintenance costs can add up to a sizable figure.

d) Staff has initiated discussions with planners at UNC regarding the Bolin Creek greenway and will provide copies of current maps and polices relating to the creek corridor. As any other information is compiled for the master plan update or in follow-up to the Friends of Bolin Creek proposal, this should also be shared with the university. It will also be necessary to include UNC representatives in planning for the Morgan Creek greenway as the trail is proposed to extend to University Lake.

- 2) Staff has communicated the Board's proposal related to the Lands Legacy program's participation in greenway planning but has not received a formal response. Any information on this question will be provided as soon as it is available.
- 3) The Town's current Recreation and Parks Master Plan contains the most formal description of Carrboro's greenways plans. The text that would typically elaborate on greenway purposes, expected service area, surface types, access points (in a broad sense) is, admittedly, skeletal. The plan's map is, however, quite clear, and has served as an excellent guide for land use planning – framing the 'network of corridors connecting places' that greenways are often hoped to be.

It is entirely feasible to consider including a *master* plan for greenways in the recreation master plan update. Such an effort would provide an opportunity for a community dialogue about connections between parks and greenways and may provide an excellent forum for considering the Bolin Creek corridor park concept promoted by the Friends of Bolin Creek. It is not recommended that this take place as a substitute for the design efforts that are needed to move the Morgan Creek Greenway planning and development efforts forward. Absent a separate "master," it will also still be possible and necessary to move forward with designing the Bolin Creek greenway as funds will be available for this activity in federal fiscal year 2006.

- 4) Per the Board's direction, staff will consider the Friends of Bolin Creek as an entity that should be included in any committee structure associated with linear park and greenway planning and/or development along Bolin Creek. Staff would suggest that communication with mountain bikers in the community be initiated through the Durham Orange Mountain Bike Organization (DOMBO), with additional contact through TriangleMTB.com, an umbrella web site for all mountain bikers in the Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill region. Staff would also suggest that the Board consider including representatives from the Morgan Creek Valley Alliance, and OWASA.

FISCAL IMPACT

Acceptance of this follow-up information carries with it no known fiscal impacts.

ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the resolution accepting the information provided in follow-up to the greenway report (*Attachment A*).