

# Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers Greenways Kick-off Meeting Notes

July 16, 2009

3:00 pm – 4:45 pm

Des Moines Botanical Center

Advisory Committee, Task Force, and Interested Parties

Greenways benefits presentation by Steve Durrant of Alta Planning + Design.

**Healthy Environment** – *connected open space for habitat protection and enhancement, stormwater and flood retention, conservation of natural and cultural resources and views. Completes a disconnected collection of conservation areas into a more complete ecological system.*

**Healthy Lifestyles** – people exercise more regularly when they have access to trails and greenways

**Children's well-being** – children with access to open space demonstrate higher academic achievement, better attendance, and higher levels of concentration.

**Economic** – accelerated appreciation of nearby properties, enhance ability to attract employees, and outdoor related product manufacturing and sales

**Transportation** – healthy alternative to cars and transit, and safer routes

**Civic Engagement** – diverse groups of people can discover common interests and form a sense of community

**Community Vitality** – people are engaged, enthused, & attracted to the greenways

What resonates with citizens: clean water, safe parks, community trails.

Clean water will be a huge issue.

Safety issues?

## **Threats/Issues:**

- Viewshed from the river for users?
- Impaired water quality? (agricultural and other runoff)
- Neglect of the resource
- Private vs. Public access and interests conflicting
- Illegal dumping
- Increased water velocities and flows in the rivers (flow doubled in last 40 yrs)—increases erosion
- Development from public and private forces (roads, etc...)
- There won't be the will to pull all the jurisdictions together and the elected will to follow through with the plan
- Loss of habitat and wetlands
- The temptation to do something on every piece of land. (urge to have a function/use everywhere)
- Construction of new roadways/highways -- Road building (NW 26th/MLK)
- Land values

- Creating the bottom-up initiative/constituency for these lands and facilities
- Funding priorities
- Shrinking budgets – need to work together to combine funding and apply for funds
- Education is lacking on the importance of these facilities to make it a priority
- Grassroots efforts needed/general population needs to know why this is important
- No great ways to value the benefits of these lands, facilities, spaces, etc...
- State constitutional amendment vote—competition vs. coordination of 1% tax increase
- Lack of respect for historic and pre-historic use of greenways and rivers
- Destruction of historical and cultural sites and uses
- Flooding and its impacts
- Continuity of public land along the rivers (public vs. private ownership)

**Goals:**

- Have Greenways planning lead effort for greater/further cooperation among gov'ts.
- Can there be a way to implement this plan across multiple jurisdictions
- Cooperation among governments (there are some good examples like DART, Waterworks, WRA)
- Multiple benefits for diverse stakeholders-the most benefit for the most people.
- Build a constituency
- Education
- Civic awareness
- Quality of the water equals the quality of the view
- Appropriate public access
- Protection of wildlife corridors
- Increased environmental stewardship among constituency
- A fun place to go regardless of age
- Develop best practice policies and other things to make things more uniform.
- Develop good easement language
- Coordinated comprehensive management of greenways
- Low hanging fruit is education and the history of the rivers.
- Create an identity for the greenways – name, logo, signage & identification, brochure, website
- Get everyone to take responsibility for the greenways
- Create the emergency for this
- Create local easements and policies that put some teeth in the preservation of the land for future generations
- Examine legislative gaps
- Develop cause and effect relationships to see what happens when we act
- Be inclusive with business ventures: Bike and canoe rentals, Restaurants, Small shops, Farmers markets, Shopping on the river

***Other Thoughts/Ideas:***

- Upper Mississippi River protection plan. -- The MHB is a model that is worth considering. The Joint Powers agreement was the instrument that gave them the authority for zoning ordinances, etc. They also set standards for development within the corridor such as lot sizes, setbacks, etc.  
[http://mississippiheadwaters.org/about\\_mhb/about\\_mhb.htm](http://mississippiheadwaters.org/about_mhb/about_mhb.htm)
- The MRPC isn't regulatory but more advocacy and promotion. They do get involved in the politics as it affects the river though. <http://www.mrpcmembers.com/index.php>
- Migratory bird habitat along these rivers
- Friends groups can be key
- State constitutional amendment can be a big support
- Responsibility to find locations for ATVs and other things
- Create a National Geographic map(s)
- Get Two Rivers Task Force Information