



# Town Branch Trail

Vol. 1, Nov. 2000

*A trail through Lexington. A trail through time.*

**Greetings to supporters of Town Branch Trail and other interested persons, and welcome to the inaugural newsletter of the Town Branch Trail project.**

## The State of the Project

Funded by a grant from the Kodak American Greenways program of The Conservation Fund (<http://www.conservationfund.org>), we held a three-day workshop in February in conjunction with design students from the Landscape Architecture department at UK, led by faculty member Krista Schneider. The workshop began with a public presentation at McConnell Springs.

Over the weekend, a group site visit and an interactive discussion with the public, students, and invited experts were followed by a student/professional design workshop. The students produced terrific research; public attendance and participation was very high; and the design process brought us much closer to a clear set of options for the project's scale, scope, and form. The students submitted their work for national awards, and a comprehensive summary document will be available soon.

The Town Branch Trail project has also worked with two design studios at the UK Architecture School, as well as with UK Gaines Scholar Rebecca Green on a creative student thesis. Student work continues to be a terrific resource of talent, energy, and fresh perspectives.

We have given numerous presentations of the project to public and private civic organizations, continuing to raise public awareness and gain support. From the favorable response we have begun to build a "friend list" and raise some much needed cash. We have been conducting deed research, and opening conversations about structuring agreements for placement of and access to the future trail. So far the rapport has been favorable, but we have quite a lot of work ahead of us on this front. Any and all legal, financial, and real estate related services are greatly needed to push ahead on this all-

## A Call to Action!

*Organizational meeting, November 28, McConnell Springs Education Center, 7:00-8:30 pm*

Many of the people who hear about the Town Branch Trail project are so enthusiastic that their immediate response is "How can I help?" Now that a large amount of background research has been completed, the project is ready to enter a new phase of community outreach, planning and fund-raising, with the goal of identifying an appropriate trail segment and beginning implementation of the TB Trail.

At the meeting November 28, we will present a proposed timeline of goals, objectives and tasks. We're asking you to come out, join the discussion and "sign on" to one or more committees or teams, depending on your interests and skills. Join us in this once in a lifetime opportunity to make history by keeping the history in Lexington.

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*Van Meter Pettit addresses the February workshop.*

important front.

Van Meter Pettit gave an invited presentation at the Ideafestival on September 23. Among the many enthusiastic attendees was Don Edwards, columnist at the Herald-Leader, who wrote a very insightful overview of our project for the paper. These events sparked a wave of new interested volunteers whom we hope to bring into our ongoing collaboration.

## Attitudes on Greenways

In their 1999 Survey on Urban Parks, the National Association of Counties and the US Conference of Mayors found that:

- (1) 98% of Americans feel parks, green space and recreational activities are important to the quality of life in their communities;
- (2) 74% of Americans think more parks, green space and recreational activities would help prevent juvenile crime and delinquency;
- (3) 86% of Americans believe parks and green space enhance private property values and contribute to economic stability;
- (4) 89% of Americans are certain parks and green space are beneficial to the community;
- (5) 92% of Americans want the federal, state and local government to take steps to preserve and expand parks and green space for future generations;
- (6) 71% of Americans want the federal government to use funds collected from off-shore oil and gas drilling to support the development of parks and green space.

(Derived from the National Association of Counties website at <http://www.naco.org/pubs/surveys/parks>. Original survey was conducted by National Research, LLC., who made 1200 random calls to the 50 largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Respondents were from 30 states and DC, and were 57% female and 43% male.)

## Steering Committee Expands

Recently the Town Branch Trail project gained three dedicated and hard working volunteers who bring a range of important skills and experience to the steering committee.

**Greg Epp**, an aquatic ecologist, promotes the watershed approach to managing our natural resources. He lives and works in the Town Branch watershed and is interested in both the water quality and quality of life in the city.

**Ron Simon** is an attorney and native Lexingtonian. We're looking forward to having Ron's assistance in the areas of deed research, grant writing, and general legal expertise.

Businessman **Phil Holoubek** has become involved in several "community improvement" projects since his arrival in Lexington this year, including the revitalization of a local park and working to ease our affordable housing crisis. His energy and financial skills will be an asset to our team.

## Greenway Websites

Here are a handful of websites that may interest, educate or inspire you about greenways.

**<http://www.trailsandgreenways.org>**

The Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse provides technical assistance, information resources and referrals to trail and greenway advocates and developers across the nation.

**<http://www.midtowngreenway.org>**

This is an urban greenway project in South Minneapolis, using an abandoned rail corridor.

**<http://www.goforgreen.ca/greenways/>**

A site profiling greenway work and concerns in Canada

**<http://www.outdoorlink.com/amtrails/resources/greenways/>**

A site with links to resources, case studies and other information about greenways

**<http://www.lfucg.com/greenways/>**

The Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government's web page for local greenways.

**<http://www.greenwayfoundation.org>**

The Greenway Foundation revitalized the South Platte River in Denver, CO.

## Structuring Our Efforts

In order to better handle the many tasks associated with the Town Branch Project, we have recently created several committees. They are as follows:

- Marketing/PR/Communications
- Finance/Fundraising
- Property Acquisition/Trail Planning
- Environmental Quality Issues

We encourage our supporters to get involved and volunteer to serve on one of these committees. You can contact any of the steering committee with questions or to volunteer, or attend our upcoming organizational meeting November 28. (see Call to Action for details).

## Fayette County Greenway Master Planning Process Now Underway

The first workshop for the Greenway Master Plan was held on Monday October 30 in the Central Library. **Don't miss** upcoming sessions December 11, 6:30 - 9:30 at Leestown Middle School and January 29, 6:30 - 9:30 at Veteran's Park Elementary School.

The theater was full, with both supporters and opponents of greenways. Charles Flink of Greenways, Inc. presented examples of successful greenways throughout the country, and documented his firm's experience in trail and greenway design and implementation. The audience submitted questions, several of which Flink read and answered on the spot.

After refreshments, groups formed for a work session to identify areas in the county to be preserved as greenspace, links we saw as important, and important issues, positive or negative. Reference materials included a small map of existing and proposed bike trails in the county, and larger maps showing roads, parks, schools, streams and proposed and existing greenways. Various members of the LFUCG, including planners, engineers, and Parks department personnel, along with local consultants from McIlwain and Associates, Landscape Architects and Fuller Mossbarger Scott and May Engineers, joined Flink, to answer questions and assist the groups.

The group I participated in included opponents of a particular greenway trail. While they objected to the particular impact they felt that project would have on their homes, they were as enthusiastic as anyone else when it came to identifying priorities for preserving streams and greenspace, to connecting schools, parks and neighborhoods and to providing safe and attractive bike ways that showcased our rural landscape.

The groups presented brief summaries at the end of the evening, and both their notes and marked-up maps were collected by the consultants. These materials will be summarized and presented at the next workshop (December 11), which will build on the work begun here. They want and need our input to prioritize the areas to be protected, connected and preserved. You can make a real difference in the shape of Lexington's greenways, so please participate in the next workshop.

## Town Branch Trail Immediate Needs

If you just can't wait until our organizational meeting November 28, or if you can't make it that night, here is a brief list of our most pressing needs:

- 1) a person proficient in MS Access software to update and maintain our database, and prepare donation reports, mailing labels, etc.
- 2) one or more persons to aid in grant research, identifying appropriate programs, monitoring application deadlines and maintaining files of historical, financial, endorsement and other background information necessary for such grant applications.
- 3) one or more persons proficient in web design to create and maintain a website for the Town Branch Trail project.
- 4) accountant to assist with bookkeeping tasks.
- 5) A/V equipment for presentations
- 6) one or more people to contact groups and organizations in the area, and schedule and conduct presentations about the Town Branch Trail Project.
- 7) One or more neighborhood liaisons to initiate and maintain contact with residents and organizations in the neighborhoods adjacent to or potentially affected by the Town Branch.

## How's the Water?

We put a heavy load on urban streams like Town Branch, so natural systems that purify water often break down. Town Branch has been diverted into culverts, and it receives storm water from downtown and treated sewage. Both the creek and aquatic life have suffered. The situation can be improved by approaches such as reestablishing streamside vegetation to slow and filter incoming water. Documenting problems is an important step in determining what action to take, and local citizens may play a role.

Government findings show overfertilization of Town Branch chokes off life in the stream by driving levels of oxygen in the water too low. The creek also consistently fails to meet standards for safe swimming because of bacteria. In 1998 the state found excessive nutrients and organic matter had degraded aquatic life in Town Branch. It was therefore put on a list of impaired streams. The state is analyzing how

much enrichment the ecosystem can handle, and eventually may limit inputs.

Town Branch is also listed among streams most afflicted by non-point source pollution. Non-point source pollution is contamination brought in by rainwater flowing over land, rather than from a specific “point” like a waste pipe from a factory. One path of non-point source pollution is rainwater that runs off yards and streets in central Lexington and reaches Town Branch via storm drains.

This year, state scientists again determined that the health of the stream ecosystem was poor, both above and below Lexington’s sewage treatment plant. They also found unsafe bacterial levels. A combination of agriculture, sewage, urban runoff, storm sewers, and alteration of the channel probably contribute to the problems. Partly because of the condition of Town Branch, the watershed of South Elkhorn Creek (into which Town Branch flows) ranked among those most in need of action and protection in the Kentucky River Basin Assessment Report.

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# A Call to Action!

*Organizational meeting, 7:00-8:30 pm, November 28,  
McConnell Springs Education Center*

Please RSVP to Zina Merkin, [zmerkin@ca.uky.edu](mailto:zmerkin@ca.uky.edu) or 268-2508

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Friends of the Park  
512 Southbend Drive  
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**Town Branch Trail**