



TOWN BRANCH TRAIL

A trail through Lexington. A trail through history.

Newsletter: Volume 2, No. 2, October 2001

www.townbranch.org

OUR HOTTEST NEWS

• 2001 Annual Public Meeting at McConnell's Spring

It's that time of year again. We will showcase our plans and progress achieved over the past year on November 16. Read the back for more information.

• We need Project Coordinators

Our media project and trail signage projects need coordinators and content providers. See back for more information

• TOWN BRANCH & McCONNELL'S TRACE Using Greenspace in Subdivision Development

When McConnell's Trace subdivision on Leestown Road across from Masterson Station Park is completed, it will display all the features of now familiar suburban development — but something more: twenty-four acres of interconnected park land, greenspace, and walking-biking trails, the result of a cooperative effort on the part of the developer and the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government and a \$100,000 Federal Transportation Enhancement grant.

Subdivision developer Dennis Anderson wanted to incorporate a catalyst for community into a high density development, approximately 850 houses and 250 two-unit townhouses on 223 acres of curving streets and cul-de-sacs. In older neighborhoods with roomier lots, Anderson points out, neighbors talk from one front porch to another, while their children congregate in back yards. In McConnell's Trace, as in many new developments designed primarily for first-time home buyers, two-car garage doors replace roomy front porches and the lots, sized to accommodate the buildings, leave little room for back yards. Anderson also wants to preserve distinctive natural features of the landscape—a stand of burr oaks and a canebrake—and to comply with next door neighbor Brack-

town's wish to retain its distinct and historic identity.

For Anderson, the natural environment offered the answers. A seven acre park on the western border of the subdivision will soften the transition from newborn McConnell's Trace to venerable Bracktown. A greenway path will surround the subdivision, with two extensive natural space peninsulas, one extending into the subdivision from the west, the other from the south, providing common areas for children to play and neighbors to socialize. The burr oaks and canebrake will remain undisturbed. Paved trails will connect the entire twenty-four acres of greenspace, affording safe and easy biking and walking within the subdivision and eventually providing non-motorized links to Bracktown, Masterson Station Park, other new residential neighborhoods, and ultimately to downtown via the proposed Town Branch Trail system.

The humanizing and naturalizing of the newly created subdivision is not the work of private enterprise alone. Anderson consulted closely on the greenspace project with former LFUCG planner Doug Greene, attributing to him much of the planning and the acquisition of the funding that will move the project from the drawing board to the real world. Anderson will donate the twenty-four acres to the city next year; the grant money will pay for their transformation into park, trails, and greenspace areas.

Anderson anticipates what he calls a "win-win" outcome when the work is completed in the next year or two: for himself, a tax break on the donated land and a subdivision with unique attractions for prospective buyers; for McConnell's Trace settlers, a natural space where a community can take root and grow; for the city of Lexington, a potential model for future development—a suburb that is not isolated by traffic-clogged roads, but connected to the city by greenway trails.

-by Tom Blues

McConnell's Trace Summer 2001



• WHAT ARE OUR COMMITTEES DOING?

A summary report from each of our committees

Public Relations Committee Report

We had a busy summer this year. Our three public summer events were the Central Kentucky Harvest Festival, the Bluegrass 10,000 Runner's Expo, and the 4th of July Festival. The events attracted many newcomers and, appropriately, were located over or near the historic course of Town Branch. With the help of numerous volunteers, we added over 90 members to our expanding ranks. Thanks to all for such a success!

During the last Saturday in June, our booth joined approximately 40 other presenters in Phoenix Park for the annual Harvest Fest. Sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, WUKY and a host of other organizations, this event helps, in the words of KDA Commissioner Billy Ray Smith, "to re-establish the vital connection between farmer and consumer." The preservation of our watersheds is a goal for both Town Branch Trail and local farmers, so we dovetailed nicely with this event. Our display attracted gangs of curious visitors with a large map, brochures, historic imagery, and a newsletter signup sheet. We also met a few suntans on this bright afternoon.

On the heels of the Harvest Fest, we set up camp in Heritage Hall on July 3rd for the Runner's Expo. Although many attendees focused their '10K stare' on the following morning's run, we received an enthusiastic response. Many runners expressed a desire to jog on a continuous stretch of scenic trail unfettered by angry automobiles. Our mission is to develop such a trail originating in downtown Lexington.

Our largest event was Lexington's 4th of July Festival. The day started wet, got even wetter, but ended with a warm, colorful sunset. The City capped the evening with a vibrant volley of fireworks above the heart of Town Branch. Imagine a future fiery display illuminating an elegantly landscaped Town Branch Trail. Our booth hugged the corner of Vine and Quality Streets, almost exactly where Town Branch originally flowed. Aside

from our informative display materials, we gave away newsletters and free peppermints, which kept the crowd rolling through our tent.

We didn't end with just a booth. Through a federation of volunteers, we crafted a parade float that glamorously and abstractly entertained throngs of happy spectators. Our float leapt vertically illustrating local architectural icons, spread horizontally with undulating blue fabric that represented the waters of Town Branch, and was constantly orbited by bicyclists, rollerbladers, joggers, and walkers, all of whom showed healthy uses of Town Branch Trail. With your help, we will outdo this next year!



Trail Planning Committee Report

The Town Branch Trail Planning Committee has been meeting through the summer and into the fall in work sessions to study the Town Branch/Manchester/Old Frankfort Corridor (from downtown to Masterson Station Park). We have created plans for each section of the trail based upon the existing 'facts on the ground' and what potential land use options are available. The trail does not need to occupy a great deal of land, but there is a very direct symbiotic relationship between the trail and the land that adjoins it. We hope these plans can be suggestive of the potential of the land and existing structures along the corridor- beyond that of the trail itself. Cities around the country have successfully redeveloped large urban areas based upon very similar circumstances. After all, the San Antonio Riverwalk was once a dirty and ugly 'arroyo', and now consists of a lot more than a canal and sidewalks. It is an ideal example of public/private partnership.

This preliminary trail corridor plan is a great benchmark for us. It is the result of thousands of human hours of research, planning, and discussion with input from a large and diverse group of individuals. We know that it is only the beginning of a long-term and changeable project, but this plan will give everyone a clear introduction to what great promise this project holds.

Finance and Fundraising Report

The TBT fundraising committee has officially begun



its work. Yvette Hurt is chairing the committee and has recruited Hillary Hopper, and Linda Griffin as members. Linda and Hillary bring a wealth of experience in fundraising, grant-writing, and environmental activism to TBT. Yvette has a background in environmental law, Linda has over twenty years experience in grant writing and management in the public and private sectors, and Hillary has been actively involved in Sierra Club activities, promoting Kentucky caving, and writing and editing for a national publication.

TBT has received two of the three grants it solicited during the past year. As reported in the last newsletter, TBT has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the city of Lexington and another \$10,000 grant from the state Department for Fish and Wildlife. A third application for a \$5,000 seed grant, submitted to the Department for Local Government's Community Rivers and Streams Program, unfortunately was denied in September after the program's entire budget for 2002 was cut as a result of the state budget crisis. The program's funding should be restored for 2003 and TBT has been assured that our application, and others submitted this year, will receive priority review.

The fundraising committee is gearing up to submit an application to the Kentucky Heritage Council, due in November, and to begin work on a major federal Transportation Enhancement (Tea-21) application early next year. The latter program has provided major sources of funding in the past for greenway projects here in Lexington and around the country.

Environmental Quality Committee Report

The Environmental Quality Committee has been considering our aspirations for Town Branch and its environment. How much improvement can we hope for, and how much will we need right away for the trail? Every stream reflects its watershed: the land that provides all the water as rain runs over, through, or under the soil to the stream. The stream, in turn, is intimately connected to the plants and animals living in and near the creek bed. The urbanized Town Branch watershed is far from natural, so Town Branch and the streamside corridor are likewise far from their natural states. Lexington will remain urban, so we don't expect the creek to become pristine. But much can be done to improve the watershed, the trail corridor, and the creek. The important short-term issues for the trail are conditions that assault the eyes, nose, or ears of trail users. Visual blight such as trash is among the easier problems to address. New odor controls are already planned for the sewage plant. Noise from New Circle may require creative trail design. Health and safety must also be ensured. Restoring the creek ecosystem at a deeper level will take time.

Several initiatives are already underway to strengthen and protect those natural systems that support clean water, drainage, recreational uses, and healthy plant and animal populations. Kentucky's Watershed Framework sponsored



a workshop on the South Elkhorn Creek Watershed in September to promote action there: Town Branch is the South Elkhorn tributary that sparked the most local interest. Development of a county-wide environmental vision is also contemplated, to crystallize compatible environmental, economic, and community goals. (To participate in either project, contact David Gabbard at 859-258-3410.) By supporting these and similar efforts, individually or in partnership, we can promote a creek and a trail that will become valued features of Lexington.



HOW CAN THE OLD CITY LANDFILL HELP TOWN BRANCH TRAIL?

Lexington has reached a final agreement with the state Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet to close the landfill on Old Frankfort Pike (Lexington's city dump from the 1940s until the 1970s). The closure plan includes placing a cap over the landfill and collecting polluted runoff that has been seeping into groundwater and nearby Town Branch creek for years.

On June 19, 2001, city and state officials gathered at the site to announce the agreement and Mayor Pam Miller stated that, while a substantial portion of the site would be redeveloped for governmental or private industrial use, a walking trail would be included in any redevelopment plan. Because of the landfill's proximity to the Town Branch corridor, the walking trail would offer a nice loop off the main trail.

Interpretive Trail Sign Project Coordinator

Seeking a multi-talented individual(s) to coordinate the environmental signage project under the grant received from the state Department for Fish and Wildlife. Responsibilities include detailed development of the environmental education concepts proposed, writing specific educational modules, overseeing graphic development and fabrication of signs, and identifying potential locations and arranging for sign placement. Contact Zina Merkin at 268-2508.

Multimedia Content Producers

Are you good story teller or artist? Like photography? One easy way to volunteer is to help us create content for our multimedia CD-ROM. Contact Boyd Shearer at 255-7813.

You can always Volunteer now!

Trail Planning — Van Meter Pettit, 258-9253

PR & Marketing — Zina Merkin, 268-2508

Environmental Quality — Greg Epp, 257-5387

Fundraising — Yvette Hurt, 223-7698

Mapping & Multimedia — Boyd Shearer, 255-9293



2001 ANNUAL MEETING

AT

McCONNELL'S SPRING EDUCATION CENTER

NOVEMBER 16, 2001 6:30PM

Join us for our annual progress report. We will show new maps, plans, and ideas. The public is invited and refreshments will be served.



TOWN BRANCH TRAIL, INC

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