



GREATER MEMPHIS GREENLINE

The Greater Memphis Greenline will increase property values, promote healthier lifestyles, decrease crime, address air quality issues, attract and retain employers, and tie our neighborhoods together increasing the unity of our citizens - overall, creating a higher quality of life.



Turning an Eyesore into Trails Galore

One drive past any of the abandoned sections of the CSX railway in Memphis and Shelby County and you will notice weedy overgrowth and no trespassing signs with chains trying-without success-to keep vagrancy away. How can these eyesores become an asset for Shelby County citizens and tourists alike? In partnership with business leaders, non-

profits, and Shelby County and Memphis City governments, the not-for-profit Greater Memphis Greenline is planning the redevelopment of over 13 miles of abandoned railway, stretching from Midtown to Cordova, to connect people, parks, and open spaces through a world-class linear recreational park in which you can walk, run, hike, bike, horse-back ride, picnic, and more.

Comprehensive Community Development: *Everyone Benefits*

This grand plan brings with it a multitude of questions. Who will use the trail and how? How will we ensure the trail is well maintained? What about crime and property values?

Research and discussions with peer cities with similar greenlines indicate that, with plenty of public support and engagement, the Greater Memphis Greenline (GMG) will increase property values, promote healthier lifestyles, decrease crime, address air quality issues, attract and retain employers, and tie our neighborhoods together increasing the unity of our citizens - overall, creating a higher quality of life.



An abandoned section of the CSX railway in Memphis.

Economic Impact

The experiences of successful greenlines in other cities indicate that at least three positive economic impacts are felt: increased tourism, talent attraction and retention, and an elevation of property values.

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry and greenlines are beacons for ecotourists. The 10.5-mile Monon Trail in Indianapolis boasts an estimated 1.7 million users. The 20-mile North Central Rail Trail through Baltimore County attracts approximately 450,000 visitors annually. In one year, those visitors spent an estimated \$3.38 million on purchases related to trail use, according to the Maryland Greenways Commission.

The quality of life that a community offers impacts employers' abilities to attract and retain high quality employees which, in turn, helps determine where major employers locate. In his much celebrated book *Cities and the Creative Class*, Richard Florida's research found that "talented individuals are attracted

to places with high levels of active outdoor recreation." The Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress concurs, reporting that a city's quality of life is given more weight in business location decisions than business-related factors, particularly for high-tech industries.

The National Park Service estimates that properties on and around greenlines increase in value anywhere from 5-32%. Why? Karina Straub of IndyParks states

that greenways create "beachfront property where we have no beach." To illustrate, the Nashville Greenway Commission noted an average \$30,000 jump in the selling price for houses directly on their greenline. Many developers seem to understand this. When asked what amenities were being built into a new residential development near the Monon Trail, a developer replied "I am not providing any amenities... the Monon Trail is an amenity that will attract big buyers." Similarly, in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina, American Tobacco Trail officials report that developers are planning connections from new neighborhoods to the 22-mile trail. In our community the potential has been estimated by the Shelby County Land Bank,

which predicts that Shelby County will see an increase in its tax base of more than \$155 million through property value increases along the GMG.

Greenlines may even reduce public expenditures. A National Park Service report on the economic impact of natural areas states conservation, as opposed to intensive development, saves public costs for infrastructure development, such as sewers and roads, which aren't always paid for by increased property tax revenue.

Environmental Impacts: Healthy Lives, Healthy Environment

Greenlines have proven positive impacts on the natural environment and on the physical health of users. Noise and air pollution are reduced by open spaces that contain plants which naturally clean the air and water by filtering out pollutants and absorbing noise. A National Park Service study found greenlines reduce noise levels by 8-10 decibels. According to the Trust for Public Land, the annual value of air pollution reduction in Atlanta caused by urban trees is \$15 million. Shelby County will similarly benefit to the tune of a \$6 million value annually through the trees on the greenline alone.

Greenlines provide easy and free access to healthy activities for people of all ages and fitness levels. Because of their linear nature, more people have ready access and can sustain their activity level for longer periods. In a survey of trail users in Southeast Missouri, 55% said they exercise more now

that they have access to a trail. Surveying public opinions since 1963, a recently Harris poll found that 46% of adults said they would bike to work if they had access to a trail or greenline.

Community Connections: Safety and Unity

The economic health of Shelby County and Memphis are inextricably tied together. GMG

will connect many neighborhoods, including Berclair, White Station, High Point Terrace, Binghampton and Midtown, as well as provide increased access to many public destinations and institutions such as, Shelby Farms, Avon Park, Robert Howze Park,

Mid-South Fairgrounds redevelopment site, Main Library, Rhodes College, and Christian Brothers University. This excites many and alarms some.

Memphis' greenline is certainly not unique in its connection of neighborhoods with vastly different resources. Many greenlines are characterized as urban and crime rates have been closely monitored. Crime rates are lower on urban trails and greenlines when compared to other urban areas, according to a Rails-to-Trails Conservancy report on 372 trails or greenlines across the country. For example, in 1995 the national assault rate for urban areas was 531 (per 100,000) with the national assault rate on urban trails being .58 (using the FBI Uniform Crime Report).

It is important to remember that the GMG, as many rails-to-trails sites, will clean



The Wolf River Trail, in Germantown, is similar to plans for GMG.

up, maintain, and populate areas now abandoned and overgrown. In an example from our community, the V&E Greenline (in the Vollintine Evergreen Neighborhood in Midtown) reports that criminal activity on the greenline has reduced significantly since its transformation from abandoned railroad tracks to greenline. Simply put, a previous hiding place becomes an open, visible space.

Examples from Our Own Backyard

The groundwork for community support of the GMG has already been laid here through the successes of the V&E Greenline and the Germantown Greenway.

The 1.7-mile V&E Greenline was purchased by the neighborhood in 1996 after being abandoned by the L&N Railroad in 1980. The abandoned tracks were known for dumping, high weeds, and as a haven for crime. Now the trail is enhanced and maintained through organized efforts and donations of neighborhood residents and businesses. When complete the 22-mile Germantown Greenway will loop the City of Germantown offering alternative transportation pathways to parks and businesses. Part of the Greenway, the two miles of completed trail along the Wolf River is already in heavy recreational use.

A public-private partnership from its inception, GMG will remain so in its implementation and operation. In order to reap the benefits other communities have, our community must put forth a multi-sector effort for implementation and maintenance. The entire 13.34 linear miles (encompassing 169 acres) of the GMG is envisioned to include

a 12-foot wide asphalt trail with 2-foot wide natural surface shoulders. Community groups will adopt sections of the trail to bolster their identities and usages with projects that could include butterfly gardens, mini-parks, and artist-designed bike racks. Cost for development of the trail is estimates to be between \$20-30 million, depending on acquisition costs. Annual maintenance is estimated at \$155,000.

This vision fits in nicely with existing community plans. The Metropolitan Planning Organization recently adopted a plan that calls for 678 miles of bike and pedestrian facilities in Shelby County. Likewise, the Tennessee Parks & Greenways Foundation is working to “create sustainable communities and regions by linking natural land or water features, parks, nature reserves, cultural features, and historic sites with each other and with populated areas.” Making Memphis a “Place of Choice” for knowledge workers is a goal of Memphis ED, the economic development plan for Memphis and Shelby County. Seen as key to this is a “seamless system” of outdoor recreational activities. Furthermore, the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy has adopted a master plan to preserve and enhance the 4,500 acre park, which includes a connection to the GMG. Never before has our community seen such a confluence of dedication toward creating a comprehensive system of outdoor recreation for our citizens.

The time is right to support the creation of the GMG—for our economic vitality, for the health of our citizenry, for the preservation and betterment of our natural environment.

To support the Greater Memphis Greenline contact:

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For more information visit www.greatermemphisgreenline.org