

Introduction

Greenways Vision

Blacks Run flows through the heart of Harrisonburg. The Greenway would be like a string of pearls, connecting neighborhoods in the north and south with downtown housing and businesses, strategically placed pocket parks, Keister School, Purcell Park and Ramblewood Fields.

The Greenway should enhance life in Harrisonburg in many ways, providing:

A recreational outlet for hiking, walking, jogging, and biking, as well as the myriad opportunities offered by parks.

A safe, off-road means for children and pedestrians to travel between recreational and educational sites.

Improved access to our downtown businesses and an enhanced tourist profile.

Educational opportunities to learn about our cultural and natural heritage.

A safeguard for our watershed and wildlife, enhancing our status as a Bird Sanctuary.

The opportunity to exercise our civic pride to create a jewel which we can leave for our children and which improves our quality of life.

The idea for a Blacks Run Greenway was discussed as early as 1989, when a local community group, Citizens for Downtown, began an initiative to improve Blacks Run as part of its larger goal of revitalizing downtown Harrisonburg. Efforts to improve Blacks Run have continued since then, most visibly through the annual community-wide Blacks Run Restoration Day held every April.

Through a public-private partnership between the city of Harrisonburg, volunteer groups and individuals, private companies and property owners intend to develop a naturally attractive, ecologically healthy greenway along Blacks Run in Harrisonburg. The resulting Blacks Run Greenway will be open to the public wherever possible for recreational and non-motorized transportation use. Walking and biking paths, benches, picnic tables, playground and educational facilities, and other amenities will be added to particular sections along Blacks Run. The greenway corridor will be designed and implemented to improve the environmental health of the stream, its banks, and surroundings. The prevention of soil erosion, establishment of riparian buffer areas, and improvement of water quality will be important goals in the implementation of the greenway project.

Greenways Definition

Greenway is often used to describe a linear corridor of open space that is used or designated for recreational use and transportation. They typically include some form of developed trail or path. Greenways are often located within existing man made or natural linear corridors, or greenbelts, such as rivers, streams, lake edges, canals, valleys, ridges, utility easements, rail lines, roads and the like.

Greenways typically accommodate non-vehicular modes of transportation in a community setting and provide an alternate mode of transportation to traveling by traditional methods. Greenways may accommodate a variety of non-vehicular modes of transportation such as walking, bicycle, equestrian, skiing, snowmobiles and the like.

A greenway system may include a mix of uses. Some portions of the greenway may be used for pedestrians only while others may make provision for pedestrians and bicyclists. The appropriate mix of users will be important to the success of a greenway. As usership increases it is generally desirable to separate distinct groups such as bicycles and pedestrians by means of pavement markings or separate systems all together.

Greenways can accomplish many goals for a community including: economic development, transportation, education, conservation and recreation.