

Executive Summary

The La Vergne - Smyrna Greenway Master Plan is a collaborative project of two rapidly growing communities in Middle Tennessee. The plan is focused primarily on the identification of opportunities for passive recreation and is the direct result of significant effort expended over a number of years by Parks and Recreation staff, elected officials and others charged with providing public services to the citizens of La Vergne and Smyrna. The planning effort to develop this master plan was funded largely through the efforts of U.S. Congressman Bart Gordon to develop a greenway corridor linking the communities of Murfreesboro, La Vergne, Smyrna, Nashville and Clarksville via the Cumberland River and its tributaries.

Development in La Vergne and Smyrna over the past 50 years is typical of this country's suburban expansion since World War II. Planning for residential development and schools has been largely driven by the automobile-very little consideration has been given to providing safe and pleasurable facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. Sidewalks are rare in La Vergne and Smyrna, and bicycling amenities are virtually non-existent. However, like much of the rest of the country, both communities have recently embraced the concept of greenways and have begun to implement them with remarkable success. Recognizing the need for a long-term plan to preserve greenspace and make their communities pedestrian-friendly, the cities have come together to develop a Master Plan for integrated and comprehensive development of future greenways and other pedestrian facilities.

Although the term Greenway encompasses a variety of concepts, most greenway projects share some common elements. Greenways are linear parks or corridors. They are often developed from unused pieces of land such as abandoned railroad tracks, utility easements or floodplains. They frequently follow some outstanding natural feature such as a stream or river bank. Greenways are even developed in urban settings to create, in the heart of the city, a green oasis. They can be used to link existing parks or join residential neighborhoods to schools and shopping. Imaginative and energetic communities can create greenways of almost any description to provide safe and secure spaces for people to walk, jog, bicycle or simply to enjoy the landscape.

Land and land ownership are, of course, significant issues related to greenways, especially when trails might cross private properties. Wherever possible, the proposed greenways for La Vergne and Smyrna have been shown on public lands including road rights-of-way and utility easements. Trails have also been shown in areas of the communities that are now primarily agricultural. However, those greenways will be constructed in the future if, and when, the landowners choose to develop or sell their properties for residential or other uses. To facilitate greenway implementation as land uses change in the future, both La Vergne and Smyrna are encouraged to consider revisions to their subdivision regulations to require developers to set aside land for greenways and to include sidewalks in new development. Trails have also been shown in urban-

ized areas adjacent to or on private properties. In these cases, both cities have expressed a commitment to work with landowners to establish easement agreements or, when acceptable and appropriate, for fee simple acquisition.

It should be noted that this plan is conceptual in nature and identifies an overall network of greenways, bikeways and pedestrian facilities for two expanding communities. It is intended as a planning tool and departure point for future action. As additional funds become available for construction, the overall trail design will continue to evolve. Trail alignments may move, and the specific components of trailheads may change in response to changing land uses and the needs of greenway users. Each phase of implementation must begin with a detailed master plan for that particular segment, followed by an environmental assessment and the eventual development of construction documents. The realization of this plan will not be a small task. However, if the level of effort and enthusiasm already shown by the communities continues, the citizens of La Vergne and Smyrna will soon have additional opportunities to experience greenways.