

Open Space and Greenways

Packet synopsis

Open space and greenways have come to be recognized as an important human need and as a necessary element in a comprehensive land use plan. In the built up urban setting, even a pocket park or neighborhood playground is seen as a necessity for urban living. Not only do **open space and greenways** provide social amenities for the human such as a space to play or relax or socialize, they confer economic benefit.

For our natural environment, **open space and greenways** are vital for the survival of native flora and fauna and bio diversity by allowing them to securely move and migrate and giving them areas to grow. And a healthy natural environment is essential for human existence.

For many cities, counties and townships the time to plan for and reserve land for **open space and greenways** is now while the opportunities still exist to do so. Not only the conventional wisdom but fact and past experience demonstrates that when growth and/or development occurs without planning for **open space and greenways**, future opportunities for them are almost universally precluded.

The contents of this packet have been selected because they not only illustrate some basic planning tools and techniques but also point out the positive values that **open space and greenways** provide. They are as follows:

“Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Spaces”, *Public Investment*, American Planning Association, Chicago, IL, September 1999 – points out that **open space and greenways** attract investment through improved quality of life, can help revitalize neighborhoods and boost tourism.

“Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors: A Resource Book”, *Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance*, National Park Service, Washington DC, 1995 – is both a documentation of the economic benefits of **open space and greenways** and a “how to” perform a community’s own analysis. It covers such subjects as real property values, commercial uses, tourism impact and public costs and more. The full work book can be downloaded from the National Park Service’s web site

http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rtca/econ_INDEX.HTM.

“Townships seek Alternative to Cookie-cutter Development: Open Space Design offers Townships Fair Means to Preserve Rural Landscape”, *Reinventing the Planning Process*, *Pennsylvania Township News*, August 1995, Pennsylvania Association of Township Supervisors, Enola, PA. – advocates open space design as the means to balance both development objectives and achieve conservation objectives. It goes on to explain “what it is” and “how it works” as well as the four steps in designing an “open space” subdivision.

“Open Space: How to Get It and How to Keep It”, Henderson, Harold, *Planning*, American Planning Association, Chicago, IL, 1990 – describes various approaches to acquiring open space for public purpose. These range from local government purchase, described as the “go out and get it” approach, using non-profit land trusts or creating your own and public/private cooperation, purchase of development rights (PDU) and regional or multi-jurisdictional cooperation and planning. It describes various examples of these approaches.

“Open Space Zoning: What It Is and Why It Works”, *Planning Commissioners Journal*, Burlington, VT, July/August 1992 – states that conventional zoning assigned a land use designation to every acre of land and has been described as “planned sprawl”. The article describes the better solution, namely “open space zoning” or essentially cluster development and to be effective it must be required. It then presents some examples of community implementation and the economic advantages to the land owner, community and the developer.

“Planning Paths for Your Community”, *Planning Commissioners Journal*, Number 10, Burlington, VT, May/June 1993 – emphasizes the use of **greenways** as alternative transportation corridors. It gives a step-by-step process for a planning commission to follow in developing a trail system and addresses a principal concern – recreational trails and crime.

SPECIAL TOOLS

EPICplanner 1.0 – Planning Places with GIS, Minnesota Planning, St Paul, MN, 2002.

This is a user-friendly software program with an accompanying instructional guide specifically developed to meet the needs of county-level planners and other staff concerned with land use planning.

The program can be used for township and city land use planning and what are important are its relatively simple and fast modeling capabilities.

The guide and the software (2 CDs) have been distributed to all Minnesota county planning offices. It is also available free to Minnesota governments upon request to Minnesota planning. .

INTERLIBRARY LOAN MATERIALS

The following on **open space and greenways** can be borrowed via MnLINK.

Open Space Design Development: A Guide for Local Governments, Washington County Planning and Administrative Services, Metropolitan Council, BRW, Inc. Fall 1997.

LEGAL NOTES

Open space and greenways can be created by counties, cities and townships under Minnesota Statutes which convey to them the power to plan and zone. These are:

For Townships - Minnesota Statutes § 366.10 through § 366.18 convey to townships the authority to enact zoning regulations, zoning districts and establish zoning commissions and prescribes the manner in which this is to be done. Minnesota Statutes § 394.33 also conveys to townships the authority to plan and zone with the stipulation that any official controls, after adoption, must not be inconsistent nor less restrictive than any adopted official controls of the county within which it belongs. Minnesota Statutes § 462.352 Definitions, subd. 2. Municipality defines "municipality" to mean any city, including a city operating under a home rule charter, and any town, thereby extending all of the authority granted to municipalities to plan per Minnesota Statutes Chapter 462 - Housing, Redevelopment, Planning, Zoning - to townships as well.

For Counties - Minnesota Statutes § 394.21 specifically grants to all counties, except those in the defined seven-county metropolitan Area, the authority to “carry on county planning and zoning.” Minnesota Statutes § 394.23 gives county boards the power and authority to prepare and adopt by ordinance, a comprehensive plan, “a comprehensive plan or plans when adopted by ordinance must be the basis for official controls adopted under the provisions of sections 394.21 to 394.37.”

For Municipalities - Minnesota Statutes § 462.353 grants municipalities their authority to plan. Subdivision 1. states, “A municipality may carry on comprehensive municipal planning activities for guiding the future development and improvement of the municipality and may prepare, adopt and amend a comprehensive municipal plan and implement such plan by ordinance and other official actions in accordance with the provisions of sections 462.351 to 462.364.”

The seven metro counties are governed by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 473, the Metropolitan Planning Act.

For cities in the seven-county metropolitan area, Minnesota Statutes § 473.858 -Comprehensive Plans – governs.