

Executive Summary

Plan Vision

The vision for this Plan is to create a connected and comprehensive system of greenway trails that enhances quality of life throughout Wake County. There is no other single type of investment that can be made on a local and regional scale that provides such a wide range of positive impacts. Greenways improve quality of life by providing opportunities for transportation, recreation, public health, economic development, and environmental stewardship. This Plan serves as a clear guideline for trail planning and development, providing a framework for local governments and project partners to create a connected system of cross-county greenway trails.

WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

Greenways are defined as linear, natural areas which may be suitable for access. Some greenways benefit the community by remaining as undeveloped open space, protecting water quality, providing valuable buffers, environmental preserves, or wildlife corridors. Wake County has a well-established Open Space Plan and Program that is dedicated to the protection of these types of natural corridors and systems throughout the County.

Some greenways also contain trails. These “greenway trails” enhance existing recreational opportunities, provide routes for active transportation, and improve the overall health and quality of life in an area. They can be paved or unpaved, and can be designed to accommodate a variety of trail users.

FOCUS OF THIS PLAN

This particular plan is focused on establishing greenway trail connections. When planning trail routes, natural greenway corridors (such as those along waterways) are preferred over man-made corridors (such as roadways). However, roadway corridors are often necessary for routing trails to certain destinations and population centers, where other opportunities do not exist. The preference for using natural corridors for trails is due not only to the preferred experience of the trail user (to be in nature), but also due to the many benefits associated with protecting our natural lands and waterways (see pages 16-17).

Plan Goals

The projected impact of the proposed trail system is summarized on pages 57-59 (and quantified in Appendix A), based on several of these trail benefits/goals:



IMPROVE ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS



INCREASE CONNECTIVITY FOR MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION



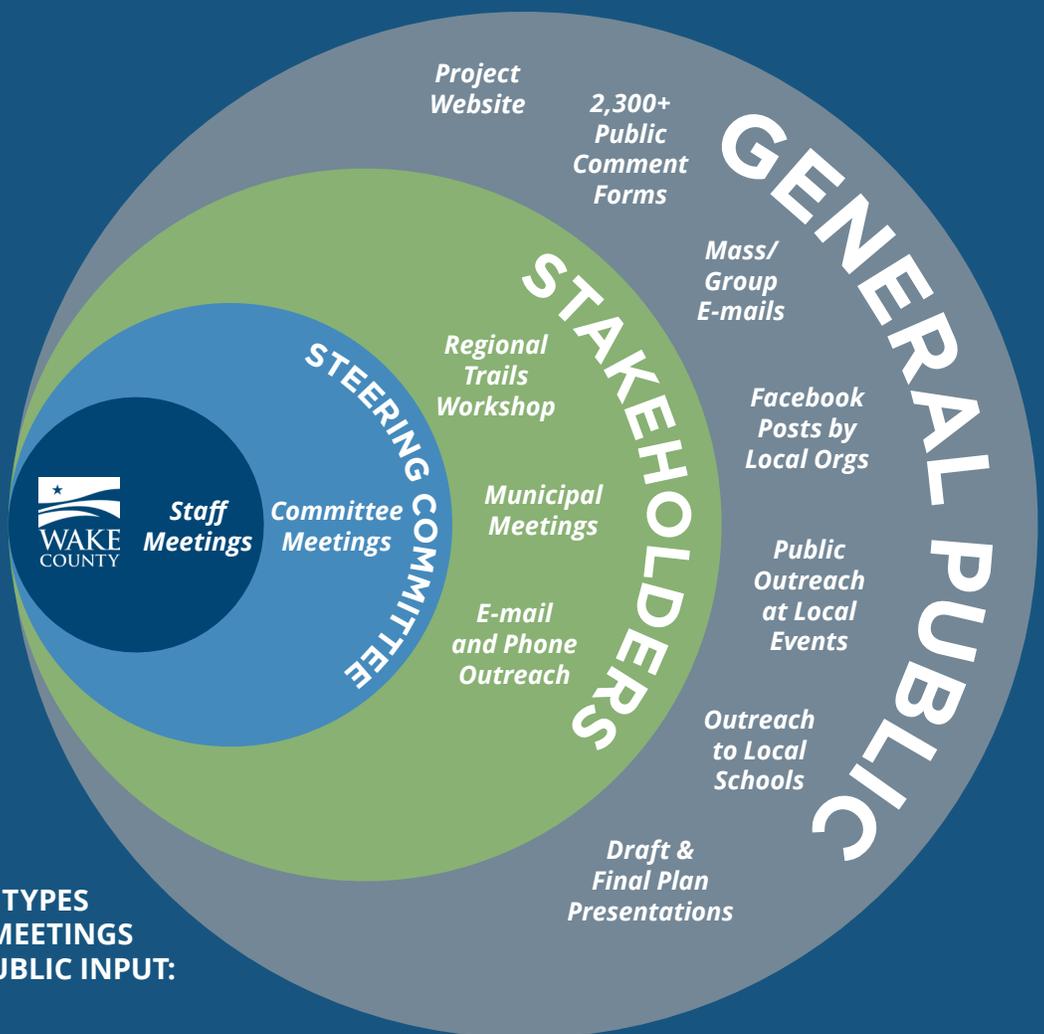
SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CAPITALIZE ON TRAIL-BASED TOURISM



PROTECT WATERWAYS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND NATURAL AREAS ALONG GREENWAYS

Public Process Overview

The planning process began with a stakeholder workshop in late 2015. The draft plan was developed with input from the public and a Steering Committee in early 2016. The final plan was developed with further input and presentations throughout 2016.



THE COUNTYWIDE GREENWAY SYSTEM

The Countywide Greenway System (opposite page and Map 3.0) was developed with these key steps:

1. *Collect data.*
2. *Map all existing trails and trails proposed in previous plans.*
3. *Identify a system of regional connector trails.*
4. *Prioritize the overall system into sets of recommendations.*

Rather than including all proposed trails from all existing plans (Map 3.0-B), this system focuses instead on corridors that offer the best potential for regional trail connectivity. It is based primarily upon connections between existing trails and the ability to connect to destinations such as parks, lakes, and downtown/town centers.

THE GREENWAY SYSTEM BY PROJECT CATEGORIES

The overall system of recommendations is organized into the following set of project categories in Chapter 3:

MAP 3.1 BRIDGE THE GAPS

The focus of these “Bridge the Gaps” priority projects is connectivity, featuring 48 miles of trail in 23 segments. The projects are spread throughout the county, with at least one project in each of Wake County’s 12 municipalities. These fill critical gaps within the existing network of trails, and serve as catalyst projects where trails are currently lacking. For more on these projects, see the project cutsheets in Chapter 3 of the Plan.

MAP 3.2 CONNECT PARKS AND LAKES

This group of projects features 60 miles of trail in 12 segments, connecting to 15 parks (seven of which feature lakes). The idea of connecting to parks and lakes was driven by public feedback on desired destinations, in which people indicated a desire to connect with existing trails, parks, and natural areas as the top choices out of a range of destination types (see the public comment form results in Chapter 2).

MAP 3.3 CONNECT THE COMMUNITIES

With this group of projects, all 12 municipalities will be connected into the greenway system, with 19 miles of trail in six segments. These projects allow for key connections in Fuquay-Varina and Zebulon, plus more direct greenway trail connections between Raleigh, Cary, Apex, and Morrisville.

MAP 3.4 COMPLETE THE SYSTEM

There are 147 miles of proposed trail in this group, made up of over 30 project segments. These longer-term projects (like all projects) could be completed sooner, depending on how they are implemented and on the opportunities that arise to complete the system in the coming years and decades. See Chapter 4 for more on the overall implementation strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

Chapter 4 features information on the recommended organizational framework for implementation, funding strategies, policy guidance, and detailed action steps.

