Elevating Greenway Planning: Incorporating Environmental Justice, Urban Landscapes and Ecological Restoration

THE ALLEGHENY GREEN WEB

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Objectives of Today

1. Discuss the limitations of the traditional approach to greenway planning and why many well-intentioned plans have not been implemented.

2. Explore the potential of greenway planning to address environmental justice issues in impoverished urban areas by incorporating blighted lands and by overcoming physical barriers to green space.

3. Examine how the restoration of blighted lands and the creation of resilient landscapes forges new opportunities for greenway corridors.

4. Explain this through the introduction of the Allegheny Green Web case study.
Allegheny Green Web
The Vision

Envision a future where all communities within Allegheny County are more livable, healthy, prosperous and environmentally sound, through an interconnected trail system

Goals

#1 Connects County & Municipal parks with each other, and to communities
#2 Provides options for outdoor recreation and alternative transportation
#3 Equitable and connects all communities
#4 Build communication between, and share info with, municipalities, organizations, and residents about trail connections
County Comp Plan
No local connections
Greenways and Trails “With a Twist”
Can we ALSO use trails and greenways to overcome and/or mend the environmental liabilities we have created in our communities?
Environmental hazards such as poor air quality, contaminated ground water and lack of usable green space have left some Allegheny County communities with a legacy of health and wellness issues.
Environmental Justice
Can greenways and trails be strategically used to improve our communities’ abilities to manage and absorb heavy rain events and flooding?
Resiliency
The cost of public safety and economic losses created by overtaxing the County’s landslide and flood-prone areas is difficult to quantify but it is a REAL threat to both public and private assets.
Restoration

Decades of industrialization and resource extraction have left a raft of environmental legacies.
Restoration

Allegheny County is home to thousands of brownfield acres that are slowly being redeveloped. Greenways and trails are critical elements that should be integrated into these redevelopment plans.
Restoration

Open space areas such as the Allegheny Land Trust’s Wingfield Pines property instill inspiration of ‘what could be’ when considering impaired lands where restoration can create exceptional community value.
So How Can a Trail and Greenway Plan Address Resiliency, Restoration and Environmental Justice?
Paradigm Shift

#1 Imagine an expansive network of open spaces, natural and built, as well as a set of connective ribbons – again natural or built; places and connections

#2 Look not only at the positive assets of a county or region, but also consider how the places and connections where unhealthy environments or circumstances could be mended or healed; oases and deserts

#3 Delineate more than the connection between the important places, but also define connections to ALL communities independent upon size, location, affluence and/or degree of accessibility – ‘no community left behind’; arteries and capillaries
Allegheny Green Web Concept
AGW Planning Tool: Places to Connect
Oases & Deserts
AGW Planning Tool: Opportunities for Connections to Places
Types of Arterial Connections

Ecology

Heritage

Active Transportation

Ecology, Heritage and Active Transportation Examples of Typical Greenway Connections
Types of Arterial Connections

A Connection Type Unique to the Allegheny Green Web
Types of Arterial Connections

A Connection Type Unique to the Allegheny Green Web
How Will We Implement?
Strategy for Municipalities

Develop a Baseline
Strategy for Municipalities

Develop a Baseline
Strategy for Municipalities

Offer Data
www.tinyurl.com/agw-sandbox
Strategy for Municipalities

Offer Analysis
Creating an “artery” Trail & Greenway Corridor Options Tool
Strategy for Municipalities

Build a Strategy
Our analysis + local knowledge

Loose conceptual plan: broad “artery” and “capillary” corridors, connecting critical touch points

Finding inspiration in other projects across Pennsylvania

Creating a Connected Community
Once completed, the Kennett Greenway will be a 10-12 mile contiguous pedestrian and bicycle trail loop—linking Kennett’s beautiful preserved open space, numerous recreational facilities, and other community assets in southern Chester County.
Strategy for Municipalities

Offer Technical Assistance to Help Implement Their Section

- Identify + apply for resources
- Land acquisition + easements
- Build/steward trails + greenways
- And much more
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Prioritizing projects with a high resiliency and restoration score/benefit
Next Steps for the Allegheny Green Web

2018

Finishing Our Analysis

Creating the “artery” Trail & Greenway Corridor Options Tool

Corridor scoring system, based on: Ecology, Heritage, Alternative Transportation, Resiliency and Restoration benefit
Next Steps for the Allegheny Green Web

2019
Engaging the Municipalities
Through the COGs

1. Develop the baseline inventory
2. Input on the “artery” Trail & Corridor Options
3. Start to define the local “capillary” connections to the “arteries”
Thank you!
Questions and Discussion