

Great Rivers Greenway

Making St. Louis a Better Place to Live:

An Update to the Regional Greenway Plan to Build, Promote and Sustain the River Ring

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August 9, 2011

Acknowledgements

The Great Rivers Greenway Board of Directors and staff wish to thank all who participated on this update to the Citizen-Driven Regional Plan. Your desire to make the St. Louis region a better place to live was essential to create this plan which will guide the District for years to come.

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Building the River Ring

A decade ago, St. Louis citizens came together in unprecedented unity to make an enduring commitment to the region's future: In creating the Great Rivers Greenway District in St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County, Missouri—and its Illinois complement, the Metro East Park and Recreation District in Madison and St. Clair Counties—the people of St. Louis initiated a fundamental transformation of the

region's quality of life, environment and economy.

Since 2004 the District has been guided by its original framework plan, Building the River Ring, which emphasized high-impact investments via land acquisition and greenway facility construction. This Regional Plan Update expands upon the original plan's framework, with this action plan to build, promote and sustain the investment being made on greenway development throughout the region.

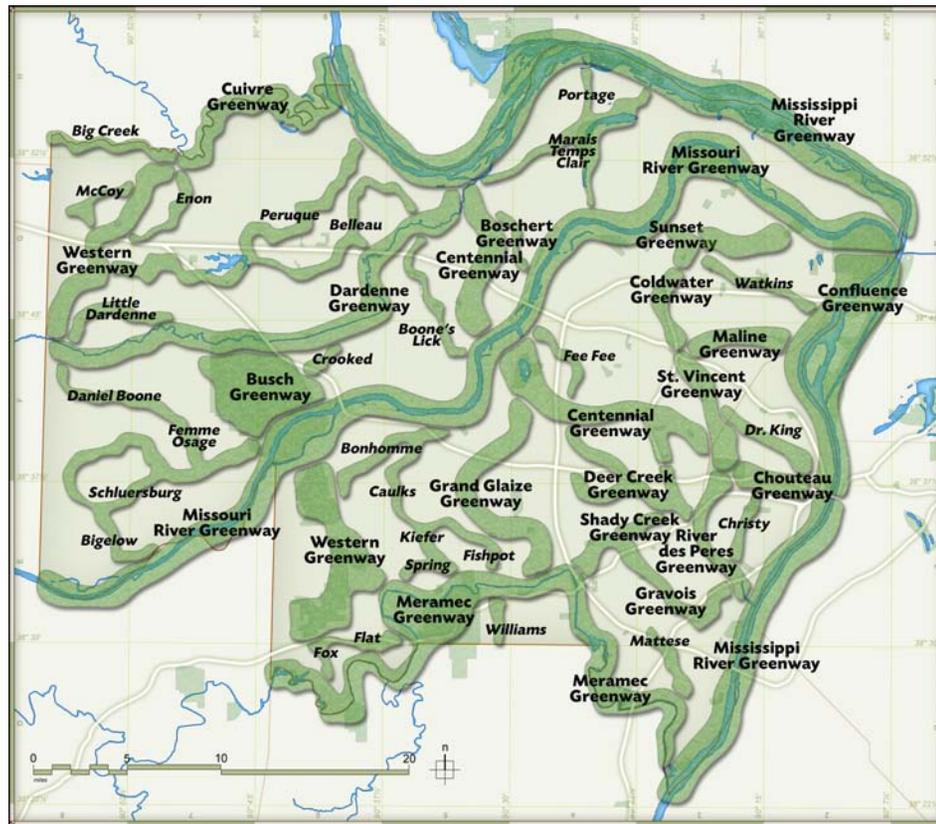


Figure 1 - The complete vision of the River Ring includes 45 separate greenways in St. Charles County, St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis.

Purpose of the Plan

The Great Rivers Greenway District is a relatively young governmental organization, currently celebrating its first ten years of operation. As it transitions into its second decade, it has become necessary for the District to update its plan to address new challenges and opportunities for the River Ring's future, ensuring the long-term quality of its investment in greenway facilities.

More specifically, the purpose of the Plan Update is to incorporate the following aspects into the framework for building the River Ring:

EVALUATION. Establish principles and criteria to evaluate greenway projects and their potential to generate social, environmental, and economic benefits.

PRIORITIES. Establish principles and criteria to prioritize ongoing and future greenway projects.

PARTNERS. Strengthen existing and identify new partnerships for collaborating on River Ring projects in order to leverage resources and expand Great Rivers Greenway's impact across the region.

COMMUNICATION. Expand awareness of Great Rivers Greenway and the River Ring, in part by engaging residents and community leaders, to increase facility use and expand support for the District.



Figure 2 - Greenway facilities throughout the River Ring commonly blend new amenities with established projects.

10 Years of Making St. Louis a Better Place to Live

The St. Louis region's history, culture and economy have traditionally been linked to the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Through Great Rivers Greenway's efforts and the collaboration of its partner organizations in Missouri and Illinois, the region is reviving its affinity for these natural resources through strategic investments in public open space facilities.

Achievements of River Ring Plan

Great Rivers Greenway has received national recognition for its unique organizational structure and its numerous accomplishments during its first ten years of operation. In collaboration with over 100 partner organizations, the District has compiled an impressive list of accomplishments enhancing the St. Louis region:

1487 acres
OF LAND PRESERVED

90 miles
OF OFF-STREET TRAILS

79 miles
OF ON-STREET BIKEWAYS

17 miles
OF TRAILS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

63 miles
OF TRAILS IN ENGINEERING + PLANNING

Momentum for creating a regional open space network began in the mid 1990s during visioning sessions of the St. Louis 2004 Initiative. The Initiative's Parks and Open Space Task Force recommendation for a greenway system addressed its overall mission: to improve quality of life in the region while creating an enduring legacy for future generations.

Widespread voter approval of Proposition C in 2000 provides funding for the Great Rivers Greenway District in Missouri and the Metro East Park and Recreation

District (MEPRD) in Illinois. Half of the one-tenth of one cent "Prop C" sales tax is directly allocated to Great Rivers Greenway and MEPRD. Over the last ten years they have created exceptional value of this revenue while leveraging additional resources to make the St. Louis region a better place to live.

Figure 3 - Ribbon cutting of new trail segment along Sunset Greenway formally celebrates completion of the project while promoting it as a community asset.



Building, Promoting and Sustaining the River Ring

Citizen-Driven Regional Plan: Building the River Ring

As the framework document that has guided Great Rivers Greenway since 2004, the original Building the River Ring Plan established a number of principles that have become a flexible foundation for creating the greenway legacy in St. Louis. These principles also form a foundation for branding the greenway network and communicating the District's purpose and mission to the public. As the name of the plan suggests, it was developed through a process that continued a long tradition of citizen input: the River Ring was shaped by and for the people of the St. Louis Region.

Greenway Definition

The term “greenway” tends to have varying connotations across the country. In many ways this allows communities to set a definition that is appropriate and unique to local conditions, culture and environment. Greenways that make up the River Ring are defined as interconnected linear open spaces—public and private—that generate social, environmental and economic benefits.

River Ring Network of Greenways

St. Louis' network of greenways is branded as the River Ring. Its conceptual plan proposes an interconnected web of 45 greenways, encompassing 600 miles of trails, which will encircle the region. Substantial progress has already been made linking neighborhoods throughout the region to the emerging River Ring greenway corridors.



Figure 4 - Collaboration between Great Rivers Greenway and the Metro East Park and Recreation District is refocusing the region's attention toward the Mississippi River.

Bi-State Collaboration

At the same time Missouri citizens passed Proposition C, similar success was achieved in Madison and St. Clair Counties, Illinois, establishing the Metro-East Park and Recreation District (MEPRD). The plan for a bi-state network of greenways is one of the unique attributes of the River Ring and presents an opportunity to promote unity between the Missouri and Illinois portions of the region.

Great Rivers Greenway is actively coordinating greenway planning and implementation with MEPRD along the Mississippi River to promote physical and symbolic connections.

Social, Environmental and Economic Benefits

The identification of the potential benefits of an interconnected greenway network was an important

outcome of the Citizen-Driven Regional Plan. Comparing the impacts greenways and other open space investments have made in other communities around the country, Great Rivers Greenway is expected to realize similar social, environmental and economic benefits throughout metropolitan St. Louis:

SOCIAL BENEFITS. The River Ring will enhance health, education, community pride and social interaction among greenway users and within communities that have good access to greenway facilities. Neighborhoods with quality public open space and good access to greenways frequently demonstrate stability, desirability and high quality of life.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS. The River Ring will strengthen environmental stewardship among St. Louis residents by fostering stronger interaction between greenway users and the natural environment. The open space in greenways improves air, water and soil quality while reducing consumption of fossil fuels by providing users alternative, efficient transportation options. Land conservation for greenway purposes also creates healthier ecosystems for native plants and wildlife.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. The River Ring will strengthen local economies and improve regional prosperity by improving property values and providing a catalyst for reinvestment and growth. With quality of life issues becoming increasingly important factors for attracting and retaining a talented workforce, greenways have become vital contributions to regional economic competitiveness.

Update to the Citizen-Driven Regional Plan

1. ENGAGING the COMMUNITY

Great Rivers Greenway's tradition of public participation has continued through this process to update the Regional Plan. A diverse group of citizens was assembled into a variety of engagement teams to generate ideas and provide periodic, critical input at strategic periods throughout the planning process. Hundreds of ideas for the River Ring were generated through a variety of interactive work sessions.

2. BUILDING, PROMOTING and SUSTAINING the RIVER RING

With significant input from the engagement teams, and evaluation by Great Rivers Greenway's staff and Board of Directors, the interactive process produced an updated purpose, five overall goals, and comprehensive list of strategies for building, promoting and sustaining the River Ring.

3. DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Three greenways—Dardenne, St. Vincent and River des Peres—were selected to demonstrate how the comprehensive list of strategies could be applied to actual River Ring projects. Since these greenways represent a variety of site-specific conditions, they offer distinct examples of implementation, suggest potential partnerships and explore quantifiable objectives to measure success.

4. ACTION PLAN

Finally, a list of immediate action items was created that will direct Great Rivers Greenway in the near-term. These actions, through refinement, feedback and evaluation, are the direct result of ideas generated by participants of the various engagement teams.

Regional Plan Update: Building, Promoting and Sustaining the River Ring

The Regional Plan update expands upon the foundation created by the original Citizen-Driven Plan by responding to the changing needs of the Great Rivers Greenway District as it begins its second decade of operation. Philosophically, the changes reflect the increasing role the District is beginning to play in promoting and sustaining the River Ring—in addition to building the greenway network.

Figure 5 - Greenway activities are targeted toward all ages. By attracting younger trail users, Great Rivers Greenway can build multi-generational support for the River Ring.



1. Engaging the Community

Great Rivers Greenway's success as a respected steward of public resources is due in large part to the District's transparency and its tradition of open dialogue through civic engagement. This process for updating the Regional Plan continues Great Rivers Greenway's commitment to meaningful public participation. The engagement strategy developed for the Regional Plan Update was crafted to generate fresh ideas and critical input for Great Rivers Greenway and the River Ring.

Feedback Summary

Throughout the planning process a large body of input was collected from the various engagement teams and focus groups. These ideas, comments and critiques were systematically refined and reorganized to achieve a final set of goals, strategies and actions.

Social, environmental and economic benefits generated by a greenway network served as the introduction of dialogue about the future of the River Ring. The Citizens Advisory Committee developed a spectrum of over 160 social, environmental and economic benefits that could be achieved through greenway projects. Focus groups were asked to evaluate these ideas in order to understand community priorities. In turn, these ideas were reorganized as 11 working "SEED Goals" (*SEED = social, environmental, economic development.*)

During a week-long work session, four of the engagement teams reconvened to provide their respective input on these goals. A transformative theme related to collaboration and partnerships emerged from this work session: that Great Rivers Greenway needed to broaden its partnership base beyond building greenway

projects to include promoting and sustaining the District and its facilities for long-term viability. These roles (build, promote, sustain) were evaluated by the Regional Advisory Committee to offer guidance for future partnership opportunities.

Next, an extensive list of over 100 potential River Ring strategies was developed by reorganizing the Citizen Advisory Committee's original list of 160 ideas according to the 11 SEED Goals and likely roles to build, promote or sustain.

Concurrent with this process, the District also conducted a review of its external communication strategy. Staff and Board members collaborated on these two processes (the Plan Update and communications strategy) which ensured their consistency with each other. Final outcomes from this process include:

- A succinct message describing the purpose of the River Ring,
- Five overall River Ring goals,
- 40 strategies to build, promote and sustain the River Ring, and
- A series of near-term actions Great Rivers Greenway will undertake upon the plan's adoption.

In addition to the goals and strategies above, the engagement process also identified a range of partners who could potentially play important roles building, promoting or sustaining the River Ring. These partnerships would represent four general categories of groups and individuals:

- Public and Institutional
- Business
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Citizens

Engagement Team Organization

In order to provide a range of local viewpoints, technical advice and regional perspective, five separate engagement teams were formed and invited to participate at strategic moments throughout the process. Additionally, work sessions were also conducted using focus group participants from targeted audiences to provide input specific to certain River Ring issues.

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Regional Advisory Committee (RAC)

Applied Research Collaborative (ARC)

Peer Review Committee (PRC)

CAC Focus Groups

Non-User Focus Groups

Educators and Middle School Students

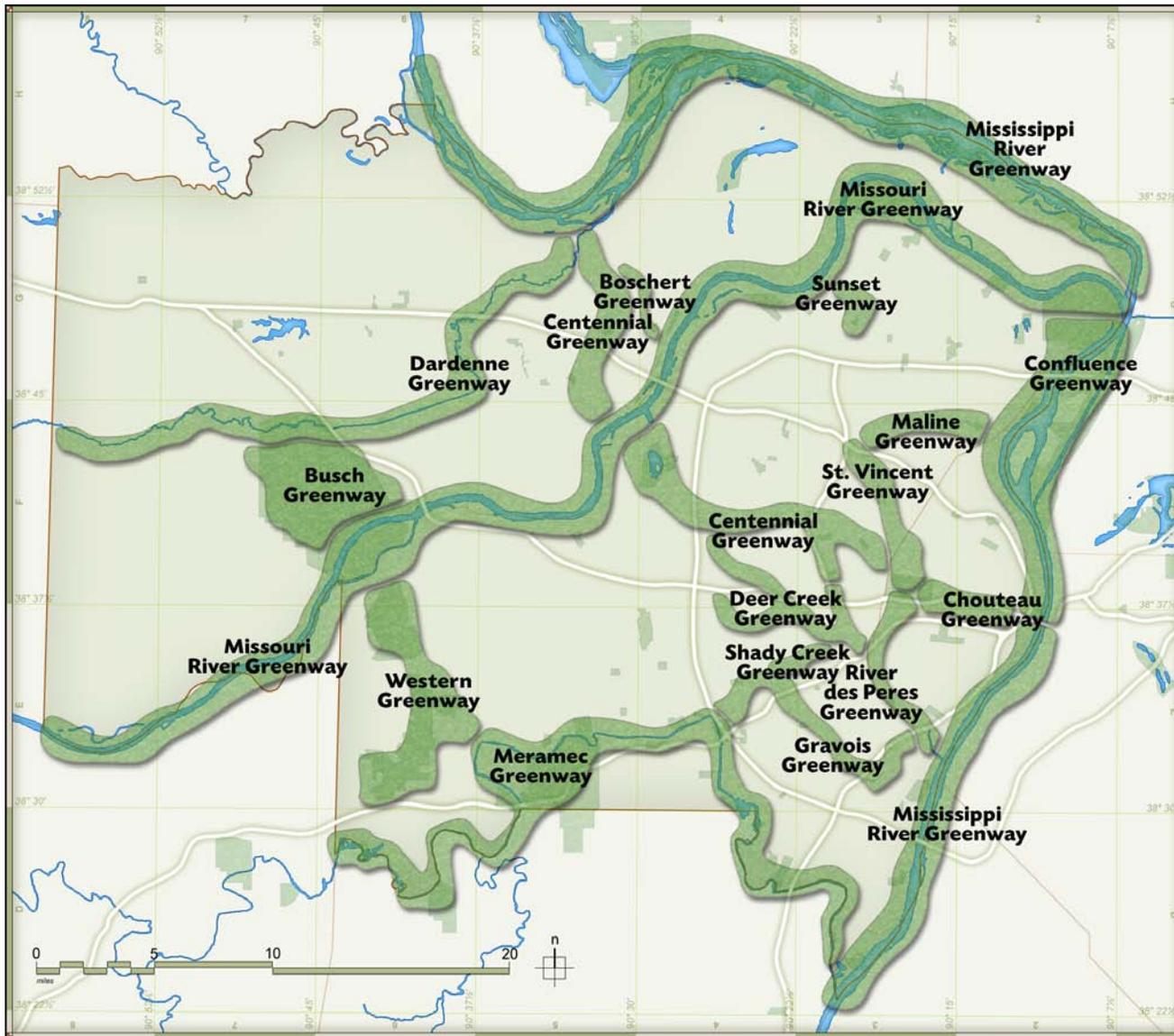


Figure 6 - Great Rivers Greenway's 17 Active Greenway corridors are emerging as the backbone of the River Ring.

Active Greenways of the River Ring

Great Rivers Greenway is currently engaged in facility development within 17 greenway corridors. These "active greenways" will remain the focus of the District's efforts in the near-term and comprise the backbone of the emerging River Ring:

- Boschert Greenway**
- Busch Greenway**
- Centennial Greenway**
- Chouteau Greenway**
- Confluence Greenway**
- Dardenne Greenway**
- Deer Creek Greenway**
- Gravois Greenway**
- Maline Greenway**
- Meramec Greenway**
- Mississippi River Greenway**
- Missouri River Greenway**
- River des Peres Greenway**
- Shady Creek Greenway**
- St. Vincent Greenway**
- Sunset Greenway**
- Western Greenway**

2. Building, Promoting and Sustaining the River Ring

The fundamental purpose of Great Rivers Greenway’s mission—to create a clean, green and connected region—is to enrich the quality of life for St. Louis residents. The significant progress the District has made in its first ten years of operation has begun to fulfill the promise of creating a legacy for future generations. Gradually, the River Ring greenways are becoming symbolic of the region and part of St. Louis’ cultural identity.

While much of Great Rivers Greenway’s focus in its first ten years has been on building River Ring greenways, parks and trails, the engagement process of this Plan Update identified that more attention needs to focus on promoting the greenway network and its benefits, as well as sustaining these facilities for future generations.

The River Ring purpose and goals establish a new direction for Great Rivers Greenway to lead over the next decade to effectively build, promote and sustain the greenway network. Each of the 40 strategies is intended to contribute toward improving social, environmental or economic conditions in the region.

PURPOSE STRATEGIES. The first group of eight strategies on page 11 support the overall *purpose* of the River Ring, to make the St. Louis Region a better place to live. They typically describe actions to build, promote and sustain the River Ring as a whole, as well as the Great Rivers Greenway District as an organization.

GOAL STRATEGIES. The next group of 32 strategies on page 11 support the five broad *goals* of the River Ring. They are typically directed toward more specific actions to build, promote and sustain various greenways and programs within the River Ring network.



PURPOSE OF THE RIVER RING

MAKE THE ST. LOUIS REGION A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE

Comments recorded throughout the community engagement process repeated this central theme many times over: Great Rivers Greenway was established to improve the quality of life in the region while creating an enduring legacy that will be shared with future generations.

RIVER RING GOALS

CONNECT COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

St. Louis residents seek a more connected region—where real and perceived barriers between communities and neighborhoods are mended and connections strengthened. Improved connectivity leads to greater civic cooperation, improved safety, neighborhood stability and a more engaged and active community.

PRESERVE AND CONNECT PEOPLE TO NATURE

The diverse natural resources in the St. Louis region are nationally significant and abundant, but not easily accessible. By facilitating appropriate, low-impact connections between people and nature, Great Rivers Greenway can foster an improved sense of stewardship for the natural environment across the region.

IMPROVE ECONOMIC VITALITY

Property value increases and investment opportunities are commonly associated with proximity to quality open space networks. Implementing River Ring projects will improve local economic conditions while creating a more prosperous St. Louis region over time.

PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

Developing and supporting transportation options, including transit, walking and bicycling, responds to residents’ growing demand for alternatives to automobiles. Connecting neighborhoods to destinations of employment, education and recreation will provide residents with healthy, clean and efficient transportation options.

PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH

Active lifestyles typically lead to improved physical and mental health, increased longevity and happiness. Residents of all generations, abilities and demographics indicated desires to live healthier lifestyles, including access to greenway recreation, pollution-free environments, community gardens and locally-grown produce.

PURPOSE OF THE RIVER RING

BUILD STRATEGIES

PROMOTE STRATEGIES

SUSTAIN STRATEGIES

<p>MAKE THE ST. LOUIS REGION A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE</p>	<p>Establish the backbone of the River Ring by completing and connecting existing greenways</p> <p>Celebrate and interpret the historical, cultural and recreational attributes unique to every greenway</p> <p>Nurture dialog and relationships with other public agencies, utilities, and private land owners to expedite greenway development</p>	<p>Promote the River Ring regionally and nationally as a natural, cultural and community asset contributing to a high quality of life</p> <p>Collaborate with regional partners to promote Great Rivers Greenway’s role as an innovative organization and outstanding steward of public funds</p>	<p>Identify and create alternative funding strategies for capital projects and long-term sustainability of greenway infrastructure</p> <p>Explore options for volunteer labor and maintenance for greenway partners</p> <p>Measure the social, environmental and economic impact of greenway development in the River Ring</p>
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RIVER RING GOALS

<p>CONNECT COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS</p>	<p>Connect existing greenways to strengthen the River Ring</p> <p>Complete projects in existing greenways that serve the greatest number of residents</p>	<p>Promote the economic benefits that greenways provide to neighborhoods and communities</p> <p>Develop marketing and outreach plans to increase the public’s understanding and use of greenways</p> <p>Partner with schools and youth-based organizations to promote use and appreciation of greenways</p>	<p>Cooperate and sponsor civic events and activities that create a stronger community identity and ownership of greenways</p> <p>Create public-private partnerships for development, enhancement and maintenance within greenways</p>
<p>PRESERVE AND CONNECT PEOPLE TO NATURE</p>	<p>Partner with other organizations to conserve environmentally sensitive lands, improve water and air quality and reduce flooding in existing greenways</p> <p>Incorporate conservation practices or natural community restoration in greenways while improving access and connectivity to natural sites</p> <p>Incorporate best management practices in sustainable design into greenway projects</p>	<p>Collaborate in education and outreach activities that promote outdoor participation and appreciation of nature</p> <p>Promote a public stewardship of the River Ring</p>	<p>Enhance and maintain natural communities in greenways through design and construction practices</p>
<p>IMPROVE ECONOMIC VITALITY</p>	<p>Collaborate and partner with public and private entities to implement greenway projects that serve as economic catalysts for increased property values and tax revenues</p> <p>Encourage reinvestment near greenways to revitalize and restore economically distressed neighborhoods and communities</p>	<p>Encourage area convention and tourism organizations to include greenway facilities in marketing materials</p> <p>Partner with economic development organizations and real estate agents to market greenways as a neighborhood and community asset</p> <p>Partner with area colleges and universities to provide River Ring materials to current and prospective students, faculty and staff</p>	<p>Encourage partnerships to leverage resources to sustain the River Ring</p> <p>Foster stakeholders commitment to improve the quality of public open space in greenways</p>
<p>PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES</p>	<p>Partner with public agencies to facilitate access between greenways and public transit and/or on-road bicycle and pedestrian facilities, to improve commuting options</p> <p>Incorporate traffic calming strategies in greenway plans and projects for improved bicycle and pedestrian safety</p>	<p>Promote health, environmental and economic benefits of bicycle and pedestrian commuting.</p> <p>Encourage increased public participation and acceptance of bicycle and pedestrian commuting.</p> <p>Promote connectivity between on-road and off-road bicycling networks</p>	<p>Partner with local agencies to develop model education programs for bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists</p>
<p>PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH</p>	<p>Provide safe and convenient greenway and trail access</p> <p>Collaborate with community groups, public agencies and local produce suppliers for community gardens and farmers’ markets on sites within existing greenways</p>	<p>Promote activities and options for year-round exercise</p> <p>Coordinate with partners to promote the health benefits of using greenways</p> <p>Work in partnership with other organizations to promote fitness benefits of walking, riding and rolling</p>	<p>Support annual and seasonal recreational programming in greenways to encourage long-term healthy behaviors</p>

3. Demonstration Projects

Each greenway in the River Ring is unique in its physical character, surrounding neighborhoods and environmental features. Great Rivers Greenway is in the process of completing a master plan for each greenway, identifying a greenway’s distinct opportunities and challenges, while outlining a timeline for implementation.

The Regional Plan Update acknowledges the unique circumstances of each greenway, as well as Great Rivers Greenway’s practical need for a common, yet flexible, set of strategies that will facilitate building, promoting and sustaining projects throughout the River Ring.

St. Vincent, River des Peres and Dardenne are three greenways with greatly differing characteristics and development circumstances. They were selected to demonstrate how the River Ring strategies could be applied to enhance existing implementation action plans while concurrently supporting the updated overall purpose and five principal goals of the River Ring.

WHAT. A clearly understood vision for each greenway is necessary to illustrate its unique potential. The vision should provide an answer to the question, *what should the Great Rivers Greenway District strive to achieve with this particular greenway?* Typically, the greenway’s vision and supporting goals addresses the opportunities and challenges for implementation.

WHO. Stakeholders—residents, technical advisors and decision makers—provide collaborative input that is used to steer every phase of building, promoting and sustaining the greenway. Ideally, these stakeholder groups will remain involved through the duration of the planning process, and will continue to provide feedback and leadership after projects are complete.

HOW. The list of 40 River Ring strategies describe actions, tools or procedures that can be used to build, promote or sustain distinct aspects of every greenway project. A particular greenway’s action plan would be comprised of specifically tailored list of these strategies.

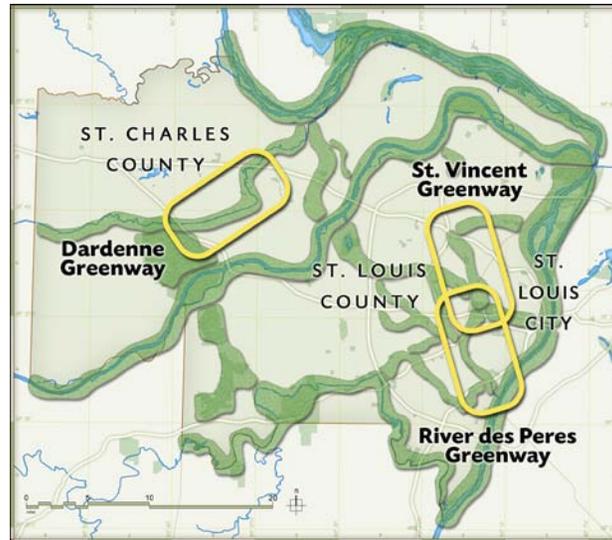


Figure 7 - River Ring Demonstration Projects – Dardenne, St. Vincent and River des Peres Greenways – are representative of three distinct conditions in St. Charles County, St. Louis County and St. Louis City.

Supporting the Purpose of the River Ring

Strategies that support the overall purpose of the River Ring, *to make St. Louis a better place to live*, apply to all greenways in the River Ring or they apply to actions Great Rivers Greenway will undertake to build, promote and sustain the entire system.

BUILDING THE RIVER RING. Completing active greenways will contribute to building the backbone of the River Ring. Each should celebrate unique regional and local conditions through design, programmed activities and interpretive features. Collaboration with other partners will be necessary for the continued development of each greenway in the River Ring.

PROMOTING THE RIVER RING. In addition to promoting expanded use and activity on greenways locally, Great Rivers Greenway will expand its outreach to promote the River Ring nationally as an amenity that makes a substantial contribution toward improving the quality of life in the region. The District will also work to promote its strong reputation as an innovative governmental organization and responsible steward of public resources, trust and cooperation.

SUSTAINING THE RIVER RING. For Great Rivers Greenway to provide high quality River Ring facilities to future generations, it must implement sustainable strategies now to provide for the long-term viability of the system. The District will pursue alternative funding strategies and innovated solutions for greenway maintenance. Furthermore, baseline data and future measurements will enable Great Rivers Greenway to authenticate social, environmental and economic impacts greenways make throughout the region.

The strategies described in the following demonstration project descriptions, therefore, are related to the five River Ring goals: *connect communities and neighborhoods, preserve and connect people to nature, improve economic vitality, provide transportation choices, and promote good health.*

River des Peres Greenway Demonstration Project

River des Peres Greenway is one of the most well established greenways in the River Ring. Its master plan was completed in 1999, before the formation of Great Rivers Greenway and many of the parks, trails and other facilities were built at the same as the surrounding neighborhoods in South St. Louis. The greenway begins in Forest Park and follows River des Peres to its confluence with the Mississippi River.

With so many of the greenway facilities already established, the strategies for River des Peres Greenway are weighted mostly toward sustaining it over the long term, with additional strategies to promote it as an important regional greenway connection and local asset that strengthens nearby South St. Louis neighborhoods.

Building River des Peres Greenway	Promoting River des Peres Greenway	Sustaining River des Peres Greenway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ River des Peres is a major regional linkage between multiple other greenway corridors. Expand trail connections to link River des Peres to Mississippi River, Gravois, Shady Creek, Deer Creek, St. Vincent and Chouteau Greenways. ■ Partner with other stakeholders and agencies to improve the ecological conditions of River des Peres and its watershed to provide residents greater access to natural areas in an urban setting while improving water quality. ■ With access to MetroLink at the Shrewsbury station, as well as numerous bus lines servicing the greenway, River des Peres trail facilities will be expanded to enhance the corridor for alternative transportation opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Expand programming and marketing efforts targeting residents' awareness of River des Peres Greenway to increase number of greenway users and build appreciation for how greenway amenities improve the quality of life in nearby neighborhoods. ■ Capitalize upon a highly competitive real estate market by partnering with agents who have residential listings near River des Peres Greenway to encourage inclusion of greenway proximity and their benefits in property descriptions. ■ Expand awareness of the on-street Bike St. Louis network to promote local neighborhoods' access to the River des Peres Greenway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collaborate on public-private partnerships with local governments and organizations dedicated to River des Peres to focus on long-term maintenance and enhancements to the greenway. ■ Introduce or restore naturalized habitat areas along River des Peres with native plant communities to encourage self-sustaining environments, reduce long-term maintenance requirements of the greenway landscape and improve water quality. ■ Support local organizations with annual and seasonal activities or special events that are designed to encourage long-term healthy behaviors through increased greenway activity.

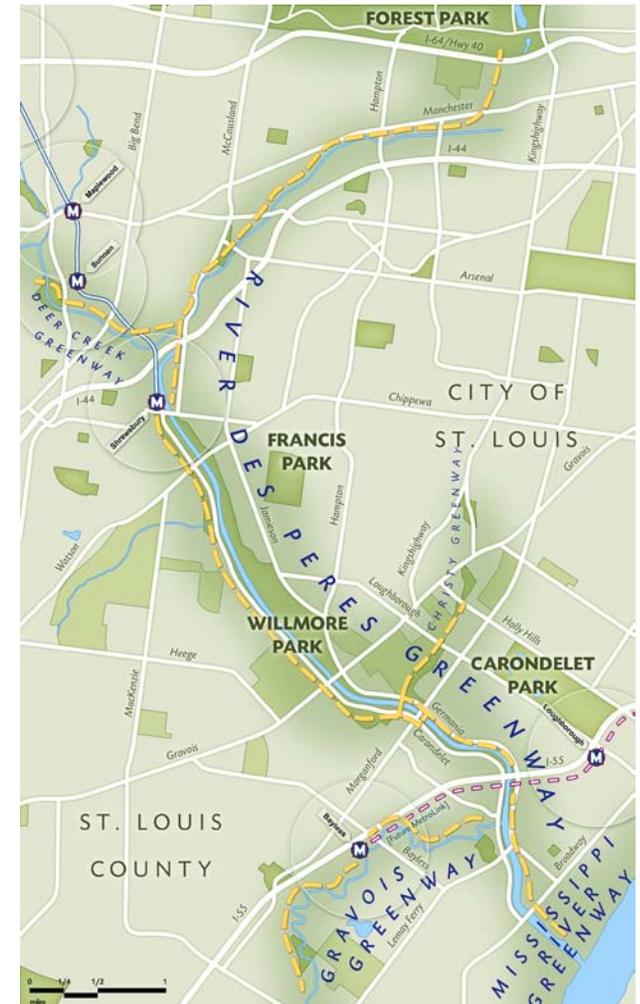


Figure 8 - River des Peres Greenway is planned to link Forest Park to the Mississippi River primarily along the River des Peres corridor. Along the way it provides access to many neighborhoods in South St. Louis and St. Louis County such as Dogtown, Maplewood, Lindenwood, St. Louis Hills, Shrewsbury, Carondelet, Affton and Bella Villa.

Demonstration Projects

Dardenne Greenway Demonstration Project

Traversing the heart of rapidly growing St. Charles County, Dardenne Greenway is in a relatively early stage of development. The master plan was completed in 2007 and over a short period of time, the greenway has become a popular destination for recreation and family activities. As it has become more connected to numerous communities, Dardenne Greenway has also become more appreciated by homebuilders, developers and community leaders who have witnessed the greenway's numerous social, economic and environmental benefits. The challenge moving forward for Dardenne Greenway is to continue building exceptional facilities, linking them to local neighborhoods and following strategies that ensure the greenway's long-term sustainability.

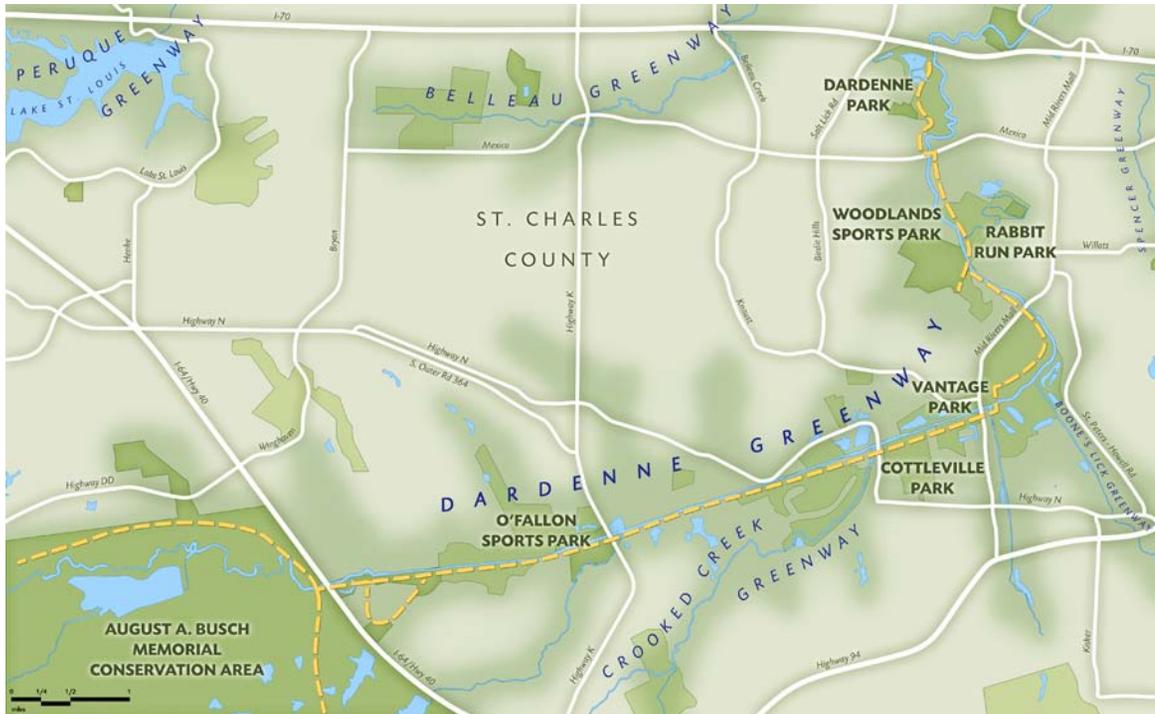


Figure 9 - Dardenne Greenway is planned to eventually link Busch Conservation Area with Lakeside 370, a new park under construction in the City of St. Peters, and will become a major recreation destination in the eastern portion of Dardenne Greenway. The segment consisting of the greenway's initial phase – generally between I-64 and I-70 – traverses through the heart of St. Charles County, linking the communities of St. Peters, O'Fallon, Cottleville and Dardenne Prairie.

Building Dardenne Greenway

- Continue the expansion of Dardenne Greenway making connections to existing parks and trail facilities, extending linkages between adjacent communities in order to complete the corridor between I-64 and I-70.
- Incorporate stream bank and habitat restoration into designs for open space along Dardenne Creek to help restore the riparian corridor, native plants, animal habitats and water quality.
- Seek partnerships with homebuilders, homeowner associations, developers and local municipalities to connect greenway facilities to open space amenities in private projects.

Promoting Dardenne Greenway

- Partner with school Districts in St. Charles County to conduct educational activities in Dardenne Greenway. Opportunities may include science education, physical education, bicycle rides and cross country running events.
- Work with local organizations and state agencies to promote the ecological importance of linking the numerous parks and natural areas along the Dardenne Creek riparian corridor.
- Collaborate with local booster organizations, real estate agents or community leaders to promote Dardenne Greenway as the emerging central community asset that links numerous municipalities together.

Sustaining Dardenne Greenway

- Sponsor local events within the corridor that are programmed to enhance community identity with Dardenne Greenway and contribute to a sense of ownership, stewardship and local pride.
- Collaborate with public and private organizations to develop ecologically sensitive trail design standards that help improve long-term environmental quality of Dardenne Creek.
- Foster public-private partnerships with greenway stakeholders and interest groups to collaborate on promoting the benefits of quality open space within Dardenne Greenway as a vital community asset.

St. Vincent Greenway Demonstration Project

St. Vincent Greenway has been in various states of implementation since its master plan was prepared in 2005. Stretching from Forest Park and generally following the MetroLink corridor to the University of Missouri-St. Louis campus and NorthPark, St. Vincent Greenway traverses a variety of neighborhoods and environmental conditions.

Although pockets of disinvestment and environmental hazards pose challenges for greenway development in some locations, there is also great potential for St. Vincent Greenway—with good access to numerous MetroLink stations, parks, employment centers and students—to be a catalyst for rejuvenating and strengthening local communities.

Building St. Vincent Greenway	Promoting St. Vincent Greenway	Sustaining St. Vincent Greenway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complete trail corridor segments within the greenway to become a linkage between Forest Park and Maline Greenway to provide crucial interconnectivity for the backbone of the River Ring. ■ Collaborate with public and private partners to leverage resources, create value and be a catalyst for reinvestment in adjacent neighborhoods. ■ Coordinate greenway improvements with St. Louis County, Metro, local municipalities and private developers to provide safe, convenient and quality connections between the greenway, on-street bicycle corridors, MetroLink transit stations and the proposed Loop Trolley. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Partner with local schools, community groups and youth organizations to encourage activities along the greenway to build a local base of new greenway users and supporters. ■ Collaborate with University of Missouri-St. Louis and Washington University to provide information on St. Vincent Greenway to students to promote active student life opportunities and enhance student perceptions of each university's surrounding neighborhoods. ■ Promote the health, environmental and economic benefits of the greenway as an alternative transportation corridor linking residents to school, jobs and transit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coordinate with local municipalities, Metro and MSD to support mutually beneficial projects that expand and preserve the greenway while providing other benefits, such as stormwater mitigation and water quality. ■ Foster stakeholder involvement from businesses and institutions along the greenway to ensure long-term quality of the facilities in the corridor while creating value for local homeowners, businesses, institutions and community leaders. ■ Explore the creation of a semi-independent organization with an explicit mission to provide for the long-term development, maintenance and stewardship of the greenway.



Figure 10 - St. Vincent Greenway is planned to link Forest Park to the NorthPark development parallel to MetroLink and Engelholm Creek. When complete, the greenway will connect University of Missouri-St. Louis and St. Vincent County Park with Wellston, Pagedale, Greendale, Bel-Nor, Normandy, Berkeley and several neighborhoods in west St. Louis City.

4. Action Plan

The 40 strategies to build, promote and sustain the River Ring provide a spectrum of options to help Great Rivers Greenway achieve the River Ring Goals formulated through the Plan Update process. As described in the three demonstration projects, the application of these strategies varies considerably according to the location of each greenway, its particular context and conditions, and the anticipated timeline for completing existing projects while identifying mid- and long-term objectives.

On a more immediate level, the actions described on the following pages outline the next steps Great Rivers

Greenway will take over the next several years in pursuit of its commitment to make the St. Louis region a better place to live. This action plan focuses on:

- The Purpose of the River Ring
- Regional Collaboration
- Strengthening Sustainable Design and Practice in the Region
- Calibrating District Priorities
- Raising Awareness of—and Participation on—the River Ring Greenways
- Measuring Achievements

Anticipating New Priorities

During Great Rivers Greenway's first decade of operation, it placed a high priority on building greenway facilities. The District now has an expanding portfolio of accomplishments: tangible, completed projects that gradually improve the quality of life in the region. With this growing network of facilities comes the opportunity to grow a wider base of greenway users, as well as the responsibility to ensure that the facilities are properly maintained. The Plan Update provides Great Rivers Greenway flexibility to adjust its priorities over time.

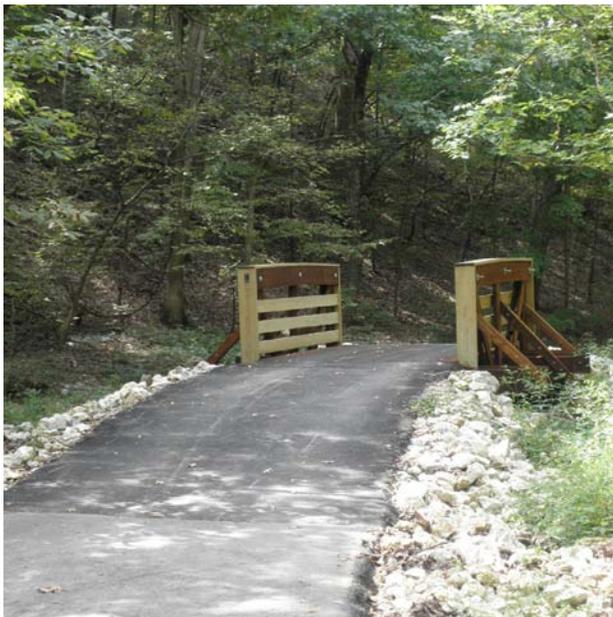


Figure 11 - Great Rivers Greenway is BUILDING THE RIVER RING with projects such as the recently completed Rock Hollow Trail in the Meramec Greenway.



Figure 12 - In partnerships with organizations such as Trailnet, Great Rivers Greenway is PROMOTING THE RIVER RING at special events targeting increased activity on local greenway and trails.

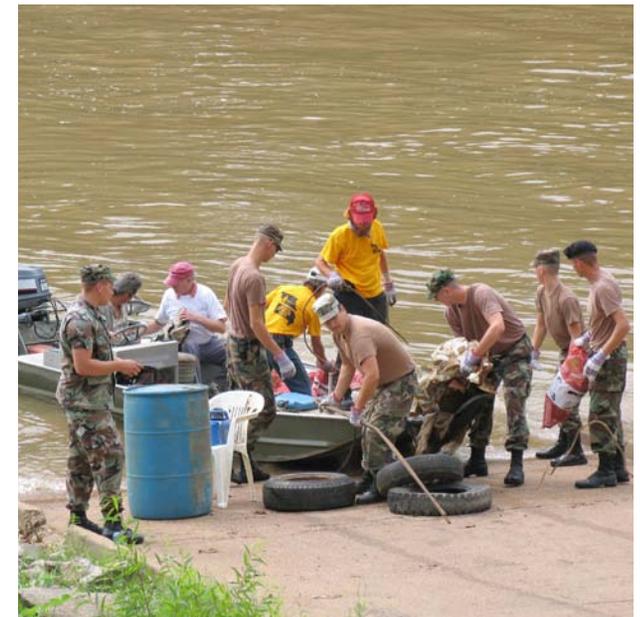
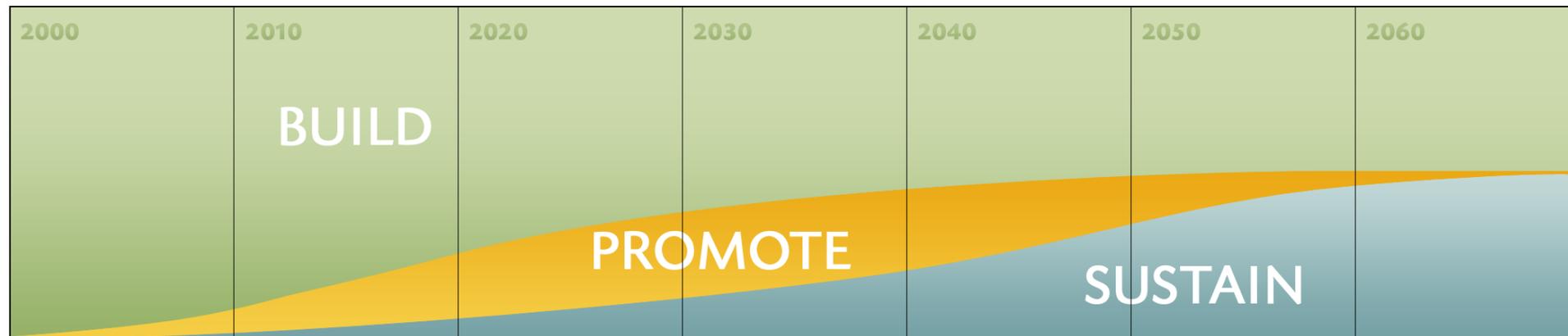


Figure 13 - Operation Clean Stream, founded in 1967, is a river restoration program sponsored by Great Rivers Greenway and a model for SUSTAINING THE RIVER RING in natural corridors across the region.

Figure 14 - Great Rivers Greenway's priorities respond to expansion of park, open space and trail facilities, as well as the maturation of the District.



2010

Regional Plan Update

Recognizing the immense progress that has been made over ten years of building the River Ring, the Plan Update resets the course for Great Rivers Greenway to gradually shift priorities toward promoting the system for increased use and initiating strategies to ensure greenway facilities are sustained in perpetuity.

2020

Launching Great Rivers Greenway's Third Decade

Over the following ten years Great Rivers Greenway will utilize its network of partners to leverage investment in the River Ring while expanding its outreach to promote greenway activity, programs and stewardship across the region.

2004

Citizen-Driven Regional Plan

When the Regional Plan was adopted, several important milestones were achieved: it established the *Building the River Ring* concept; began promoting social, environmental and economic benefits; and rebranded the District as Great Rivers Greenway.

2000-2001

Clean Water, Safe Parks and Community Trails Initiative

Following the passage of Proposition C, the first actions to set up the Metropolitan Park and Recreation District (MPRD) included appointment of the Board, hiring of staff and selection of the executive director. This built the organizational infrastructure of the District as it exists today.

Soon thereafter, MPRD began funding projects that were already underway when Proposition C was passed, such as Meramec Greenway, Confluence Greenway and Grant's Trail. A high priority was placed on getting greenway facilities in the ground to quickly demonstrate early success and tangible investment with taxpayer resources.

2060s

Great Rivers Greenway's Sustained Future

Fifty years from now the citizens of the region will appreciate the River Ring with the pride and fondness we have for Forest Park today. Greenways will essentially promote themselves as an increasingly ubiquitous community asset. At that point, a balance between building and sustaining may be the most prudent way to ensure the perpetual state of high quality and safe conditions for River Ring facilities.

2030s

Future Generations of Greenway Users

By the time Great Rivers Greenway celebrates its 30th anniversary, there will be several generations of greenway users who will have grown up using the region's many greenways. These future St. Louisans will never know this region *without* the River Ring, just as many current generations cannot recall St. Louis without the Arch.

Promoting the River Ring will eventually become less necessary over time. However, as the network begins to show its age, maintaining its quality and condition will become increasingly important.

Action Plan

Purpose of the River Ring

Continue or commence actions targeting the eight strategies that address the Purpose of the River Ring, making the St. Louis region a better place to live.

Typically, the strategies devised to support the overall purpose of the River Ring encompass the entire network of greenways or apply to Great Rivers Greenway as an organization. These strategies are intended to help Great Rivers Greenway in its current efforts and expand upon its existing base of partnerships to leverage building, promoting and sustaining resources for the District as a whole.

The additional 32 strategies supporting the five River Ring Goals are generally more applicable to individual greenway corridor projects, as indicated by the three Demonstration Projects.



Figure 15 - Innovative and bold strategies successfully promote the River Ring, such as the Grant's Trail bridge over I-44 in Kirkwood, and reach an audience of tens of thousands of commuters daily.

Regional Collaboration

Strengthen relationships with other regional organizations to collaborate on existing and future quality of life and infrastructure initiatives.

Collaboration between Great Rivers Greenway and the various regional decision making bodies will be an effective, and necessary, step toward making the St. Louis region a better place to live. Great Rivers Greenway will continue to collaborate on regional infrastructure and quality of life issues such as Metro's Moving Transit Forward Plan; East-West Gateway's Long-Range Transportation Plan and its Great Streets Initiative; Metro East Park and Recreation District's Master Plan; Trailnet's Livable St. Louis Network; and the multi-organizational sponsored Sustainable Communities Regional Plan coordinated by East-West Gateway Council of Governments.

In addition, Great Rivers Greenway has led the Regional Bicycle Master Plan effort, working in partnership with a variety of public agency and non-profit partners. The plan will guide the development of a regional on-street bicycle network with consistent design standards and signage throughout the River Ring. An interconnected system of on-street routes and trails in greenways will create a seamless network providing greater bicycle transportation access. Great Rivers Greenway will coordinate with local governments, state and local agencies and residents to ensure increased connectivity through a planned system.

Strengthen the Region's Sustainable Design and Practice

Continue to incorporate sustainable design practices and guidelines in District projects and activities.

Great Rivers Greenway will demonstrate its leadership in environmental stewardship by strengthening green standards in River Ring projects. The District will continue its efforts to implement sustainable trail and park facility planning and design standards throughout the River Ring.

Sustainable planning and design standards will affect the public and private partners that work with Great Rivers Greenway on various projects. The District will work collaboratively with our partners to understand the benefits of sustainable practices. Ultimately, the region's upfront investment in efficiency and sustainability will conserve future resources for long-term operations and maintenance.



Figure 16 - Forest Park, the intersection and trailhead of numerous River Ring greenways, is among the country's best example of a park's positive impact on regional quality of life.

Calibrating Priorities

Strategically adjust District priorities to reflect the importance of building, promoting and sustaining the River Ring.

Use regular Board and staff meetings, budgeting process, annual reports and public feedback to evaluate commitment of resources and priorities among the broad categories of building, promoting and sustaining within the 17 active greenways in the River Ring. In the early years of Great Rivers Greenway, the highest priority was placed on building greenway facilities. However, there is growing need to focus more attention and resources on issues related to promoting greenway use and their long-term sustainability. It is expected that in the future, as the River Ring gains popularity it will be self-promoting, leaving more resources for building and sustaining.



Figure 17 - Environmental stewardship activities with hands-on citizen participation, such as native planting and prairie seeding programs in the Confluence Greenway, build pride and a sense of ownership while reducing short and long-term cost.

Raising Awareness and Participation of Greenways

Increase active participation, understanding and commitment to the River Ring by citizens, community, regional and corporate leaders.

Great Rivers Greenway continues its tradition of meaningful citizen engagement to fulfill its mission to build a clean, green and connected St. Louis region. The District will redesign its website with useful information on the District’s trails and parks while enhancing opportunities for residents to engage with Great Rivers Greenway staff on specific projects and initiatives. New forms of social media, marketing and other informal and formal community outreach will be developed.

Additionally, the District continues to partner with public and non-profits organizations supporting activities and events within River Ring greenways that raise awareness of park and trail facilities and cultivate opportunities to sustain the River Ring for future generations.



Figure 18 - Strategically located River Ring messaging targets greenway users, communicating amenities and awareness to likely new users such as local residents, commuters and visitors.

Measuring Achievements

Compile a database of measurable achievements on each greenway to evaluate progress toward achieving River Ring goals.

While implementing greenway projects, Great Rivers Greenway will document relevant information consistently to enable the District to establish baselines for evaluating future impacts. Determining progress and success is a long-term endeavor with complex variables. Accurate data collected at regular intervals, including trail user counts and evaluating perceptions of safety and quality, will be valuable for undertaking future studies.



Figure 19 - Greenway bicycle trails and other facilities offer a range of popular activities that enhance the quality of life throughout the region.

The Great Rivers Greenway District works for a **clean, green, connected** St. Louis region.

To deliver its mission, the District is spearheading the development of **The River Ring**, an interconnected system of greenways, parks and trails that will encircle the St. Louis region, enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors.



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