

Increasing species movement

Chattanooga Greenways, Tennessee, USA

Background

Greenways are linear open spaces along natural or man-made features such as rivers or railways. The word is most commonly used in North America, where it can cover anything from a strict conservation area to a recreational or low-impact transport route. The Chattanooga and Hamilton County Greenway in Tennessee, USA, is an example of how linear green infrastructure can run right through a large city, with multiple benefits.

Materials and Methods

History

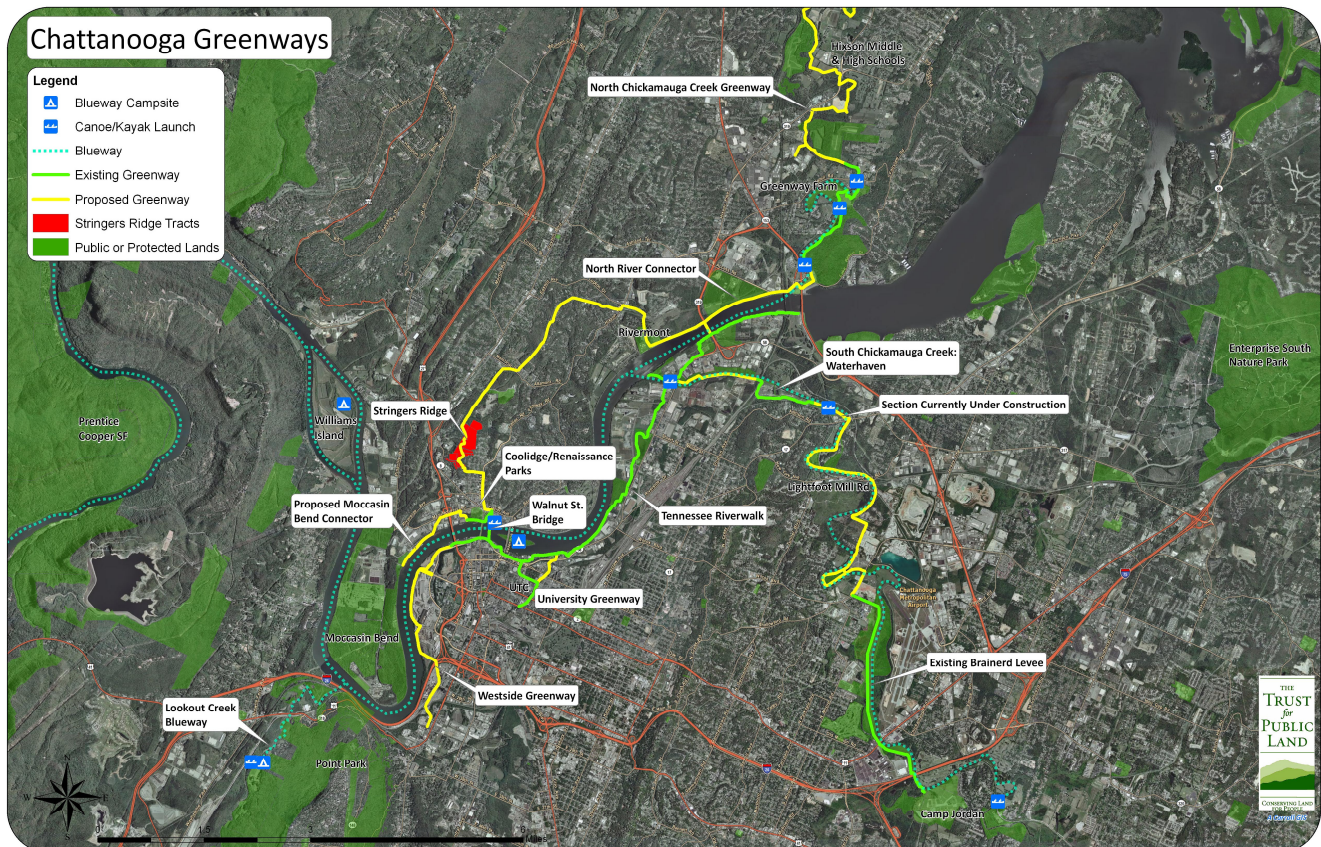
Thirty years ago Chattanooga suffered economic deprivation and pollution, having one of the most polluted rivers in the USA. A large area of abandoned land ran alongside the Tennessee river where factories and iron foundries had existed.

The first section of the greenway, the Tennessee River Park, was created in the late 1980s. The Greenway Advisory Board was convened by the City of Chattanooga authorities in 1989. Described as a 'citizen's task force', the board is largely formed from grassroots organisations from across the city, who advocated a high quality greenway path along the riverfront, creeks and scenic corridors that connected housing, parks, businesses and tourist attractions. The authorities decided to build a 16 km park along each side of the Tennessee River.

To assist in the planning and implementation, the city contracted with the Trust for Public Land (a non-profit organisation), to provide technical assistance, co-ordination, land purchases and land protection for the greenways. Land for the greenways and most of the easements had been donated.

Results

- Today, Chattanooga is seen as one of the most attractive places to live in America, and as a 'laboratory' for new urban ideas.
- Investment in the greenway appears to have inspired developers, and led to further investment. As shown in the figure, the original Tennessee River Park has been expanded and now runs along both sides of a 16 km stretch of river.



The Chattanooga and Hamilton County Greenway Network (reproduced from the Trust for Public Land, www.tpl.org/images/tn_chattgreeway_map09full.jpg).

- There is still a great deal of sedimentation and pollution in the river, with fish numbers are lower in urban than in forested areas in the surrounding Hamilton County.
- In some areas the soils still contain high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH). However, the urban parks along the route contain a range of wildlife such as coyotes, snapping turtles and wild turkeys.

Discussion

The strength of the Chattanooga greenways networks, in contrast to some other cities with large-scale greenway network plans, is that the main co-ordinating body is citizen-led, based on the original Greenway Advisory Board, now called the Chattanooga Greenways Task Force.

Future plans

Chattanooga is networking the greenways into a linear park reserved for environmental and recreational use. As shown in the figure, one greenway that follows the North Chickamauga Creek for more than 6 km (of its proposed 24 km route) connects to the Greenway Farm, a 180-acre (73 ha) facility used as a park, which features a renovated farmhouse used as a conference centre. On the south side of the

Tennessee River, the 35 km greenway is 40% complete and will eventually link the Chickamauga Dam with the Tennessee Aquarium.

Four other greenways will link the Tennessee Aquarium, parks, and neighbourhoods while providing protected trails for people to ride bikes, jog, walk and commute. With the completed greenways and another 120-160 km of greenway planned for the future, the community has generated pride and enthusiasm that is considered a benchmark for other communities.

Reference

Erickson, D.L. (2004). Connecting corridors: implementing metropolitan greenway networks in North America. In: *Ecological networks and greenways: concepts, design, implementation*, eds R.H.G.Jongman and G.Pungetti. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.