

FINAL REPORT

Village of Holly: Shiawassee Trails Phase I
Pre-development Grant #2002-1185 from GreenWays Initiative of the
Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan
September 2002 – September 2003

Implementation of the Program

The Village of Holly acted as fiduciary agent for Headwaters Trails, Inc., a not-for-profit coordinating group, that oversaw all aspects of the grant. The scope of the project was too extensive to subcontract to a single planning firm, so, per the proposed budget, the separate tasks were divided among several contractors. A project coordinator was hired to manage the planning, local collaboration, stake holder involvement and land ownership issues. Since the proposal consisted of trails in three jurisdictions, the respective engineering firms normally serving those municipalities were engaged to provide services from site inventory to concept design to final plans. Local firms, local individuals and county agencies accomplished other specific tasks, such as design of signage, mapping, and resource inventory.

Trail 1: A canoe/kayak water heritage trail on the Shiawassee River between the Village of Holly (Oakland County) and the City of Fenton (Genesee County). Length 7 miles.

The water route was mapped and the adjacent owners and parcels were identified with the assistance of Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services. Preliminary reconnaissance, historic analysis and photographic documentation were completed so that it was possible to discuss the route's status as one of the first Water Heritage Trails in Michigan. Affiliation with this statewide program was an unexpected development that will add stature to the completed route. The trail will be listed on the web site being developed by Dr. Dave Lemberg of WMU and educational materials and tourist listings will accompany it.

The coordinator made presentations to the Parks Boards of Holly Village, Holly Township and the City of Fenton and obtained Resolutions of Support from each. Midway through the project, the Community Development Block Grant Funds, which the Village of Holly Parks Commission earmarked for development of the proposed launch site, became unavailable due to a revised census, which excluded that area. The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Development grant that had been submitted in April 2003 suddenly had no matching funds, and the decision was made to withdraw the application for a parking lot, trail extension, footbridge and canoe launch in favor of reapplication in 2004 with different match funding.

Public support for this route remained high through 3 public hearings and monthly meetings of Headwaters Trails, Inc. The proposal to restart the annual canoe race, which had been a spring event for forty years, met with local enthusiasm. A preliminary letter of approval to fund the canoe launch itself was received from Recreational Equipment Incorporated.

Coordination of signage with Holly's Downtown Development Authority, the police department, Water Heritage Trails specifications and landowner concerns have proceeded to the point of concept drawings. Negotiations will continue when a new DDA director is hired and Dr. Lemberg's team sets its standards. The usual riparian concerns have not surfaced in this project, perhaps because of the offer to provide "No Trespassing" signs to landowners and combine them with river mileage markers.

Historic low water conditions forced some rethinking. A canoe portage location has been proposed, financed by Pulte Development, and will likely be built in the next year. Also, trash removal by the "Shiawassee River Ducks," a volunteer group, has successfully removed natural and artificial obstacles along the 7 mile river route. That group will redirect its effort to natural stream rechannelization in future years in order to make the Shiawassee floatable along its entire length from Holly's WaterWorks Park to Fenton's Strom Park. It was also decided that no canoe livery would be based in Holly, although there has been some interest in private enterprises based elsewhere.

Pre-development planning is 90% complete for this trail and the remaining tasks take time to materialize rather than money. The one disappointment is that, to date, we have not been able to secure land for a canoe launch/take out at a midpoint on the river. This will not prevent the project from going forward, however.

Trail 2: A connector between Downtown Holly and Sorensen Park in Holly Township, with a new added walking loop. Length: 2.8 miles including loop.

Walking and bicycling paths were surveyed in the Village of Holly and along East Holly Road, leading to the trailhead in Sorensen Park. A scenic vantage point at the south end of the park was dedicated in June as the Charles Harding Mott II Shiawassee Overlook and wood-chipped park pathways were improved to reach that endpoint. Preliminary surveying has been completed and we are awaiting the contracted, but not yet completed, final plans for the multi-use path extension along East Holly Road within Holly Township.

A noticed public hearing was held on this route and letters sent to every parcel owner since a previous proposal met with opposition in the mid-1990's. The coordinator visited all the homes in the township portion where no sidewalk exists now. There was only support this time around. A few homeowners requested that the pathway be built soon because the newly constructed county road lacks sufficient shoulder.

An added loop has been proposed as a result of stakeholder comment. This will link Lakeside Park, an unused exercise trail by the cemetery and a boat launch on Bush Lake to the main trail along Maple Street. This residential walking path evolved from discussions about starting a new sanctioned walk/run to coordinate with the village's winter Dickens Festival. The name was irresistible: "Run Like the Dickens." The first annual event will be held this December 13th. The residential loop will encourage local residents to get into shape to participate and the event itself will be a fundraiser for the high school track team.

Predevelopment planning of Trail 2 will be complete upon receipt of the Road Commission of Oakland County's approval of the preliminary engineering design. The same signage design mentioned in Trail 1 will give a uniform look to each of the trails in this Phase I proposal.

Trail 3: A connector between Downtown Holly and Seven Lakes State Park in Holly Township with spurs to accommodate new development. Length: 3.1 miles.

In return for increased density in a new 900+ home development along the village border, Holly Township has required a pathway as a public amenity through the multiple areas being built by Pulte Development. Its construction is assured since a full Master Plan for the pathway is a condition of approving the next phase of construction. Furthermore, “miles of trails” have become a marketing strategy of Riverside Development. Since the construction is on an accelerated schedule, this portion of Trail 3 is likely to be completed by 2005.

The route of Trail 3 within the village has been finalized and will follow existing sidewalks with an identified bike route along village streets. Preliminary engineering by Rowe Incorporated has been completed, including crosswalk design.

The state DNR has agreed in concept to the connection to Seven Lakes State Park, although there is a statewide freeze on new trail development at the moment. Thus pre-development planning has proceeded as far as possible with Trail 3.

Further aspects of Trail 3 have evolved in talks with Pulte Development’s Landscape Architect. Spurs between their Phase I homes and their apartment complex area and the main portion of the trail are now on the table. Also, Pulte has made a preliminary offer to construct a canoe/kayak portage, a river viewing area and a small fishing pier where the trail spur crosses the Shiawassee River. The details have yet to be worked out, but the win-win advantages for the new homeowners and the general public are significant. When completed, this complex of recreational options could be a precedent setting benchmark for all future development in this area.

Trail 4: A connector between WaterWorks Park in Holly Village and Camp Has-O-Rec in Rose Township. Potential distance: approx. 1.6 miles.

As indicated in our original proposal, this trail route presented numerous difficulties. The trail, however, represents the country walk or ride that most people envision as a rural trail and we feel strongly that it should be completed. The proposed endpoint is an unused school camp, which abuts both Rose Oaks County Park and an electric utility corridor. Since these features offer clear possibilities for future trail extensions, predevelopment money was used for evaluation of the difficult road/RR crossing, the proposed pathway along Milford Road and the rehabilitation of the abandoned school camp building. Remaining problems are land acquisition, crossing the railroad a second time, overcoming the county’s resistance to developing a master plan for Rose Oaks, winning support for use of the utility corridor and developing a financing plan.

Rose Township is supportive, however. The whole trail lies in that municipality except the common trailhead in WaterWorks Park in Holly Village. The township contributed planning and engineering time and is rewriting its Parks and Recreation Plan. Further predevelopment actions will have to await funding opportunities (SAFE-TEA funds?) and Oakland County support for a coordinated approach to the affected utilities.

Final Budget

Attached is the final budget. \$50,549.09 was spent by September 15, 2003. Note that \$3450.91 remains unspent, and, is returned to the Community Foundation. We hope this balance will contribute to funding your required audit.

No alteration of line item amounts was sought nor any granted. Only one line item, Public Workshops, ran over the estimated budget. Taking into account the 11.65% reduction in funds granted vs. funds sought, it was nevertheless possible to accomplish almost everything as proposed in the grant application.

A number of checks issued against contracts written by September 15 have not been cashed as the date of this report. The audit if performed quickly should take that into account. The "Outstanding Work" is detailed in a second budget page attached. Explanation of why these amounts are outstanding appears in the Evaluation narrative below.

Note also, the unspent funds in the "Report/copying/title issues" line item. It was hoped that land for a second canoe launch/take-out and land associated with completing Trail 4 could have been researched and in some way secured during this grant period, but it was not to be. Willing sellers were not located as predicted when the grant budget was constructed.

Please feel free to ask for further clarification if these budget charts are not sufficiently clear.

Evaluation

This GreenWays Initiative Pre-development Grant succeeded in bringing the northwest Oakland communities together to connect the recreational resources of the area and to forge a partnership to make the vision of a trail network a reality. Private and public entities are now involved and there is broad support for an interconnected trail system that will define a high quality of life standard for residents and visitors. The details of 3 trails were defined. Work on the fourth trail, as expected, revealed possibilities for future development.

The grant led the local communities (Holly Twp., Holly Village, Rose and Groveland) to rewrite their master plans and expand their thinking about greenways. The Village of Holly underwrote a substantial part of the preliminary engineering. Additional development in WaterWorks Park to establish a trailhead and an additional residential loop were unexpected pluses that arose from stakeholder requests. Collaboration with the Shiawassee River Task Force led to a proposed easement on village wetlands and a proposed acquisition of a scenic, but landlocked, property at the eastern trail terminus. Collaboration with the school district led to plans for an unused facility, support for the "Walk to School" movement and a fund raising opportunity for the track team. Close consultation with the DDA led to economic stimulus plans and future area promotions.

Perhaps more could have been accomplished if the first Project Coordinator had moved expeditiously ahead. It was necessary to terminate her employment and hire a

short-term replacement in the 10th month of the grant period. However, probably as much as could be expected within the grant parameters was completed from July to September 2003, because the groundwork had been laid down earlier. The summer timetable left some work contracted for but incomplete on September 15th. Thus the extended conclusion of work itemized on the “Outstanding Work” budget page.

Nevertheless, the grant objectives were met and preliminary engineering is now in place making it possible to move ahead, seeking public and private support for the trail network. Moreover, public support for the concept has been established and will continue to be cultivated through the Headwaters Trails website <www.headwaterstrailsinc.org>

Special mention should be made of the extraordinary support provided by Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services (OCPEDS). The map and design services they offered legitimized all our efforts and made communication among potential partners much easier.

In conclusion, sincere thanks are due to the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan for its visionary support of this and other GreenWays proposals. The confidence communicated by the GreenWays Initiative staff in our efforts helped us achieve our goals despite setbacks.

Future Plans

There are immediate and long-term steps that will be taken with the objective of constructing each of the four trails as well as developing WaterWorks Park as a central trailhead. Funding is of course the biggest hurdle, so opportunities to leverage this pre-development grant rise to the top of the itemized list below.

A Phase II plan will be necessary to complete Trail 4 and will incorporate trail extensions and link-ups with the projected Oakland County Trail Network as outlined by OCPEDS. Current discussions with the National Veterans Cemetery in northern Holly Township, coordination with the Genesee-Lapeer-Shiawassee Greenways Collaborative, plans for cross county linkage with Livingston County as well as networking with many others through continued participation in the Oakland County Trail Advisory Council—all these actions already begun will undoubtedly lead to a lengthening of the following list:

1. Apply for a GreenWays Initiative Implementation Grant in December 2003
2. Reapply for the preliminarily approved REI funding for a canoe launch in 2004
3. Reapply to MNRTF for WaterWorks Park development in April 2004
4. Coordinate with Water Heritage Trail planners (2003-04)
5. Participate in a NAWCA grant application in February 2004
6. Apply to the NPS Rivers and Trails program for assistance (Trail 1)
7. Investigate timing of a SAF-TEA grant for Rose Township (Trail 4)
8. Research other grant possibilities for all our proposed trails
9. Continue negotiations with Pulte Development re Trail 3
10. Develop an extended fundraising campaign
11. Solicit local memberships and donations to Headwaters Trails, Inc.
12. Assist with hosting “Run Like the Dickens” in December 2003
13. Assist with restarting a spring canoe race sponsored by Midwest Canoe Racing Association (MCRA) from Holly to Fenton (Trail 1)

14. Conclude an agreement for usage of Camp Has-O-Rec (Trail 4)
15. Create an exercise trail in WaterWorks Park in Spring 2004
16. Refurbish the exercise stations along Bush Lake (Trail 2 Loop)
17. Secure CDGB funding for Trail 2 in Holly in 2004-05
18. Continue talks to extend the trail network north (Holly Hills, Holly State Recreation Area, National Veterans Cemetery, City of Grand Blanc)
19. Continue to participate in collaborative partnerships with the Holly Area Chamber of Commerce and the Holly Downtown Development Authority
20. Seek trail linkages with each of the northwest Oakland townships
21. Focus on trail possibilities for the future civic center sites in Holly and Rose Townships
22. Maintain local and state contacts with trail related groups.

Thank you for the encouragement to dream
and the support to turn dream into reality.