

**GreenWays Initiative**  
An initiative of  
**The Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan**  
**Green Forum II:**  
**Healthy Communities, Healthy People**  
April 16, 2003

Those who attended the Green Forum were given an opportunity to pose a question on a note card about greenways. During the forum, discussion groups addressed many of the questions presented. A number of questions focused on subject matter that wasn't included in any of the discussion groups. Those questions, with answers, are presented here. If you would like further clarification about a particular answer, or have a question prompted by one of the issues raised below, please contact either Tom Woiwode at [twoiwode@cfsem.org](mailto:twoiwode@cfsem.org) or Melissa McMillan at [mmcmillan@cfsem.org](mailto:mmcmillan@cfsem.org) at the Community Foundation.

Why is Livingston County a special grant community identified area? What does that mean?

A number of foundations are established for a specific purpose or geographic region. Known as "affiliated foundations", they are administered by the Community Foundation and are dedicated to support the charitable organizations and activities within that region of southeast Michigan. These affiliated foundations are led by local leaders dedicated to enhancing and preserving their respective communities.

The Community Foundation for Livingston County is one such affiliated foundation. Established by a group of community-minded leaders in 1991, it supports charitable activities and organizations that benefit the residents of Livingston County.

Livingston County does not hold any special status with the GreenWays Initiative.

What can you tell me about congregational grants that have been awarded (by the Community Foundation)?

The Community Foundation makes grants from a variety of funds and programs, including flexible/unrestricted funds, field-of-interest funds and scholarship programs. Some are from targeted grantmaking programs that focus on specific issues such as tutoring, parenting and community economic development. Donor advised grants come from funds that allow donors to stay involved as advisors to the funds.

Congregations have benefited from the range of funding programs available at the Community Foundation. Recent grants to congregations have supported family night, after-school, youth and family, drug prevention, beautification, grieving, and summer youth programs. A complete list of congregations that have received grants from the

Community Foundation can be found in the Community Foundation's Yearbook, available at no charge by contacting the Community Foundation at (313) 961-6675.

No congregations have applied for GreenWays Initiative grants thus far.

### What is 501(c)3 and how do we determine if our community qualifies?

The Internal Revenue Code (the Federal Tax Code) includes a section that refers to nonprofit organizations and the services they provide. The different types of nonprofit organizations are listed under Section 501(c) of the Code. Section 501(c)3 describes those types of organizations that, by virtue of their stated purpose, are exempt from federal taxation, and for whom charitable contributions are tax deductible. Many funding sources (including the Community Foundation) require that a grant applicant be either a tax-exempt public charity organized under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, or be a political jurisdiction (township, village, city, county, etc.) or agency of a governmental unit in order to receive a grant. The above qualifications are the same for GreenWays Initiative grants as well as other programs at the Community Foundation.

If you are a member of a nonprofit organization, you should consult the attorney who incorporated the organization, or check the organization's legal documents. Organizations that qualify under Section 501(c)3 have received a letter from the Internal Revenue Service confirming their status.

### What do funders look for when reviewing grant applications?

In its grantmaking programs, the Community Foundation gives priority to programs that reflect one or more of the following characteristics:

- Develops or tests new solutions to community problems
- Improves the quality of nonprofit organizations by means of more efficient and effective operations
- Responds to a unique opportunity to move the region forward
- Facilitates cooperation and collaboration among organizations
- Encourages volunteerism and civic and community involvement

All grant requests should include a description of the need for the proposed project, a description of the potential impact of the project, including a description of the persons or groups that will benefit, some detailed work plans and the timeframe for accomplishing the project's objectives, an indication as to whether the proposed activity is new, expanded or an ongoing part of the organization's programming, and a description of the expected outcomes and impact of the proposed project.

Stated differently, the Community Foundation (including the GreenWays Initiative) looks for the greatest impact that will serve the largest number of people or will provide a significant benefit to a large population of people in need. The case has to be compelling; it also has to be "doable," that is, the project must be realistic in terms of

scope of activity or service. And the organization must have the institutional mission, commitment and capacity to do what it represents will be done.

We encourage potential applicants to contact us prior to any application being submitted, to discuss the project and its appropriateness for Community Foundation consideration.

What are the most common mistakes people make when writing proposals/preparing applications?

Perhaps the biggest mistake is not talking to someone from the Community Foundation before submitting an application. A pre-application conversation can provide potential applicants with some guidance as to the various funding options within the Community Foundation, and give representatives of the Community Foundation an idea of the plans the applicants have for their community.

Other issues include the failure to outline the issue that prompts the funding request, or to describe it in enough detail for the readers to appreciate its significance; a failure to link the activity being proposed in the grant application to the issue to be addressed, to show how the funds will resolve the issue; an inability to distinguish between the proposed project and other projects of similar nature; a lack of clarity as to how the proposed project fits into the applicant's mission and long-term institutional vision; lack of institutional planning to anticipate what will happen once the funding from the Community Foundation ends; a far more grandiose statement of likely outcomes than can be realistically expected; and lack of institutional capacity to be able to see the proposed project through to completion.

“Prettier” is not necessarily better. Glossy brochures and expensively created application materials will not make up for a proposal without substance.

How are people protected from crime (on greenways)?

One of the most commonly raised, yet most misunderstood, issues regarding the creation of greenways has to do with the possibility of “introducing crime” into a community. Because greenways link communities, concerns are often raised about inviting in an “unsavory element.” That is simply not true.

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) has done extensive studies of crime on trails around the country. On trail after trail, RTC studies have shown that crime is actually lower along the trails than it is in the greater community, often significantly. The reason is because of the increased number of eyes on the street. As the use of the trails increase, the increased presence has consistently shown to be a strong deterrent to crime, and thus, crimes on greenways have shown a marked decrease from crimes in the community as a whole. For more information about these studies, visit the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy at [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org).

Another way communities have responded to concern about crime is to create a patrol route that includes the greenways and trails. Police officers on bikes have been used effectively to patrol trails, which again helps address concerns a community might have about crime.

Are the current greenways lit? Are they used at night?

Each community is responsible for the operation and maintenance of greenways that fall within its jurisdiction. That includes lighting, which is the obligation of each of the municipalities.

Even those that may not be lit, however, are usually open to the public 24 hours a day. Greenways are being designed for public use and enjoyment; and many people enjoy using this important community benefit in the evening or early in the morning.

Is there an umbrella 501 (c)3 organization that grassroots groups can link with for fundraising, liability protection, networking, etc.?

Several of the trails that include multiple municipalities have created trail commissions that include representation and involvement from all the municipalities affected by the trails. That institutional structure has been developed to address some of the concerns raised in the question.

However, not all trails have created a trail commission. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has worked with local organizations and municipalities to develop systems that respond to such community needs. Their national Web site, with Michigan links, can be viewed at [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org). The Michigan office can be reached at (517) 485-6022.

How do you address the barrier of inclement weather? Rain, snow, cold weather, it seems, would pose a significant barrier to consistent daily exercise.

One of the objectives of the GreenWays Initiative is to encourage people to experience the out-of-doors in a healthy and aesthetically pleasing way. In a climate like Michigan's, that comes with the challenges of seasonal changes. Some seasonal activities, however, can contribute directly to a healthier lifestyle. Cross-country skiing, for example, is a healthy way to enjoy winter outdoors.

If the objective is to exercise on a daily basis, rather than to enjoy outdoor activities, individuals should identify an indoor exercise regimen that could be used in inclement weather. No matter how one views the reason for the development of greenways, however, communities creating greenways give users the option of enjoying them whenever they wish to.

Where are we in creating rail-trails within Detroit?

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, through a grant from the GreenWays Initiative, recently published a report on rail-trail opportunities within the city. That report, released in early April, identifies 10 abandoned rail corridors within or connecting to the city that may have the potential to be converted into rail-trails. The report is available online at the GreenWays Initiative Web site at <http://greenways.cfsem.org>.

Can a system of kiosks or signs that includes signs outside the “official” greenway be proposed for CFSEM (GreenWays) funding?

For aspects of a trail that are not a physical part of the landscape to be considered for GreenWays funding, they must relate directly to the greenway being constructed; and must be included as a part of an overall greenways construction plan (support for the amenities cannot be requested independent of the trail or greenway construction itself).

If the request was submitted to the Community Foundation, for consideration from a pot of money other than GreenWays, it would likely be best characterized as educational in nature. However, because of limited funds for educational programs, the Community Foundation strongly encourages such requests to be developed as a part of a greenway development program, and funneled through the GreenWays Initiative.

Are funds available for purchasing and planting trees, bushes, shrubs, etc., for a community park?

Any requests for investments in trees and greenery must be included within a larger request for support for the construction of greenways to be considered by the GreenWays Initiative. If requested for a community park, it is important to show how that community park is part of a larger network of green spaces, and how they are all linked. Trees, etc. can be used to create that link.

Other than the GreenWays Initiative, there are no special pots of money within the Community Foundation to support such an activity. Any request made independent of the GreenWays Initiative would likely be considered from the Community Foundation endowment, which has considerable demands on its resources because of the breadth of activities funded by the endowment.

Would there be funding available for the preservation and upgrade of land donated to a nonprofit serving eight southeast Michigan counties’ youth?

It depends upon what is being asked as to whether such support is appropriate for consideration under the GreenWays Initiative. If the property is a part of a larger network of greenways and green spaces, and the request seeks to design and/or construct linkages to connect the green network, it would meet one of the criteria for consideration. If the focus is entirely on enhancements to a particular park, with no plans to connect the park to other resources in the community, and to other communities, it would not meet the criteria for GreenWays consideration. The grants guidelines specifically state that pocket, neighborhood or community parks are not eligible for GreenWays funding; and

linkages and connections to other communities and neighborhoods are required. A copy of the GreenWays Initiative grants guidelines can be found at the Community Foundation Web site at [greenways.cfsem.org](http://greenways.cfsem.org).

These projects cost millions. But typical grants are much smaller. How do you convince local leaders to commit scarce public funds to greenways development? Do you suggest a millage?

In addition to the GreenWays Initiative, there are a number of other funding sources, mostly public funds, available in the form of grants for the planning, development and construction of greenways. They include such funding opportunities as the TEA-21 program through the Michigan Department of Transportation; the Natural Resources Trust Fund, administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources; and the Coastal Management Program, overseen by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (there are many more public funding programs that may be appropriate). These and other funding sources will be featured at an upcoming GreenWays Initiative event, the Funders Workshop, to be held in August 2003. For more information, check this Web site regularly.

The Trust for Public Land, the Land Trust Alliance and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy have all done extensive studies on the different ways communities have used to fund trail and conservation projects, including the use of millages. For more information from these different organizations, please check their Web sites at [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org) (Trust for Public Land), [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org) (Land Trust Alliance), and [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org) (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy).

I am coming up against people (politicians/residents) who do not want us to pave pathways because it may take down trees and creates impermeable surfaces. I need some good material to support creating paved paths for alternative transportation—any advice/sources to support paved trails?

One of the best books we've seen on trails design is Greenways: A Guide to Planning, Design and Development, written by Charles A. Flink and Robert M. Searns (Island Press, copyright 1993). The authors describe the different kinds of trails and construction materials, and the merits and demerits of each.

The Surface Transportation Policy Project also has a wealth of information and reports describing the benefits of alternative forms of transportation. They can be found at [www.stpp.org](http://www.stpp.org).

What tools can be used to get developers as well as potential homeowners of a development to become a part of building networks to connect to trailways?

A number of communities in Michigan have created different kinds of protective or set-aside ordinances that require that a certain amount of land in a development be set aside and remain as open space. In several communities, where developments were being put

in along planned trail routes, developers, recognizing the value trails would add to their developments, have included trail construction in their plans. The Urban Land Institute may be able to offer some guidance on what communities are doing and how they're doing it. They can be reached at [www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org).

How can our agency find other agencies who have similar interest, i.e. our agency is interested in beautifying our neighborhoods?

If your agency is in or near Detroit, you may want to contact the Greening of Detroit, which works closely with nonprofit organizations and city agencies in restoring the landscape of the city. Their Web site is [www.greeningofdetroit.org](http://www.greeningofdetroit.org).

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy of Michigan works with local communities to develop trails and greenways commissions that work on multi-jurisdictional collaborative projects. They can be reached at [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org) by following the links to the Michigan Chapter.