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Project Greenway investment worth every dollar spent

There are many compelling reasons to build a greenway in downtown Greensboro. The four-mile urban loop can provide fitness opportunities and health benefits for all city residents, improve the environment, strengthen connections within and across neighborhoods and foster vibrant public art.

But here's the single biggest reason why city leaders should prioritize the Downtown Greenway for immediate and significant investment: It will stimulate much-needed economic growth.

With \$5.6 million in private funds committed by leading foundations and \$7 million in street improvement bonds already approved by voters, the greenway is poised to become a signature project for our city. It can raise national awareness of our outdoor amenities and commitment to a green economy, helping catapult Greensboro onto the country's short list of great places to live and work.

A group of 18 civically engaged Greensboro professionals — including economists, financial analysts, attorneys and leaders in the health and public policy sectors — recently formed Project Greenway, a citizen advocacy group supporting economic development in Greensboro through creation of the greenway.

The group's extensive study of research papers, government documents



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and news reports found strong evidence of economic benefits from urban greenways and trails in more than 25 U.S. cities. Greenways spark new and existing business development; increase property values and municipal revenues; heighten commercial activity; and attract talented professionals.

In Greensboro, where the first mile of the greenway is under construction, we already see the impact.

Deep Roots Market chose to move to North Eugene Street to be in close proximity

to a future leg of the greenway. Local developer Marty Kotis bought five acres on Battleground Avenue, where he is planning 50,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, in part because of the expectation that the greenway will soon connect to the existing Atlantic & Yadkin Greenway north of downtown. Several other vacant properties primed for use near the planned greenway are being eyed by developers.

And this is not an isolated trend.

The presence of the Catawba River Greenway was influential in Caterpillar's decision to relocate to Morganton. The greenway system in Indianapolis is credited with \$140 million in increased property values. The Lake Merritt Greenbelt in Oakland was found to add \$41 million to surrounding property val-

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ues. Research shows that urban trails may save up to \$450,000 a year from single-occupancy vehicle trips avoided and garner cities nearly \$20 million in medical care savings related to increased recreation. We found similar evidence in cities across 15 states.

By building on the core dimensions of what makes Greensboro great, the greenway can be a catalyst for the city's growing national reputation as an innovative, green and thriving community. Already, we have outstanding outdoor amenities, including publicly accessible lakes, a wide range of parks, ball fields, playgrounds and extensive

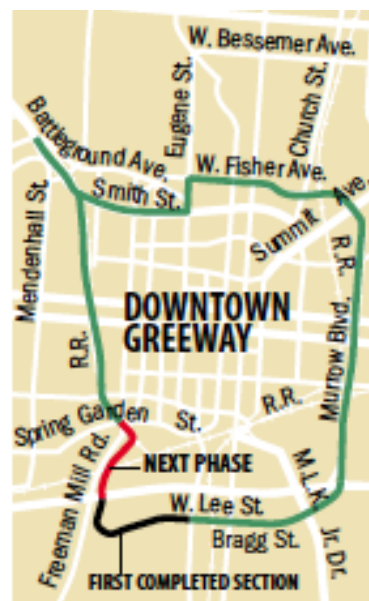
trails. We have ranked as a top 50 "green city" in Popular Science magazine. In March, The Washington Post featured "the new green Greensboro," highlighting our green buildings, transit infrastructure and agricultural movements.

The American Planning Association notes that U.S. cities known for high concentrations of "knowledge workers" are those that offer a breadth of outdoor recreational activities, such as bicycling and walking trails. The Downtown Greenway can become a signature project that helps the city to attract and retain high-tech businesses, entrepreneurs and talented professionals essential to our long-term success.

The greenway also will make the center city more accessible for tens

of thousands of college students, injecting even more energy into efforts to revitalize downtown. Finally, it will be the latest example of successful public-private partnership in Greensboro, like those that led to Center City Park and the downtown baseball stadium, projecting to a national audience the city's continued ability to unify around initiatives that move the city forward in great strides.

At a time when businesses around the country and world are seeking locations that excite employees, offer a high quality of life, and express a culture of forward-looking vision, collaboration and innovation, we urge Greensboro's elected leaders to leverage our city's strengths by investing in the Downtown Greenway.



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