

GREENWAYS CAN BENEFIT THE OVER 50 CROWD IN ANY COMMUNITY

By Tripp Barrineau, PLA, Associate Vice President, Keck & Wood

Greenways are “year around” amenities that provide physical and mental benefits for all ages, fitness levels, and cultural backgrounds. They are particularly attractive due to the ease of use and access, connections to nature, and community building potential. So, in addition to parks and active recreation places, why should South Carolina (and the nation) invest more in greenways?

An important consideration should be to serve the rising population of residents over 50. According to SeniorLiving.org, almost 2 million residents in the state of South Carolina are eligible for senior discounts. In other words, more than 37% of the state’s population is over 50. Since people over the age of 65 in the U.S. have been traditionally underserved regarding recreation options, a way to improve this statistic today is to create a park experience that appeals to the active 50+ crowd. More greenways can be an integral part of the solution.

How can greenway design attract the active and non-active adult?

Greenways are different than traditional community parks in the sense they provide a connection between points of interest, which promotes pedestrian travel. They can weave and meander to tie a community together, or provide a direct, non-vehicular access to nature. This fundamental design is a great fitness benefit for the active middle-aged.

“The Lindsay Pettus Greenway has been a well-received amenity for the City of Lancaster, SC. The 10’ wide paved trail along the Gills creek provides a walkable amenity for our community that connects numerous residential areas to downtown. The gentle grades of the trail allow individuals of all ages and fitness levels to enjoy the outdoors and numerous ecosystems,” said Sherri Gregory, Lindsay Pettus Greenway Executive Director.

Another benefit of greenway design is the incorporation of park-like elements along the route for those who are a little more subdued in their wellness regimen. By designing elements such as fitness trail loops, plaza areas, nature pavilions, seating/rest areas along the route,

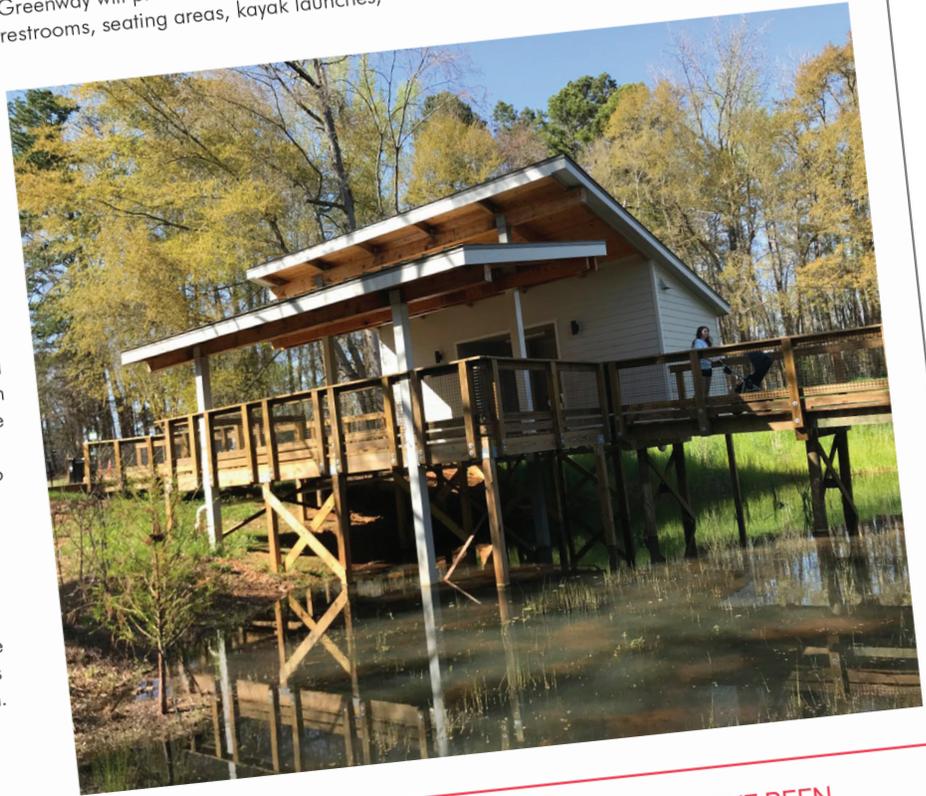
playgrounds, kayak launches, trailheads with parking and restroom amenities, the greenway can promote social interaction, volunteer opportunities, places to gather, places for exploration. Providing areas of social interaction can help individuals who are at risk from social isolation, which promotes a potentially dangerous sedentary lifestyle.

“The South Tyger River Greenway will provide outdoor recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors within the City of Greer, SC. The proposed greenway will allow individuals of all ages to experience nature and the natural beauty of the South Tyger River corridor. The South Tyger River Greenway will provide accessible parking, restrooms, seating areas, kayak launches,

and a river overlook to allowing for an enjoyable passive experience,” explained Ann Cunningham, City of Greer Director of Parks, Recreation, & Tourism.

Why should communities consider more greenways?

Greenway designs blend important aspects of fitness design with a community’s needs for traditional park amenities in a natural setting. For active middle-aged adults, greenways can provide a myriad of opportunities to get or stay fit, commune with nature, and spend quality time with friends and family. For a community, implementing a greenway can be a life-long amenity that would be cherished by citizens for generations to come.



SINCE PEOPLE OVER THE AGE OF 65 IN THE U.S. HAVE BEEN TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED REGARDING RECREATION OPTIONS, A WAY TO IMPROVE THIS STATISTIC TODAY IS TO CREATE A PARK EXPERIENCE THAT APPEALS TO THE ACTIVE 50+ CROWD.



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