

Great Rivers floats plan for greenway

BY PATRICK L. THIMANGU
pthimangu@bizjournals.com

As more residential and commercial developments sprout in St. Charles County, The Great Rivers Greenway District is moving ahead with plans to create new conservation and recreational space there.

Great Rivers is pursuing the development of a 36-mile network of trails and parks along Dardenne Creek, which feeds into the Mississippi River. The system would be known as Dardenne Greenway.

Nancy Ulman, project manager at Great Rivers, said the greenway would run from the Warren County-St. Charles County border eastward to the August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area — located in an unincorporated part of central St. Charles County — and pass through St. Peters, O'Fallon, Cottleville, Dardenne Prairie and possibly St. Charles.

Great Rivers is a tax-supported body charged with developing a system of interconnected parks and trails in the city of St. Louis and St. Louis and St. Charles counties. Its goal is to create a 600-mile network of greenways known as the River Ring.

Among projects Great Rivers already has completed are a two-mile extension of Grant's Trail and a four-mile addition to the River Des Peres Greenway. Grant's Trail runs from Reavis Barracks Road and Interstate 55 north to Pardee Road near Grant's Farm in St. Louis County and then on to Crestwood, Oakland and Kirkwood. The River Des Peres Greenway runs from Forest Park to the confluence of the River Des Peres and the Mississippi River.

Great Rivers hired Webster Groves-based SWT Design earlier this year to develop the conceptual plan for Dardenne Greenway.

Hunter Beckham, a landscape architect at SWT, said that work on Dardenne Greenway is still in the preliminary stages and it's too early to even have rough estimates on what the project would cost. He said the firm has a goal of developing a conceptual plan for the project next year.

Great Rivers hosted three public meetings last month in which it sought opinions on the project from residents and businesses, Beckham said. Attendance at the meetings was good, he said, and general support for the project appeared high.

Residents are interested in Dardenne Greenway because of an increased awareness of the environmental and health benefits of green space, Beckham said.

This type of trail/park system also can attract residential and commercial development, Ulman said.

She said development of greenway and green space in Denver, Minneapolis, San Antonio and Indianapolis has proved successful in attracting new residential and commercial development and added value to real estate.

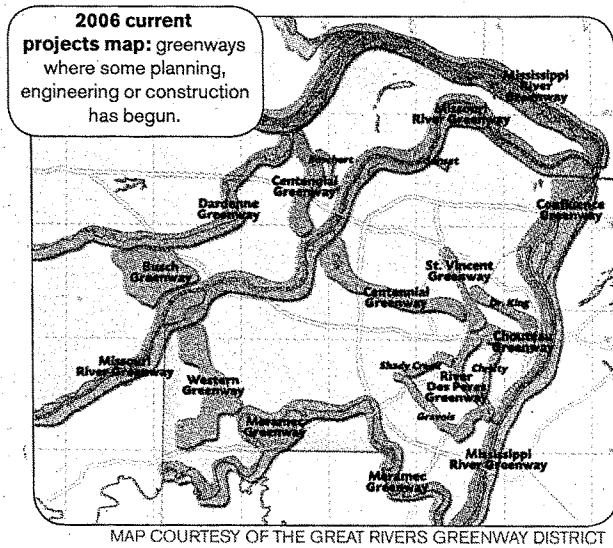
Ulman said Dardenne Greenway

also would connect new developments in St. Charles County. Those include Lakeside 370, a 300-acre park planned in St. Peters, and BaratHaven, a 200-acre mixed-use development that McEagle Properties LLC and Vantage Homes is building in Dardenne Prairie.

Dardenne Prairie Mayor Pamela Fogarty said she favors Dardenne Greenway because it would offer a number of environmental, social

and economic benefits. For example, the greenway would protect Dardenne Creek and its banks from encroachment by developers, she said.

In addition, the greenway fits in with Dardenne Prairie's ideal of encouraging the creation of compact communities where residents can easily walk or ride bicycles from one part of the neighborhood to another, Fogarty said.



MAP COURTESY OF THE GREAT RIVERS GREENWAY DISTRICT