

Regional Trails System Plan to Emerge from Interact for Health Grant

Organization awards grant to Groundwork Cincinnati/Mill Creek to develop strategy to link existing core paths and trails

Cincinnati – October 13, 2014 – [Interact for Health](http://InteractforHealth.org), a catalyst for health and wellness, announced today it has awarded a \$186,000 grant to the nonprofit Groundwork Cincinnati/Mill Creek (formerly called Mill Creek Restoration Project) for research and analysis of ways to connect existing and planned trails in the City of Cincinnati together, and to set the stage for securing local, state and federal funds to make that happen.

The Interact grant will advance the planning for missing trail segments that will complete the city's core of our regional trail system. In the past year, the Green Umbrella Regional Trails Alliance, through a grant from Interact for Health, made an inventory of trails. They mapped a stunning 391 miles of existing trails, 439 miles of planned trails, and another 1,293 miles of potential networked trails in the nine-county Greater Cincinnati region.

“Interact for Health works to improve the health of people in the Greater Cincinnati region,” said Pat O’Connor, vice president of Interact for Health. “The first study showed that we have extensive existing trails, but they are fragmented. The obvious next step is to begin to connect key trails into a system. Then the trails throughout our region will be able to connect with it and each other to form a powerful system. Interact believes that creating a vibrant connected trail system will attract people to active living, leading to an overall healthier community.”

Once built, the city trails will provide free, convenient, and accessible places for residents and visitors to go both for short trips and for outdoor exercise and recreation. For some, it can provide an alternative to using a car to commute to work and other activities.

“The goal of the project is to create a protected, green, interconnected trails network in Cincinnati that brings people and places together and encourages activity, such as walking, hiking, running, bicycling,” said Groundwork Cincinnati executive director Robin Corathers. “There should be a seamless transition between the trail system and the existing transportation systems, including bike lanes, cycle tracks, parking lots, Metro and Access bus stops, and other transit options.”

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The Connecting City Trails Project steering committee will include the City of Cincinnati, Queen City Bike, Green Umbrella Regional Trails Alliance, as well as Interact for Health and other proponents of six city trails in various stages of development. The six trails include:

- Mill Creek Greenway Trail
- Ohio River Trail West
- Wasson Way
- Little Duck Creek
- Oasis Line
- Ohio River Trail East

The steering committee will be assisted by a technical team from the landscape architecture studio Human Nature. The Interact grant will make advanced planning possible for each trail and will help ensure that critical connector trails are identified to be built sooner. The project will also examine the significant economic impact of the trails. Along with improving the quality of life, trails improve property values and stimulate economic development.

“Cities across the country that have invested in urban trails are reaping economic, social, and public health benefits, as well as attracting and keeping businesses, residents, and visitors,” said Corathers. “Momentum for such a project is building. Bicycle Magazine just added Cincinnati to its *50 Best Bike Cities* list and ranked us 35th in the nation. Cincinnati’s Red Bike (bike sharing) program was just launched. And, we have a Mayor who is a trails champion, a forward-looking City Council, and enthusiastic trail groups who want to collaborate on this project.”

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ABOUT INTERACT FOR HEALTH

Interact for Health improves the health of people in the Cincinnati region by being a catalyst for health and wellness. We accomplish our mission by promoting healthy living through grants, education, and policy. Interact for Health is an independent nonprofit that serves 20 counties in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. More information can be found at www.interactforhealth.org

ABOUT GROUNDWORK CINCINNATI/MILL CREEK

Groundwork Cincinnati/Mill Creek is a boots-on-the-ground, community-based nonprofit that is celebrating its 20th Anniversary this year. To date, the organization has completed 33 projects to restore wildlife habitat, streambanks, wetlands, and floodplains; sponsored year-round environmental education programming for over 35,000 middle and senior - high school students; constructed and facilitated construction of almost five miles of the City’s Mill Creek Greenway Trail; and transformed over three linear miles of blighted and derelict properties along Mill Creek into public green space, parks, gardens, and trails.

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