

## INFRASTRUCTURE GUIDES DESTINY

Public infrastructure systems are the framework for urban communities. Road, sewer, water, and greenway systems influence urban design and development because they determine the pattern of growth. Their adequacy or inadequacy at any given time will have profound consequences on both the perception and reality of the urban area's quality.

Inadequate roads can result in traffic congestion and degraded air quality. Inadequate sewers or treatment facilities can result in overflows and degraded water quality. Inadequate source water quality can result in higher drinking water treatment costs.

Since greenway systems can provide multiple public benefits, any inadequacies can have multiple consequences. For example, exposure to the damage and disruption of flooding can be increased, and stream water quality can be degraded by reduced buffer widths. Further, opportunities for nonmotorized transportation can be lessened by an unintegrated bike path system, and air quality can be further degraded. Also, ecological systems can be irreparably fragmented, and the quality of the urban environment, as well as public access to natural environments can be minimized. Then again, the opportunity for formal and informal environmental education experiences will be reduced, and close-to-home locations for outdoor exercise and its effects on public health will be nominal.

The importance of all of the above public infrastructure systems is obvious. Each, and not the least of which is greenways [see < <http://www.journalconsplanning.org/2005/volume!/allen/manuscript.html> >] has a key role to play in determining the current and future quality of the region and its individual communities. Regardless of whether growth is occurring upward or outward, the pace of infrastructure system creation will foreshadow the destiny of urbanizing areas.

Across the state and across the country, communities and regions are in competition for people, jobs, and tourism. Whether appealing to current or potential residents, or to potential visitors, each community's quality of life and quality of place will lead to its success. The region must have both the perception and reality of quality if it is going to have a winning future.

This should be good news for greenways, as the region's green infrastructure, because they are a must-have element of public infrastructure. Greenways influence too many hot bottom quality issues to be overlooked for long. Yet to be determined is whether they will receive enough attention, soon enough to guarantee the region's destiny favorably.