



Luray-Hawksbill Greenway Trail

Luray, Virginia

Town of Luray

Counterclockwise from top: Hawksbill Greenway; Hawksbill Creek; Greenway users (all photos ©Hawksbill Greenway Foundation).

A creekside greenway combines a lush habitat for wildlife with healthy transportation and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

CONTEXT

- Completed in 2008.
- Southeast.
- Rural.
- \$3.5 million.
- 4 miles.



URBAN/CITY TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

- New open space and improved access to amenities.
- Enhances connectivity between the downtown area and residential districts.
- Provides valuable health and recreational benefits, including access for individuals with disabilities.

WHAT WAS THE PROJECT DRIVER?

Hawksbill Creek is the gateway to Luray – a town of fewer than 5,000 in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley. For much of the last century, this waterway was polluted by agricultural and industrial runoff, and over time the creek’s banks grew unsightly and inaccessible. In 1999, the town’s Director of Parks and Recreation attended a State conference on greenways and trails. Soon afterward, he presented his concept for a paved bicycle-pedestrian path alongside the creek to the Mayor and Town Council, who voiced their support. The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and the Virginia Department of Conservation agreed to provide technical and financial assistance on the condition the Creek be assessed for pollution control and improvements to fish habitats. Additionally, the

project received more than \$300,000 in support from the Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program.

HOW DID THIS CONNECT THE COMMUNITY?

With the Town Council's approval, a landscape architect was hired for less than \$10,000 to develop a conceptual design plan for the proposed greenway. At a public hearing, residents expressed their wholehearted approval of this plan, and the Council recommended to proceed with construction of the Luray-Hawksbill Greenway Trail.



Murals from local artists and schoolchildren line the Greenway (©Hawksbill Greenway Foundation).

The final phase of the Greenway was completed in 2008. This pathway borders a number of local businesses and crosses Main Street in the center of Luray's vibrant downtown area. The Town coordinated with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to ensure the new bridge replacement would provide adequate vertical clearance for the greenway and allow for unimpeded travel. Additionally, the Greenway provides enhanced bicycle-pedestrian access to and from adjacent residential areas, including a number of historic neighborhoods. The Greenway also connects to the town's restored train depot, which houses Luray's Visitor Center and a Railroad Museum.

Since its construction, the Greenway has become very popular with local joggers, walkers and bicyclists, offering valuable **health in transportation** benefits. In fact, one of the town's residents lost over 100-pounds by walking the Greenway. Further, the Greenway is

accessible to individuals with disabilities, offering an opportunity to enjoy the Greenway's many benefits.



Pocket park (©Hawksbill Greenway Foundation).

As the Greenway construction began, the town undertook a parallel effort to mitigate creek pollution. Working with the VDOF and local farmers, the town established a riparian buffer between the creek and adjacent cattle grazing field. Volunteers from local groups donated their time to help plant over 3,000 seedlings in this buffer zone. Through this effort, the creek's waters have become much cleaner and the creek has been designated a Virginia "Class A" trout stream. To take advantage of this amenity, the Town provided accessible fishing platforms along the greenway and hosts a popular annual Youth Trout Fishing Tournament there.

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS?



INVEST

By enhancing connectivity to local businesses and amenities, the Greenway has helped the town become a true "walking community."

By creating shared recreational opportunities and bringing members of the community together in an effort to beautify the surrounding areas, the Greenway has also strengthened Luray's social fabric. Further, it has served as a direct catalyst for the creation of dozens of murals along the Greenway and a number of nearby pocket parks.

Awards:

Virginia Downtown Development Association, Award of Excellence (2007).

For more information:
<https://hawksbillgreenway.org/>