BIKEWAYS, SIDEWALKS, GREENWAYS & TRAILS SURVEY

Real estate sales staff often speak of "location, location, location" as the three most important features to consider when buying property. As our county grows, planners and developers are considering these "three" factors as well and looking at how to better connect our neighborhoods, schools, parks and community centers with bikeways, sidewalks and greenways and trails. They want your help.

Osceola County Engineering Department in concert with RHPA, a local consultant and other county departments and users is working to develop a master plan to guide and prioritize where sidewalks, bike lanes, multiuse pathways and greenways and trails are most important to our Osceola County residents. Walkers, joggers, cyclists, hikers and equestrian users are all invited to participate.

Two meetings are scheduled to get your input and let you show them and tell them what you want and where you want it. You are invited to attend either a meeting at the County Administration Building, Commission Chambers, 4th Floor at 6 PM on Tuesday, July 27 or in St. Cloud at City Hall, Council Chambers at 6 PM on Thursday, July 29. Both sessions will have staff available to answer questions about the draft master plan and to talk to about your ideas and suggestions. Maps will be available so you can see existing bicycle lanes and sidewalks and add your suggestions for future projects.

Interested residents are also invited to provide input via a sidewalk, bikeways, trails and greenways public survey available online at the county website osceola.org. Print copies are also available at the Engineering Department or pick up a copy at the Osceola County Extension Services Office, 1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane at Osceola Heritage Park between Kissimmee and St. Cloud. Call Craig Zetwo at 407-343-2600 for questions regarding the meetings and survey.

Additional input is welcome at the Metroplan Long Range Transportation Planning meeting at the Kissimmee Civic Center on Monday August 2. The meeting will be open for map viewing at 5 pm and the public hearing will begin at 6 pm.

You are also invited to participate in ongoing efforts of the Osceola County Greenways and Trails Planning Team. We have informal monthly meetings to discuss ways to promote greenways, blueways and trails locally. The team consists of county and city staff as well as interested user groups. Call Cindy Rutherford at 321-697-3000 to get information on upcoming meetings. A list of existing paved and unpaved trails is available through the "Pathfinder" newsletter or online at osceola.ifas.ufl.edu.

Some developers are integrating natural trails and paved multiuse pathways into their design. They are looking at ways they can connect to planned pathways and offer that as an amenity to future residents. While there is a required minimum standard for parks and sidewalks in new development, some are exceeding these standards and planning improved pathways because they know future residents value these services. They know these features will place their development higher on the list in the buyer’s mind.

Both Kissimmee and St. Cloud have identified an interest in "Walkable Communities", inviting in prominent speakers to share ideas to improve how pedestrian friendly these communities are as they continue to grow. The City of Kissimmee has acquired FDOT grant funds to develop a multiuse pathway that through neighborhoods following part of an abandoned railroad corridor. This project that has been on the planners’ drawing boards for a long time. It will truly connect residents from east to west and provide opportunities for visitors as well to get to stores or just get exercise.
Osceola County is working with the City of Kissimmee, Orange County and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to protect wetlands and nearby uplands in a greenway or linear natural area along Shingle Creek. Plans include a blueway or paddling path from near International Drive all the way to Lake Tohopekaliga. Paddlers will be able to navigate along the scenic parts of the creek in the dense cypress swamp with a marked path through the shallow flood plain in areas where the water flow is hard to follow and there is no distinct creek bed.

Discussions are also underway for a trail along the northern portion of the creek to eventually connect with downtown Kissimmee. First discussions have included a mix of unpaved trails in natural areas to wide paved multiuse trails in more developed areas with scenic overlooks onto the creek wetlands.

Boardwalks along creek swamps are expensive so overlooks may be more practical. These plans will provide opportunities for a variety of users for recreation as well as potential for a transportation connection from residential developments to work.

Osceola County is working to develop and expand sidewalks as well as adding park land and trails on existing parks. As new schools and developments are being added at an alarming pace, these public meetings and survey input are critical in helping the county prioritize where funding is most needed and for what projects. We hope you will take time to participate and have a voice in our future.

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