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Point of View

## **A thread connecting our region**

European cities show Carolina Thread Trail is a 'must do' for our area

by [Ruth Shaw](#)

The [Carolina Thread Trail](#), a bold vision for hundreds of miles of interconnected trails and greenways in 15 Carolinas counties, has taken me in many new directions. One unexpected direction was toward Europe, where our delegation recently visited trail systems in three regions anchored by cities comparable in size to Charlotte.

This study trip allowed our regional team to understand and experience approaches to open-space preservation, trail integration and sustainable development in areas where open spaces are scarce, urban density is high, land is at a premium and gasoline prices have long been prohibitive.

We walked the Greenbelts and Regionalpark Rhein-Main of Frankfurt -- a major financial center just like Charlotte. Frankfurt has conserved more than 30% of its land as open space, and its greenways, businesses, transportation, public art and leisure pursuits are seamlessly integrated with an eye toward a sustainable -- and enjoyable -- community.

We cycled Amsterdam's trails and its conserved land that connect and carry 80,000 cycling commuters each day. We viewed a parking deck at the main train station filled with thousands upon thousands of bicycles. We biked over reclaimed landfills and explored an urban park crisscrossed with trails that was a reclaimed gas factory site and included public art, a lively restaurant and a dog park.

<http://charlotte.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2008/05/12/editorial1.html>