

## Talk of the Mount Holly Riverwalk excites crowd at meeting

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The Mount Holly Citizens Center was abuzz recently with people learning about the Mount Holly Riverwalk, a key component of the regional Carolina Thread Trail. The occasion was Mount Holly Matters, a free public forum sponsored by the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation.



The forum provided an opportunity to hear from and meet the key partners who have been working behind the scenes for six years to make Mount Holly's greenway system a reality. Mayor Bryan Hough was recognized for championing the greenway when it was first an idea, and for the city's continuing partnership. Ann Browning, executive director of the Carolina Thread Trail, emphasized Mount Holly's significant location in the center of the 15-county trail system.

The foundation has raised more than \$560,000 in private contributions tied to the Mount Holly Greenway System. The money has spearheaded design and planning, construction documents, and acquisition of land easements for the river greenway. The big news is that Clariant Corporation has signed the first land easement in this complex process of securing legal covenants. Representatives from American & Efir, Inc were recognized for their vision in seeing the greenway's potential in the community, and for being the first corporation to commit funding.

Mount Holly Chief of Police David Belk addressed the issue of whether greenways increase crime in neighborhoods near them. He said with proper management, they do just the opposite. He cited case studies where crime is deterred through well-used and maintained public pathways that are appropriately lit and that encourage citizen ownership. Interested citizens received informative handouts that explained the security and safety of greenways in neighborhoods throughout the U.S.

The keynote speaker was Mount Holly's planner, Chuck Flink of Greenways Inc., Raleigh. Flink, who is nationally renowned for his greenway designs, presented the strong economic benefits of creating a greenway in Mount Holly. He cited how communities around the country continue to reap a return of \$17 to \$22 for every dollar invested by the community to develop their greenway.

Other organizations were recognized for their contributions including the N.C. Forestry Service, Duke Energy and the Catawba Lands Conservancy, which oversees the Carolina Thread Trail. Scott Griffin, chair of the foundation's Greenways Committee, was enthused that so many citizens gathered to learn about the Mount Holly Riverwalk progress. He saw it as "an important step when citizens express their concerns and support for a major project in the community.

"The foundation sees its role as bringing the community together to identify its dreams and help bring them to fruition," he said.

Mount Holly Community Development Foundation is a non-profit organization whose mission is to advance the "health, general welfare and prosperity of the Mount Holly area."

To get involved in its activities or to become a member, call 704-827-5262 or visit [www.mounthollyfoundation.org](http://www.mounthollyfoundation.org). To get involved with the FROGS — Friends of the Greenways — e-mail Scott Griffin at [mounthollyfrogs@gmail.com](mailto:mounthollyfrogs@gmail.com).