



Catawba County residents choose thread trail locations

Written by Jordan-Ashley Baker (O-N-E Staff Writer)

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Respondents to the North Carolina Thread Trail's survey chose Murray's Mill, the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and the SALT block as the top locations they want on the thread trail.

"(The destinations) are very unique to Catawba County," said Mary George, assistant planning director for Catawba County. "People recognize that the places are a very special regional destination."

The results were compiled Feb. 24 from an online survey at the Carolina Thread Trail Web site. The survey asked respondents the locations they wanted to see on the trail, how they would use the trail and any concerns regarding the trail's implementation.

"Not only do communities determine where the trail goes but what purpose the trail serves," said Randi Gates, Carolina Thread Trail community coordinator. "This is ultimately their project."

Roughly 280 people filled out the online survey. Residents from Hickory, Claremont, Newton, Catawba, Maiden, Conover and several other municipalities from Catawba County responded.

"We were thrilled to have all those responses," George said. "It was tremendous."

The majority of people surveyed said they want to use the trails for hiking and walking.

"We're going to make the trail as multi-modal as possible," Gates said.

Paved trails, for example, can be used for several different purposes, including walking, hiking, biking and rollerblading, Gates said.

Survey respondents also said their main concern about building the trail network is the safety of trail users. Other popular concerns are property rights and potential damage to farmland.

Of those surveyed, most respondents said they supported the trail's implementation. The attitude results, however, could be misleading.

Gates said people who visit the thread trail Web site to take the survey are more likely to have positive attitudes regarding the trail. She encourages people to respond to their survey, regardless of their feelings about the Carolina Thread Trail.

"We want to hear from everyone," she said. "We want to know how everyone feels about the project, and we continue to try and get the word out."

The thread trail survey for Catawba County residents can be found at www.carolinathreadtrail.org.

After the final results of the survey are compiled, thread trail officials will review the responses and compare them with a map of potential thread trail locations.

"We ask, 'Of these destination places, how many did we hit with the map?'" George said.

After officials compile a map of the trails, citizens will have the opportunity to comment on the map during public hearings. The hearings will be similar to meetings held in January, where citizens discuss their ideas and concerns about the thread trail.

Just because locations aren't chosen for the final thread trail doesn't mean the destinations can't be part of the trail system. The locations can be part of a system of sub-trails that connect destinations to the main thread trail.

Connecting the SALT block to the Carolina Thread Trail will also include other high-priority areas nearby, such as the Ivy Arboretum.

George said Carolina Thread Trail officials hope to present a map of the trails in August to county commissioners and town and city councils for approval.

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