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## City hopes fitness brings money

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By [Mark Wineka](#)

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Salisbury hopes to parlay its identity as a "Fit Community" into money to expand the greenway from Forest Hills to the North Main Street area.

On Tuesday, the City Council authorized its staff to apply for a Fit Community grant through the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund.

A maximum of \$60,000 is available through a Fit Community grant.

If Salisbury gets the money, council members would like to combine it with \$55,000 already allocated toward an "impact project" in the North Main Street neighborhood.

Planning for that project has focused on West Miller Street near City Park.

Meanwhile, the council also passed a resolution Tuesday in support of the Carolina Thread Trail, a 15-county regional effort to plan and construct a network of greenways and trails.

Salisbury won designation as a Fit Community last year as part of a statewide obesity prevention program.

But the program also offers grants for projects that fit its goals, including increasing citizens' routine physical activities.

One component of the city's recently adopted North Main Street Small Area Plan was the call for an improved pedestrian tie-in to City Park from West Miller Street, which runs between the park and North Main Street.

City staff began planning for a sidewalk and street-narrowing project on West Miller Street before looking at broadening the whole pedestrian scope through a Fit Community grant.

Senior Planner Janet Gapen said the staff is now proposing to extend the Salisbury Greenway from Mahaley Avenue at the Forest Hills section to the North Main Street neighborhood.

Gapen said it would help connect Rowan Regional Medical Center, Hurley Park, City Park and the North Main Street neighborhood, most of which is a historic district.

She said the route would make use of existing sidewalk and trails and include new sidewalk along Lake Drive and Jackson and West Miller streets. It also would add greenway directional signs.

Councilman Bill Burgin said a Fit Community grant could provide "a tremendous opportunity" to leverage the city's money. Councilman William "Pete" Kennedy said he was glad to see that it could possibly add more sidewalks.

The Carolina Thread Trail may provide another resource for the city when it comes to trails and greenways. Communities will be able to apply for grants from the Thread Trail's private capital to supplement local funds for state and federal matching grants.

The regional effort already has raised \$17 million in private funds toward a \$40 million goal, Project Director Ann Browning said.

Browning said the Carolina Thread Trail's three core values are connectivity, community self-determination and use of private funds as a catalyst for public investment. The organization hopes to start giving out grants this year.

Eight cities, a county, a Metropolitan Planning Organization and marine commission have approved resolutions supporting the Thread Trail idea so far, Browning told City Council.

The 15-county focus includes 11 counties in North Carolina and four in South Carolina.

An ultimate goal is to connect the entire region with trails.

The organization's brochure says, "The actual location of the Carolina Thread Trail will be determined over time as communities plan their trails and work with neighbors to target points of connection."

It adds that a concept map shown to link all the counties probably will change "as conceptual lines become actual trails."

"The Thread's process of connection and collaboration will be a template for addressing future regional issues," promotion materials say. "By providing much more than conservation, some say the Carolina Thread Trail is a civic engagement initiative dressed in greenway clothes."

Contact [Mark Wineka](mailto:Mark.Wineka@salisburypost.com) at 704-797-4263 or [mwineka@salisburypost](mailto:mwineka@salisburypost.com)

<http://www.salisburypost.com/area/339773549456627.php>