



# CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL.

## 16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL TRAIL FORUM

Presented by: LandDesign

### Session Descriptions

#### **Lunch Keynote - Ready, Set, Thrive! Trail Communities Prospering through Partnerships**

This year's keynote speaker, Amy Camp, will share partnership stories that demonstrate how partnering contributes to thriving, trail-friendly communities. Using her experience with the nationally recognized "trail town" model as well as her involvement in a multi-state trail network, she will also speak about trends and best practices for leveraging trails.

#### **Ready to Design a Greenway?: Design Best Practices + Field Study**

New to greenway design and don't know where to start? This extended session will feature a presentation which will highlight best practices, key considerations and available resources when designing and implementing greenway projects. Key topics covered include establishing design criteria (greenway width, longitudinal slopes, cross slope, cut/fill slopes, safety rail warrants), structures considerations (type, siting, loading requirements), drainage considerations, long-term maintenance considerations and interaction with park amenities. Following the presentation, we will take a short walk to Liberty Park and take a guided on a tour along the recently constructed greenway where we will see elements of the presentation in action, discuss design challenges and answer questions from attendees about greenway design elements.

#### **Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden: Using Trails as a Catalyst for Strategic Renovation and Programming**

Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden (DSBG) has embarked on a reimagining of what it means to create an unforgettable experience that instills a love of nature and its beauty.

For 30 years that unforgettable experience was had through our formal, curated botanical garden. As cultural norms have shifted, especially in a post-covid world, we understand that unforgettable experiences in nature can be had in a variety of ways. Therefore, we are committed to investing in our trail infrastructure to improve our existing trails and develop new ones to activate our full 380 acres.

However, The Garden has decided to lean into the active, outdoor lifestyle and not only look at the physical trails on the ground but also how we can redevelop existing infrastructure and programming to encourage engagement with the trails and nature at an approachable level. Our aim is to no longer only be a traditional, southern botanical garden. Rather, our new direction is to be a venue for everyone to develop a love of nature at their own pace whether it is a curated garden experience, a hike or bike on the trails, a programmed outdoor education experience, an immersive sculpture trail, or getting on the water and paddling the Carolina Thread Trail designated *Catawba River Blueway – Lake Wylie Section*.

As a part of this session, we will discuss the future of The Garden Property, our commitment to becoming a trailhead for the Matthews-Belk South Fork Corridor, redevelopment of existing buildings to become community gathering spaces with a focus on trails, becoming the southernmost point in NC to access the Catawba River Blueway – Lake Wylie Section, and our commitment to having some of the most diverse trail offerings in the area to allow people to access the outdoors at their own pace

### **Trail Signage: Improve Wayfinding and Branding**

Many communities or trails have piecemeal, or no consistent wayfinding for their greenways or entire trail systems. This presentation gives an overview of why a good wayfinding system is crucial for trail user experience, safety and emergency response, and a sense of place. Wayfinding is also crucial to raising awareness of the greenway to potential users or co-branding regional trails like the Carolina Thread Trail. We will also discuss the role system-wide user maps play in wayfinding both for print and kiosks and share best practices in their development.

Attendees will learn and participate in interactive ways about the following topics:

- Components of a trail wayfinding system and the purpose of each sign type and best practices
- Co-branding with regional trails, or multiple trails sharing the same route
- Creating a wayfinding branding system, unfolding a creative and collaborative process (with examples across the country that include co-branding with long distance trails)
- Creating a placement plan and design schedule, considerations for looking at a system comprehensively and setting standards for placement
- Detailed design of signs and working with sign manufacturers
- Best practices for developing sign and print maps to engage greenway users

### **The Seam: Master Planning the 50+-Mile Trail**

Building on the planning work from the 2013 Mooresville-Charlotte Trail study, the Seam will be a 50+ mile regional multi-use trail extending from the South Carolina border with Pineville to Statesville, NC paralleling the I-77 and future CATS Red Line corridors, connecting the communities of Pineville, Charlotte, Huntersville, Cornelius, Mooresville, Troutman, and Statesville. Envisioned as an active transportation superhighway, the Seam will tie into other local trails in Mecklenburg and Iredell Counties and contribute a core spine to the Carolina Thread Trail system.

This session will present the proposed alignment of the Seam and introduce an online public input map which session attendees can use to provide feedback on its route. The session will be interactive with informal polling of the audience on a variety of questions that will help inform planning for the Seam.

The goal of the session will be to gain feedback to inform the ongoing master planning effort for the Seam, build excitement, and identify potential project champions within the Carolina Thread Trail Community.

### **Charlotte's Urban Arboretum Trail: Preservation, Partnerships and Placemaking**

The City of Charlotte's Urban Arboretum Trail (UAT) initiative is a part of the City of Charlotte's Tree Canopy Preservation Program (TCPP). UAT uses a dynamic partnership model that aims to conserve land for tree canopy preservation while simultaneously activating, connecting, and revitalizing community green spaces. UAT seeks to achieve tree canopy policy objectives set forth in the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The initiative has a bold goal of achieving success in the following focus areas: preservation of tree canopy, connecting places, open space, community placemaking, community education, and neighborhood character. UAT is led by the City's Community Tree Canopy Preservation Division, but overall success of the initiative largely depends on the skills, expertise, and shared missions of UAT's program partners. Key partners include: The Charlotte Urban Design Center, City of Charlotte's Landscape Management Division, Catawba Lands Conservancy, Carolina Thread Trail, and Charlotte-area neighborhoods and residents. The City plans to expand UAT seeking a broader and deeper community impact across the City of Charlotte. The City is currently partnering with Catawba Lands Conservancy using grant funding from Bank of America to expand UAT's program capacity and overall impact. Learn how a dynamic public/private partnership model can achieve success across multiple urban disciplines.

## **Design and Construction of the Great Falls Portage Trail Project**

The design and construction of a system of portage trails to support the Great Falls recreation flow releases that began in March of 2023, created a number of physical and topographical challenges. We will explain the design process from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission requirements through the construction and end result of trails built on Mountain Island and at the Canal Street site in Great Falls, SC. These new trails will ultimately connect to a larger system, including a long stretch of Carolina Thread Trail that will eventually extend all the way to Rock Hill, SC.

Construction of dam modifications to provide recreation flows on two reaches of the Catawba River required the incorporation of dam portages and access trails. The primary location of trails is on Mountain Island, which gets its name from the steep terrain and physical situation between the two river reaches. Mountain Island is not accessible by vehicle and has been undeveloped for well over 100 years. This created a challenge regarding access during both the design and construction phase of the work. Water levels in the Great Falls reservoir had to be adjusted and regulated based on weather conditions during the construction process to allow for barge and equipment access to the island. We will share images and stories of the process and the final product and provide an overview of all the work being done in Great Falls as part of our Catawba-Wateree License.

## **The World Speaks Trails: Lessons and Tales from a Trail-Builder's Time Abroad**

Of the many benefits that my trade as a professional trail builder has afforded me, one that I particularly cherish has been the ability to work internationally. As of this year I have spent nearly a year of my life living and working in Europe on various trail development projects across four countries as a contractor and employee of a Swiss-Based recreational trail development firm.

During this time abroad I've had the opportunity to work on projects that were diverse in language, tradition, culture, work ethics, and geography ranging from mega-destinations with huge crews and seemingly endless budgets for helicopter transport to small, remote villages that are banking on trails to re-tool their character, identity and economy. Despite all of the differences, the persistent theme was the universal language of fun and the mission the same: develop high quality sustainable trails and build human capacity.

The World speaks trails:

From high-stakes meetings with resort executives and passing environmental ministry inspections to digging up avalanche charges with machinery and working in stomach churning terrain, the challenges have provided me personal growth and newfound skills that I frequently apply to domestic projects here at home.

Talking points include:

- **Tales and Experiences of International Trail Projects**
  - Foreign jobsites and conditions
  - Photos and stories of locales
  - Near misses and close calls
  
- **Spreading the Gospel of Sustainability and Quality**
  - Teaching best practices
  - Leading by example
  - Pioneering and standard setting
  - Completing the mission

- **Community Building Through Recreational Tourism**

- Jobs creation
- Capacity building
- Transition of power to local workforce

- **Lessons Learned**

- Bringing the knowledge home
- Differences and similarities
- Using trails as a unifier

**Achieving the Great Trails State Vision in NC: Implementing the Great Trails State Plan and Expanding State Funding Opportunities for Trails Through Advocacy and Year of the Trail.**

After several years of planning, North Carolina's statewide trail plan and the Great Trails State Coalition are seeing success! ALTA and NC DOT will look back on what was accomplished during the Great Trails State Plan development process, look at where we are today in implementation, and discuss what is to come for the Great Trail State Plan rollout. Next, Palmer McIntyre and Iona Thomas, two of the founders of the NC Great Trails State Coalition, will showcase how the Coalition is successfully advancing support for all types of trails statewide, through direct legislative advocacy and through the 2023 NC Year of the Trail campaign.

Attendees will hear about the following:

- Overview of the Great Trail State Plan process overview and purpose, the process, results and key themes of the plan
- Early implementation projects and what projects are under study that are part of the GTSP, especially focusing on Carolina Thread Trail and connecting trails.
- NCDOT Trail Feasibility selection process (grant criteria)\*, future funding opportunities for the GTSP
- How NCDOT will be using the GTSP to guide their work\*
- How NCDOT has been partnering with State Trails related to the GTSP
- How the Great Trails State Coalition is successfully advancing support for all types of trails statewide, through direct legislative advocacy and through the 2023 NC Year of the Trail campaign.
- How Year of the Trail campaign strategies have elevated the profile of trails across the state through broad community engagement, including successes of the first annual First Day Outdoors and Great Trails State Day.
- How diversifying Coalition membership, through industry partners and building the Cities, Towns and Counties for Trails Working Group, has strengthened the Coalition, leading to historic state investment in trails.
- What's to come after NC Year of the trail in launching the brand of North Carolina as the Great Trails State where each of our 100 counties enjoys the proven benefits of trails, including health, safety, economic development, tourism, transportation, and environment.

### **Preserving the Heritage Oaks: Innovative Tree-Root Crossing Solution on Wake Forest Campus**

Project designers faced a difficult challenge when planning multiple building projects to enhance Wake Forest's campus: preserving the area's native Heritage Oak and Magnolia trees. Specifically, designers needed to plan multiple pedestrian pathways and campus trails avoiding the Heritage Oaks' robust root system.

Hear from lead designer and landscape architect Kimberly Barb as she discusses Wake's stringent Heritage Oak protection program, the design challenges faced by Heritage tree-roots including staying ADA compliant, what options she and her team considered, and their creative elevated boardwalk design solution.

### **Perspectives on Trail Art - Panel**

Session presenters will discuss perspectives from public art projects in their trail systems. The panel session will be moderated by a public art consultant, allowing for primarily an interactive Q/A with audience members. The presenters' public art projects, which will be presented as a catalyst for the panel discussion are as follows:

#### **Dabney Sanders**

The Downtown Greenway, a collaborative project between Action Greensboro and the City of Greensboro, is a 4-mile multi-use trail that encourages community dialogue, economic development, healthy living, and improves quality of life for its citizens. Expanding the perceived footprint of downtown and connecting surrounding neighborhoods, the Downtown Greenway is the central hub of the city's trails and greenways system. With its emphasis on public art, the Greenway tells stories, and, in doing so, activates selected sites and engages users in a unique and authentic way and plays an important role in bringing our community together while setting our community apart. Community engagement has been a key to the success of creative placemaking efforts along the Downtown Greenway. This presentation will share insights into how disenfranchised members of the community were engaged and transformed into supporters of the project, how public art has created dialogue and bridged disparate communities together, and how creative placemaking has provided inspiration for the City's future growth in an equitable and inclusive way.

#### **Shane Prisby**

Shane will discuss intertwining art and trail development to create unique experiences for trail users. I will focus on the Fonta Flora State Trail in Burke County where artistic elements were designed into the trail structures to create functional pieces of public art that complimented the existing branding. The intent of the session is to provide attendees with a variety of ways to include art in their projects from simple cost-effective solutions to larger more ambitious projects. There will be a focus on some of the tools that can be used to create these elements in-house such as Adobe Creative Cloud and building partnerships to bring in local artists to create public art in and along the trail.

#### **Michael Applegate**

Gaston County boasts many significant public art pieces along the Carolina Thread Trail. I would like to do an overview of examples, such as *Ghillie Dhu's Enchantment Spirit Tree* on Avon and Catawba Creek Greenway and *Spirit of the River* along A&E Riverfront trail in Mount Holly, to explore how they add value to outdoor spaces.

According to Americans for the Arts "Cities gain value through public art – cultural, social, and economic value. Public art is a distinguishing part of our public history and our evolving culture. It reflects and reveals our society, adds meaning to our cities and uniqueness to our communities. Public art humanizes the built environment and invigorates public spaces. It provides an intersection between past, present and future, between disciplines, and between ideas. Public art is freely accessible." **Public Art Network Council Green**

**Paper**

The art installations along the Carolina Thread Trails in Gaston County matter given the value they bring to these outdoor spaces:

- Cultural value and community identity
- Artists' contributions to cultural value
- Social value and placemaking
- Social value and collaboration
- Economic value and regeneration

**May Barger**

May will serve as panel moderator and will lend her own insights and experiences to the discussion.