

February 6, 2019

Dear Mecklenburg County Commissioners,

With Mecklenburg County's rapid population growth and increasing price of land, we urge you to act on the recommendations outlined in the resolution adopted by the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Commission on January 8, 2019.

**In particular we urge you to immediately revise the CIP to fully fund *and complete* the 2008 bond projects by 2023, and create a scorecard and regular reporting cadence to track progress on the execution of the master plan.**

Additional greenways are a critical part of the existing plan. Greenways are important not only for recreation, but also for transportation, which increases community connectivity, economic mobility, public safety, and public health. However, in order for greenways to serve as viable transportation corridors, they need to be built as a connected network -- without gaps.

**Greenways connect people to opportunity.** The median-income Mecklenburg County household spends 23% of its income on transportation, to the tune of \$12,275 per household annually (*source*: Housing & Transportation Affordability Index). As housing costs rise, it's more important than ever to connect our residents to housing and jobs, and to support their ability to live as fully engaged members of the community even if they don't own a car. People of all ages, incomes, backgrounds, and ability levels deserve to be connected to community.

Greenways allow people to walk or ride bicycles for short to mid-distance trips instead of driving. In many areas, greenways connect people to public transportation routes, which allows them to travel longer distances. Building the greenway network will allow Mecklenburg County to leverage its concurrent investments in expanding the bus and rail network because greenways offer a "first and last mile" transportation choice. A top-notch park and greenway system will help Mecklenburg County to attract and retain talented workers who increasingly choose where to live based on quality of life indicators.

**Greenways save lives.** In 2018, 28 pedestrians were hit killed by drivers on Charlotte's streets alone – an all time high. Greenways offer a safe, off-street transportation choice for people to get around on foot or by bicycle without fear of being hit by a driver. Investment in parks and greenways will also support Mecklenburg County's public health efforts because people are more likely to exercise outdoors and use active forms of transportation when they feel safe.

**Greenways improve public health.** Mecklenburg County is just barely within the federal legal limit for ground-level ozone concentrations, a harmful air pollutant that is formed from automobile

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tailpipe emissions. As our population grows and more residents arrive, we can keep our air clean and healthy if there are safe, feasible alternatives to driving.

I hope you will act swiftly to implement the recommendations of our Park and Recreation Commission on the behalf of all of us who call Mecklenburg County home.

Thank you for your service and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like to discuss.

Respectfully,



Shannon Binns  
Founder + Executive Director  
Sustain Charlotte