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Contact:

Trish Kapustka, APR, CPRC
TLK Communications, 904.891.6320
TKapustka@Tkapustka.onmicrosoft.com

Groundwork Jacksonville Earns City Council Approval of Emerald Trail Master Plan *Plan Will Connect 30 Miles of New and Existing Trails in Urban Core*

Jacksonville, Fla. 3/27/2019 The Emerald Necklace was envisioned by architect Henry Klutho in the early 20th century to describe a series of parks, trails, greenspace and creeks forming a necklace around downtown. It has been just an idea for more than a century, but now the Jacksonville City Council has adopted a plan presented by Groundwork Jacksonville to build the Emerald Trail within the next 10 years.

The resolution, which was approved at the March 26 City Council meeting, adopts the Emerald Trail Master Plan, including branding and design standards, and encourages the City of Jacksonville to follow the master plan in the implementation of the City's future trail planning and revitalization efforts.

The estimated project cost for design and construction is approximately \$31.0 million, not including land acquisition. Groundwork has an agreement with the City to manage the design and permitting of the project and has committed to raising at least 50 percent of the design and permitting cost from private donors, grants and foundations. "The Groundwork Trust was established in Jacksonville to realize the Emerald Necklace and to build the public-private partnerships to make it possible," says Kay Ehas, CEO of Groundwork Jacksonville, "We are proud to take this first giant step toward achieving that goal."

According to Ehas, the next step will be to design and build the "Model Project," a portion of the trail that will be highly utilized and will offer the community a tangible example of what the finished Emerald Trail can be. The 1.3-mile Model Project will connect the south end of the existing S-Line Rail Trail to the intersection of Park Street and Stonewall Street, near the Convention Center. The goal is to have the project completed in 2020.

There are many advantages to this connection including multiple access points for the LaVilla and Brooklyn neighborhoods, the opportunity to connect to the McCoy's Creek greenway in the future, and no land acquisition is needed. The total cost for this first trail segment is projected to be \$3.6 million. Groundwork is currently raising \$900,000, or 25 percent of the Model Project cost. For the balance of the funding, legislation will soon be introduced to move funds into the 2018-2019 Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) budget for design. Construction funds will be requested from City Council as part of the 2019-2020 CIP.

"As we look ahead at creating a vibrant and bustling downtown, I am pleased to have the City partner with Groundwork Jacksonville to increase pedestrian and bicycle access to our natural spaces," said Mayor Curry. "Connecting



communities and celebrating our neighborhoods is what the Emerald Trail project is all about. We are a city on the rise and this important project will be a big part of changing the landscape of our downtown as we move forward.”

When complete, the Emerald Trail will encompass 19.7 miles of new trails connecting at least 14 historic neighborhoods and downtown to existing and/or planned trail segments including the S-Line Rail Trail, Hogans Creek, McCoys Creek, the Northbank and Southbank riverwalks and the FDOTs Riverside connection to San Marco, for a total of 30 miles of trails and linear parks.

“The Emerald Trail will not only create unprecedented recreational opportunities in the urban core, it is a transformative transportation and economic redevelopment project,” said Ehas. Groundwork sees Jacksonville’s neighbor to the North as an example of the impact this project could have. “If you look at the Atlanta BeltLine, the direct economic impact is almost \$4 billion dollars thus far. We believe the Emerald Trail will deliver significant economic benefits to Jacksonville as well,” Ehas added.

Groundwork Jacksonville developed the Emerald Trail Master Plan in collaboration with the PATH Foundation—the organization responsible for building more than 280 miles of trails in Georgia—and KAIZEN Collaborative, one of the Southeast’s leading trail planning and design firms.

Advocates believe the Emerald Trail will be a catalyst for social and economic opportunity in Jacksonville, from encouraging healthy lifestyles and promoting public safety, to spurring neighborhood revitalization and economic development. The trail will link to 18 schools, two colleges and 28 parks among other destinations like restaurants, retail and businesses, with an additional 20 schools and 21 parks located within three blocks of the trail.

“Everyone involved in revitalizing Jacksonville is looking for ways to create a more livable, walkable, recreational downtown to attract residents, visitors and business expansion to the urban core,” said Councilwoman Lori Boyer, District 5, a champion of downtown renewal and riverfront activation. “The Emerald Trail will help to accomplish this while also improving mobility and economic opportunity for those who currently live in the historic urban neighborhoods along the proposed trail.”

About the Emerald Trail Master Plan

Within the overall Master Plan, the trail system is dissected into two implementation tiers. Tier 1 reflects Klutho’s original vision for the Emerald Necklace, with linkages to the existing S-Line Rail Trail. Tier 2 expands the trail to provide additional connections to several historic neighborhoods and Edwards Waters College. The goal is to have a trail segment within acquisition, design, permitting, and construction at all times until completion, which is anticipated to be 2028.

Tier 1 includes 6.8 miles of new trail at a cost of approximately \$13.59 million:

- Segment 1 - Model Project: South end of S-Line on State Street to the intersection of Park Street and Stonewall Street



- Segment 2 - Hogan Street Connector: Hogans Creek at 1st Street to the Northbank Riverwalk at the Landing
- Segment 3 - Southwest Neighborhood Connector: Artist Walk under I-95 to the south end of the McCoys Creek Greenway on Edison Avenue
- Segment 4 - S-Line Connector: Boulevard Street to East 21st Street
- Segment 5 - Hogans Creek Greenway: S-line near 12th Street to Hogans Creek Greenway at North Laura Street

Tier 2 is includes 14.1 miles of new trail at a projected cost of \$17.44 million:

- Segment 6 - Westside Connector: McCoys Creek Boulevard at Leland Street to Florida C. Dwight Memorial Playground
- Segment 7 - Northwest Connector: McQuade Street north of the active S-Line to Moncrief Road
- Segment 8 - Eastside Connector: North Liberty Street just south of East 13th Street to Hogans Creek Greenway south of the Arlington Expressway
- Segment 9 - Hogans Creek to Riverwalk: Hogans Creek Greenway at Laura Street to Northbank Riverwalk at Newnan Street

Programmed trail segments are the proposed trail connections that have existing funding allocated for implementation. McCoys Creek greenway, Artist Walk to Fuller Warren Bridge and the San Marco Connector are programmed segments that the Emerald Trail will connect to as part of the Master Plan.

How the Plan Was Developed

Over a six-month period the PATH/KAIZEN team reviewed numerous research and planning documents developed over the years by the City and other organizations, performed extensive field research to determine potential routes that will connect active destinations and vetted their findings with Groundwork Jacksonville and key constituents.

Each month the design team met with a Steering Committee convened by Groundwork Jacksonville. In addition, Groundwork met monthly with a Neighborhood Working Group comprised of community members who live and/or own businesses along the proposed trail.

To help prioritize trail segments for implementation the Steering Committee first considered extending existing trail segments, like the S-Line, to provide greater trail use and connectivity. The group also took into consideration input from the Neighborhood Working Group and others in the community to determine the most desired trail connections. Ensuring the trail segments connect places where people are to places they want to go was a primary consideration, along with determining the complexity and potential cost of property acquisition.

The iterative planning process incorporated feedback from the Neighborhood Working Group and other constituents at each stage of development. The draft plan was presented to a standing-room-only group of more than 300 community members in July 2018, who provided additional feedback and input.



The \$88,200 plan cost was privately underwritten by a \$50,000 donation from JTC Running (JTC) as well as through grants from Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the Giving Forward Community Endowment Fund at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

Emerald Trail Logo

Through brainstorming with the Steering Committee and Neighborhood Working Group along with feedback from the community, the consensus was that the Emerald Necklace had significant brand equity. After all, the community has yearned for this dream to be realized for so long, to abandon it for a completely new name seemed unwise. However, since Emerald Necklace is used in several other cities, the decision was made to shorten the name to the Emerald Trail.



The Emerald Trail logo, designed by local graphic artist Lindsay Powell, pays homage to Klutho’s vision of connected neighborhoods and green-scapes. The logo features bold geometric emerald-cut gemstones with intersecting ‘rings’ that represent the Trail network of loops and symbolize how the Emerald Trail will connect our historic urban neighborhoods, schools and businesses, to the environment and to each other.

About Groundwork Jacksonville

Groundwork Jacksonville, Inc., is the city’s primary nonprofit organization specifically created to restore our urban creeks and clean, redevelop and convert contaminated land into parks, playgrounds, trails, and other public green-space. Groundwork Jacksonville is a partnership between the City of Jacksonville, the US National Park Service, the US Environmental Protection Agency and Groundwork USA. Groundwork is one of 20 Trusts across the country, the only Trust in Florida and the first in the southeastern United States.

About PATH Foundation

PATH Foundation was formed in 1991 by a small group of cyclists who wanted to develop greenway trails in Atlanta for use during the 1996 Olympics. Since that time, PATH has designed hundreds of miles of linear parks that have become part of the landscape of urban and rural areas around Atlanta and throughout the Southeast, connecting citizens from all races, ages and cultural and economic backgrounds.

About KAIZEN Collaborative

Greta deMayo founded KAIZEN Collaborative in 2010 with the specific intent of bringing together the best talent to provide expertise to clients building active transportation and recreation facilities. KAIZEN Collaborative offers highly-specialized landscape architecture, planning, and GIS services, focused primarily on healthy, active communities.

Media Resources: [Download Trail Master Plan; Maps; Photos; Illustrations and Logo Files](#)