

# MEMPHIS GETS MOVING

HEALTH & ECONOMIC IMPACTS  
OF BUILDING THE  
WOLF RIVER GREENWAY

PREPARED FOR

WOLF RIVER



CONSERVANCY

PREPARED BY

alta



PLANNING + DESIGN

Photo: Dale Sanders

# When the WOLF RIVER GREENWAY IS COMPLETE,

The Wolf River Greenway will connect neighborhoods from Mud Island and Downtown Memphis to Germantown and Collierville, providing residents and visitors a window into Tennessee's wilderness.

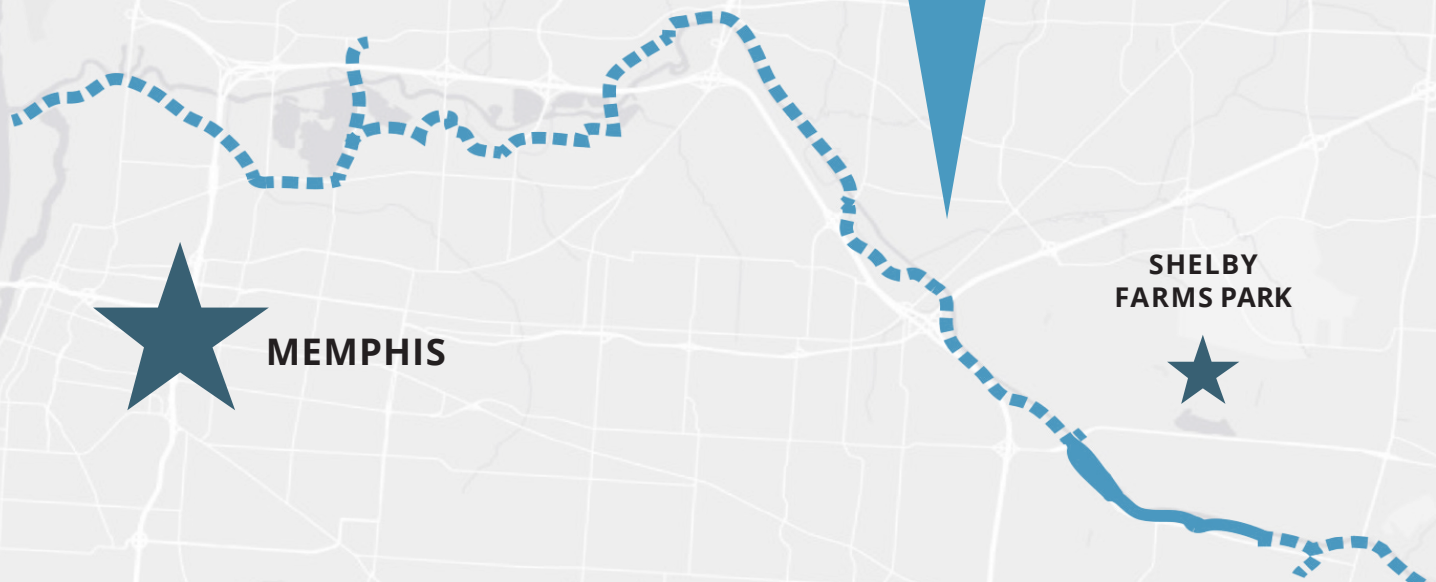
**Designed for active transportation and outdoor recreation, this path will extend a total of 36 miles, linking residents and visitors to nature, rural farmlands, jobs, schools, shopping, restaurants, parks, and other attractions.** With over 7 miles already built, the trail system is already bolstering the quality of life of the Memphis region.

**100,000**

PEOPLE LIVE WITHIN A

**10 MINUTE  
WALK**

OF THE PROPOSED  
GREENWAY.



★  
**MEMPHIS**

**SHELBY  
FARMS PARK**  
★

**GERMANTOWN** ★

## WOLF RIVER GREENWAY

- EXISTING
- - - PROPOSED

THE MEMPHIS  
REGION WILL GAIN:



1,126,000

MORE BIKE  
TRIPS PER YEAR



4,650,000

MORE WALK  
TRIPS PER YEAR



\$26,972,000

IN ONE-TIME, UP-FRONT  
CONSTRUCTION  
BENEFITS



\$1,467,000

IN HEALTH  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



\$2,842,000

IN TRANSPORTATION  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



\$7,185,000

IN ENVIRONMENTAL  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



\$2,920,000

IN ECONOMIC  
BENEFITS PER YEAR

over

**\$14 MILLION**

IN TOTAL BENEFITS PER YEAR

COLLIERVILLE





*Photo: Dale Sanders*

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## INTRODUCTION

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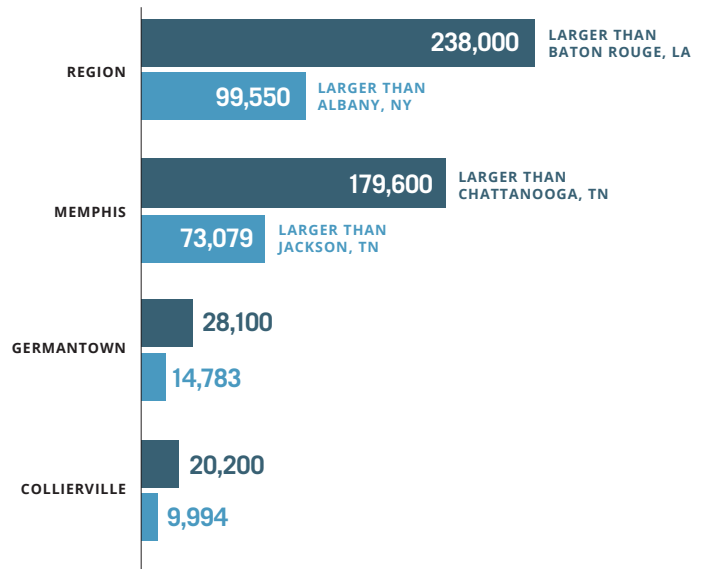
**The fully built Wolf River Greenway will improve health, economic, environmental, transportation, and equity issues across our region. Memphis residents will have a higher quality of life because of the trail, and we will attract new visitors in the process.**

**Assigning dollar values to these benefits helps residents and decision-makers better understand how their investment in the trail network will impact the region.**



## Who lives NEAR THE GREENWAY

While construction of the Wolf River Greenway will benefit all residents and visitors to the Memphis region, those living within one mile of the trail (about a 20 minute walk) and one-half mile (about a 10 minute walk) will have the most convenient access to the Greenway. These neighbors will gain the most from its construction. To calculate what this means, we have estimated impacts of the trail system for residents living within a 10 minute walk of the trail and then separated the estimates into three distinct communities: Memphis, Germantown, and Collierville. All estimated values are rounded and should be considered order of magnitude estimates rather than exact amounts.



POPULATION WITHIN 20 MINUTE WALK AND 10 MINUTE WALK OF THE WOLF RIVER GREENWAY<sup>1</sup>







## METHODS

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*US Census data are one of the most common resources for measuring walking and bicycling activity.*

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In order to calculate health, environmental, economic, transportation, and equity impacts, this analysis utilizes five-year socio-demographic and travel behavior estimates generated by the US Census Bureau. Currently, less than 1 percent of Memphis

residents bicycle to work and less than 2 percent walk to work.<sup>2</sup> With better access to trails that connect destinations and jobs, the number of people bicycling and walking in Memphis will rise to be more in-line with similar cities in the southeast.



## How **MEMPHIS** COMPARES

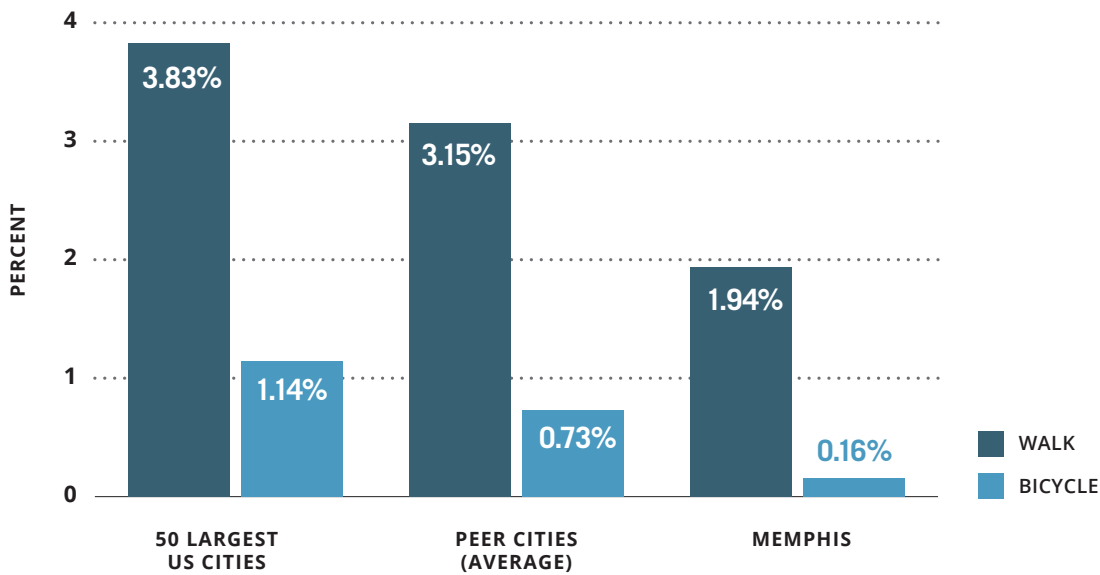
How will a fully-developed trail network change the way Memphis residents travel? To better understand this shift, we looked at travel behavior in cities similar to Memphis, but with more advanced bicycle and pedestrian networks. These cities, known as peer cities, were selected based on similarities in the design of their street networks, geographic locations, climates, terrain, street networks and the make-up of their populations.

Based on these criteria, Augusta, Charlotte, Nashville, and New Orleans were selected as peer cities to Memphis. With the exception of Augusta, all of the peer cities have achieved Bronze Level League of American Bicyclist's Bicycle Friendly Community® award designation.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Charlotte and New Orleans each received a Bronze Level Walk Friendly Community® award designation.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, Memphis is neither a Bicycle or Walk Friendly Community.

The designation of a city as a Bicycle Friendly Community® or as a Walk Friendly Community® represents a significant investment in improving the bicycle and walking environment. Because of this, residents on average are more likely to bicycle or walk in the four peer cities compared to Memphis. Currently, only 0.16 percent of the Memphis population bicycles to work compared to an average of 0.73 percent in the four peer cities. In addition, less than 2 percent of people in Memphis walk to work compared to an average of over 3 percent in Augusta, Charlotte, Nashville, and New Orleans.<sup>5</sup>

## WALK AND BICYCLE COMMUTE MODE SHARE<sup>6</sup>



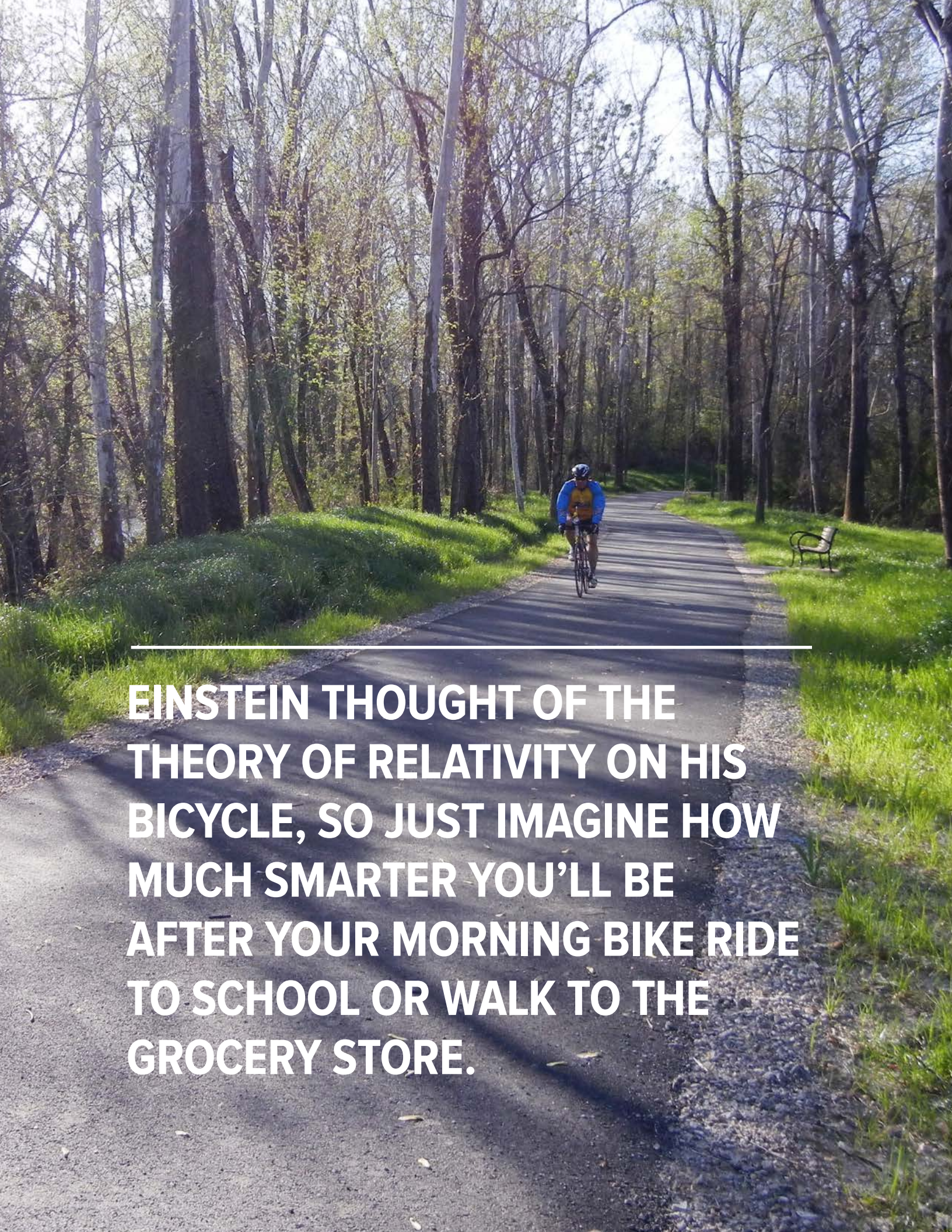
## HOW THE IMPACTS ARE CALCULATED

A series of over 50 factors from various studies and peer-reviewed journal articles were utilized to convert the estimated number of new bicycle and walking trips that will result from the construction of the Wolf River Greenway into dollar figures.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

The primary purpose of the analysis is to create a clearer, fuller picture of how the Wolf River Greenway will improve the quality of life of Memphis-area residents.

This analysis examines the Wolf River Greenway as an entire trail system, but reports on the localized impacts within Memphis city limits, Germantown city limits, and Collierville city limits. These localized impacts are for reference purposes only and should not be considered the potential impacts of developing individual segments of the Greenway. The true benefit of the Greenway comes from the expanded connectivity of the trail system across the Memphis region. **The estimated impacts reflect the benefits that may be experienced with the full build-out of the 36 mile trail.**

A person wearing a blue jacket and a helmet is riding a bicycle on a paved path that winds through a forest. The path is surrounded by tall trees and green grass. A bench is visible on the right side of the path. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

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**EINSTEIN THOUGHT OF THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY ON HIS BICYCLE, SO JUST IMAGINE HOW MUCH SMARTER YOU'LL BE AFTER YOUR MORNING BIKE RIDE TO SCHOOL OR WALK TO THE GROCERY STORE.**



## HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

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*The health and wellness of Memphis residents and the health of the Memphis environment are tightly linked. We know that health conditions caused, in part, by a lack of physical activity are a fast growing problem in the United States, and the Memphis region is no exception. We also know that air pollution can intensify existing health conditions and contribute to severe health problems in children and pregnant women. The Memphis region released over 15 times more pounds of toxic material into the environment in 2012 than the Nashville region.<sup>7</sup> These high levels of toxic material helped earn the state of Tennessee a spot on the National Resource Defense Council's "Toxic 20" list in 2011 and 2012, and contribute to the broader picture of negative health outcomes among residents.<sup>8</sup>*

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Building a well-designed, connected trail system across Shelby County will encourage a shift from energy-intensive modes of transportation such as cars and trucks to active modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking. While many of the active living-related benefits of a trail network can be difficult to quantify – such as improved mental health, educational growth, connection to nature, and sense of place – a growing body of literature links parks and trails to increased physical activity, decreased healthcare costs, and improved air quality (RBA, 2002; FHWA, 1993).

The completed Wolf River Greenway will dramatically shape the ability of residents in the Memphis region to get out and live more active, healthier lifestyles. It will help to generate over 2 million more bicycling and

walking trips, remove over 5 million pounds of pollutants from the atmosphere, and spur over 500,000 new hours of physical activity. This boost to wellness will save over \$1.4 million in healthcare-related costs per year.

In addition, studies show that increased physical activity helps seniors stay mentally fit<sup>9</sup>, reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, and even decreases the amount of insulin needed by people with Type I diabetes.<sup>10</sup>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified the Type II diabetes rate in Shelby County as one of the highest in the country and listed Tennessee as one of 15 states in the U.S.'s "diabetes belt".<sup>11</sup> When combined with a healthy diet, increased physical activity has been shown to reverse the course of Type II diabetes.<sup>12</sup>

# Why It Matters

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## MEMPHIS IS THE **LEAST FIT** CITY IN THE U.S.

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**35%**

**OF THE ADULT MEMPHIS  
REGIONAL POPULATION  
IS OBESE.** <sup>13</sup> Along with 9% of  
low-income pre-schoolers.<sup>14</sup>

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**28%**

**OF PEOPLE IN MEMPHIS  
HAVE NOT EXERCISED  
IN THE LAST MONTH** <sup>15</sup>

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**50%**

**HIGHER  
DIABETES RATE  
THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE** <sup>16</sup>

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# When the WOLF RIVER GREENWAY IS COMPLETE,

THE MEMPHIS REGION WILL GAIN

## WALK TRIPS

**1,190,000**

MILES WALKED  
PER YEAR

That's the  
equivalent of

**390**

CROSS-COUNTRY  
ROAD TRIPS



## BIKE TRIPS

**1,254,000**

MILES BIKED  
PER YEAR

That's the  
equivalent of

**50**

TRIPS AROUND  
THE EARTH!



## REDUCED HEALTHCARE COSTS

**\$1,467,000**

IN ANNUAL HEALTHCARE  
COST SAVINGS

That's the equivalent of  
4,900 trips to the doctor!



## MORE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**57%**



MORE PEOPLE MEETING THE CDC  
RECOMMENDED HOURS OF  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (~30 minutes/day)

## REDUCED VEHICLE EMISSIONS

**\$7,185,000**

SAVINGS FROM REDUCED  
VEHICLE EMISSIONS PER YEAR



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**MOVE OVER GRACELAND.  
PEOPLE WILL BE TAKING SELFIES  
ALONG THE GREENWAY.**





## ECONOMIC BENEFITS

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*Creating a major recreational resource like the Wolf River Greenway that also provides access to businesses and jobs not only contributes to a sense of place for locals but also attracts tourists in hiking boots, running shoes, paddling gear, and funny-shaped hats.*

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The leisure and hospitality industry makes up a large portion of the Memphis region's economy, with more than one-tenth of the region's non-agricultural labor force in the business of making sure visitors enjoy their stay.<sup>17</sup> While it is difficult to accurately forecast the change in tourism spending resulting from the construction of the Greenway, an examination of the current tourism activity and spending near similar trail projects provides a helpful comparison.

Studies of those trail systems show that nearby property owners can expect a minimum increase of 3.75 percent in the value of their properties after the Greenway is completed.<sup>18</sup> Once built, the trail system will generate nearly **\$2 million in tourism spending per year**, with over \$0.25 million captured by local municipalities through tax revenue.

The same amenities that will draw tourists to the area also appeal to residents looking to buy new homes or open new businesses.

**The total estimated increase in property value will top \$129 million, with nearly \$2.7 million of that captured in property tax revenue every year.**

In addition to tourism spending and property tax revenue, the construction of the Greenway will pump almost **45 million construction-related dollars** into the local economy and create just under 500 permanent and temporary jobs.

*Why It Matters*

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**MAKING MEMPHIS A**  
**“CITY OF CHOICE”**

**FOR FAMILIES, YOUNG PROFESSIONALS,  
AND THE WORKING POOR**

- MAYOR A.C. WHARTON<sup>19</sup>

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**29%** OF BICYCLISTS  
ON THE AMERICAN  
TOBACCO TRAIL

**REPORTED EATING AT  
RESTAURANTS DURING THEIR  
TRAIL EXPERIENCES<sup>21</sup>**

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MORE THAN

**10%**

OF MEMPHIS' NON-AGRICULTURAL  
LABOR FORCE WORKS IN THE

**LEISURE & HOSPITALITY  
INDUSTRY<sup>22</sup>**

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When the  
**WOLF RIVER GREENWAY IS COMPLETE,**

THE MEMPHIS REGION WILL GAIN

TOURISM SPENDING



**\$1,980,000**

IN TOURISM SPENDING PER YEAR



**\$261,000**

IN ANNUAL TAX  
REVENUE FROM  
TOURISM SPENDING

MORE JOBS

**499**

**MORE JOBS**

SUPPORTED BY THE EXPECTED  
INCREASE IN TOURISM AND  
CONSTRUCTION SPENDING  
(INCLUDING PERMANENT & ONE-TIME JOBS)



CONSTRUCTION SPENDING

**\$44,987,000**

IN ONE-TIME, UPFRONT  
CONSTRUCTION SPENDING  
(INCLUDING DIRECT & INDIRECT SPENDING)



PROPERTY TAX REVENUE



**\$2,659,000**

IN ANNUAL PROPERTY  
TAX REVENUE

PROPERTY VALUE



**\$129,037,000**

IN ESTIMATED PROPERTY  
VALUE GROWTH

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**SOME SAY THE JOURNEY IS  
MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE  
DESTINATION. A BEAUTIFUL TRAIL  
THAT PROVIDES ACCESS TO GREAT  
DESTINATIONS MEANS YOU CAN  
HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO.**





## TRANSPORTATION & ACCESS BENEFITS

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*The Memphis region falls behind most other American cities when it comes to investment in parks, trails, and other recreational amenities. The region spends 74 percent less on parks per resident than the other 50 largest metro regions in the country.<sup>11</sup>*

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This means that approximately 57,000 residents living within one mile of the Wolf River Greenway do not currently have access to a trail system. Of those 57,000 residents, approximately 5,000 are living below the poverty line, 2,500 do not have access to a motor vehicle, and nearly 12,000 are students.<sup>23</sup> Currently, only 38 percent of residents in the Memphis region have access to parks and trails, and the region's ParkScore® ranks an unimpressive 53<sup>rd</sup> out of the country's 60 largest regions.<sup>24</sup> The trail system will not only provide new access to trails and recreation for this underserved population, but it will also provide access to schools, jobs, retail, and other services.

In addition to improved access, the Greenway will also save money on transportation costs. While money doesn't always change hands, real savings can be estimated from the reduced costs associated with congestion, collisions, road maintenance, and gas. Construction of the trail system will **save households over \$1.3 million annually in vehicle operation costs and \$1.4 million for the region.**

## Why It Matters

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MEMPHIS  
SPENDS

**74% LESS ON PARKS**  
PER RESIDENT THAN THE TYPICAL U.S. CITY<sup>25</sup>



**2,500**

RESIDENTS  
WITHIN A 10 MINUTE  
WALK OF THE GREENWAY

**DON'T HAVE  
ACCESS  
TO A CAR OR  
TRAIL SYSTEM<sup>26</sup>**



**5,000**

RESIDENTS  
WITHIN A 10 MINUTE  
WALK OF THE GREENWAY

**LIVE BELOW  
THE POVERTY  
LINE AND  
DON'T HAVE  
ACCESS TO  
TRAILS<sup>27</sup>**



**17.6%**

OF THE AVERAGE  
U.S. HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS

**SPENT ON  
TRANSPORTATION<sup>28</sup>**

When the  
**WOLF RIVER GREENWAY IS COMPLETE,**  
THE MEMPHIS REGION WILL GAIN

HOUSEHOLD VEHICLE OPERATION COSTS



**\$1,396,000**

IN REDUCED HOUSEHOLD  
VEHICLE OPERATION  
COSTS PER YEAR

COMMUNITY-WIDE VEHICLE OPERATION COSTS

**\$1,446,000**

IN REDUCED COMMUNITY-WIDE  
VEHICLE OPERATION  
COSTS PER YEAR



VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED



**2,449,000**

FEWER MILES TRAVELLED BY  
AUTOMOBILES EVERY YEAR

TRAIL ACCESS



**57,000  
RESIDENTS**

WITHIN A 10 MINUTE WALK OF  
THE GREENWAY WITH NEW  
ACCESS TO TRAILS

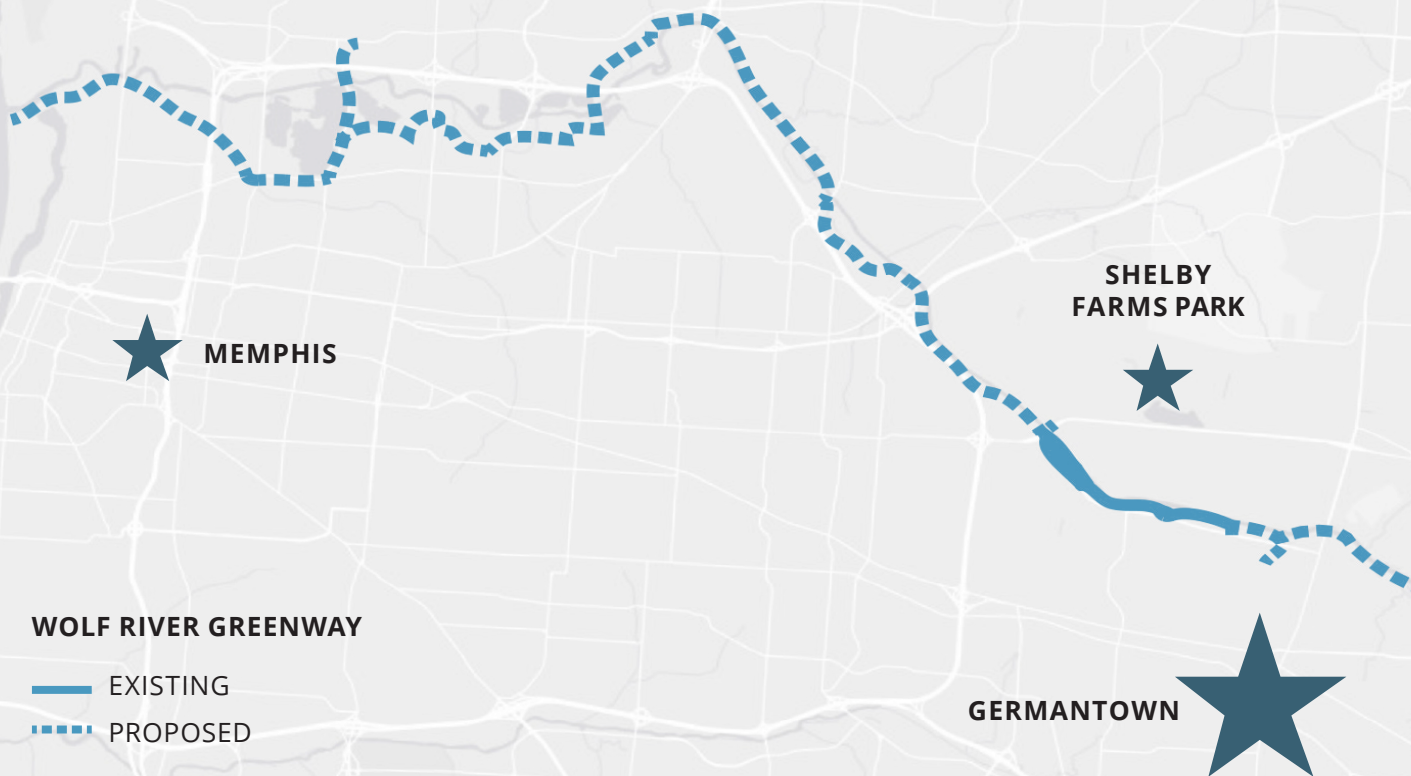
# GERMANTOWN GETS MOVING

The Wolf River Greenway will connect neighborhoods from Mud Island and Downtown Memphis to Germantown and Collierville, providing residents and visitors a window into Tennessee's wilderness.

**Designed for active transportation and outdoor recreation, this path will extend a total of 36 miles, linking residents and visitors to nature, rural farmlands, jobs, schools, shopping, restaurants, parks, and other attractions.** With over 7 miles already built, the trail system is already bolstering the quality of life of the Memphis region.

The fully built Wolf River Greenway will improve health, economic, environmental, transportation, and equity issues across our region. Germantown residents will have a higher quality of life because of the trail, and we will attract new visitors in the process.

Assigning dollar values to these benefits helps residents and decision-makers better understand how their investment in the trail network will impact the region.





WHEN THE WOLF RIVER GREENWAY IS COMPLETE,  
GERMANTOWN WILL GAIN:



**797,000**

MORE BIKE  
TRIPS PER YEAR



**1,011,000**

MORE WALK  
TRIPS PER YEAR



**\$842,000**

IN ACTIVE LIVING  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



**\$561,000**

IN TRANSPORTATION  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



**\$1,421,000**

IN ENVIRONMENTAL  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



**\$265,000**

IN ECONOMIC  
BENEFITS PER YEAR

over

**\$3.6 MILLION**

IN TOTAL BENEFITS PER YEAR



WHEN THE WOLF RIVER GREENWAY IS COMPLETE,  
COLLIERVILLE WILL GAIN:



**728,000** MORE BIKE  
TRIPS PER YEAR



**908,000** MORE WALK  
TRIPS PER YEAR



**\$907,000** IN ACTIVE LIVING  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



**\$467,000** IN TRANSPORTATION  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



**\$1,178,000** IN ENVIRONMENTAL  
BENEFITS PER YEAR



**\$166,000** IN ECONOMIC  
BENEFITS PER YEAR

over

**\$3.0 MILLION**

IN TOTAL BENEFITS PER YEAR

COLLIERVILLE



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## PROJECT PARTNERS

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Relying on a unique network of community leaders and created through a base of knowledge since 1985, the Conservancy works to protect wilderness, to connect people to the outdoors, and to transform our community by completing the Wolf River Greenway.

The Conservancy is supported in the planning, design, and development of the Wolf River Greenway by a myriad of local partners, including the Hyde Family Foundations and the City of Memphis.

Completed on December 9, 2014



# WOLF RIVER



# CONSERVANCY

## MISSION

The Wolf River Conservancy is dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the Wolf River corridor and watershed as a sustainable resource. Relying on a unique network of community leaders and created through a base of knowledge since 1985, we work to protect wilderness, to connect people to the outdoors, and to transform our community by completing the Wolf River Greenway.

## WHAT WE DO

- Protecting habitat within the Wolf River watershed.
- Spearheading the Wolf River Greenway project along the urban Wolf.
- Connecting people of all ages to the Wolf River through education.
- Providing outstanding recreational opportunities for our community.

## CONTACT US

(901) 452-6500 | [wrc@wolfriver.org](mailto:wrc@wolfriver.org) | [www.wolfriver.org](http://www.wolfriver.org)



[www.altaplanning.com](http://www.altaplanning.com)