

PARTNERSHIP

In October 2000, the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) formalized, through a Memorandum of Understanding, a partnership to help communities across the nation “plan, design, and manage their natural, cultural, and recreation resources.”

RTCA is a partnership program of the National Park Service (NPS) with offices throughout the country. RTCA staff work with community groups and local, state and other federal programs to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The program helps local coalitions develop concept plans, build partnerships to achieve community-set goals, engage the public’s imagination, and identify potential sources of funding. All RTCA projects are result-oriented, with an emphasis on community initiative, cost-sharing, and cooperation.



The mission of the American Society of Landscape Architects is to lead, to educate and to participate in the careful stewardship, wise planning and artful design of our cultural and natural environments. Landscape architects strive to realize a balance among preservation, use and management of the country’s resources. Members of ASLA have volunteered their skills, individually and as part of the organization’s community stewardship programs, to many projects throughout the nation, such as neighborhood playgrounds and gardens, Habitat for Humanity, and environmental education.

The NPS/ASLA partnership provides landscape architects with opportunities to work with communities and raise public awareness about their profession through pro bono technical assistance on RTCA conservation and recreation projects. In turn, RTCA is able to sponsor professional design expertise otherwise unavailable or unaffordable in these community-based efforts.

Transforming the national agreement into regional action, members of the Idaho-Montana, Washington, Oregon and Virginia chapters of ASLA joined forces with RTCA program offices for four partnership projects in three states in 2007. Both organizations look forward to many more successful partnerships.

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COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PARTNERSHIP

Helping communities
plan, design, and manage
their natural, cultural
and recreation resources

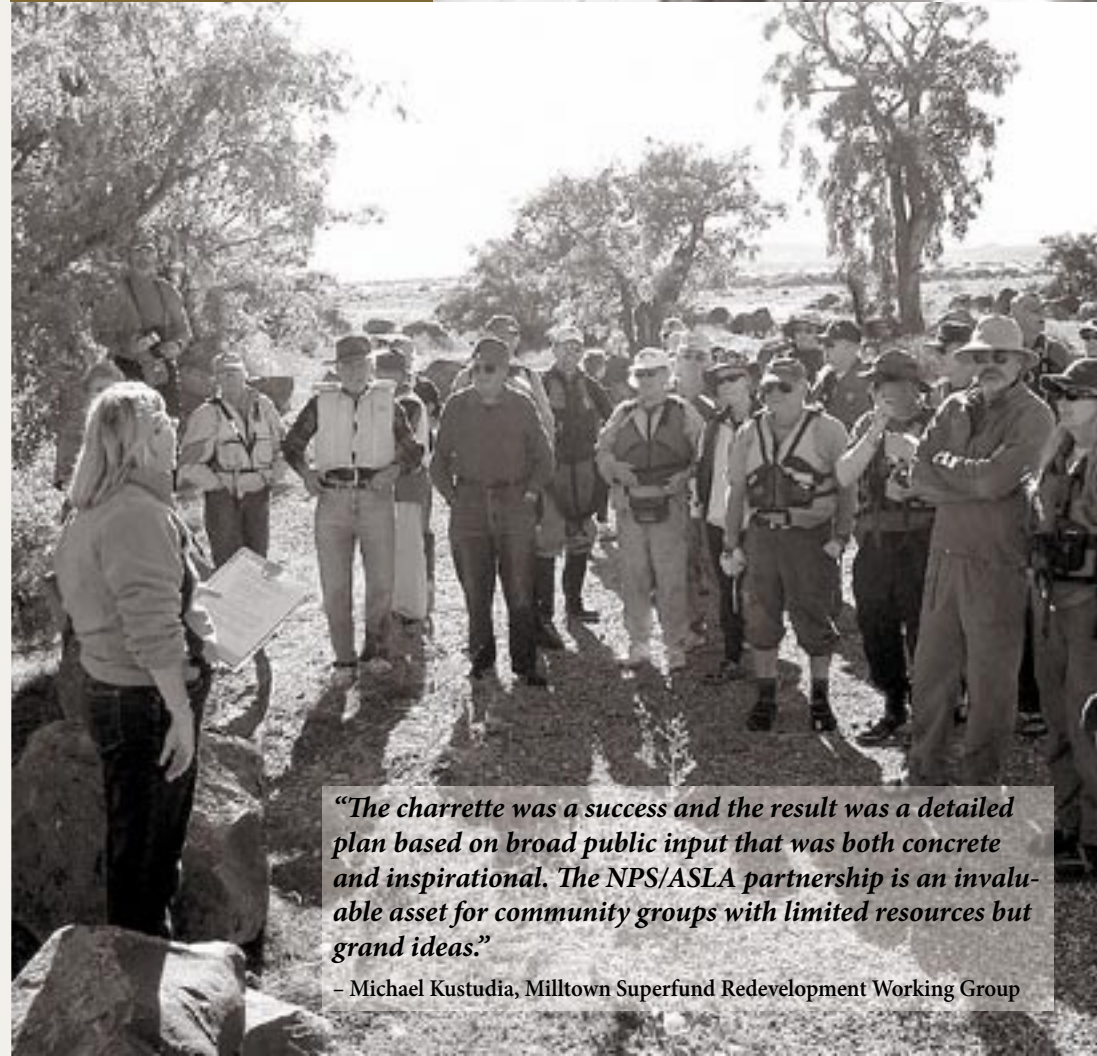


National Park Service
Rivers, Trails & Conservation
Assistance Program



American Society of
Landscape Architects

ASLA



“The charrette was a success and the result was a detailed plan based on broad public input that was both concrete and inspirational. The NPS/ASLA partnership is an invaluable asset for community groups with limited resources but grand ideas.”

– Michael Kustudia, Milltown Superfund Redevelopment Working Group

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Neighborhoods, small towns, and community groups sometimes face planning or design challenges they are unable to meet due to a lack of expertise, funding, personnel, or other resources. The partnership between NPS and ASLA chapters addresses these challenges and assists communities by pairing the organizational and planning skills of NPS planners with the technical design skills of ASLA landscape architects.

One of the most effective vehicles for producing ideas with limited time and resources is the *design charrette*. A charrette is typically an intensive, illustrated brainstorming session that involves any number of people and lasts from a few hours to a few days. Traditionally it dates from the early 1900s at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, in Paris, where professors would send a cart (charrette) around to pick up students’ work at the submission deadline. Some students, frantic to complete their drawings, would jump on the cart as it rolled down the street, hence, working “*en charrette*.”

In preparation for a community design charrette, RTCA staff works with project partners to organize the event and define the goals for generating design ideas and potential solutions for their recreation or conservation project. During the charrette, ASLA members and allied design professionals are teamed with local community citizens and subject matter experts. Working together, they quickly address project challenges and craft visual



design solutions. The objective is high creativity and productivity. No ideas are discarded due to impracticality or questionable details. These are decisions for the community to make later, after the design professionals have returned home, and ideas are moved forward from within the community.

The image of frantic, last minute drawing (sometimes described as “organized chaos”) is still characteristic

at charrettes today, particularly since participants typically present the ideas they generate during the charrette at a public forum of some kind. It is here, at this final charrette wrap-up, where the synergy of the work between outside professionals and local citizens is highlighted and handed-off to the larger community.

Inside is a “snapshot” of how the National Park Service and ASLA chapters helped four communities envision their future trails and greenways.

Produced by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA). Brochure design by Dan Gilchrist Design. Photos courtesy of RTCA except centerfold historical painting (“The Surrender” by Keith Rocco) and back cover photo (Sarah Kruger, Washington Water Trails Association). Printed on recycled paper.

IDAHO-MONTANA



Milltown Park Design Workshop

In April of 2008, for the first time in a century, the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers flowed freely through their confluence near Missoula, Montana. After more than twenty years of study, planning and legal

negotiation, Milltown dam was breached and work was finally underway on the \$110 million cleanup of the Milltown Superfund site. Remediation of toxic sediments will be followed by restoration of river channels and native vegetation. The site will then be redeveloped as a new 450-acre state park celebrating the rich history of the confluence of these two rivers.

RTCA has been assisting the Milltown Redevelopment Working Group in planning for redevelopment of the restored area. In September 2007, RTCA partnered with the Idaho-Montana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (IMASLA) to conduct a charrette for a new Milltown Park. Co-sponsored by Missoula County and the state of Montana, participants in the Milltown Park Design Workshop included more than 30 landscape architects, resource professionals, key stakeholders and community members.

The principal goal of this intensive two-day workshop was to design and illustrate appropriate landscape features and facilities for the Milltown park that would support desired recreational activities while discouraging others. Site amenities (trails, river access sites, interpretive facilities, parking, etc.) were described in sufficient detail to allow a future cost estimate. Workshop participants were also charged with suggesting a phased implementation plan and developing management recommendations to address potential problems of overuse or inappropriate use. Public comment was instrumental in establishing sideboards for the workshop, in evaluating the interim alternatives that were developed, and in crafting the final Milltown Park conceptual plan.

Results... Development of a state park at Milltown will be the capstone for a project that will likely stand out nationally as a showcase for successful, integrated environmental remediation, ecological restoration and community redevelopment. Already, the redevelopment effort has attracted nearly \$5 million for high-priority projects such as replacement of a footbridge, historic preservation and safety trails. The Redevelopment Working Group is collaborating with a non-profit foundation to explore ideas for funding construction of the rest of the park as well as operations and maintenance. ■

"It was amazing to see all the maps, photos, and drawings spread throughout the school while the teams worked. The consolidated drawing pulled all those ideas together and gave us a great concept and design elements to work with."



VIRGINIA



Farmville Greenways & Trails Community Forum

Farmville, on the Appomattox River, was a tobacco farming town and the site of a skirmish toward the end of the Civil War. It is now home to Longwood University and the midpoint of the High Bridge Rail-Trail State Park. RTCA worked with the Town of Farmville and the Greater Farmville Greenways Alliance to advance the vision of a multi-use trail and greenway system for the town and surrounding areas. A trails design charrette in April, 2007, facilitated by RTCA and volunteering ASLA members from *designforum* (a Richmond-based landscape architecture firm), generated a conceptual plan. The plan included recommendations for pilot projects, to ensure early on-the-ground successes, that will connect existing parks and trail segments, link local schools and neighborhoods through the greenway system, and connect student housing to Longwood's main campus.

Results... A final plan and implementation strategy was developed for Farmville greenways and trails with input from the community and resource professionals. In addition, the Greater Farmville Greenway Alliance (GFGA) initiated a speaker series and newsletter to showcase project successes and accomplishments. According to Anne Pettus, local landscape architect and leader of GFGA, the charrette has been the foundation of a broader green infrastructure initiative in the region. ■

Appomattox Heritage & Recreation Trail Plan

Appomattox is one of the most recognized Civil War sites in Virginia, where General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at a small farmhouse, effectively ending the war. For the past several years, the Town of Appomattox, Appomattox County and Appomattox Court House National Historical Park have been working collaboratively to improve both physical and interpretive connections between the town, Court House, county park and other community resources. RTCA worked in partnership with the agencies, local leaders and interested citizens to develop a trail vision. From the vision, the Virginia Chapter-ASLA, with leadership from *designforum*, developed the "Appomattox Greenway Master Plan," graphically depicting the vision of an interconnected trail network.

Results... Since endorsement of the greenway master plan in October 2007, Appomattox County has secured a \$138,000 Enhancement Grant to fund development of the first 1.5 miles of trail. The Town of Appomattox was awarded a Virginia Multimodal Planning Grant to develop a Pedestrian Access Plan; the project will build partnerships with educators, homeowners associations, and other partners to support increased activity for youth and support the town's heritage tourism. ■



OREGON & WASHINGTON



Trail Connections – Castle Rock & Lexington

Cowlitz County lies in southwest Washington State, its southern boundary formed by the Oregon-Washington state line and the Columbia and Lewis rivers, and its eastern boundary crossing the Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. The local economy is based primarily on wood and paper processing, technology and retail. In the last decade, the county has experienced steady population growth and expects the pattern to continue, hence the need for more trails serving and connecting unincorporated areas as well as incorporated cities. The foundation for a county-wide trail network was laid in 2006, when the County worked with Cowlitz on the Move – Healthy Lifestyles Coalition (COTM) and the public to prepare the "Cowlitz County Regional Trail Plan." A subarea study was proposed, after witnessing the success of a recent trail project in the City of Castle Rock, for a loop trail connecting Castle Rock and unincorporated Lexington. COTM and Pathways 2020 (a local health nonprofit) took the lead with a request for planning assistance from NPS-RTCA.

Ten months of background work and research on the Castle Rock-Lexington corridor followed, in preparation for the keystone event: a 2-day charrette. Around 25 citizens volunteered and were joined by 20 volunteer landscape architects from the Oregon and Washington ASLA chapters. Community members represented the partner organizations, tribal and local government, and active citizens. The outcome was consensus on a preferred trail route – the Castle Rock to Lexington Loop – that connects the communities and public lands, and key concepts for interpretation, protecting the environment, and development and maintenance.

The volunteer landscape architects all felt they had influenced positively the future of Cowlitz County and aided the inspirational goals to improve community health, recreation and non-motorized transportation. The community volunteers left with an appreciation of the design process and a comprehensive vision and plan for the trail.

Results... The Trail Committee continues outreach to nearby landowners and the public. Response to the draft trail plan, displayed at regional events like Earth Day and 4th of July, showed a high demand for more trails and support for a small tax increase to supplement grant funding for trail construction and maintenance. The final trail plan, based on the concepts and details created in the charrette and feedback from the public, was adopted by Cowlitz County less than a year after the charrette. Plans are underway to build the first two miles of trail, with the opening slated for National Trails Day 2009. ■

"...the design teams got so involved in their work that we had a hard time getting them to break to eat meals!"

