

'Central Park' plan proposed

Ann Arbor Sierra Club pitches city greenway

BY TOM GANTERT
News Staff Reporter

The local chapter of the Sierra Club is pushing a new proposal to create a three-mile-long green space trail along the Allen Creek corridor – a sort of “Central Park” that would cut through the heart of downtown Ann Arbor. It would include bike and foot paths from Bandemer Park to the Michigan Stadium.

The Sierra Club-Huron Valley Group backed the plan for the greenway in its latest newsletter, which was mailed to 3,000 city dues-paying members Friday.

Doug Cowherd, co-chairman of the Sierra group, said he expects a battle with developers and their political allies if the city is to realize the full-scale vision, dubbed the Ann Arbor Greenway.

“It could well be the biggest battle between developers and Ann Arbor residents that we’ve seen,” said Cowherd, who was involved in the successful public campaign in 2003 to create a fund to purchase land to create a greenbelt around the city....

“If the people who live in Ann Arbor know what’s at stake here, they can prevent this (trail) idea from being quietly killed in the back rooms of city hall.”

Mayor John Hieftje said the

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Doug Cowherd,
Sierra Club

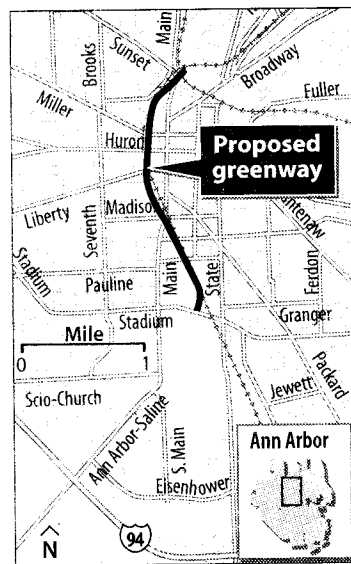
greenway concept has a lot of merit but needs to be thoroughly discussed by all residents.

“Residents of any area need a place where they can go to experience the outdoors,” Hieftje said. “This has to be a long-term vision.”

Republican City Council Member Mike Reid said it was a “reasonable assumption” that there would be a mix of parks and development as opposed to a full-blown greenway.

“I don’t think you can be opposed to creating more green space in the downtown area,” Reid said. “Whether it is a continuous Central Park type thoroughfare, I kind of doubt that is a realistic vision.”

Ann Arbor developer Ed Shaf-



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fran said the idea will bump heads with the city’s plan to lure more residents downtown. Shaf-fran doesn’t see dedicating so much space downtown to parks as being compatible with the city’s goal to bring 1,500 residences or about 3,000 people downtown by 2020.

Cowherd said the key to his vision is a flat parking lot at First and William streets. Cowherd believes the city should turn it, as well as the city’s parks garage at 415 W. Washington St. and the fleet maintenance facility at 721 N. Main St., into parks. The parks garage and the fleet maintenance facility are expected to be

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