

# Mispillion River Greenway

## MILFORD, DELAWARE

The transportation and economic history of Milford, Delaware, is tied to its location on the Mispillion River. In the 1770s Milford was home to a well-known and thriving ship building industry. By the 1920s declining timber resources and the increased use of rail for the transport of freight forced Milford's key industry to close.

In 1995, the city of Milford and its Department of Parks and Recreation received the first of several Transportation Enhancements (TE) awards for the construction of a multi-phased riverfront bicycle and pedestrian trail. Today, the one-mile long Mispillion River Greenway includes a 150-foot pedestrian and fishing bridge, brick-paved sidewalks and period lighting. The Greenway is revitalizing Milford as it draws residents out of their cars and onto the trail, providing new transportation options for downtown travel while encouraging reinvestment in the business district.

### RELATIONSHIP TO SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

Prior to the Greenway, pedestrian travel within the downtown district was nearly impossible. As a result, one of the primary objectives of the city's revitalization plan was to increase opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian travel with the construction of pedestrian bridges and the greenway trail. The Mispillion River Greenway links both sides of the river and allows easy access to and from downtown office buildings, cafes, parks and residential areas.

### ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

"Ten years ago downtown Milford and the Mispillion River could only be called an eyesore," says City Manager Richard Carmean. Downtown was host to vacant storefronts and a polluted river. The advent of TE inspired a concerned group of citizens to work with the city to develop a total

downtown revitalization plan. Several TE awards, used towards the construction of the greenway and downtown streetscape projects, make the city a scenic, mobility-friendly and pleasant place to live, work and visit.

The Greenway and related streetscape projects have inspired

downtown reinvestment. According to the Chamber of Commerce, Milford has demonstrated a net gain in new businesses with annual retail sales figures exceeding \$200 million over the last ten years. More than 250 people now work in downtown offices, stores and restaurants. The

Greenway and the growing downtown business district have attracted the attention of housing developers and national retail businesses. "Transportation Enhancements funding from the Delaware Department of Transportation played a major role in Milford's revitalization efforts," Carmean concludes. "If there is anywhere that owes its existence to government funding, it's our new downtown."

The Greenway project's riverside location necessitated the careful coordination between city, state and federal agencies. Because all partners were involved from the onset of the project, there were very few delays in the permitting, planning and construction process. The project has improved important ecological habitat including the river fishery.

As a former resident of Milford, Governor Ruth Ann Minner has been a strong proponent of the greenway project saying, "This project is the perfect example of how protections of greenways and public access to natural open space do not need to be mutually exclusive goals. The Mispillion River Greenway bicycle and pedestrian projects incorporates both goals...while also encouraging Delaware residents to maintain healthy lifestyles and use alternative forms of transportation."

### FUNDING

Total Project Cost: \$1,542,298

Federal TE: \$1,296,496

Non-federal Match: \$245,802

### CONTACT

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