

CASE STUDY

GREENPRINT GEORGIA: HALL COUNTY

CATEGORY Greenprinting
Watershed Protection
Water Quality

LOCATION Hall County, GA

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SYNOPSIS The Greenprint Georgia program is an innovative way to help local governments protect their critical natural and cultural resources and build enduring, prosperous communities. The program is currently working in several counties throughout the state. In Hall County for example, Trust for Public Land helped to initiate a series of public meetings that resulted in the development of a vision map, helped the county government apply for funding from the Georgia Community Greenspace Program, and continues to acquire and convey to the county properties such as Williams Mill in Hall County.

SITUATION From 1990 to 2000, Georgia grew from 6.5 million to 8.1 million people, an unprecedented 26.4 percent increase. Georgia ranked fourth in the nation in population change and third in the nation for acres of farmland and woodland being converted into subdivisions, malls and other developments. Rural Georgia was disappearing at an alarming rate, and most local communities were at a loss as to how to deal with their seemingly uncontrollable growth. Metro Atlanta felt the impacts as well, losing 50 acres a day to development. Hall County is one area that is affected by this growth and that began a greenprint strategy. Greenprints are a practical method of addressing the impacts of population pressure, and protecting not only important natural resources, such as drinking water, watersheds, wetlands, parks and other open spaces, but also the special places that define an area's history and unique character.

PROJECT APPROACH A greenprint is to a community what a blueprint is to an architect. The greenprinting process involves four key components: visioning, funding, acquisition, and stewardship. It can be an invaluable resource when it comes to shaping future growth around a county's or community's watershed land, working farms, forests and wildlife areas. Greenprinting can also play an important role in connecting public spaces with greenways and trails. Hall County's government leaders had an idea for a greenprint to preserve greenspace in a community whose rural character is being challenged. Through a series of public meetings, they turned their idea into a vision and implemented a greenprint strategy to protect their most important natural lands.

RESULTS/ IMPACTS

The County opted into Governor Roy Barnes' Georgia Community Greenspace Program and obtained \$735,000 that helped them acquire their first priority: 48 acres of shoals, wooded hills, open meadows, and clean streams known as Williams Mill. The land will become a treasured public park and is a great example of the preservation opportunities possible with the cooperation of the state and county. Observers see the purchase as a model the rest of the state can follow. "Hall County should be commended for its commitment to protecting vital natural resources and creating opportunities for residents to connect with nature," says Dale Allen, Southeast regional director of the Trust for Public Land. The Trust for Public Land is currently supporting Hall County residents in an effort to pass a November ballot measure that would create new funding for parks and greenspace. The proposed text of the measure follows:

Water and Land Preservation for Hall County

For the purposes of preserving natural lands and parks that can protect drinking water sources, improve the water quality of lakes, rivers, and streams, preserve forest lands, provide nature programs for children, and protect wildlife habitat, shall a special district be created to include all of Hall County; AND, shall there be levied an annual tax of one-half mill exclusively for the purpose of funding such a "supervised parks and recreation system" with guidance from a citizens' advisory committee and with all expenditures being subject to annual audit?

PARTNERS

This program demonstrated the benefits of collaboration between county and state governments. The County's Board of Commissioners worked together with the Georgia Community Greenspace Program to help preserve the community's natural resources. The Trust for Public Land assisted the county in developing its greenspace protection plan and obtaining the Williams property.

FUNDING

The Georgia Community Greenspace Program contributed \$735,000 to obtain the Williams property. Hall County Board of Commissioners provided \$300,000 for the project.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

The county needed to act immediately in order to protect its quality of life. Creating a thorough plan quickly, obtaining the financing, and acquiring the land were the keys to success for this greenprint project. The three key components of successful greenprinting are:

- **Visioning** -- developing a shared community vision that reflects a community's growth and land protection goals, then prioritizing the natural, cultural or historic places to be protected.
- **Funding** -- identifying and securing funding to implement the vision. The funds may come from a combination of sources such as a local greenspace referendum (such as a special purpose local option sales tax or bond issue) and the Georgia Community Greenspace Program. Revenues may also come from foundations, nonprofit organizations, and private individuals. In just the past five years, the Trust for Public Land has helped communities across the country raise over \$25 billion to help them implement their land conservation and protection strategies.
- **Acquisition and Stewardship** -- systematically completing the necessary transactions according to the approved greenprint, and then actively managing the community's newly designated green assets.

SOURCES

- The Trust for Public Land, Greenprint Georgia
http://www.tpl.org/tier2_rp2.cfm?folder_id=2306