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Wednesday, June 21, 2006

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Steele Creek forging new path

Developer takes lead creating first part of trail

By Catherine Muccigrosso, Pilot editor Lake Wylie Pilot
(Published June 20, 2006)

STEELE CREEK -- Tucked away from the noisy traffic of N.C. 49 and the hustle and bustle of the new Rivergate shopping development is a little green piece of quiet along Walkers Creek.

The first section of Steele Creek and Walkers Branch greenway -- that will eventually stretch 50-miles connecting neighborhoods, parks, schools, shopping areas and employment centers throughout the Steele Creek community -- is complete, thanks to developer Childress Klein and the labor of Steele Creek Community Trail committee volunteers.

"Childress Klein has been a tremendous supporter of the greenway and community," said Karl Foelich, who formed the trail committee.

Last week, the developer blazed a new trail -- costing about \$200,000, according to committee member Brian Malec -- the first segment of the trail is paved in asphalt, 10-foot wide and wheelchair accessible.

"Childress Klein is one of the first developers to actually donate land and pay for construction of the greenway," Malec said.

The Mecklenburg County park planner estimates it would cost about \$100,000 per mile for a 10-foot wide asphalt trail to accommodate all residents and safety vehicles. The total length of the Steele Creek and Walkers Branch Greenways is about 7 miles, so it will take about \$700,000 to complete those, according to

www.steelecreekresidents.org.



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The group hopes area residents will take a walk, or ride a bicycle, at the left back section of the shopping center near Home Depot to get a taste of what the trail system will offer.

"This would be such an easy sales pitch if everyone took 10 minutes just to see it," said Andrew Burg, as the SCCT members walked the wooded path Thursday evening.

The group continues to seek land easements and donations for the trail.

"Before Steele Creek is completely developed, we need to get land for the trail during the planning process so we

can form our efforts without having to buy land," Froelich said, explaining most of the trail path is in flood plain area and cannot be developed. "We're working with Charlotte Parks and Recreation and Real Estate Services to acquire rights from landowners to build the trail. Things are moving, slowly."

Then it'll be on to building.

"One of the biggest challenges we have is money for building trails is nonexistent," Froelich said, explaining Steele Creek is currently not high on the priority list.

But once more land is acquired, the group hopes that status will change.

"Our priority has be be first get land, then construction will follow," Malec said.

Froelich said volunteers are needed to help the committee with raising awareness, and eventually clearing and developing trails.

"We do have a lot of interest from people including landscapers and individuals wanting to help build the trail," he said.

The next portion of the trail to be complete will run north from the first segment up to the Huntington Forest area.

"We're just citizens trying to get a place to walk," Froelich said.

Want to get involved?

The Steele Creek Community Trail committee is affiliated with Partners for Parks, a fund-raising program benefiting park and trails efforts. Send checks designated for Steele Creek Community Trail to P.O. Box 411371, Charlotte NC 28241.

The committee meets monthly at 7 p.m. the third Thursday of the month at the Steele Creek Athletic Association Community House, 13350 Choate Circle, Charlotte.

For more information, visit www.steelecreektrail.org.

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