



Insider's Update: Community Building
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Our mission of protecting and preserving Georgia's 100-mile coast starts with a single step.

At One Hundred Miles, we are committed to ensuring our coastal Georgia communities are strengthened as our coast changes and grows. As such, we pay a lot of attention to the decisions being made at the local level, in cities and towns along our coast. That's because thriving, healthy cities, where people feel safe and can be active, spend time with each other and their environment, and have access to economic opportunity, are an important component of a regional conservation strategy.

For example, here in Glynn County, St. Simons residents are all too familiar with the growth pressure facing the island. Glynn County holds three of only four beaches that are accessible by car within the entire 100-mile coast. Meanwhile, downtown Brunswick residents and businesses are challenged by abandoned houses and empty streets.

One way to relieve the pressure from St. Simons is to invest in the livability of downtown Brunswick. There are many opportunities to invest in this historic city and other communities across our coast.

Research linking investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to economic development abounds. Many studies, including two out of San Francisco State University and the New York City Department of Transportation, conclude that communities friendly to bicyclists and pedestrians are more likely to have thriving small businesses. In Georgia, investments in the BeltLine project in Atlanta have resulted in more than \$3 billion in private redevelopment spurred by the project. Similar public and private investments in the Carrollton Greenbelt have helped this small town blossom by providing an off-road transportation option for those traveling to school, parks, commercial shopping areas, some residential neighborhoods, and other locations.

In addition to these economic benefits, interconnected bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure – both on and off-road – gets people out in their community, talking to neighbors, spending time with their families, and enjoying treasured local places.

At One Hundred Miles, we're doing our part by helping to make Brunswick more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly. We're working with the City of Brunswick, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and five downtown schools to

inventory the infrastructure children use every day when walking or biking to school. This September, we have two days of interactive walking audits planned around the city. During the audits, volunteers will walk and survey neighborhood routes to identify problem areas, such as broken sidewalks, poor signage, and other obstacles. This important data will be shared with the city as they plan near and long-term future investments in infrastructure.

It is our hope that the Safe Routes to School Program through GDOT will provide necessary funding to kick-start many improvement projects for the Brunswick community, benefitting all who want to explore the city. Most importantly, investment in beautiful and safe bike/ped infrastructure should help spur the necessary redevelopment of this coastal city and take development pressure off more sensitive areas in coastal Georgia.

It is important that businesses, residents, and conservation groups work together to promote solutions that will help make our existing communities more enjoyable. Because each community is unique, solutions must come from those who live there. In January, OHM will begin a three-year process to host community conversations in seven coastal counties. At the end of the three years, it is our hope that our coastal communities will have clearly defined identities, an engaged and educated citizenry that is willing to promote and participate in community improvement activities, and elected officials who know what to do to improve their constituents' quality of life.

This type of work requires a long-term commitment but it begins with a single step. In Brunswick, we're starting with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. What can we help you tackle where you live?