

TOWNS & TRAILS TOOLKIT – COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The creation of a long-distance trail between towns can lead to economic, social, environmental, and health benefits for local communities.



A long distance trail is typically a shared use path that is constructed along a former railroad or along a greenway and 20 or more miles in length. These trails can become more than just recreation paths and can be used for commuting from town to town and from home to work. The greatest value to local economies is when the long distance trail connects and becomes a

regional trail.

WHAT IS A TRAIL TOWN?

- A destination along a long-distance trail, whether on a river trail, towpath, water trail or hiking trail – trail users can venture off the trail to enjoy scenery, services and the heritage of a nearby community with its own character and charm.
- A safe place where residents and visitors can walk, bike, find the goods and services they need and easily access town and trail on foot, by bike or by vehicle.
- The trail is an integral part of the community.
- Trail towns are linked by the trail corridor.
- A place where trail users may pass on a day trip or longer distance trek or may park to access the river or trail.



HOW DO YOU BUILD A TRAIL TOWN?

- **ORGANIZE:** Create a trail town action team
- **DESIGN:** Visually improve your town's appearance and connect to the trail
- **BUSINESS GROWTH & ATTRACTION:** Educate business to the market. Actively attract new businesses.
- **MARKET:** Position and brand your town as a welcoming center.



BENEFITS OF A REGIONAL TRAIL & RIVER TOWN

ECONOMIC

Increased customer base for Local businesses and services

Trail users spend money on goods and services. Studies show the following economic impact in a single season:

- Pine Creek Trail: \$3.6 Million
- Perkiomen Trail: \$2.3 Million
- Schuylkill River Trail: \$3.6 Million
- Oil Heritage Region Trail System: \$4 Million
- Great Allegheny Passage: \$41 Million
- Torrey C. Brown Trail: \$5.2 Million



Trail users are also potential investors

CONFLUENCE, PA – Population 754

A bike shop was opened by a couple from Virginia. They discovered the town while cycling the Great Allegheny Passage. They purchased and renovated an old department store on the town square, in addition to the bike shop. The building also houses offices for a Pittsburgh attorney who also discovered the town while on the bike trail. The second floor

of the building is being renovated into apartments. The couple also purchased a home in town as did their sister and brother-in-law.

CUMBERLAND, MD

The former mayor attributes the spectacular growth of the downtown (an occupancy rate now over 80% from its former 25%) “out-of-towners” who first became aware of the town from biking through it.

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS

Creation of Pedestrian Spaces and Safer Travel Corridors- ‘Safe Routes to School’

Social and Economic Benefits- *A walk-able and bike-able community offers multiple transportation choices to all citizens regardless of age, ability, or socio-economic status; provides for healthier travel choices (walking and bicycling); and, increases access to employment centers and community resources*

PROPERTY VALUES INCREASE

Studies have shown that property values generally increased with proximity to a trail.



Manion Trail, IN: 14% higher sales price for home near a trail

Pinellas Trail: Prices have escalated faster for homes near a trail

Near Pittsburgh in Peters Township, PA- Real Estate firms advertise “close to the Montour Trail”

The Trail Town Story

The number of people experiencing the outdoors is increasing each year. Twenty and thirty year olds flock regularly to land and water trails; baby boomers, leading longer and healthier lives, are seeking outdoor experiences in record numbers. With increasing frequency, both individual residents and businesses locate where trails and rivers are accessible.

A long trail, greenway or river represents a recreational/tourism corridor and can offer new opportunities for your community. Visitors to these areas need services; they are looking for restaurants, lodging and sundry supplies. While these visitors are drawn to the natural element, they are also interested in welcoming communities that can make their journey a pleasant one.

The economic benefit to trail towns is well documented. Trails like the Great Allegheny Passage (McKeesport, PA to Cumberland, MD) documented a \$40 million impact on businesses in the counties through which it passes. Pine Creek Trail, a 62-mile trail in north central Pennsylvania determined the average expenditure of a trail user was \$30.36 and the impact from this trail in bordering trail communities in 2009 was \$3.6 Million. Other significant trails report similar findings.



The goal of a Trail Town is to be a welcoming stop where visitors can experience an authentic community with a strong heritage and a solid conservation ethic.

To launch such a place, a core group of volunteers dedicated to a healthy downtown join together to craft a plan of action to ensure that their community will be in a position to offer visitors the services and amenities of the river and/or trail as recreation as well as a community which embraces conservation and sustainable development.



If done effectively, a Trail Town will reap the economic benefits of the growing outdoor recreation and tourism market.

Source: Trail Town Master Planning- Mackin Engineering Company & McCollom Development Strategies