

Rails to Trails Orchard Park



Authors:

**Orchard Park Recreation Commission
Orchard Park Recreation Department
Sarah Eneix—Research Assistant**

February 2019

Table of Contents

1. The Town Board Request

2. Introduction

3. Points of Focus

- Economic Impact
- Home Property Values
- Health and Wellness Benefits
- Public Safety

4. References

5. Appendices





TOWN OF ORCHARD PARK

S 4295 South Buffalo Street Orchard Park, New York 14127-2609

Date: December 11, 2018

SUPERVISOR
DR. PATRICK J. KEEM

COUNCILMEMBERS
EUGENE MAJCHRZAK
MICHAEL J. SHERRY

TOWN CLERK
REMY C. ORFFEO

TOWN ATTORNEY
JOHN C. BAILEY

TOWN JUSTICES
EDWARD A. PACE
JORGE DE ROSAS

SUPT. OF HIGHWAYS
FREDERICK J. PIASECKI, JR.

CHIEF OF POLICE
MARK F. PACHOLEC

BUILDING INSPECTOR
ANDREW GEIST

TOWN ASSESSOR
MILTON BRADSHAW
SCAA

TOWN ENGINEER
WAYNE L. BIELER, P.E.

RECREATION DIRECTOR
EDWARD J. LEAK, CPRP

PLANNING COORDINATOR
JOHN P. BERNARD

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER
KEVIN MASTERSON

SENIOR CENTER DIRECTOR
DEBRA SANTIAGO

Audrey Ramage Chairperson, Recreation Commission
35 Carlton Place
Orchard Park, NY 14127

RE: ECRT Initiative & Assessment

Dear Audrey:

As you are likely aware, Erie-Cattaraugus Rail Trail Inc. has recently entered into an agreement to lease the ground level of the former rail-line running from the Depot in the Village to the southeast town line. The intention is to convert this property into a paved trail that would ultimately run straight through to the Ashford area. My office can provide you with more details upon request.

In 2008 the Town Board resolved to strongly support the conversion of this property into a trail. In the decade since, many more homes have been constructed in immediate proximity to the proposed trail line, raising a host of concerns and questions. Consequently, while interested in the initiative, the current Town Board is conducting an assessment of the potential impacts of the trail – positive and negative.

We would ask that the Recreation Commission assess and issue a report as follows: review and make recommendations relating to the present and future need of the community of Orchard Park for this trail vis-à-vis the town's master plan for recreation, including parks, facilities, and programs.

We would request that research and subsequent reports be primarily, although not necessarily exclusively, *data-driven, comparing like-to like, and not overly reliant upon generalities or broad sweeps, non-contextualized comparisons, categorizations, or unsubstantiated assertions.* We would also request that, if at all possible, the report be submitted to the Town Board by January 21, 2019. Throughout the course of your research and report preparation, should the Recreation Commission

Visit the Town's website at www.orchardparkny.org

have any questions or otherwise be seeking clarification or direction, we would ask that you contact Council Member Mike Sherry for assistance.

A grateful "thank you" to you and the Recreation Commission members for the time and effort that our request will necessitate. It will be of great advantage to the Town Board and the wider community of Orchard Park that we all serve.

Warm Regards in this Christmas/Holiday season,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Keem', with a large, stylized initial 'P' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Patrick J. Keem
Supervisor/Town of Orchard Park

Introduction

As per the Town Board's request and direction, the information throughout this presentation is data driven and factually correct.

Over the last couple of months a wide range of resources and individuals have been involved in the compilation of this report.

Benefits of Trails:

Given the hard work involved in the planning, design, and development of a comprehensive trail system, it is important for all those involved in this effort to periodically remind themselves, and others, of the tremendous value it brings to the broader community. Communities across the U.S. and throughout the world are investing in trails to foster improved overall livability. They do this because of their desire to promote health, safety and welfare, in recognition of the growing awareness of the many advantages of having a connected system of trails that include social, ecologic, and economic benefits.

This report has four points of focus: Economic Impact, Home Property Values, Health and Wellness Benefits, and Public Safety. The process was thorough, comprehensive, unbiased, and insightful. It included the work of 13 individuals caring only about the facts and with the well-being of Orchard Park first and foremost as the goal.

Sarah Eneix, an Orchard Park resident, student at Niagara University, and a member of the Recreation Department summer leadership team, proved to be invaluable as our research assistant.



Economic Impact

Trails create value and also generate economic activity.

The economic benefits of trails are generated from several sources and appeal to many local groups, including residents, businesses and government agencies.

First, trails increase adjacent property values that benefits property owners, as well as local government agencies that see increased property tax revenues. Second, trails attract both business and tourists, spurring economic development that benefits all residents. Third, improved bicycle and pedestrian access near businesses, through trails or other means, has been shown to increase sales while reducing the need for expensive parking. Finally, trails are less expensive to construct than roadways and allow residents to travel by bike or foot, saving money on fuel and vehicle maintenance.

The impact of trails on the economy is an essential part of their development in local communities. According to the New York Statewide Trails Plan website, a rail trail can generate many positive economic incentives for the broader community (n.d., 2010). Trails typically generate expenditures that range from just over \$1 to amounts greater than \$40 dollars per trail visit, involving purchases of “hard” (durable) and “soft” (consumable) goods (n.d., 2010). Trail surveys have often found that 86.3% of trail users live within a 20-mile radius (local users) of the trail (n.d., 2010). Research indicates that local users spend just under \$10 per trail visit while non-local users spend an average of \$180 dollars per trail visit (n.d., 2010). Typically, trail users spend an average of \$342 dollars per year on equipment for trail activities, too (n.d., 2010). In addition, tourism due to the trail can stimulate local businesses. In 1998, the Allegheny Trail in Pennsylvania was estimated to bring in from \$5.4 million to \$14.1 million (n.d., 2007). Trips to the trail are expected to increase by more than 50 percent (n.d., 2007). Although, no updated report could be found, trends indicate that the increase should continue. The article goes on to say that, “A 1993 survey of 38 businesses along the Cape Cod Rail Trail in Massachusetts found that 24 percent of business owners cited the rail-trail as one reason they opened or acquired their business (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, 1993). This same survey found that 60 percent of the businesses expanded their business and of those, one-half considered the rail-trail a prominent factor in this decision” (n.d., 2007). This promotes the idea that local business can be stimulated within a community by adding trails. The well-known National Main Streets economic model supports this conclusion (n.d., 2010). They explain that, Trail Towns are “literally inviting trail users to spend



Economic Impact Cont.

time and dollars in their community” (n.d., 2010). Researchers have found that the economic impact of this approach is significant. The Virginia Creeper Trail generates \$1.59 million in annual spending, supporting approximately 27 new fulltime jobs (United States Department of Agriculture, 2004) and (n.d., 2010). As well, “a 2012 economic impact study of the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile trail between Cumberland, Maryland, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, found that trail users spent more than \$40 million dollars annually” (n.d., 2010). Finally, the American Hiking Society in 2018 found that “the Washington State Trails Plan estimated that trail users in Washington state spent more than \$3.4 billion dollars on equipment, which generated tax revenues of \$13.8 to \$27.6 million” (Diehl, 2018). This is substantial evidence, which supports the notion that trails can generate economic spending within communities.

As well as creating spending opportunities within communities, trails can also create jobs and local business opportunities for community members too. In fact, public investment in infrastructure (trails) can create a “return in job creation, business growth, visitation, and other economic development, all in addition to boosting a community’s quality of life, health and wellness” (Willie, 2017). The Herald Tribune cited a “2011 study by the Political Economy Research Institute out of the University of Massachusetts, titled “Pedestrian And Bicycle Infrastructure: A National Study Of Employment Impacts,” which evaluated 58 projects” (Willie, 2017). The study concluded that, “overall, we find that bicycling infrastructure creates the most jobs for a given level of spending” (Willie, 2017). It goes on to say, “For each \$1 million dollars, the cycling projects in this study create a total of 11.4 jobs within the state where the project is located” (Willie, 2017). Therefore, “pedestrian-only projects create an average of about 10 jobs per \$1 million dollars and multi-use trails create nearly as many, at 9.6 jobs per \$1 million dollars” (Willie, 2017). Ultimately, the study concludes that by bringing in trails to your community, you are able to generate jobs for the community. As well, a “study commissioned by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) job creation found that transportation enhancements (trails, walking and biking) projects create 17 jobs (design, engineering and construction) per \$1 million spent, more than any other type of project” (n.d., 2012). A breakdown of job creation from the AASHTO can be found in appendix A. To further the claims on this evidence, “a 2008 study found that the trail-related local businesses there (bike shops, restaurants, etc.) pay out \$7.5 million in wages every year—stimulating our rural econo-



Economic Impact Cont.

mies” (n.d., 2012). Meanwhile, in Michigan, in- and out-of-state bicycle tourism generates “\$38 million and \$22 million per year, respectively” (n.d., 2012). Therefore by adding trails, jobs are created and local economies are stimulated.

The economy is not the only thing that is impacted by trails. Trails are economic engines that are also helpful to the environment. For example, in Sarasota County, where the Legacy Trail is located, the community has been able to cut down on economic costs due to the trail (Cool, 2018). In fact, in an article titled, “Legacy Trail expansion is up to voters”, the article goes into detail about the benefits of the trail to the community (Cool, 2018). Andrea Seager, co-chair of the trail Extension Committee for the Friends of Legacy Trail, says that “with more kids using the trail to walk to their schools, the county has been able to cut the number of buses used” (Cool, 2018). As well, “restaurants also benefit from all those who go out to eat after their rides” (Cool, 2018). These are economic benefits because it not only cuts down on the cost of buses and gas but also stimulates local business. Trails also allow residents and visitors alternative modes of transportation (n.d., 2010). Motorized transportation is the “single largest man-made source of air pollution in the USA. The trail is a safe and viable transportation alternative. Walking displaces between 7.6 and 28.1 billion passenger vehicle miles traveled per year, saving up to 1.5 billion gallons of gas each year” (n.d, 2010). By infusing a trail into a community, the economy is not only improved but the local environment is also impacted in positive ways.



Home Property Values

The impact of trails on the value and salability of nearby residential property has been studied extensively over the past two decades. Most of the early studies are based upon opinion surveys, while there has been an increasing reliance on models utilizing sales data in more recent work. A handful of ambitious researchers have reviewed the available literature in an effort to determine whether the results are consistent and, if so, what broad conclusions can be drawn.

In 2006, a report by two scholars with the Center for Applied Demography & Survey Research of the College of Human Services, Education, and Public Policy at the University of Delaware was prepared for the Delaware Center for Transportation and the State of Delaware Department of Transportation. It offers the following opinion of the existing research at the time:

“The majority of studies indicate that the presence of a bike path/trail either increases property values and ease of sale slightly or has no effect. Studies have shown that neighbors of many bike paths/trails feel that the quality of life of their neighborhood has been improved, that the trails were a good use of open space, and in the case of abandoned railways were an improvement from before the trails went in. There is definitely a large portion of the population that sees bike paths as an amenity and will seek out residences near trails, parks, and other natural resource areas” (Racca and Dhanju, 2006).

Not long thereafter, a 2008 thesis by a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati examined a variety of studies. This researcher’s assessment of the studies grounded in opinion surveys suggested that, “residents who live adjacent to or near a trail believe that the trail has either a positive or neutral effect on the value of their property” (Karadeniz, 2008). The studies in question and their key findings are catalogued in Appendix B.

The more sophisticated empirical studies elicited similar conclusions. According to the Town of Victor in Rochester, NY, the community found that residential property values actually increase given their proximity to the trail. In fact, in southwestern Ohio, the Little Miami Scenic Trail is associated with higher property value in urban, suburban, and rural settings (n.d., 2016). Up to a mile away from the trail, for every foot closer to the trail, property value increases by about \$7 (n.d., 2016). A home a half-mile from the trail would sell for approximately nine percent less than a home adjacent to the trail (n.d., 2016). The UC researcher adds, “This finding is notable because rail-trails such as the Little Miami Scenic Trail are



Home Property Values Cont.

often criticized for having a negative impact on property values. This study suggests, to the contrary, that rail-trails can have a positive effect on the economic well-being of the surrounding community.” (Karadeniz, 2008). A few years later, in 2011, two University of Cincinnati professors, ostensibly building on the earlier research, came to a similar conclusion regarding the impact of the Little Miami Scenic Trail on the value of nearby residential property. A university publication summarized their findings and found that “housing prices went up by nine dollars for every foot closer to the trail entrance”. In fact, the study concluded that “for the average home, homeowners were willing to pay a \$9,000 dollar premium to be located one thousand feet closer to the trail” (Fuller, 2011). To add to this, “a 2003 study found that the amenity value of trails was associated with over \$140 million dollars in increased property values in Indianapolis” (Lindsey et al, 2003). As well, in “Dallas, developers report that there is a 25 percent premium for properties adjacent to the Katy Trail” (*Dallas Morning News*, 2006). In addition, on the Burke-Gilman Trail, a “study was conducted on an abandoned railroad that passes through residential neighborhoods”. It was found that “properties were significantly easier to sell and sold for an average of 6% more”. Local government can also benefit from the trail. According to the Headwaters Economics website, “when trails increase property value, local governments receive more property tax revenue. The revenue boost can offset the trails construction and maintenance costs” (n.d., 2016).

Homes near a trail also have been reported to sell faster than homes not near a trail. (n.d, 2016). For example, in seven Massachusetts towns, where the Minuteman Bikeway and the Nashua River Rail Trail run, statistics “on list ad selling prices and on days on the market were analyzed” (n.d., 2016). “The analysis shows that the homes near these rail trails sold 99.3% of the list price as compared to the 98.1% of the list price for other homes sold in these towns. The most significant feature of home sales near rail trails is that these homes sold in an average of 29.3 days as compared to 50.4 days for other homes” (n.d., 2016). Homes near the trail can sometimes be easier to sell too (n.d., 2016). For example, a report conducted by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority found in a “1998 study of property values along the Mountain Bay Trail in Brown County, Wisconsin that homes adjacent to the trail sold faster and for an average of 9 percent more than similar property not located next to the trail” (n.d., 2016).



Home Property Values Cont.

Trails can be powerful tools for real-estate growth in local communities, too. In fact, “the *New York Times* recently noted a National Association of Homebuilders study that found that trails are the number one amenity that potential homeowners cite when choosing a new community. By consciously linking trails and businesses, and by providing new desirable housing choices along trails, communities around the country are building vital, economically stable neighborhoods that are truly sustainable” (n.d., 2007). The Legacy Trail in Sarasota, Florida is an example of a very successful trail that will soon undergo an extension. On November 6th, the community in Florida voted to extend the trail, securing a \$65 million dollar bond referendum. The vote garnered a 71% voter endorsement. Surrounding the Legacy Trail are homes and luxury apartments/condos. These homes have a starting price of \$600,000 and reach the millions. In fact, currently there is a home near the trail that is asking 1.25 million dollars. The trail has helped increase property development and home values because it adds to the community. As well, there is a development named Legacy Estate homes located next to the trail. The Estate is named after the trail because it is such a prominent part of the growing community. Trails are therefore valuable amenities for homeowners to consider when purchasing land.



Health and Wellness Benefits

Trails provide an opportunity for outdoor enjoyment including walking, running, and biking. By equipping communities with a space to perform recreational activities like these, there are added health and wellness benefits for getting up and moving (n.d., 2010).

In an article written by the New York Statewide Trail Plan, it was documented that trails add a significant benefit to the health and wellness of communities and individuals (n.d., 2010). In fact the article stated that trails help individuals control their weight and reduces the risk of several life threatening diseases including cardiovascular disease, type two diabetes, and even some cancers (n.d., 2010). Trails can also strengthen bones and muscles, too (n.d., 2010). The added benefit of using a trail to walk, run, or perform another type of recreational activity can improve the mental health and mood of others, as well (n.d., 2010). Trails will carry these benefits to the local communities by providing residents with a space to perform these activities. The article goes on to state that trails will also create benefits like less stress, fewer sleep disorders, more positive outlook on life, more physically fit individuals, stronger immune systems, and an increase in motivation (n.d., 2010). These are all important benefits for individuals when considering the health statistics for Americans. The article states that 24% of adult Americans get no exercise, while 60% of NYS adults are overweight or obese (n.d., 2010). As well, in New York State, there will be an increase in the elderly population soon (NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan—"SCORP"). Please view appendix C for graphic evidence of this information. In 2025, "the youngest baby boomer will be 61. Therefore, the number of senior citizens will increase dramatically" (SCORP). The increased "elderly population will result in changes in the way New Yorkers use their leisure time and the amount of leisure time New Yorkers have available" (SCORP). This will also "require changes to the recreation infrastructure of NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation facilities, other government facilities and the private sector as well" (SCORP). In a report from Japanese researchers, they found that "simply living in areas with walkable green spaces positively influences the longevity of older citizens in large cities regardless of age or gender" (n.d., 2003). The report essentially concluded that, "public spaces need to be emphasized in areas that are densely populated" (n.d., 2003).



Health and Wellness Benefits Cont.

According to the SCORP, today's youth are also spending less time participating in outdoor recreational activities (SCORP). "This is a factor in the rise of obesity and associated health concerns" (SCORP). Children today are less connected to the natural world than ever before (SCORP). They spend half as much time outdoors than they did 20 years ago (n.d., 2010). The effects of sedentary indoor lifestyles have become increasingly evident as the childhood obesity rate has more than *doubled* and the adolescent obesity rate has more than *tripled* (SCORP). Associated with obesity is a decreased life expectancy and higher risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and joint problems (SCORP). The No Child Left Inside Coalition, "which represents more than 300 environmental, educational, business, public health, outdoor recreation and conservation groups nationwide, was created in 2006 to help connect children with nature and to advocate for environmental education and funding" (SCORP). Greater access to parks is associated with more physical activity and less sedentary behavior among youth according to a 2006 study published in *Psychological Science* (Krisberg, 2007) and (SCORP). Therefore, the No Child Left Inside Coalition is important to consider as children remain inside and the obesity rates increase throughout America. Meanwhile, studies show that children who play and learn outside have less stress, fewer sleep disorders, a more positive outlook on life, improved test scores, and greater conflict resolution skills, are more creative, motivated, and physically fit, and develop stronger immune systems (n.d., 2010). Research has also found that exposure to nature helps reduce the severity of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, diagnosed in over two million U.S. children (White, 2008) and (SCORP). Therefore, "the rewards of participation in recreation by youths can last a lifetime, providing not only physical, but emotional and psychological benefits as well" (SCORP).

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy also emphasized the call for activity by providing another alarming health report. The article written by the RTC stated that, "evidence continues to mount that an emerging health crisis in the United States is related to physical inactivity" (n.d., 2003). The article went on to say that "a 2001 'call to action' by the Surgeon General highlighted approximately 300,000 U.S. deaths a year currently that are associated with obesity and overweight" (n.d., 2003). It also said, "The total cost attributed to these conditions amounted to \$117 billion dollars in the year 2000" (n.d., 2003). These statistics are consistent with the New York Statewide Trail Plans analysis that among children and adolescents obesity has tripled over the last 30 years and cost the state more than \$7.6 billion dollars per year (n.d., 2003). The RTC study explained that "many Americans make the connection between exercise and health, but many people still lead



Health and Wellness Benefits Cont.

sedentary lives” (n.d., 2003). The Surgeon General’s call to action “emphasizes the connection between exercise and health” (n.d., 2003). This is where trails play an important part in increasing the health and wellness benefits of communities for all members. This is true for individuals who are inactive. The RTC study found that “even small increases in physical activity can bring measurable health benefits” (n.d., 2003). In fact, in Denmark a study was conducted in 2000, which found that “leisure-time physical activity improves longevity across genders and age groups” (n.d., 2003). It also found that “even moderate activity yielded benefits, with further positive effects derived from bicycling as transportation” (n.d., 2003). Trails are also credited with connecting “neighborhoods and schools so individuals can cycle or walk to their friend’s homes or school, especially in communities that lack sidewalks” (n.d., 2003). In fact, in Denver on the Weir Gulch Trail, the trail “provides a safe neighborhood route for elementary-aged children, the trail’s primary users” (n.d., 2003). Trails are a gateway to “connect people with places, enabling them to walk, run, or cycle to run errands or commute to work” (n.d., 2003). This is an opportunity for physical activity that can be built in to the daily routine (n.d., 2003). As well, in the age of “expensive indoor gyms and health clubs, trails offer cost-effective places to exercise” (n.d., 2003). Individuals are able to see and interact with other community members exercising, which researchers say is beneficial (n.d., 2003). Many individuals usually “lack this type of social support, which is often a barrier to participation in exercise” (n.d., 2003). The RTC study went on to look at a North Carolina State University study, which was “conducted to gauge potential use of a trail in Cary, North Carolina” (n.d., 2003). The study found that “72% of respondents indicated it was likely the trail would provide a place for them to exercise, and 52% said they would likely exercise more if the trail were created” (n.d., 2003). The Surgeon General noted, “even if only half of those respondents actually end up increasing their exercise because of the trail, the impact on public health is substantial” (n.d., 2003). Therefore, it can be suggested that trails bring substantial health benefits to communities. In fact, participants in an Indiana Trails Study, “which surveyed trail users on six different trails in Indiana, over 70% of trail users, on all six trails, reported getting more exercise as a direct result of using the trail” (n.d., 2003). The extensive health benefits of using trails cannot be denied and will add to the health and wellness of a community.



Public Safety

Public safety on any trail is an important factor to consider when building in a community. According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), “the *most recent* comprehensive trail safety report was issued by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) in 1998 when the trail movement was in full stride” (Young, 2014). The study included major crimes such as assault and minor crimes against property including graffiti and sign damage (Young, 2014). The survey concluded that, “of the 372 trails surveyed in the study, only 3 percent experienced any type of *major crime*” (Young, 2014). The study also found the crime rate on urban trails surveyed to be very low compared to the national crime rate for urban areas (Young, 2014). Overall, the results from the study indicated that trails are safe places to be (Young, 2014). “It’s a reassuring report, but trail managers take both major and minor crimes seriously. Trail managers are taking measures to prevent accidents, injuries and crimes — and promote an enjoyable and safe trail experience” (Young, 2014). Currently there is not a more recent report than the 1998 safety report conducted by the NRPA. However, they continue to encourage local trails to work with police officers (bike police), volunteers (volunteer patrols) and implement emergency locator systems to enhance safety on trails (Young, 2014).

The same can be done within our own community to promote the safety and well being of individuals that use our trail system. Safety is an important part of any community and is therefore one of the most important things to consider when designing a trail. To create a safe trail, engineering and design need to be taken into consideration (Young, 2014). Requests for proposals through engineering and design are the trail sponsor’s highest priority (Young, 2014). As well, crime prevention through environmental design is “a concept that takes a multidisciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior in the design process” (Young, 2014). It is important that the trail manager “work with contractors to ensure that the trail is designed for the maximum safety and enjoyment of bicyclists, walkers, and other recreational users” (Young, 2014).

Towns should also consider the added benefit of using local law enforcement agencies to contribute to the trail’s safety. Therefore, police are an important resource to collaborate with. By having “regular police involvement on the trail, crime can be deterred” more easily (Young, 2014). The police can get involved in many ways to ensure trail safety. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy suggests involving the police through trail crossings, bike police, emergency locator systems, and creating volunteer patrols (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). Trail crossings can be often “dangerous locations along trails,



Public Safety Cont.

and police can target traffic enforcement operations at these high-profile locations subject to heavy use” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). An effective approach police have used to protect crosswalks is the “crosswalk sting” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). The sting involves “a plainclothes officer who attempts to cross the street while a uniformed officer issues warnings and tickets to drivers who fail to stop” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). Speeding drivers can also make trail crossings dangerous (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). Therefore, to combat this issue police officers in Pelham, N.H. have “installed radar-equipped signs that record when drivers are most likely to speed so the department can effectively time and target its enforcement” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). These modern enforcement tactics can help ensure that trail crossings are safe for all users of the trail (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). As well, bike police are a growing trend in many areas with trails (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). The RTC says that “driving a cruiser along a trail is disruptive to trail users, less effective at engaging that community and can damage the trail surface” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). The article goes on further to suggest that “bike patrols offer many tactical advantages to police when compared with a cruiser, including lower cost, more maneuverability and a higher rate of officer activity” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). It can be suggested then that by increasing the visibility of police on the trail, crime can be kept to a minimum. Moreover, to improve emergency response to trail incidents, many park and recreation agencies are also installing emergency call boxes and emergency locator systems. The call boxes connect to a dedicated center for public safety (Young, 2014). In fact, the Alpharetta Parks and Recreation Department in suburban Atlanta has 13 call boxes, placed along their eight-mile Big Creek Greenway Trail (Young, 2014). These call boxes have been very successful in Alpharetta (Young, 2014). However, vandalism can occur to these boxes, which has happened in other parts of the country (Young, 2014). In more sophisticated systems, “emergency locator systems use signage markers with unique location identifiers placed at intervals along the trail” (Young, 2014). In Dallas, Texas “the city is expanding an emergency locator system initially used on the Katy Trail to trails throughout the city” (Young, 2014). They have placed the markers so that at least one is visible at any point along the trail. The locator signs “are joined to nearby addresses with caution notes so emergency personnel know where and how to access the trail (Young, 2014). This system gives law enforcement and emergency medical services an accurate location and access to the trail without delay” (Young, 2014). As well, according to the Friends of the Legacy Trail website, in Sarasota Florida, the county has “installed yellow 911 emergency location markers



Public Safety Cont.

spaced every one twentieth of a mile (264 feet) along the entire length of the Legacy Trail as well as the Venetian Waterway” (Young, 2014). The markers enable emergency responders to pinpoint your location and speed up their response time. There have been several cases in Sarasota where the 911 markers have been helpful (Young, 2014). Finally, another added safety measure is volunteer patrols known as trail patrol (Young, 2014). These park rangers are certified law enforcement officers and “their presence is a deterrent to any type of criminal activity” (Young, 2014).

Rules are another important factor to consider when thinking of safety. Park and recreation agencies set policies and post rules to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for bicyclists, joggers and walkers of all ages and abilities (Young, 2014). However, it is important to note that not all parks and recreation facilities post rules and policies for recreational users to see (Young, 2014). Many trail facilities hesitate to post rules and policies due to the fear that individuals will perceive the park as a dangerous place (Young, 2014). To combat this issue, “park and recreation agencies have included trail safety tips alongside other trail information on signage, in brochures and online” (Young, 2014). By doing so, trail users are able to view important information in a neutral way “without unnecessarily alarming them or deterring them from using these facilities” (Young, 2014). By utilizing these resources and involving the community, trails can be safe spaces for all to enjoy.

Economic impact, home property values, health and wellness benefits, as well as public safety are all very important factors to consider when building trails. However, it is also important to validate residential concerns that can impede construction. One of the problems that trail developers face is the anticipated fears of adjacent property owners, “which can quickly turn said owners into trail opponents” (Young, 2014). The Parks and Recreation Department in Columbia, Missouri conducted a survey called the ‘Impact of the MKT Trail on Nearby Property Owners’ (Stidham, 2016). An executive summary of the report can be found in appendix D. To help give trail proponents ammunition to counter that threat, the following question was asked on the survey of those who purchased/occupied their home before the trail was installed:

“Compare your initial reaction to the idea of living near the MKT Trail to how you feel about living near the trail today. Would you say that living near the trail is better or worse than you expected it to be? (Stidham, 2016). Thirty-seven of the respondents had occupied/purchased their homes before the MKT Trail was developed (Stidham, 2016). Fifty-three per-



Public Safety Cont.

cent of these respondents reported that living near the MKT was better (15 percent indicated “much better,” while 38 percent indicated “better”) than they expected and 47 percent reported it was the same as they expected (Stidham, 2016). No one selected the choice of “worse than I expected” or “much worse than I expected” (Stidham, 2016). Participants were also asked “about their personal use of the trail, what effect they think the trail has on the resale value of their house, whether or not the trail had influenced their choice to purchase their home, how they would rate the benefits of the trail, and to indicate their level of concerns regarding the trail. Overall, respondents ranked the benefits high and the problems low” (Stidham, 2016). The survey responses from these close-proximity residents are “encouraging to trail advocates” (Stidham, 2016). In essence, in regard to having a trail next to their property, the majority responded, “Yes, in my backyard!” (Stidham, 2016). This seems to be the trend when implementing trails in any community. However, it is important to validate resident concerns and work with residents to compromise on problems they see with developing a trail in their community. This will ensure that trails are added to the community with support and ease.

Essentially, building a trail in any community is an effort that involves many individuals. From design to operation and compromise, towns have successfully integrated trails into their communities with many added benefits. Throughout this report, evidence has suggested that putting a trail through a community can yield beneficial results in the form of economic impact, home property values, health and wellness benefits as well as ensure a safe place for recreational activities that all can enjoy. However, it is also important to validate the concerns and needs of residents and work with them to ensure smooth implementation. As trails continue to become mainstream amenities in communities across the country, it is the duty of trail managers and other recreational agencies to work together to ensure a safe and enjoyable trail experience for all who choose to use these recreational facilities.



References

- Cool, K. (2018). *Legacy Trail expansion is up to voters*. Retrieved from: https://www.yoursun.com/venice/features/legacy-trail-expansion-is-up-to-voters/article_5231aca2-c7df-11e8-99d1-974710dd3173.html
- Diehl, G. (2018). *The Economic Benefits of Trails*. Retrieved from: https://conservationtools.org/library_items/1077-The-Economic-Benefits-of-Trails
- Fuller, D. (2011). *New Research Finds that Homeowners and City Planners Should 'Hit the Trail' When Considering Property Values*. Retrieved from: <https://www.uc.edu/news/article/legacy/enews/2011/10/e14300.html>.
- Karadeniz, D. (2008). *The Impact of the Little Miami Scenic Trail on Single Family Residential Property Values*. Retrieved from: <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/the-impact-of-the-little-miami-scenic-trail-on-single-family-residential-property-values/?tag=Economic+impact>
- n.d. (2003). *The Health and Wellness Benefits*. Retrieved from: <https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=health-and-wellness-benefits-of-trails-and-greenways&id=3070&fileName=HealthandWellness.pdf>
- n.d. (2007). *From Trail Towns to TrOD: Trails and Economic Development*. Retrieved from: <https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=4620>
- n.d. (2010). *New York Statewide Trails Plan*. Retrieved from: [file:///C:/Users/andorkac/Downloads/StatewideTrailsPlan2010ExecutiveSummary%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/andorkac/Downloads/StatewideTrailsPlan2010ExecutiveSummary%20(2).pdf)
- n.d. (2012). *Trail Investment: A Good Deal for the American Economy*. Retrieved from: https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=trail-investment-a-good-deal-for-the-american-economy&id=14136&fileName=RTC_Trail_Benefits_Fact_Sheet_All_Use_v3.pdf



References Cont.

- n.d. (2016). *Measuring Trail Benefits: Property Value*. Retrieved from: <http://headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/trails-library-property-value-overview.pdf>
- Racca, D. and Dhanju, A. (2006) *Project Report for Property Value/Desirability Effects of Bike Paths Adjacent to Residential Areas*. Retrieved from: http://headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/Trail_Study_51-property-value-bike-paths-residential-areas.pdf
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. (n.d.). *Police Work and Safety*. Retrieved from: <https://www.railstotrails.org/build-trails/trail-building-toolbox/management-and-maintenance/police-work-and-safety/>
- SCORP: [file:///C:/Users/andorkac/Downloads/SCORPTrendsIssuesNeeds%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/andorkac/Downloads/SCORPTrendsIssuesNeeds%20(1).pdf)
- Stidham, R. (2016). *Yes, In My Backyard!* Retrieved from: <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2016/september/yes-in-my-backyard/>
- Willie, C. (2017). *How bike paths- the Legacy Trail in particular- boost communities*. Retrieved from: <https://www.heraldtribune.com/news/20171106/how-bike-paths---legacy-trail-in-particular---boost-communities>
- Young, M. (2014). *Trail Safety: The Perception and Reality*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nrpa.org/search?mssearch=rails%20to%20trails#/24da78e81670b65e31350a27f27a68f9>



Appendices

Appendices: Appendix A



Source: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
Average Direct Jobs by Project Type (2012); jobs in terms of full-time equivalents (FTE)



Table 1. Summary of Trail Studies That Use Opinion Surveys

Author	Study Area	Survey Respondents	Relationship to Trail	Impact of the Trail on Property Values		
				Increased	No change	Decreased
Office of Planning in Seattle (1987)	Burke-Gilman Trail	Residents	Adjacent	48%	28%	4%
			Near	37%	46%	2%
		Realtors	Adjacent	32%	43%	25%
			Near	43%	57%	0%
Mazour (1988)	Luce Line Trail	Residents	Adjacent	62%	31%	7%
Murphy (1992)	Brush Creek Trail	Residents	Adjacent	23%	69%	8%
Moore, Graefe, Gitelson and Porter (1992)	Heritage Trail	Residents	Adjacent	14%	73%	14%
			Near	8%	90%	2%
		Realtors	Adjacent	12%	82%	6%
			Near	12%	88%	0%
	St. Marks Trail	Residents	Adjacent	16%	74%	11%
			Near	21%	77%	2%
		Realtors	Adjacent	20%	80%	0%
			Near	20%	80%	0%
	Lafayette/Moraga Trail	Residents	Adjacent	53%	44%	3%
			Near	47%	52%	1%
		Realtors	Adjacent	24%	52%	24%
			Near	48%	52%	0%
Combined	Residents	Adjacent	35%	58%	7%	
		Near	31%	67%	2%	
	Realtors	Adjacent	19%	70%	10%	
		Near	28%	72%	0%	
Alexander (1995)	Highline Canal Trail	Residents	Adjacent	14%	72%	0%
	Weir Gulch Trail	Residents	Adjacent	40%	20%	20%
	Willow Creek Trail	Residents	Adjacent	100%	0%	0%
	Combined	Residents	Adjacent and Near	29%	43%	7%
Realtors		Adjacent	55%	36%	0%	
		Near	9%	91%	0%	



Table 1. Continued.

Author	Study Area	Survey Respondents	Relationship to Trail	Impact of the Trail on Property Values		
				Increased	No change	Decreased
Schenectady County Department of Planning (1997)	Mohawk-Hudson Trail	Residents	Adjacent and Near	7%	54%	7%
Greer (2000)	Trails in Omaha, Nebraska	Residents	Near (within one block)	42%	36%	2%
Indiana University (2001)	Fort Wayne River Greenway Trail	Residents	Adjacent	92%		
	Maple City Greenway Trail	Residents	Adjacent	92%		
	Pennsy Rail Trail	Residents	Adjacent	90%		
	Monon Rail Trail	Residents	Adjacent	95%		
	Cardinal Greenway Trail	Residents	Adjacent	86%		
	Prairie Duneland Trail	Residents	Adjacent	89%		
Vogt, Van der Woud, Lynch, Nelson (2002)	Pere Marquette Rail-Trail	Residents	Adjacent	18%	77%	5%



Appendix C

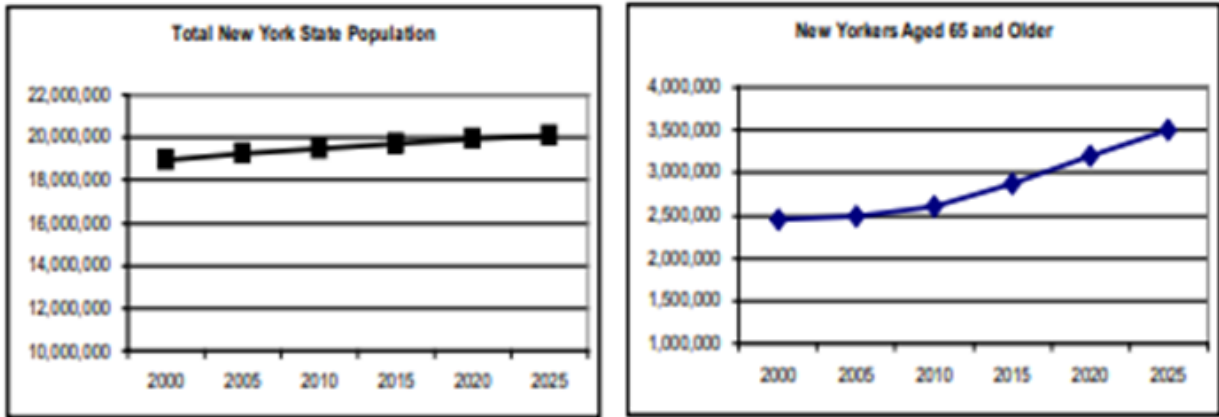


Figure 3.2 - New York State's Aging Population



Executive Summary

Nationwide, a number of studies have examined the impact of trails on the nearby property and community, and generally shown that trails had a positive impact on property values and had improved or had no impact on residents' quality of life. However, there's a lack of a local study examining the public perceptions of the MKT Trail's impact to guide planning and management decisions in Columbia, Missouri. Therefore, Columbia Parks and Recreation Department and Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department of the University of Missouri conducted a mail survey of property owners living within 200 yards of the MKT Trail to find out how the trail affects nearby residents and their property.

Participants in this study were 149 property owners who live near the MKT Trail. Responding residents owned/ occupied the property near the MKT Trail for an average of 18 years. They use the trail mostly for health and exercise and most used the trail on a weekly basis. The majority were white. Most were 50 years or older, with no child living at home. Most respondents had a relatively high annual household income (65% earned over \$100,000 annually).



Property owners were satisfied living adjacent to the MKT Trail and indicated the trail had improved their quality of life. A majority of respondents would choose to live near a trail again if they were to move. Most MKT neighbors thought the trail will make their property more desirable and valuable if listed for sale.



Overall, respondents ranked potential benefits of living near the MKT Trail very high and ranked potential problems of living next to the trail relatively low. Results indicated that promoting the trail's benefit for non-motorized transportation, promoting community pride for the trail and better addressing people's concerns about trail safety could increase the already high customer satisfaction levels.

Ninety-eight (66%) of the respondents provided comments. A large majority of them expressed love for the trail and indicated a positive feedback. Nine themes emerged from these comments such as seeing the trail as a community asset, enjoying easy access to the trail, enjoying nature and outdoors.



Major Findings at a Glance



94% of property owners living near the MKT Trail are very satisfied (70%) or satisfied (24%) with having the MKT Trail as a neighbor.



89% of the MKT neighbors indicated that the trail has improved their quality of life.



77% of those who bought/occupied property during/after the MKT Trail development indicated the trail had a positive influence on their purchasing decisions. (17% no impact, aware of trail, 5% no impact, not aware of trail, 1% negative)



72% of property owners would choose to live near a trail again if they were to move. (24% not sure, 5% no)



71% of property owners believed the trail would make their property easier to sell (15% no effect, 10% don't know, 1% more difficult to sell) and 56% believed the trail increased their property value (26% no effect, 18% don't know).



A majority (66% to 93%) of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed on all 8 trail benefits.

Only a small portion (5%-13%) reported they agreed or strongly agreed with 8 potential concerns.

