



A summary of greenway, trail, and blueway case studies from communities throughout the United States

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Trails, greenways, and blueways (water trails) provide a wide variety of health, environmental, economic and social benefits to users and the communities they connect, as demonstrated in hundreds of American cities, towns and regions.

These benefits – which all contribute to a community’s quality of life -- include:¹

- *Creating Value and Generating Economic Activity*
Expenditures by hikers, bicyclists, paddlers and other visitors boost local economies; increased property values provide more revenue sources for community development; entrepreneurial opportunities emerge for small business that serves trail users; quality of place attracts millennials, active baby boomers and CEOs looking to compete for high quality talent.
- *Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation*
Trails and greenways provide transportation alternatives for commuters, students, and others to get to work, to school, to parks, shopping and entertainment venues.
- *Improving Health through Active Living*
Presence of nearby trails and parks encourages more active lifestyles.
- *Clear Skies, Clean Rivers, and Protected Wildlife*
Trails, greenways and blueways are frequently companions to land and water conservation projects that improve water quality, protect and restore wildlife habitats, and expand forests that filter pollutants and capture carbon dioxide.
- *Protecting People and Property from Flood Damage*
River greenways protect floodplains from development that both increases the severity of flood events and also puts people and property in harm’s way.
- *Enhancing Cultural Awareness and Community Identity*
Trails link people with neighborhoods, historic sites, community gathering spots, and each other.

Following is a listing of key findings in case studies of successful trails, greenways and blueways. Each summary includes a link to more complete information, often in the form of a user survey and economic impact analysis.

Root River Trail

42 mile Root River Trail in Southeastern Minnesota.

Pre- and post-trail Lanesboro, a town of about 800 residents on the trail, differ dramatically. Post-trail Lanesboro boasts 12 B&Bs (with year-long waiting lists), 8 restaurants, an art gallery, a museum, and a thriving community theater well-off enough to offer housing to its actors. Economically speaking, the Root River Trail has been very, very good for Lanesboro. For a town like Lanesboro, a trail can mean an annual economic impact of more than five million dollars.

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/MNecon.html>

http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_trails/root_river/index.html

Swamp Rabbit Trail, South Carolina

14 miles – Greenville to Travelers Rest

501,000 annual users 2012-13

\$6.7 million in trail tourism by out of town trail users

<http://greenvillerec.com/swamprabbit>

Swamp Rabbit Trail revitalizes Travelers Rest, BlueRidgeNow.com, May 18, 2014,

<http://www.blueridgenow.com/article/20140518/ARTICLES/140519904>

Little Miami River Scenic Trail, Ohio

77 miles

150,000 to 175,000 annual users

Status Report on Trails and Greenways in the OKI Region, January 2011

<http://www.oki.org/pdf/trailplans.pdf>

Shepherd's Vineyard housing project, Apex, NC

\$5,000 cost premium for 40 homes adjacent to regional greenway, yet greenway homes were the first to sell.

Economic Benefits of Rails to Trails, Rails to Trails Conservancy

http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource_docs/tqc_economic.pdf

Washington and Old Dominion Trail, Northern Virginia

45 miles

\$7 million in visitor spending

Virginia Department of Conservation

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/tr-sbiic4.shtml

Virginia Creeper Trail, Southwestern Virginia

34 miles

\$2.5 million a year in visitor spending

Virginia Department of Conservation

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/tr-sbiic4.shtml

St. Mark's Trail, Tallahassee, FL

16 mile trail

\$2.2 million per year economic benefit

www.greenways.com

Silver Comet Trail, Georgia

61.5 miles

1.9 million annual visitors

\$57 million annual spending by visitors

Northwest Georgia Regional Planning Commission

<http://community.railstotrails.org/media/p/38692.aspx>

Monon Trail, Indianapolis

Homes close to trail have sold for average 11% more than homes farther away.

Rails to Trails Conservancy

<http://community.railstotrails.org/media/p/37270.aspx>

Mon River – Caperton – Deckers Creek Trails, West Virginia

48 mile linear park

\$200 million private investment along trail in Morgantown, WVA

American Trails

<http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/trailNRT/MonRiver-WV.html>

Waterway at New River State Park

39 mile water trail on New River

155,331 visitors

\$2.5 million visitor spending in local economy

Virginia Department of Conservation

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/tr-sbiic4.shtml

Pennsylvania Water Trails (Schuylkill, Susquehanna—North Branch, Juniata, and Three Rivers)

\$2.6 million in Gross State Product (for 6 months, extrapolated from 6 week study)

2012 Pennsylvania Recreational Water Trails Economic Impact Study, A Four-trail Case Study, for Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee

<http://pa-chestercounty.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/9573>

Kickapoo River Water Trail, Wisconsin

22 miles

\$1.75 million annual economic impact from canoeing.

Case Studies of Water Trail Impacts on Rural Communities

University of Oregon

<http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/wtimpacts.pdf>

Meramec River Greenway, Missouri

108 miles

\$7.7 million avoided flood damages annually

1% increase in home sale price for every 1,000 feet closer to greenway = \$23.6 million benefit along length of greenway

Floodplain Conservation as a Flood Mitigation Strategy, Resources for the Future, Oct. 2013

<http://www.rff.org/Publications/Pages/PublicationDetails.aspx?PublicationID=22237>

Mingo Creek Greenway, Tulsa, OK

9 miles

25% reduction in flood insurance rates

American Rivers

<http://www.americanrivers.org/initiative/floods/projects/floodplain-and-wetlands-restoration-projects/>

Great Allegheny Passage, Pennsylvania

150 miles

30% of trail town gross business revenues were attributed to the trail in 2011, an increase over 2009.

In dollars, the revenue attributed to the trail was over \$1 million per establishment in 2011.

2012 Trail Town Business Survey Report, Frostburg State University

<http://www.atatrail.org/au/impact.cfm>

Trail's opening eyed as path to prosperity, Baltimore Sun, December 2006

"The revival of the city is driven, in part, by the trail," [Great Allegheny Passage in Cumberland, MD] says Mayor Lee Fiedler, who ordered bike racks installed on downtown street corners. "No one thought people with bikes would spend money, but they were wrong. Business is spreading back from the trail."

Lackawanna River Heritage Trail

70 miles

\$28.2 million annual economic impact

Lackawanna River Heritage Trail 2009 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area October 2011

<http://www.lhva.org/docs/LRHT%20Trail%20User%20Survey%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Wolf River Greenway

36 miles when complete

Memphis to Collierville, TN

\$14 million in estimated total benefits per year

Memphis Gets Moving, Health & Economic Impacts of Building the Wolf River Greenway

http://issuu.com/wolfriverconservancy/docs/wrq_report_final_webview2_010815

Orange County Trails

Florida

“The West Orange, Little Econ, and Cady Way trails in Orange County supported 516 jobs and an estimated economic impact of \$42.6 million in 2010.”

East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (2011)

http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/economic/PDF/Orange_County_Trail_Report_final_May2011.pdf

Teton County Trails

Jackson Hole, Wyoming

The Teton County trail system generated an estimated \$18 million in economic activity in 2010, with \$1.1 million spent by local trail users and \$17 million by non-local trail users: “Employment and wages relating to the trail system in Teton County totaled \$3.6 million with approximately 213 workers employed in the summer and fall of 2010.”

Jackson Hole Trails Project Economic Impact Study (2011)

http://www.imbacanada.com/sites/default/files/kaliszewski_JHTP_final.pdf

Ludlam Trail

6 miles

Miami, Florida

“The development of Ludlam Trail will save the community between \$1.68 million and \$2.25 million annually in direct medical costs related to lack of physical exercise while leading to approximately 4,931 to 6,579 area residents becoming new exercisers. Residents within the Ludlam Trail Study Area can expect to lose or keep off between 32,664 and 109,939 pounds of weight annually by burning between 2.19 million and 7.39 million calories (kilocalories) per week while exercising on Ludlam Trail.”

Trail Benefits Study: Ludlam Trail Case Study (2011)

<http://www.miamidade.gov/parksmasterplan/library/trail-benefits-report.pdf>

American Tobacco Trail

Durham, NC/Triangle region

A new bridge linking two unconnected sections of the trail resulted in a dramatic increase in trail use and economic impact. The Mounds Greenway would provide a similar link between the trails in Anderson, Muncie and the Cardinal Greenway.

Trail usage increased from 217,900 trips in 2013 to 508,100 trips in 2014. After construction of the bridge, trail users’ annual expenditures supported an additional 43 jobs, \$1.3 million in employee compensation, and \$4.9 million in gross business revenues.

Bridging the Gap, Economic, Health, and Transportation Impacts from completing a critical link in a 22-mile rail trail

http://www.itre.ncsu.edu/ITRE/research/documents/BridgingTheGap_ATT-FINAL-For-WEB-Brochure.pdf

Iowa River Trail Recreation

\$520 million in annual spending for trips on 73 rivers statewide, leading to over 6,300 jobs.

Economic Impacts of River Trail Recreation in Iowa

Center for Agricultural and Rural Development, Daniel Otto, March 2012

http://www.card.iastate.edu/environment/items/economic_impacts_of_river_trail_recreation.pdf

Indianapolis Cultural Trail

8 miles

Property values within 500 feet of the trail saw a \$1 billion increase from 2008 to 2014 in assessed value due to their close proximity to the trail.

Assessment of the Impact of the Indianapolis Cultural Trail: A Legacy of Gene and Marilyn Glick, Indiana University Public Policy Institute, March 2015

<http://policyinstitute.iu.edu/Uploads/PublicationFiles/15-C02%20CulturalTrail%20Assessment.pdf>

Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism



A project of Allegheny Trail Alliance

A “Trail Town” is a destination along a long-distance trail. Whether on a rail trail, towpath, water trail, or hiking trail— trail users can venture off the trail to enjoy the scenery, services, and heritage of the nearby community with its own character and charm. It is a safe place where both town residents and trail users can walk, find the goods and services they need, and easily access both trail and town by foot or vehicle. In such a

town, the trail is an integral and important part of the community. *Trail Town Program*®,

www.trailtowns.org

¹ The Benefits of Greenways, Greenways, Inc., <http://www.greenways.com/benefits-of-greenways>; The Economic Benefits of Recreational Trails, U.S. Forest Service, <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/rectrails.pdf>; From Trail Towns to TroD: Trails and Economic Development, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, www.railstotrails.org; Economic Benefits of Trail Tourism, American Trails, www.americantrails.org/resources/economics; The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space, Trust for Public Land, www.tpl.org; Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, www.railstotrails.org; Property Values, Recreation Values, and Urban Greenways, Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, Fall 2004 Volume 22, Number 3 http://staff.washington.edu/kwolf/Archive/Classes/ESRM304_SocSci/304%20Soc%20Sci%20Lab%20Articles/Lindsey_2004.pdf