

# TRAILS SUPPORT ECONOMIES



## TRAILS ARE IMPORTANT AMENITIES FOR REAL ESTATE BUYERS ACROSS AGE GROUPS

A study of 4,300 home buyers found that proximity to a park and access to walking/jogging trails were among the most desired amenities (National Association of Homebuilders, 2016; Wasik, 2016).



## TRAILS IMPACT REGIONAL ECONOMIES THROUGH JOBS, TAX REVENUE, AND MONETIZED VALUE OF QUALITY OF LIFE

A study from North Carolina of a \$26.7 million investment in four greenways found that every \$1 spent on construction yielded \$1.72 in additional impact annually (ITRE, 2018). Other impacts included: \$19.4 million in local business sales, \$684,000 in tax revenue, \$25.7 million in savings due to increases in physical activity, less pollution and traffic, and \$48.7 million in business revenue from construction. Economic impacts from a particular trail or region may not be comparable to other areas due to differences in structure and use.



## TRAILS MAY IMPACT PROPERTY VALUES AND MITIGATE CRIME

Several studies found either a neutral or positive effect of trails on local home values, with premiums ranging from 5-10% (Hilfer, 2007; Lawson, 2016; Lindsey et al, 2004; Nicholls & Cromton, 2005; Parent & Vom Hofe, 2013). Evidence suggests that green spaces have a mitigating effect on crimes such as murder, assault, and theft (Shepley, 2019).



## TRAILS MAY INCREASE INVESTMENT IN DEVELOPMENT

A review of real estate case studies from around the world found bike lanes and sidewalks add value to development projects, the market is growing for inclusion of bike friendly amenities in residential and commercial properties and private-public partnerships will maximize the investment in Trail Oriented Development (TrOD) projects. (Urban Land Institute, 2017).



## TRAIL USERS SPEND MONEY AT LOCAL BUSINESSES

The Outdoor Industry Association reports that out-of-state day users spend nearly \$100 more (\$191) than in-state day users (\$100). Factors that have the greatest effect on direct spending include trail quality, user amenities, and community connections via spurs or shuttles (Berard et al, 2014; Kazmerski et al, 2009).



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**TAKE A SYSTEMS APPROACH:** Trails serve many functions including physical activity routes for local users, amenities for tourism, and regional transportation systems and infrastructure.

**CONNECT TRAILS TO DOWNTOWN AMENITIES:** Communities should focus on the areas most likely to have existing amenities and connectivity is key. Clarify safe routes for users to and from trails to downtown areas.

**ENGAGE AND INVOLVE ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS AND LOCAL PROPERTY OWNERS IN TRAIL DEVELOPMENT:** Universities, major employers, utilities, and museums can play an essential role in supporting trail development and promotion. These institutions and private property owners have an interest in how the trail will impact foot traffic, property values, or public safety.

# CASE STUDY: CANTON, CT TRAIL TOWN ON THE FARMINGTON CANAL TRAIL

In 2011, a 1.4 mile paved section of the Farmington River Trail opened that connected the town of Canton (pop. 10,292) to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, an 81.2 mile trail through Connecticut and Massachusetts. According to planning director Neil Pade, "simply having the trail changed the amount of foot traffic considerably, thus changing economic activity." With the goal of capitalizing on the economic potential of the trail, Canton has captured over \$1.7 million in grants to fund master planning and street improvements. Phase I, completed in 2015, included a shaded plaza with benches, bike racks, lighting, a water fountain and info kiosk that greet visitors to the village. Phase II will bring the trail further into the Collinsville Business District and create connectivity to other economic assets.



*As communities throughout the U.S. and the world cope with the devastating toll of COVID-19, the pandemic has brought a renewed focus on the importance of local trails. The Trail Impact Series explores how local trails are vital assets for improving physical and mental health, building community, stimulating economies, and fostering climate resilience. The goal is to provide community leaders, trail planners, and advocates with evidence-based information on the benefits of trails, and recommendations for advancing informed design, policy and programming. To view the series visit: <http://s.uconn.edu/trailimpacts>*

Front Image: Concert goers enjoy the waterfront trail in Hartford, Connecticut. Photo Credit: Riverfront Recapture Photo. Above Image: Bicycle amenities in Canton, Connecticut. Photo Credit: Neil Pade, Town of Canton Planning Director.

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