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CENTRAL OHIO TRAIL TOWN FRAMEWORK



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City of Mount Vernon

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Downtown District**

Heart of Ohio Trail Board

Kokosing Gap Trail

Ohio to Erie Trail Board

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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Cover Photo Courtesy of Randy Cronk

Thanks also to the many local leaders who participated in our local leader group interviews, including Mayor Patrick Closser (London), Mayor Gregory Sands (Centerburg), Mayor Matthew Starr (Mount Vernon), and Mayor Joe St. John (Sunbury).

This document was prepared by Cycle Forward and Toole Design, together with the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC).

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT TRAIL TOWNS

“Trail towns” is both an investment and an attitude.

To be a trail town is to pay attention to trails, to invest in them, and make a concerted community-wide effort to improve trail-to-town connections. This includes both physical connectivity and feelings of connection. Conceived 20 years ago in Pennsylvania, the trail town model for community development empowers communities to make critical infrastructure improvements, better serve trail users, and adopt a hospitable trail culture.

Recognizing the trail town approach as a way of leveraging trail tourism opportunities, as well as active transportation and quality of life benefits, Central Ohio Greenways (COG) sought professional consulting services to develop a framework for a regional initiative.

ABOUT CENTRAL OHIO GREENWAYS

Central Ohio Greenways (COG) is a trail network of national significance spanning 230+ miles, connecting Central Ohio to other parts of the state and country. These trails are traveled more than 12 million miles annually and provide economic, quality of life, and health benefits to the community. The COG Board, a committee of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), was formed in 2015. The COG Board’s vision is to create a world-class network of trails easily accessible to every Central Ohioan. Its mission is to increase trail mileage and the use of trails for recreational and transportation needs.

The Board seeks to increase the number of people using the regional trail system through trail network expansions, increased programming, improved branding and marketing, and new partnerships. With Central Ohio expected to be a region of three million people by 2050 – bringing an increased demand for more walkable neighborhoods and transportation options – trails have become a critical element for providing a high quality of life to a diverse population. New trail miles will extend existing trails, fill gaps in trail corridors, connect neighborhoods to job centers, and create a truly interconnected network of trails useful for both transportation and recreation.

As the COG trail network expands, having a regional trail town program in place will position Central Ohio to fully maximize the potential of local and regional trails. Recognizing this potential, MORPC initiated and managed this project. As Central Ohio’s regional council, MORPC’s municipal relationships as well as its commitment to complete trail networks, active transportation, and improved quality of life positioned it to lead the project. The MORPC staff raised funds, assembled a steering committee, managed the consultant selection process, served as the conduit between the consultants and committee members, and provided useful feedback throughout the planning process. Similarly, the committee contributed insights that ensure the program is designed to meet the needs and capacity of regional trail communities.

Trail of Regional Significance

A Trail of Regional Significance is a primary trail, predominantly off-street, multi-jurisdictional, and connects people to major destination points. These trails have a well maintained, improved surface and should prioritize comfort and safety for trail users. In locations where Trails of Regional Significance intersect or conflict with vehicular traffic, the trail should be emphasized as highly as practicable. Landscaping and buffering should be incorporated into the design of these trails. Access to amenities, such as restrooms, drinking fountains, and parking should be provided periodically. Wayfinding, snow & ice removal, maintenance, and 24/7 access of Trails of Regional Significance are critical to ensure that reliable and equitable access is provided to all users.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND REPORT FORMAT

The COG Board selected a consulting team comprised of Cycle Forward and Toole Design Group, LLC to develop the Central Ohio Trail Town Framework. From December 2021 – July 2022, the consulting team and MORPC staff worked with a Steering Committee comprised of local community representatives and regional trail advocates to design a program that will meet the needs of local trail communities. The project was supported with financial contributions from City of Mount Vernon, City of Sunbury, The Columbus Foundation, Friends of Madison County Parks and Trails and 1811, Downtown District, Heart of Ohio Trail Board, Kokosing Gap Trail, Ohio to Erie Trail Board, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, and the Village of Centerburg.

While the eventual program will be open to any community located along a Central Ohio Trail of Regional Significance, four communities along the Ohio to Erie Trail (OTET) have invested in this planning stage of the project. They invested time and energy into the planning process and were included in baseline research. For purposes of this document, these locations – Centerburg, London, Mount Vernon, and Sunbury – are referred to as “sponsoring communities.” Their financial support of the project does not constitute trail town designation, however, it is indicative of their vested interest in connecting to trails and helped strengthen the overall program design. Everybody involved hopes these communities and others will soon have the opportunity to seek trail town designation and reap the benefits of a regional program.

This framework document details the planning process, existing conditions, and recommendations for designing a regional trail town program. The document is organized in three sections:

Part 1: Existing Conditions

This part of the report details existing conditions primarily in the four sponsoring communities. Included are an existing conditions infrastructure inventory, community survey results, a local leader interview summary, and a points of interest inventory. Existing conditions (both in terms of physical conditions, and perceptions and attitudes toward trails) were determined through a combination of surveys, interviews, steering committee meetings, and community site visits.

Part 2: Trail Town Framework

This section makes recommendations concerning how a trail town program can be launched and sustained in Central Ohio. It addresses how a program would be structured, staffed, and operated. This portion of the report also addresses potential program areas, such as infrastructure improvements, tourism, economic development, branding, art, and wayfinding. Essentially, the framework becomes the scope of work for implementing a regional trail town program over the next few years.

Part 3: Short-Term Implementation Strategy Recommendations

This section recommends short-term implementation projects that local communities can pursue regardless of trail town designation. The specific projects were conceived as a result of site visits, steering committee discussions, and other community feedback concerning existing conditions. The projects emphasize the “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” approach to placemaking, are intended to demonstrate a sense of vibrancy and that change is occurring. Participating communities can decide whether they want to take on these or similar projects as a regional trail town effort is being designed.

PART ONE: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

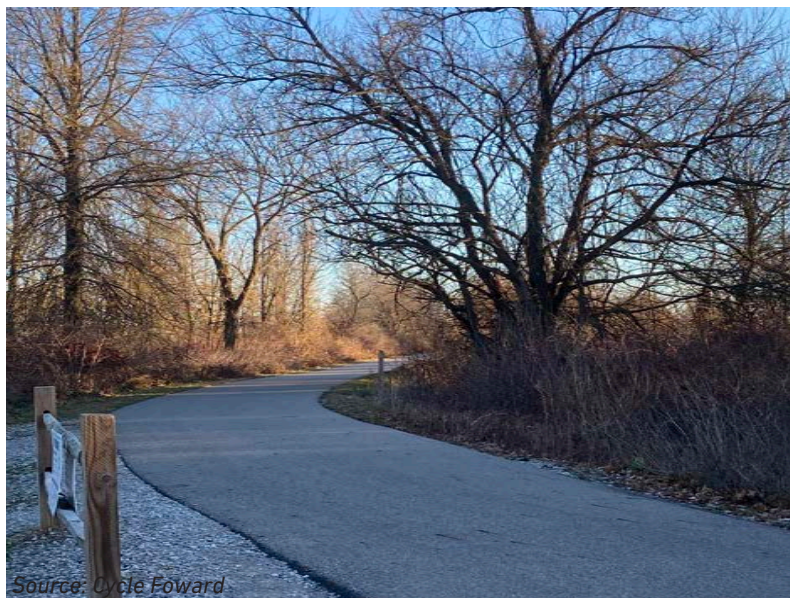


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TRAIL AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE INVENTORY

The consultant team conducted field visits to each of the sponsoring communities in December 2021. This section addresses existing conditions in terms of trail and active transportation infrastructure as observed by the consultant team at that time.



MOUNT VERNON, OH

Trail Overview

The Ohio to Erie Trail passes through the city of Mt. Vernon adjacent to the Kokosing River just south of downtown. Within the Mt. Vernon city limits the trail is an off-street multi-use asphalt pathway that is approximately 10 feet in width. While signed as the Ohio to Erie Trail, locally the trail is known (and signed) as the Kokosing Gap Trail, Downtown Connector Trail, or the Heart of Ohio Trail as described further below:

- *The Heart of Ohio* enters Mt. Vernon from the southwest and terminates at the restored Cleveland, Akron & Columbus (CA&C) Railroad depot just south of downtown and west of South Main Street. It has several at-grade signed roadway crossings on mostly lower volume and lower speed roadways.
- *The Downtown Connector Trail* “connects” the Heart of Ohio and the Kokosing Gap trails. From the CA&C depot, the trail follows along the Kokosing River, under South Main Street, and terminates at Mt. Vernon Avenue where the Kokosing Gap Trail begins. There is a short at-grade signed crossing of Mt. Vernon Avenue. Additionally, there is a short trail spur just east of South Main Street that bridges over the Kokosing River and terminates at the intersection of Howard Street and South Gay Street on the southeastern side of downtown. There is also an existing at-grade crossing of South Main Street between the CA&C depot and the Downtown Connector Trail and trail spur to downtown. This was the only connection across South Main Street prior to the completion of the Downtown Connector Trail under South Main Street. This crossing appeared to be avoided by walkers and cyclists on the day of our field visit.
- *The Kokosing Gap Trail* continues to the east from Mt. Vernon Avenue where it connects to Gambier and other communities. There is a short spur of the trail that extends to Phillips Park and Liberty Street just to the north of Mt. Vernon Avenue. Phillips Park has restrooms and vehicular parking facilities that are primarily open during daytime hours.

Trailheads

While there are numerous roadway access points to the trails or other park access points, Mount Vernon has two designated trailhead facilities. They include the previously mentioned CA&C depot along with one at the Kokosing Gap Trail terminus adjacent to Mt. Vernon Avenue.

Trailhead: Cleveland, Akron & Columbus (CA&C) Railroad Depot

The CA&C Depot has many amenities that would prove to be beneficial to trail users. These amenities include:

- Bike Fixit Station
- Restrooms (Located indoors)
- Good lighting
- Water fountains
- Wayfinding signage
- Little Free Library
- Free public parking

Trailhead: Kokosing Gap Trail – Lower Gambier Rd

The trail access on Lower Gambier Rd to the Kokosing Gap Trail contained the following amenities:

- Free public parking
- Restroom (one portable toilet)
- Pavilion with water fountain
- Wayfinding signage
- Flashing crosswalk at the Mt Vernon Avenue crossing
- Photo opportunity (I heart KGT - art installation)

General Information

Active Transportation

The active transportation environment within the city of Mount Vernon includes sidewalks on most streets within the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods north of the Kokosing River. South of the river, sidewalks are located along segments of South Main/Newark, Martinsburg, and are generally absent on residential streets. There are several smaller segments of existing on-street bikeways (signed routes and/or shared lane markings) along two downtown streets and a combination of several streets in the east side of town connecting the termini of the Kokosing Gap Trail adjacent to Phillips Park to Fairgrounds Road.

Local Bike Shops

Y-Not Cycling & Fitness has a wayfinding sign near the CA&C Railroad Depot, where the trail crosses South Main. The wayfinding sign reads, "bike shop 2 blocks" with an arrow pointing in the correct direction. Y-Not Cycling & Fitness is located downtown on the corner of Gambier Road and Blackberry Alley. To access the shop, bicyclists must ride on the road or walk their bike on the sidewalk.



Y-Not Cycling & Fitness
Source: Toole Design

A key barrier would be South Main, especially the South Main bridge. Bicycling over the South Main bridge, on road, would feel uncomfortable to most people due to narrow lanes, higher speeds, and the overall volume of traffic. Walking a bicycle on the sidewalk could also feel uncomfortable due to the narrow width with no buffer between the travel lane and the sidewalk. Bicyclists could also use the bridge over the Kokosing to the Gay/Howard intersection. There is an existing on-street bikeway along Howard and Plum Alley; however, this route may also be a barrier to bicyclists due to higher speeds and volumes along South Gay Street.

Amenities

Creno's Pizza and Whit's Custard are both across South Main CA&C Depot and directly accessible from the Downtown Connector Trail. Both restaurants would be easily accessible by foot or bike by traveling through their parking lot. There is also a coffee shop, grocery store and several fast food restaurants within a half mile of the trail along South Main/Newark Road. A sidewalk exists on both sides of South Main/Newark Road, but there are no bike facilities (or noticeable bike racks).



Locomotive in Mount Vernon
Source: Randy Cronk

Within the downtown there are over a dozen restaurants (including a least one brewery) along with numerous shops. At the time this existing conditions study was conducted, there were a few locations with bike racks, mostly in or adjacent to parking lots. Bike racks were not observed along Main Street in front of businesses. Downtown Mount Vernon has a town square, a plaza with a dog fountain, and multiple areas with benches, which are accessible by walking and bicycling (higher stress). Wayfinding between the trail and downtown (and vice versa) is limited.

Gateway Moments and Signs of “Welcome”

The trailheads, to a certain extent, provide gateway moments into the community, as does the bridge over the Kokosing. One notable gateway moment from the southwest approach is Ariel-Foundation Park, located adjacent to the trail. The park offers a striking re-use

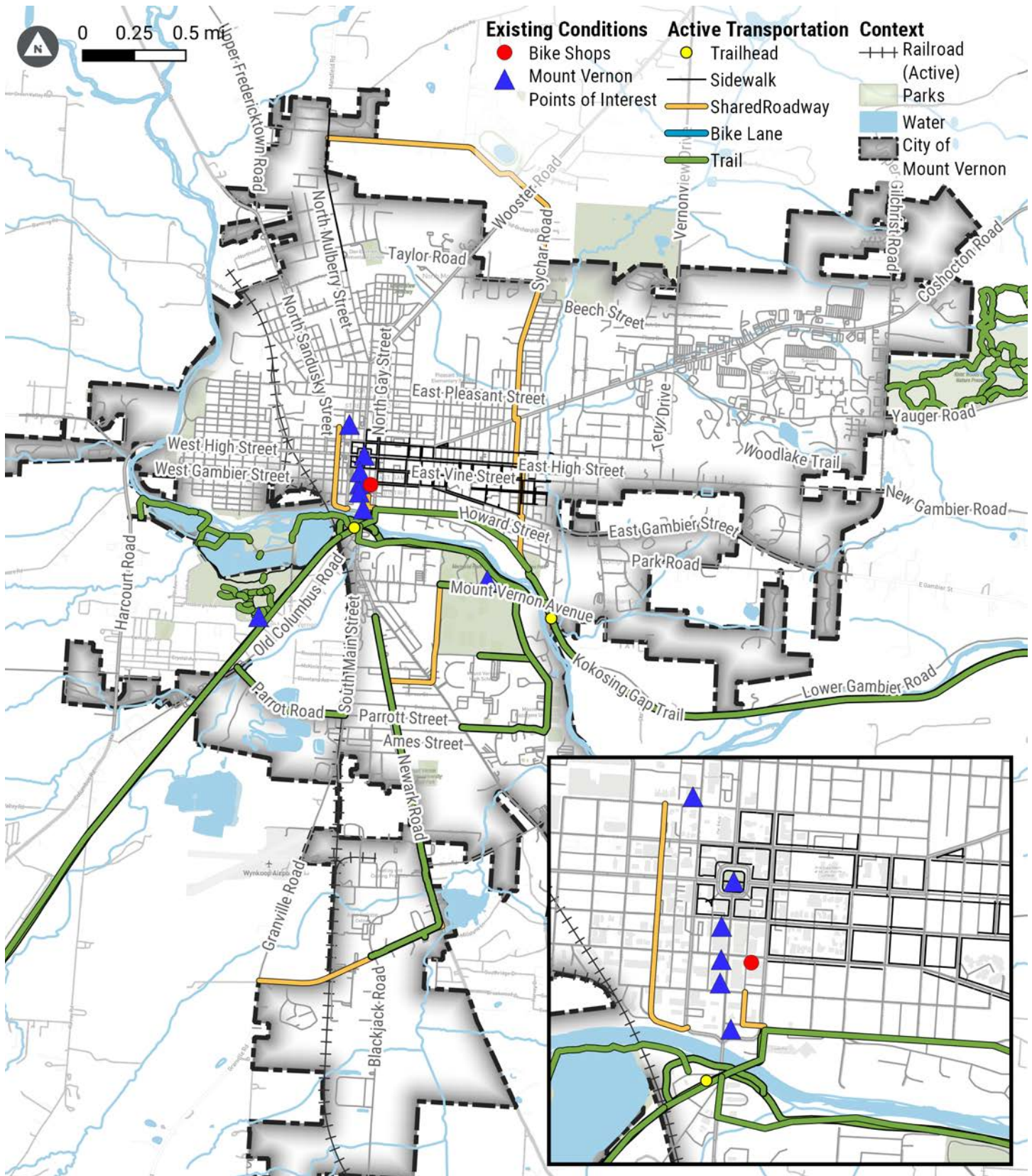
of a former industrial site, with an observation tower and architectural ruins repurposed as part of the park space. Public art, a labyrinth, an event venue, lakes, and a wooded area are accessible by trail.

The mere investment in physical infrastructure (restrooms, bike racks, wayfinding, below-grade crossings, and the like) is indicative of a community and trail organization that values trails and is welcoming of trail users. Additional “signs of welcome” evident in Mt. Vernon can be found in some of the softer infrastructure: the I “Heart” KGT photo opportunity at the Kokosing Gap Trail – Lower Gambier Rd trailhead and the Bike Fixit Station and Little Free Library at the depot. These kinds of investments signal a welcoming, trail-supportive local environment. In-town amenities, like murals and the dog fountain, contribute to an overall sense of vibrancy that is consistent with communities that have well-maintained trails.



I “Heart” KGT Photo Opportunity
Source: Randy Cronk

MAP 1. CITY OF MOUNT VERNON EXISTING CONDITIONS



CENTERBURG, OH

Trail Overview

The Ohio to Erie Trail passes through the Village of Centerburg roughly 2 to 3 blocks from Main Street/US Route 36 (which it parallels). Within the village limits the trail is an off-street multi-use pathway that is approximately 10 feet in width. While signed as the Ohio to Erie Trail, locally the trail is known (and signed) as the Heart of Ohio Trail. Additionally, in May 2022, the section of the trail located southwest of Centerburg, between Huffman Road and North County Line Road, was completed.



Memorial Park/Johnsville Rd Trailhead Map
Source: Toole Design

Trailheads

While there is a handful of roadway access points to the trail, Centerburg has two designated trailhead facilities. They include Memorial Park, which is located on the east end of Centerburg adjacent to Johnsville Road, and adjacent to downtown Centerburg at a parking lot off Clayton Street.

Trailhead: Memorial Park/Johnsville Rd

There is trail access to the Heart of Ohio Trail at Memorial Park, located off Johnsville Rd. The observed amenities include:

- Free public parking
- Picnic table
- Wayfinding signage
- Art pieces, which may also make for good photo opportunities, but may benefit from signage to alert trail users to their locations.

Trailhead: Midway Station Welcome Center

The primary trailhead within Centerburg is south of N Clayton Street, just off Hartford Avenue. Currently, the amenities seen at this trailhead include:

- Free public parking
- Benches
- Bike fixit station
- Bicycle parking
- Donation box
- Trail sign
- “Welcome to Centerburg” selfie station



Wayfinding Signage
Source: Toole Design



Trailhead: Midway Station Welcome Center
Source: Toole Design



Trailhead: Midway Station Welcome Center
Source: Toole Design

General Information

Active Transportation

The active transportation environment within the Village of Centerburg includes sidewalks on most streets, but they are narrow and in need of repair in numerous sections. The sidewalks along Main Street are wider and in better condition. There are no defined bicycle routes beyond the trail. There are a limited number of bike racks along Main Street, including circular racks that are conducive to securing touring bikes. Most streets are lower volume and lower speed, so residents or visitors would likely be comfortable on most streets within Centerburg. Crossings at traffic intersections consist of traditional crosswalk markings, with high visibility crosswalks at midblock crossings. Pedestrian signalized crosswalks were not found at traffic intersections or midblock crossings. Wayfinding signage is very limited; however, it is fairly obvious which way is the direction towards the downtown.

Local Bike Shops

There are currently no bike shops within Centerburg.

Amenities

Centerburg has a quaint downtown primarily along Main Street with a handful of shops and restaurants including a tavern, pizza shop, and ice cream shop. Sidewalks connect the trail to the downtown via Clayton Street and Hartford Avenue. Plans for future development include an outpatient facility adjacent to the trail where a connection will be made from the trail to the facility. Additionally, there may be a plan to construct a crushed stone access trail to connect the trail to the existing Hometown Market grocery store. There are ongoing efforts to improve and work on the sidewalk network throughout the town. Lastly, the Knox County Health Department is considering implementing a trail friendly business program. They have already installed a bike rack at the ReMax, which is located on Main St. It is worth noting due to the operating hours at Kolacheez Coffee Bar and Pizzaburg, users arriving midday or on Sundays or Mondays would find neither business open at this prime location.

Gateway Moments and Signs of “Welcome”

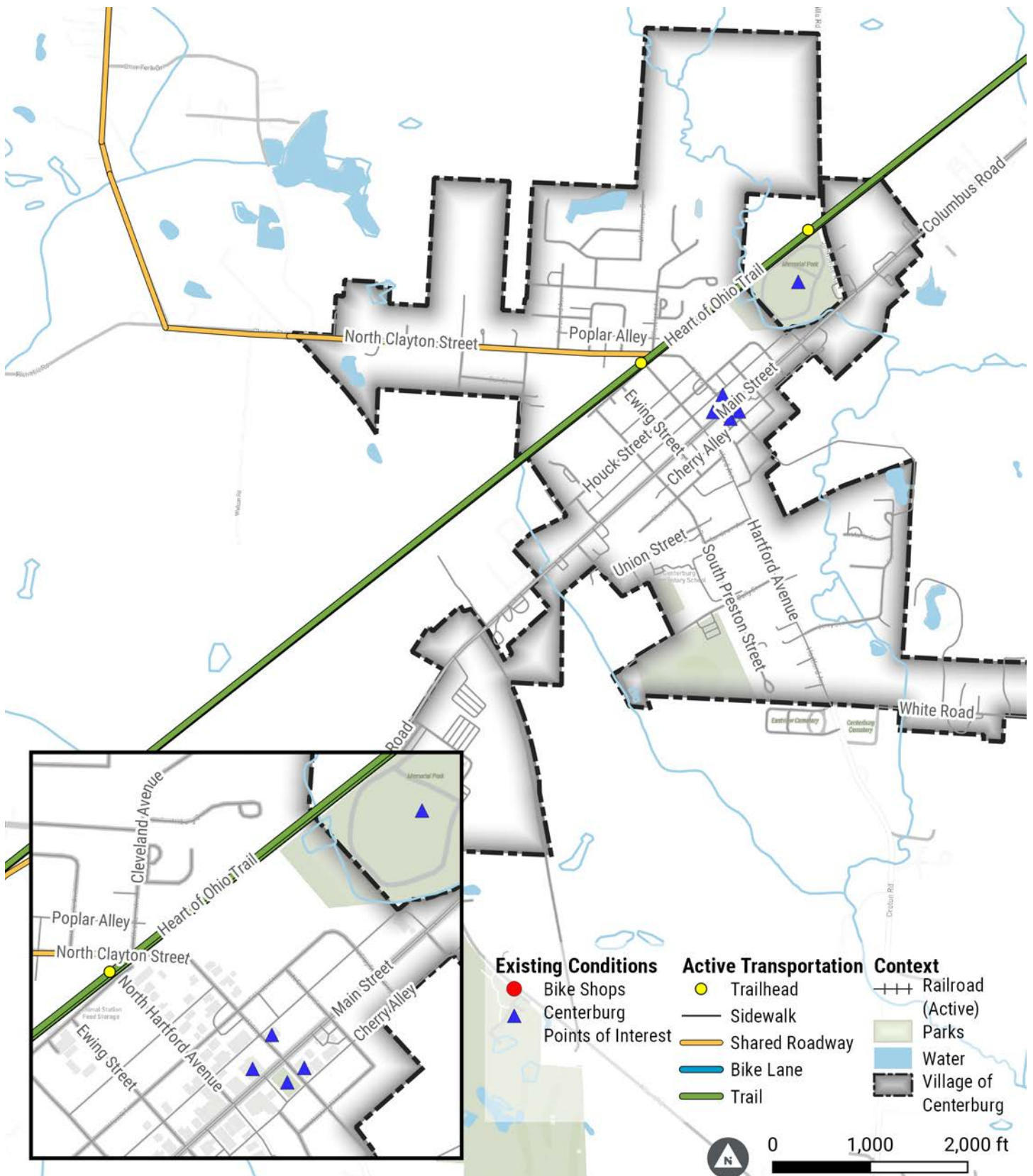
The most obvious existing gateway moments are the silos, which are commercial agricultural grain storage bins for Hendren Farms Partnership, and are adjacent to the Kolacheez and Pizzaburg parking lot. Additionally, the building that houses the two businesses is a gateway moment, as these were an old grain and feed mill dating from 1901. These impressive structures cannot be missed. Anyone visiting by trail will intuitively know they have reached a community with services.

There are a few “signs of welcome” evident in Centerburg, mainly the Center of Ohio Rock at the Memorial Park trailhead and a selfie frame at the Midway Station Welcome Center trailhead. The steel fabricated selfie frame boasts that Centerburg is the midpoint of the Ohio to Erie Trail, an ideal photo opportunity. Additionally, the village’s branded signs with the “Heart of Ohio” tagline express a generally warm, welcoming local vibe.



A group of touring cyclists stop for a photo in Centerburg
Source: Tom Bilcze

MAP 2. VILLAGE OF CENTERBURG EXISTING CONDITIONS



SUNBURY, OH

Trail Overview

The Ohio to Erie Trail passes through the City of Sunbury on a combination of off-road trail and on-road, shared vehicular travel lanes. The trail enters Sunbury from the northeast and is locally designated as the Meredith State Road Trail. It terminates along Hartford Road just east of the Big Walnut Creek (officially outside of city limits). It follows Hartford Road, to High Street, to Rainbow Road, to North Columbus Street, to East Cherry Street, to South Vernon Street where it connects to the Sandel Legacy Trail. This roundabout route is due to a network of one-way streets within Sunbury. The Sandel Legacy Trail continues to the southwest and connects to the Village of Galena. There is also a short section of trail between Walnut and Cherry streets on the eastern side of Sunbury; however, it is not currently connected to any other segments. The on-road portion has limited signage, so trail users likely need to be familiar with Sunbury to navigate the community with ease.



Sandel Legacy Trailhead (Source: Toole Design)



Trail segment between Walnut and Cherry Street (Source: Toole Design)

Trailheads

Trailhead: Sandel Legacy Trail

The main trailhead to access the Sandel Legacy Trail is located at the corner of South Columbus Street and South Vernon Street. The Sandel Legacy Trail continues southwest of Sunbury. Amenities included at the trailhead are:

- Free public parking
- Trail bulletin board with a trail map, park rules, and additional flyers



Wayfinding Signage (Source: Toole Design)

General Information

Active Transportation

The active transportation environment within the City of Sunbury includes sidewalks on most streets within the downtown core, but there are key gaps on several streets including South Columbus Street and East Granville Street (State Route 37). There are no additional bicycle facilities within the downtown or surrounding neighborhoods. There are no noticeable bike racks in the downtown area, but there is one tucked away in a parklet across from the town square. Sidewalks do connect to the commercial corridor via West Cherry Street or West Granville Street; however, the intersections with North State Street (State Route 3) would likely be a barrier to most walkers or bicyclists due to high speeds and high volume of traffic. Sunbury has experienced population growth in recent years due to new housing developments. The city is planning for future active transportation infrastructure investments to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Local Bike Shops

There are currently no bike shops within Sunbury.

Amenities

The city's downtown includes a large, traditional town green surrounded by various shops and restaurants. There are several antique stores along with 3 restaurants, a pizza shop, a donut shop, and a tavern. There are Ohio to Erie Bike Route 1 directional signs at each on-road turn in the City. However, no signage to indicate the presence or direction of the trail was observed in downtown Sunbury. Accessing restaurants, retail shops, and other amenities throughout Sunbury would prove to be difficult without a map or experience. Sunbury has indicated it wants to implement wayfinding signage throughout the town to assist bicyclists with navigating the gap in the trail network.



Sunbury Town Square
Source: Cycle Forward

Gateway Moments and Signs of “Welcome”

While not a gateway moment observable from the trail, once a trail user reaches downtown Sunbury, the town green and impressive buildings (namely, the town hall and the Myers Inn Museum) make for a memorable locale. Town leadership takes pride in the Myers Inn Museum. The building initially housed a stagecoach inn,

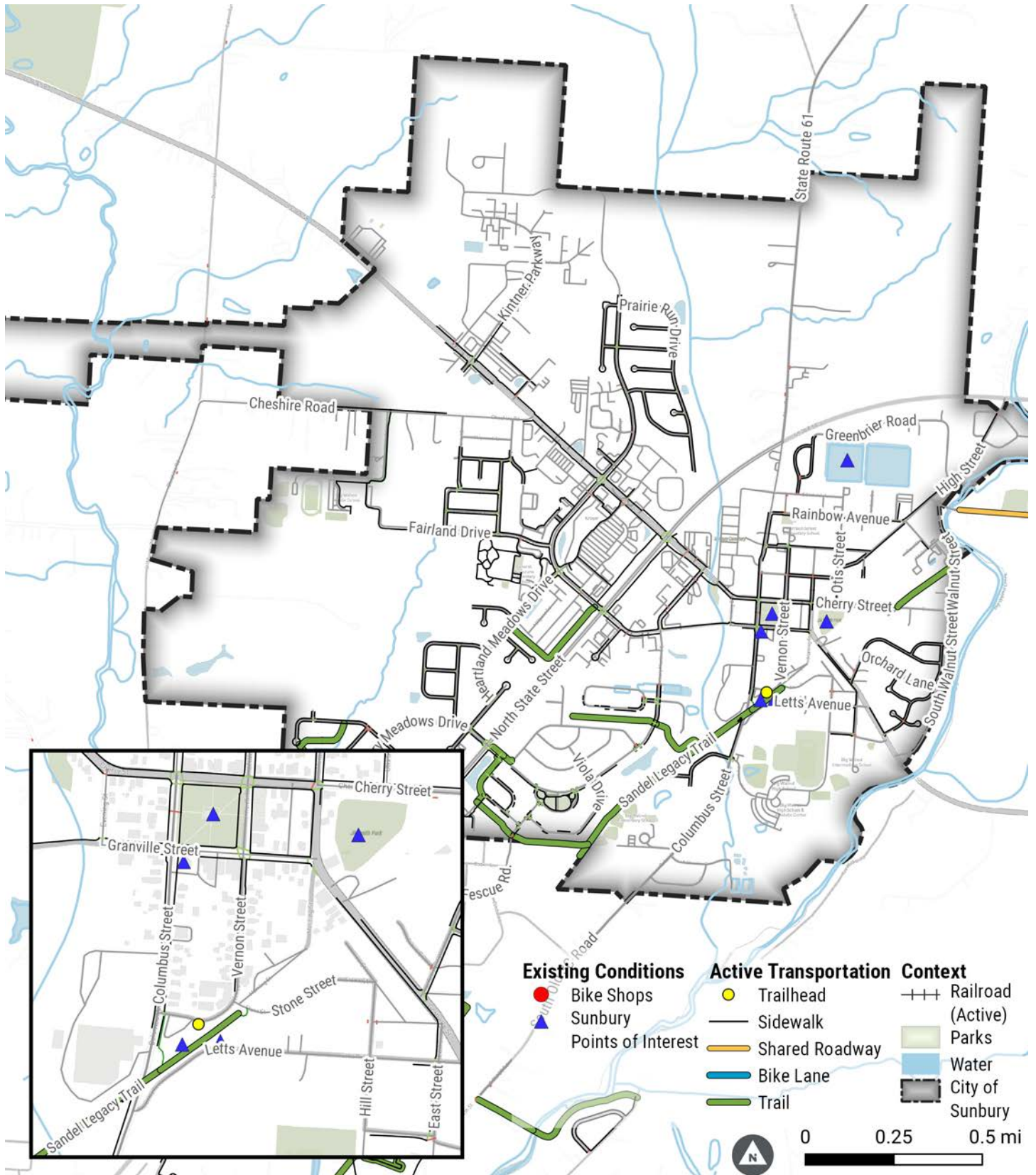
perhaps the community’s first tourism and hospitality offering. It is believed that Johnny Appleseed may have visited Sunbury (there may be a stand of trees located along a connector trail that can be traced back to Appleseed). Appropriately, Sunbury is a designated Tree City, USA.



Myers Inn

Source: Cycle Forward

MAP 3. CITY OF SUNBURY EXISTING CONDITIONS



LONDON, OH

Trail Overview

The Ohio to Erie Trail passes through downtown London on a mix of off-road trail and on-road, shared vehicular travel lanes. The trail enters London from the east as the locally designed Robert Pass Trail which parallels London-Lockbourne Road/East Center Street. The off-road trail currently terminates at South Walnut Street. On the west side of London, the trail enters the city as the Prairie Grass Trail. It parallels Columbus Cincinnati Road/West High Street (US Route 42) and currently terminates at Midway Street. This “break” in the trail is due to a rail spur that is currently inactive. A high priority for the city is to create a continuous trail through London most likely using the inactive rail spur. This would be for purposes of getting visiting trail users into town (rather than turning around short of town or detouring around) and to more easily get London residents to the trail.

There are two signed, on-road detour routes through London due to the missing gap. The downtown route follows Midway Street, West High Street, South Main Street, East 1st Street, and South Walnut Street. The bypass route follows Midway Street, Richardson Avenue, Olive Street, Center Street, and Walnut Street. The downtown route has clearer signage and is shown in Ohio to Erie Trail online mapping sites.



An Ohio to Erie thru-hiker in downtown London
Source: Wayne Roberts

Trailheads

Trailhead: Roberts Pass

Access to Roberts Pass is located off East Center Street approximately ¼ mile east of Maple Street. Both Walnut and Center contains wayfinding signage. The entrance to Roberts Pass contains an entrance sign called “Roberts Pass Trailhead”, The amenities of the Roberts Pass Trailhead include:

- Free public parking
- Maintained flowers and shrub beds
- Trail guidelines sign
- Donation safe
- Doggie bag litter stand

Trailhead: Prairie Grass Trailhead

The Prairie Grass Trailhead is located southwest of downtown London and runs parallel to High St. The Madison County Senior Center is located in front of the trailhead and trailhead parking lot. The trailhead has numerous amenities which makes it a good rest stop for bicyclists. Amenities include:

- Free public parking
- A pavilion
- Bike fixit station
- Water fountains
- Donation box
- Outdoor shower
- Photo opportunity
- Restrooms (located across the pedestrian bridge through the trailhead parking lot, just outside the Madison County Senior Citizens Center)
- Bulletin Board with a trail map

General Information

Active Transportation

The active transportation environment within the City of London includes sidewalks on nearly all streets within the downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods. There are no bicycle facilities within the city other than the signed connector routes. There are few noticeable bike racks in the downtown area. Increased traffic volumes and speeds on High Street and Main Street likely create barriers to most users attempting to bridge the gap in the trail.

Local Bike Shops

There are currently no bike shops within London, but the London Coffee Peddler fully embraces cycling and tries to accommodate cyclists who are in need of assistance.

Amenities

The city's downtown includes an abundance of restaurants, bars, shops, and other amenities. Overall, there is an ample amount of trail wayfinding signage throughout the downtown area and on streets immediate to the trail. Trails and routes that pass-through London include the Underground Railroad route, USBR 50, USBR 21, and the Chicago to NYC route (as well as the Great American Rail Trail, which follows a significant segment of the Ohio to Erie Trail). In town, it is obvious that there are bike trails nearby due to the bike route and wayfinding signs. There are several trail wayfinding signs throughout the neighborhoods on side streets; likely assuming that folks might make a wrong turn.



Runners at the London Marathon in April 2022
Source: Wayne Roberts

Gateway Moments and Signs of “Welcome”

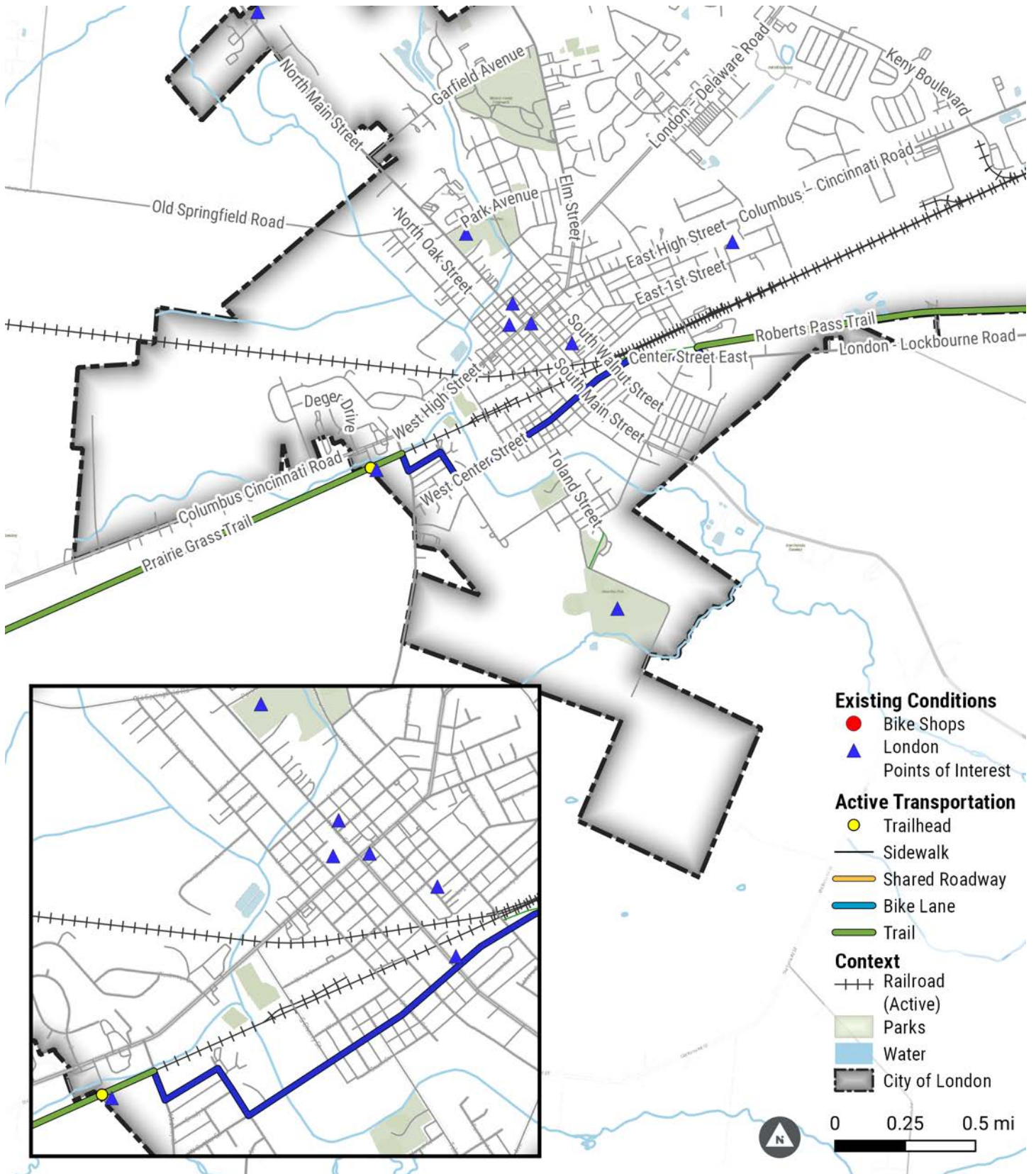
Cyclists arriving from the southwest will encounter the Prairie Grass Trailhead and recognize a community that values trails and trail users. A sprawling “LONDON” sculpture, fabricated by the local student welding class, makes for a great photo opportunity.

East of town, a picnic table fashioned to include a vintage Schwinn also catches the cyclist’s attention. In town, the county courthouse, London Coffee Peddler, and Phat Daddy’s (with bike racks, bike Fixit repair station, recurring group rides, and biker discounts) are notable locations.



“LONDON” Sculpture
Source: Toole Design

MAP 4. CITY OF LONDON EXISTING CONDITIONS



SURVEY SUMMARY

To gain insights into community member perceptions around the Ohio to Erie Trail (OTET) and trails generally, the project team and Steering Committee distributed the Central Ohio Trail Community Survey in February 2022. Subtitled “How do trails make a difference in your life and community?”, the survey was directed toward residents and business representatives in the four sponsoring communities. More than 1,000 people took the survey, a response that far exceeded the initial expectations of the project team. The next few pages summarize high level findings. The comprehensive survey results can be made available upon request.

METHODOLOGY

The self-selected digital survey was distributed by Steering Committee members and various community organizations in Centerburg, London, Mount Vernon, and Sunbury. The distribution methods varied. Among the methods were press releases, social media posts, website banner ads, local radio interviews, emails, and more.

The survey included 21 questions for community residents and 25 questions for business representatives.

Residents were asked about their personal trail use as well as their perceptions about trails and trail tourism in their communities. Business representatives were asked additional questions focused on the OTET’s impact on their revenues. A total of 1,056 responses were received with the jurisdictional breakdown in Figure 1.

Responses were sorted to cross-reference key questions and glean information based on location, gender identity, and whether respondents owned a business. Additionally, the team compared the overall responses to a data set that excluded Sunbury due to the disproportionately high response rate from the community. It was important to determine whether these responses skewed the overall dataset (they did not).

Finally, the following key questions were cross-referenced to better understand desires and perceptions related to trail tourism and community identity in relation to frequency of trail use:

- How often do you use the Ohio to Erie Trail?
- Do you think of your community as being a “trail town” along the Ohio to Erie Trail?
- Would you like to see more people who are traveling on the Ohio to Erie Trail to come into your community to visit and buy goods and services?

Responses by Location

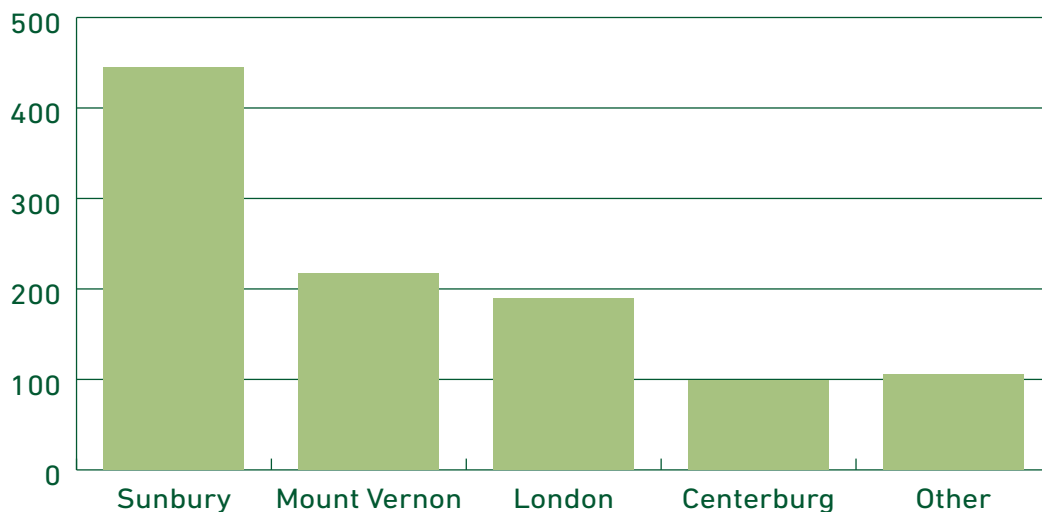


Figure 1. Survey responses by Location

Generally, among those who took the survey, those who do not use the trail were less likely to think of their community as a trail town and were also less likely to desire additional visitors than people who do use the trail.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

The responses by location generally reflect the respective sizes of the communities except for Sunbury, which yielded the most responses despite having the second lowest population. While the survey introduction discouraged people from other locations from completing the survey, 10% of total respondents reported living in other locations. Among them, 27% were from Galena and Westerville; neighboring communities to Sunbury. Their willingness to take the survey suggests a sense of connection to the OTET and Sunbury as a location for services. This is consistent with the way in which community leaders talked about the trail as a shared asset in the Sunbury Local Leaders Interview (see the Local Leaders Interview Summary). Another 9% of “other” responses were from residents of Gambier, which neighbors Mount Vernon, indicating that people there likely use the trail to get to services

and activities in their neighboring community.

Most survey respondents ranged in age from 35-74 years old. Notably, more than 100 respondents were under the age of 35. Members of two-person households (39% of all respondents) made up the largest segment of respondents, as did those with household incomes of \$60,000 or more. Most respondents (87%) identified as Caucasian, and 55% as woman. For comparison purposes, respondents to the 2020 Central Ohio Greenways Survey conducted by MORPC represented similar demographics.

TRAIL USE & BENEFITS

Nearly half of respondents (47%) reported using the trail at least once a week. It is important to note that more than 50% of respondents use the trail less frequently – some just a few times a year or not at all – and still made the effort to share their insights. This is significant because the trail town approach is a community development initiative. People do not need to personally use trails to recognize them as community assets.

When asked what their primary trail use is, the most selected option was walking/hiking (47%), followed by biking (41%) and running (9%). Multi-use and rail-

trails are often associated with cycling, but clearly walking, hiking, and running are popular uses along the OTET and the needs of people engaging in these activities should be considered in planning efforts.

People cited using the trail for health (the primary reason for 53% of respondents) and for recreation (the primary reason for 38%). Those who use the trail most frequently were more likely to select health as their primary reason for trail use.

“Yes” responses to the question “Do you think of your community as being a trail town along the Ohio To Erie Trail?”

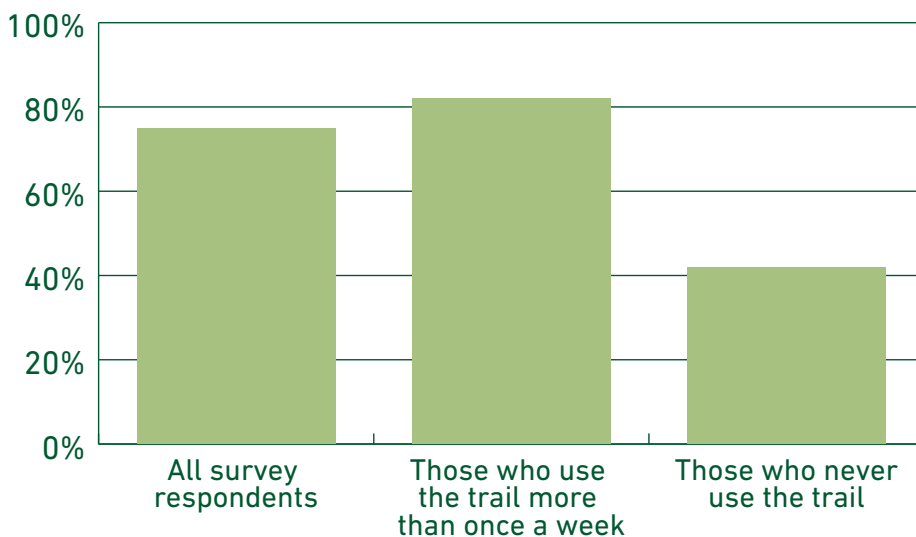


Figure 2. Peoples’ perceptions of their community as a “trail town” decrease when they do not personally use the trail.

Over two-thirds (69%) of those that use the trail more than once a week use the trail for their health, while those that only use the trail once a month to a few times a year primarily use the trail for fun (56%).

The question “Do you think of your community as being a ‘trail town’ along the Ohio to Erie Trail?” revealed that **75% of survey respondents already perceive their community to be a trail town**. Responses did vary by community, with positive responses ranging from 66% to 85%. Responses also varied based on frequency of trail use. Of those who participated in the survey, the more often a person indicated they use the trails, the more likely they are to think of their communities as a trail town. Of those that use the trail system more than once a week, 82% indicated they think their community is a trail town while only 42% of those that never use the trail feel the same.

TRAIL TOURISM

When asked, “Would you like to see more people who are traveling on the Ohio to Erie Trail to come into your community to visit and buy goods and services?” 83% of all survey participants responded yes. Community-specific “yes” responses ranged from 77% to 91%, indicating some communities are more eager to receive visiting trail users than others. Of survey respondents, 25% of those who never use the trail indicated they do not want more people traveling into their community. This is a significant departure from the way all others answered this question. Those who never use the trail were also most likely to cite the trail as being crowded.

The correlation between perceived benefits and trail use was evident in the survey. Most survey respondents cited health and wellness, recreation, and conservation benefits to the trail. Of survey participants, those that never use the trail indicated these and other benefits to their family and communities less frequently than those that do use the trail system. Further, those that

Would you like to see more people who are traveling on the Ohio to Erie Trail to come into your community to visit and buy goods and services?

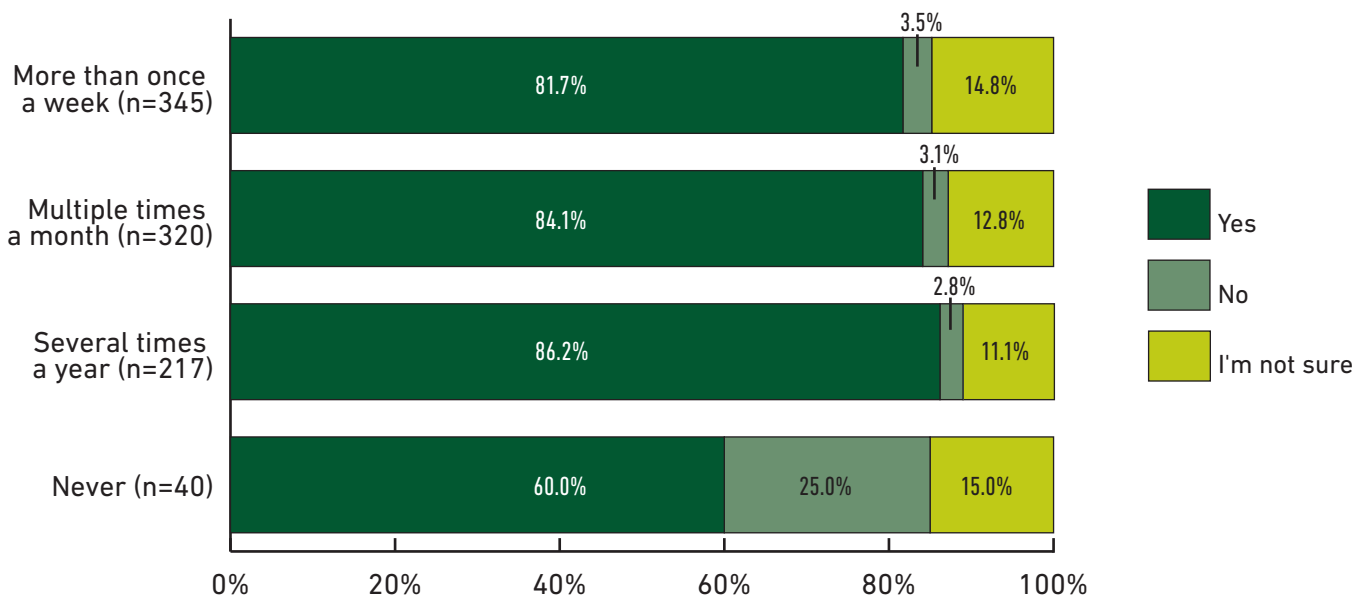


Figure 3. Survey regarding whether people would want more trail users to come into their community.

also do not want more travelers in their communities scored the benefits to their families and community in a similar manner.

The survey also queried participants about what makes the trail in their community enjoyable to use, as well as what prevents the trail from being enjoyable to use.

The trail being well-maintained, trail scenery, and feelings of safety were the most cited qualities in terms of enjoyment.

Notably, when asked what prevents the trail in their community from being enjoyable to use (with options such as limited parking, safety concerns, difficulty finding the trail or accessing local businesses, maintenance, and crowding), “None of these are issues here” was overwhelmingly the most selected option (53%).

Those that never use the trails largely indicated that the trail feels unsafe. Of the survey participants that indicated that they never use the trails, nearly a quarter (24%) indicated that the trails were unsafe, whereas the other responses were all below 8%. Also, of those that do not want more travelers in their communities, 13% indicated that the trail is crowded, while the other response types were again below 8%.

Participants were also asked in this section about local points of interest and what they hope non-local trail users might do while visiting (see the Points of Interest Inventory). As for their hopes for community interactions, the most selected responses related to making purchases, making word of mouth referrals, and learning about the community at historical and cultural sites.

Survey respondents were asked how ready the communities are to receive trail visitors. Those that never use the trail and those that do not want more travelers were more likely to say their community is “not at all ready” for visitors (these groups are not mutually exclusive). By comparison, those that indicated they would like to see more travelers had the largest percent response of their community being “extremely ready.” **Overall, 80% of respondents consider their community to be “extremely” or “moderately” ready to meet the needs of people arriving by trail.** Just 9% consider their community not at all ready.

Finally, participants were prompted to share perceived barriers to attracting trail users to visit their community. Missing sections of the trail system was the most selected barrier, followed by lack of signage/ community connectivity to the trail, missing business services, and limited or ineffective marketing.

In your opinion, how prepared is your community to meet the needs of people arriving by trail?

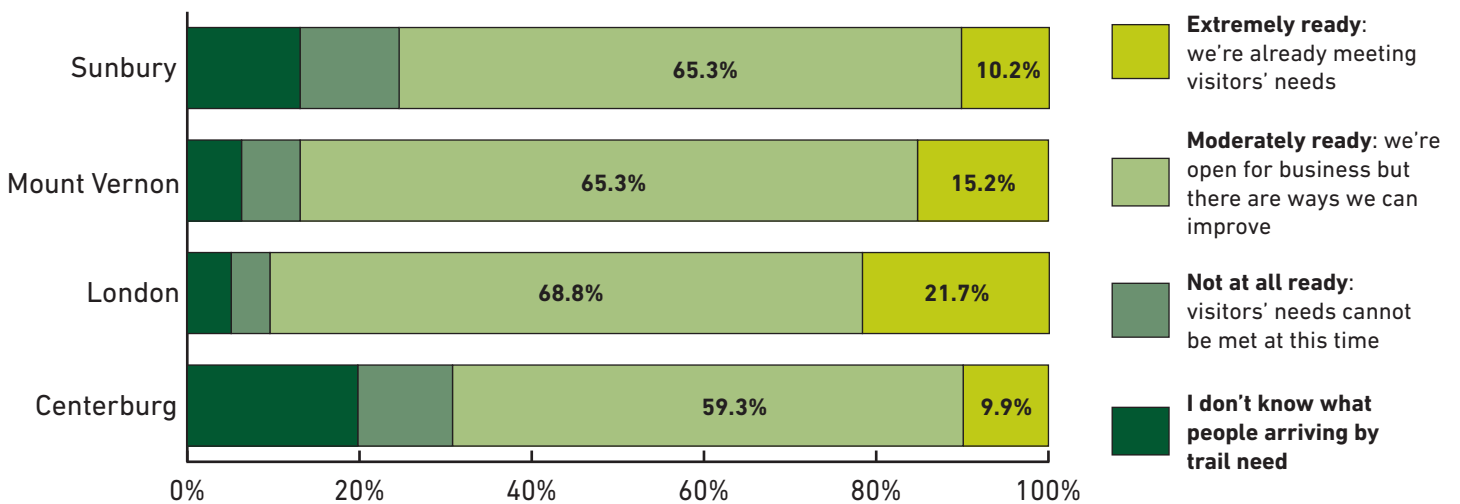


Figure 4. Survey regarding whether people think their community is ready to meet the needs of trail users.,

SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT

Thirteen percent of survey respondents reported running or owning a business in one of the communities. Of survey participants that are business owners (or representatives), those that indicated they are part of the Bike, Food & Drink, Lodging, and Transportation industries reported the most business from trail users. Over 60% from this category reported making sales to trail users, compared to other business types which only had about 11% of respondents indicating sales to trail users. In fact, more than half of the businesses overall do not attribute any gross sales to trail user spending.

All types of businesses responded: construction, real estate, agriculture, daycare, financial services, roofing, and healthcare, to name a few. The willingness of busy business owners to take the survey may be more telling than their perception of limited revenues related to the trail. Of note, several real estate agents completed the business survey. The relationship between trails and property values is known within the trails' community, but we did not ascertain whether these agents have recognized or experienced this economic benefit.

Finally, some businesses may not realize the connections between the trail and their livelihood. Short of seeing someone walk through your door with a helmet in hand, it can be hard to recognize the connection. One farmer who responded noted, "My business has no useful connection to the trail, but I use it all the time to monitor local crops." Indeed, this is a useful connection, even if not immediately recognized as such by the business itself. There are likely many other benefits that go unrecognized or undervalued.

INSIGHTS FROM THE 2020 COG SURVEY

As mentioned previously, in 2020 MORPC conducted a Central Ohio Greenways Survey. Similarities exist between that survey and our current one, even though the MORPC survey focused solely on Franklin County and focused primarily on active transportation behaviors and the pandemic's impact on trail use. Both yielded more than 1,000 responses, and the demographics of the respondents were somewhat similar.

A few of the 2020 survey findings may inform the

trail town effort. For example, with that survey, nearly 75% of respondents reported walking or biking to a trail from their home, demonstrating a clear need for safe bike and pedestrian infrastructure connecting neighborhoods, jobs, and other destinations to trails. Additionally, most of the 2020 survey respondents indicated that they will not or prefer not to bike on streets, demonstrating a clear need for safe bike infrastructure connecting to trails. Trail town initiatives typically address trail-to-town infrastructure to ensure safe and appealing routes between the two.



Cyclists on the Kokosing Gap Trail
Source: Randy Cronk

COMMUNITY POINTS OF INTEREST

Respondents to the Central Ohio Trail Community Survey were asked, “Besides the trail, what are some things to see and do in your community?” They were asked to share ideas regardless of the site’s proximity to the trail itself. (A lot of people using the Ohio to Erie Trail have their personal vehicles with them while traveling and can combine a trail trip with off-trail activities.)

More than 700 responses to this question enabled the project team to develop a Points of Interest (POI) inventory that can be used for future marketing

and asset mapping purposes. Interestingly, survey respondents mentioned some attractions located in other communities, demonstrating that residents and visitors alike think beyond municipal lines when considering area attractions. Such sites are included below (and marked with an asterisk) as a reflection of what was shared in the survey responses.

Specific businesses are noted only in instances in which they are “one-of-a-kind” or iconic destination businesses. The following pages consist of the most mentioned sites and activities (by community).



Ariel Foundation Park
Source: MORPC

CENTERBURG POINTS OF INTEREST

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants • Shops 	
Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ariel Foundation Park* • Centerburg Library • Centerburg Memorial Park • Collection of bikes at local grocery store • Dog Fountain* • Downtown Mount Vernon* • Downtown Murals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gazebo Downtown • Geographical Center of Ohio • Golf Courses • “Heart of Ohio” USA Days Festival • Municipal Building Mural • Oldtime Farming Festival • Village Mercantile (antique shop)

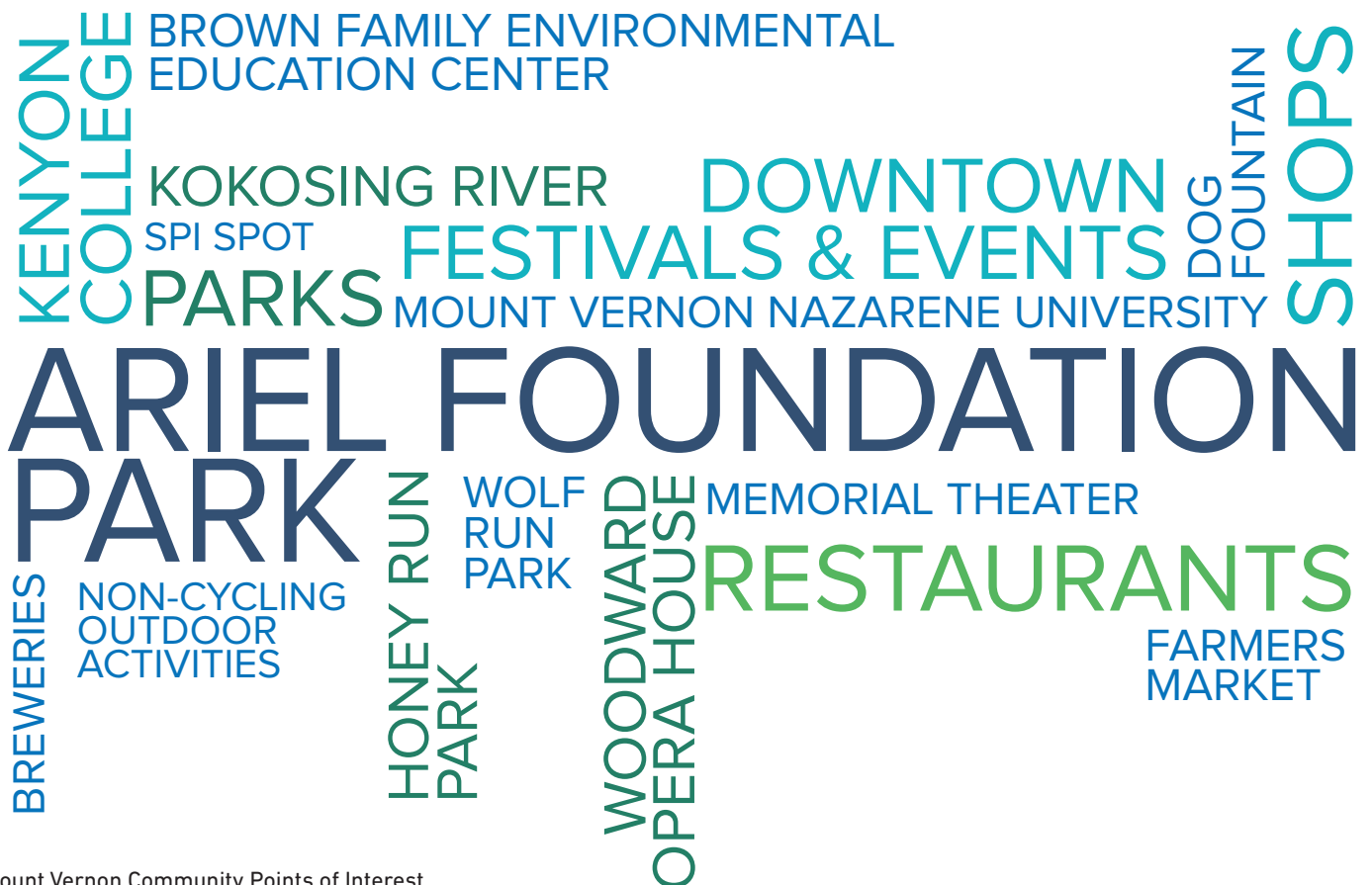
* Sites are not actually located in that community.



MOUNT VERNON POINTS OF INTEREST

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike Shop • Book Stores • Breweries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog Parks • Ice Cream Shops • Outdoor Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parades • Parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants • Shops
Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amish Country • Ariel Foundation Park • B&O Railroad Depot • Beerfest • Brown Family Environmental Education Center* • CA&C Railroad Depot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee shops • Concerts • Dan Emmett Festival • Dog Fountain • Downtown festivals & events • Farmers Market • First Friday Events • Glass Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gund Art Gallery • Harmony Park • Hiawatha Pool • Honey Run Park* • Kenyon College* • Knox County Fair Knox County Horse Park • Kokosing River • Memorial Theater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Vernon Nazarene University • Non-cycling outdoor activities • Public Library • Science-Play Space Initiative (SPI Spot) • Wolf Run Park • Woodward Opera House

* Sites are not actually located in that community.



Mount Vernon Community Points of Interest

SUNBURY POINTS OF INTEREST

General	• Boating	• Fishing	• Ice Cream Shops	• Parades
	• Camping	• Frisbee/disc golf	• Kayaking	• Restaurants
	• Coffee Shops	• Golfing	• Natural scenery	• Walking/Hiking
	• Farms	• Hunting	• Nature photography	

Specific	• Alum Creek Lake	• General Rosecrans Memorial Statue	• Ninja Obstacle Course at Methodist Church	• Sunbury Independence Day Celebration
	• Antique Shops	• Glass Rooter Cannery	• Outlets	• Sunbury Reservoir
	• Art Gallery	• Hoover Reservoir	• Sausage, Gravy, & Biscuits 5K	• Sunbury Station (Model Train Museum)
	• Char-Mar Ridge Park	• JR Smith Park	• School sports	• The Coffee Vault (Galena)
	• Community Library	• Memorial/Labor Day Flea Markets	• Sizzle and Sounds	• Town Square (Businesses, Events)
	• Dublin Irish Festival*	• Movies on the Square	• Sunbury Farmers Market	• Winter Holiday Events
	• Food Trucks	• Myers Inn History Museum		
	• Galena Boardwalk			
	• Galena Summerfest			

* Sites are not actually located in that community.



Sunbury Community Points of Interest

LOCAL LEADERS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Understanding current attitudes and perceptions about trails is an important part of the trail town process. To better understand local feelings towards the Ohio to Erie Trail and trails generally, the project team conducted group interviews with local leaders in the four sponsoring communities. Local members of the Trail Town Steering Committee arranged for government officials and other community influencers in their communities to participate. Participants included town mayors and council members, as well as trail organization representatives and members of the business, tourism, planning, and public health communities.

Interviews were held with community leaders in Sunbury (February 17, 2022), Centerburg and Mount Vernon (February 18, 2022), and London (March 7, 2022). **All the conversations were positive in nature.** They revealed a broad enthusiasm for trails and an understanding that trails positively contribute to the quality of life of residents of the communities. **Most of the elected leaders present expressed support for the concept of developing a designation-style trail town program.**



Cyclists at Trailapalooza in Centerburg in June of 2022
Source: Stacy Smith

INTERVIEW FORMAT AND FOCUS

The interviews generally included 5-10 participants from each community. The meetings were held virtually and were informal in nature. The project team moved each group through a series of questions designed to deepen an understanding of both positive and negative perceptions around the Ohio to Erie Trail and their interest in participating in a formal trail town program.

Sample questions:

1. What are the main ways your community currently benefits from the Ohio to Erie Trail?
2. What benefits have not yet been realized or could be increased? What would it take to get there?
3. What are your biggest headaches or frustrations when it comes to the trail?
4. How can your community better meet the needs of trail users?
5. Do you perceive your community as a trail town?
6. What are your thoughts about applying to be officially designated as a trail town when a regional program is launched? What benefits do you foresee? What questions or concerns do you have?

Not all communities responded in depth to all the questions, and there was some variation in verbiage from meeting to meeting. The following summary reflects the most pertinent parts of the conversations.

From these conversations, the project team garnered the following themes, frustrations, and unique ideas. Additional insights related to local trail-related success stories, off-trail points of interest, and general attitudes concerning trails and tourism helped to inform the larger project.

THEMES

Desire for Improved Connectivity

Participants in each of the conversations voiced interest in improved trail-community connectivity for the benefit of residents as well as for purposes of increasing foot traffic to businesses. The primary motivation for improved connectivity varied from community to community. Some emphasized quality of life reasons, while others were more attuned to the potential for economic benefit.

Commitment to Trails and Active Transportation is Already Evident

The meetings uncovered several previous and ongoing local investments in trails and active transportation:

- Centerburg participants mentioned crosswalks, bike racks, and an above-grade bridge crossing.
- Mount Vernon participants expressed pride in the underpass that ushers trail users beneath a busy at-grade road crossing.
- Sunbury passed a zoning code that requires multi-use trails in new developments.
- London participants are focused on eliminating a critical trail gap (and have created an on-road bypass in the meantime).

The communities understand the importance of trail and active transportation infrastructure as well as wayfinding and other supporting amenities.

Urgency to “Think Big” in Planning

From meeting to meeting, certain participants urged the project team to “think big” and plan for an effort and marketing strategy that is deserving of a national and international audience. In one meeting, it was suggested that Ohio Tourism be involved. “There are a million stories that can be developed around this” (in reference to tourist promotion and showcasing Central Ohio trails as destinations). Another participant observed that communities “up and down the Ohio to Erie Trail” will want to participate in a trail town effort. In another meeting, there was discussion around instigating a statewide trail town program so that local communities tie into an “Ohio Trail Town” program rather than a “Central Ohio” program.

Cultural Change is Still Needed in Communities

Participants were told that 75 percent of survey respondents already think of their communities as “trail towns.” One participant noted that this might be expected in a self-selected survey and that widespread community support of trails is still needed. Comments pertaining to wanting to see more residents using the trail and people underestimating the trail’s economic potential support the notion that more work is needed to affect community-wide enthusiasm for trails.

The Trail is Already a Valued Community Resource

While not all residents use and value the trail, it was recognized as a community resource in various respects (economic, quality of life, health, connectivity). In at least two of the communities, organized races are held on the trail, essentially rendering the trail a ready-made outdoor event venue.

TRAIL-RELATED FRUSTRATIONS

While the overall feedback from the communities was positive, participants were prompted to share some frustrations pertaining to their section of the Ohio to Erie Trail. Among their frustrations were:

- Gaps in the trail system, land acquisition challenges,
- Maintenance challenges/limited volunteer base,
- Difficulty of securing grants,
- Limited state funding available for active transportation projects,
- Not enough public facilities (restrooms, water fountains, etc.),
- Trails not being well-connected to communities,
- Insufficient directional signage,
- Limited indoor lodging,
- Illegal uses, vandalism, and litter,
- Trail oversight,
- Unrealized opportunities: knowing much more is possible, and
- People not understanding the economic potential of trails.

Understanding these frustrations and challenges helped in designing the trail town program framework. Some of the frustrations (community connectivity and wayfinding issues, limited understanding of the trail economy, insufficient lodging, etc.) fall within the purview of a trail town initiative. Other frustrations (missing trail segments, illegal trail uses, funding for trail projects, etc.) may be outside the scope of what a trail town initiative can address. Nevertheless, those managing a trail town effort should be aware of the spectrum of challenges. Additionally, the existence of a trail town effort raises the profile of trails, ultimately making it easier for trail organizations to do their work. Essentially, the trail town program may be able to address some concerns, but local trail organizations, along with their partners and governing bodies will need to continue to work outside of the trail town framework to address some of the other trail-specific concerns.

UNIQUE IDEAS

Some noteworthy unique ideas emerged in addition to the themes and frustrations that were noted across the interviews. In some cases, a community's primary focus or motivation stood apart from the others. In others, an individual made a comment that the project team wanted to further consider in designing the trail town framework. None of the ideas noted conflicted with the themes but do provide unique local insights that may inform the eventual program. Some of the ideas shared include:

- Sunbury's commitment to enhancing quality of life through trails and active transportation was evident. Both are clearly valued for reasons that take precedence to economic gain. Local leaders appear to approach trails from a values perspective and recently approved a new zoning code in support of trail infrastructure.
- Also in Sunbury, participants recognized that the trail connects communities to each other, noting that residents of Galena and Westerville use the trail to get to downtown Sunbury for services. Similarly, Sunbury residents can get to other locations by trail. Maintaining this corridor between the communities was considered important.

- London expressed particular interest in increasing local trail use and view completing the trail through town and hosting trail events as two key ways of getting more residents outside.
- One elected official, when asked about willingness to meet certain annual requirements to maintain trail town designation, recommended that communities should be encouraged to strive for continuous improvement, not just meeting requirements. The Tree City, USA model was mentioned.
- Inclusion of an ambassador training (or utilizing an existing training program) was recommended in order to better equip front line staff for trail user interactions.
- Gamification was shared as a way to potentially motivate both participating businesses and trail users to meet trail- and trail town-related goals.
- In Knox County (Centerburg, Mount Vernon), the health department's active involvement in trail and active transportation investments is noteworthy.

When the trail connects to other valued community resources (like the Ariel Foundation Park in Mount Vernon) trail use potential and appreciation might expand significantly. "It's like one big playground" (having the park and trail adjacent to one another)

CONCLUSION

Part 1 of the Trail Town Framework Development project focused on establishing a baseline understanding of existing conditions and current attitudes towards the Ohio to Erie Trail and other Central Ohio trails. Hearing from local leaders from across the four sponsoring communities validated that there is an appreciation for trails among this stakeholder group as well as strong interest in moving forward with a trail town effort. Knowing that local leaders recognize the many benefits of trails and took the time to offer their insights on a regional program at this early stage informed the project team's approach to designing the program appropriate to the region and in service of their community.

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PART TWO: TRAIL TOWN FRAMEWORK



PART TWO: TRAIL TOWN FRAMEWORK

This section makes recommendations concerning how a trail town program can be launched and sustained in Central Ohio. It addresses how a program would be structured, staffed, and operated. This portion of the report also addresses potential program areas, such as infrastructure improvements, tourism, economic development, branding, art, and wayfinding. Essentially, the framework becomes the scope of work for implementing a regional trail town program over the next few years.

A TRAIL TOWN FRAMEWORK FOR CENTRAL OHIO

As the COG trail network continues to expand, so do the benefits to Central Ohio communities, including enhanced active transportation, tourism, and economic development. This framework for Central Ohio will address opportunities for trail tourism to bolster local economies, while also supporting local quality of life by addressing active transportation and recreation options for residents. The desired result of a trail town initiative is having more bikeable and walkable communities that enjoy the benefits of increased trail use and trail user spending.

INITIATING A TRAIL TOWN PROGRAM

A trail town is a community through which a trail passes that supports trail users with services, promotes the trail to its residents, and embraces the trail as a resource to be protected and celebrated. The trail town approach is based on the relationship between a community, its trail, and those who use and care for it.

This explanation of the trail town approach is adapted from the North Country Trail Association's trail town definition. The North Country Trail passes through Ohio, sharing an alignment with the Buckeye Trail and two others. The Buckeye Trail Towns initiative includes 18 designated trail towns. This program is one of many formal trail town programs throughout the U.S.

The first trail town initiative was launched along the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) in 2007. Called the Trail Town Program®, it was a regional economic development effort that was modeled from the successful Main Street approach.

Trail Town Resources

The following resources may be helpful to the Steering Committee, program staff, and others seeking to develop a deeper understanding of the trail town approach.

- [Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism](#) (2005 manual)
- [Trail Town Program's Trail Town Guide](#) (available upon email request)
- [Appalachian Trail Community Program Application](#)
- [North Country Trail Town Program Handbook](#)
- [Kentucky Trail Town Program Workbook](#)
- [Deciding on Trails: 7 Practices of Healthy Trail Towns](#) (book)*

*Amy Camp of the consultant team wrote *Deciding on Trails*, which was informed by her experience working for the Trail Town Program® as well as her involvement with other trail town initiatives.



Buckeye Trail Overview Map
Source: Buckeye Trail Association

Operated by Main Street America, the Main Street approach is a framework for revitalizing downtown areas that has been applied to more than 1,200 communities. Inspired by Main Street, the intent of the Trail Town Program® was to revitalize the downtown cores of GAP communities by focusing on community organizing, promotions and marketing, physical design, and economic restructuring.

The program positioned communities to capitalize on the trail by educating local leaders on trail user needs, missing infrastructure and business services, and the economic impact of the GAP. Success was measured through business openings and expansions, job creation, and annual economic impact. The program staff worked with partner organizations and local action teams on community assessments, trail-wide marketing and brand development, business assistance, economic and trail use research, infrastructure improvements, education, and developing a regional network of trail advocates.

Following the Trail Town Program's® early successes, it was adapted by trail advocates in other locations, beginning with the Appalachian Trail, the C&O Canal Towpath, and the state of Kentucky which created the first trail town designation program at the state level. Independent programs now exist in at least 28 states as well as in Ontario. The two basic models for trail towns include the trail-specific model and the statewide model. The trail-specific model focuses on designating communities along a single trail or trail network as trail towns, where the statewide model covers all trails within a state; examples include Florida, Kentucky, and Michigan.

TRAIL TOWN BASICS

- **Any community can embrace the characteristics of a trail town** and work to become a more trail-friendly place without organizing a formal program.
- There is **no national or international governing body** or organization offering guidance, designations, or approval. Instead, communities can independently or collectively pursue the trail town approach and design a program according to local needs and resources.

- Trail town **programs vary in the level of depth and resources committed** by the administering organizations. They also vary in terms of intended outcomes. Some efforts focus heavily on economic impact, while others emphasize education, conservation, or health and wellness. Some programs endeavor to address all these topics.
- Regionally staffed programs are uniquely positioned to provide the staffing, guidance, and resources that tend to make trail town efforts more successful and longer lasting. **While communities possess local resources, wisdom, and know-how, regional coordination is typically necessary for a successful program.**
- The phrase “Trail Town” has been applied to villages, townships, boroughs, cities, and other forms of local government. If this **terminology** does not resonate regionally, other terms might be considered.

CENTRAL OHIO TRAIL TOWNS STEERING COMMITTEE GUIDANCE

The Steering Committee expressed the following preferences for a trail town initiative in Central Ohio:

- The program should be administered by a **regional entity** that specializes in trails, active transportation, community and economic development, or tourism. It was determined that a regional entity would allow for a multi-community scope without losing focus on the Central Ohio geography.
- While the program will focus on Central Ohio, the Steering Committee hopes the effort will **inform and inspire** programs in other parts of Ohio or result in a statewide initiative. Similarly, while the program will focus on multi-use trails and active transportation infrastructure, the concept is easily transferable to other trail types.
- **Strong partnerships** and collaboration are highly desired by the Steering Committee. It is possible that more than one organization will partner to administer the program.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Around the U.S. and Canada, trail town initiatives are operated by a variety of organizations, mostly nonprofits, but sometimes by state governments or quasi-governmental entities. Several factors should be considered when selecting a program lead, since the mission of the host will likely influence the focus of the program. For example, an organization dedicated to tourism will focus the program on attracting visiting trail users, whereas an entity that works in conservation would design a program according to its mission. Other potential considerations for program delivery include infrastructure, business support, economic development, tourism activities, brand development, wayfinding, art installations, and the host's service area. Staff capacity and financial resources should also be considered.

The types of organizations that might lead or partner in the Central Ohio Trail Towns effort include:

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs):

CDFIs are well positioned to connect with the business community and advance economic development initiatives. However, they may lack technical assistance, marketing, and tourism connections. CDFI's may be good partners for Central Ohio's trail town initiative, but a relationship is not yet established. (Learn more about CDFIs in the callout.)

Council of Governments

In Ohio, a Council of Governments is defined as a collection of "governing bodies of any two or more counties, municipal corporations, townships, special districts, school districts, or other political subdivisions" which may enter into an agreement with each other (Ohio Rev. Code § 167.01). A Council of Governments may operate under the powers granted to it by the Ohio Revised Code, which may or may not fully meet the needs of a trail town initiative.

Community and economic development organizations

Community and economic development organizations bring expertise in many of the program delivery areas named above. Existing organizations in Central Ohio may be strong partners for a trail town initiative.

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)

DMOs are well connected with business communities, are clear leaders in the tourism space, and are likely experienced in

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)

The first trail town initiative – the Trail Town Program® along the GAP – was housed by [The Progress Fund](#), a CDFI that specializes in making small business loans related to tourism, hospitality, and recreation. The pairing of a nonprofit lender with a program centering on leveraging the outdoor economy enabled businesses to benefit from both the programmatic support and the availability of a loan pool.

CDFIs provide lending capital in support of small business openings and expansions. In Ohio, the [Ohio CDFI Network](#) includes 19 CDFIs across the state. Not all CDFIs make small business loans, but those that do and serve Central Ohio include:

- Economic and Community Development Institute (Statewide)
- Finance Fund Capital Corporation (Statewide)
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (Rural Ohio)
- West Central Development Corporation (Statewide)

marketing and brand development efforts. However, they may be less prepared to support technical assistance and infrastructure planning goals. Additionally, in Central Ohio, DMOs typically work at a sub-regional scale (e.g., Experience Columbus or Visit Knox County), so regional partnerships would need to be leveraged.

Regional Planning Organizations: Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)

MPOs in general are well positioned to provide infrastructure planning and funding support. In Central Ohio, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) has been a trusted trail planning leader and convener for well over a decade. A 2018 [Clarity Report for Readiness and Feasibility](#) indicated that business leaders, elected officials, and philanthropic organizations in Central Ohio affirmed that MORPC's Trail Vision is something that must be implemented to attract talent and economic growth to the region. The report also revealed that the perception and interest in MORPC's COG program among the region's leaders and residents is high. This suggests that MORPC in particular is well positioned to provide technical assistance and draw partners together. While MORPC is a trusted trail partner in the region, staffing limitations, funding allocations, and limited connections to tourism and business communities could hinder the organization's ability to lead.

State agencies

State agencies manage trail town initiatives in three states: Kentucky, Michigan, and Florida. When a state agency operates a trail town program, qualifying communities from around the state can participate, access state level resources, and find ways to align with statewide trails, outdoor recreation, and active transportation plans. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources included the goal of establishment of a trail town program in its most recent state trails plan. There are clear benefits and efficiencies of having a state-operated program; however, a state entity would need to focus heavily on local and regional partnerships to be successful.

Regional or statewide trail organizations

As champions for trails and trail town ideals, dedicated trail organizations should be key partners for a trail town initiative. Organizations such as Ohio Trails Partnership, Ohio to Erie Trail Board, and several "friends" groups are active and effective within the trail community.

Trail User Groups

Trail user groups are important partners in a trail town effort. Their "on-the-ground" presence equips them with deep knowledge of existing conditions and uniquely positions them to inform the user experience. Several such groups are active on Central Ohio trails, including Black Girls do Bike, Columbus Outdoor Adventures, Major Taylor Cycling Club, and others.

PROGRAM DESIGN

Regional Strategy, Local Commitment

Successful trail town programs pair a regional strategy with local commitment, solutions, and personality. Therefore, the program will be one that relies upon regional leadership and coordination and local participation. Even if resources are limited, some level of regional leadership and coordination will lead to a more successful effort.

When regional programs offer guidebooks and toolkits without ongoing leadership, communities can lack the support they need to implement best practices. For this reason, the recommendation is a Central Ohio Trail Towns program that includes leadership from a regional entity or partnership of regional entities.

A Designation Program

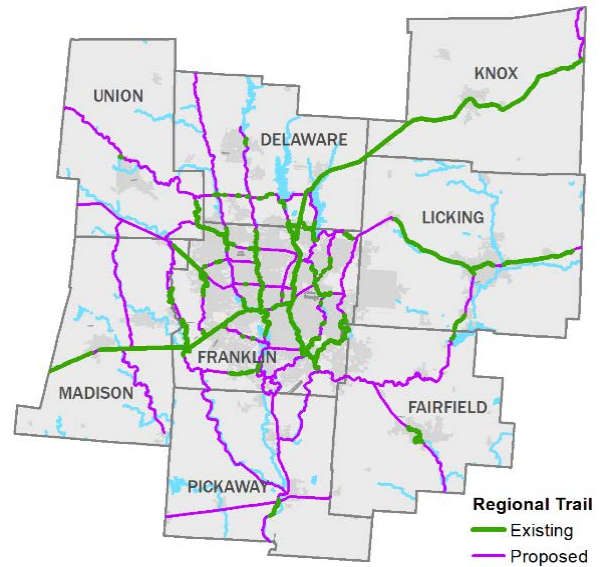
The program will be structured as a designation program. Communities located within two miles of a Central Ohio Greenways Trail of Regional Significance will be eligible to seek trail town designation via the Central Ohio Trail Town Program. These communities will also need to have – or demonstrate a strong commitment to – safe alternative transportation options that access the Central Ohio Greenways Trail of Regional Significance. (Refer back to page 4 for more on Trails of Regional Significance).

Qualifying communities should also agree to the values and approach of the program to ensure that the initiative is consistently applied throughout the region.

Further, to qualify for designation, city and village councils must apply for designation and agree to certain ongoing commitments. Communities will be certified by a regional body and have to maintain designation from year to year by demonstrating their ongoing commitment to being a trail town.

A Long-Term Approach to Community Development

Like other trail town initiatives, the program should be loosely modeled after the Main Street approach and include design, economic restructuring, promotion, and organizational considerations. Just like Main Street and



COG Trail Vision Map

CASE STUDY

It's the People that Make the Path Special in London

London boasts one of the nicest trail access areas along the Ohio to Erie Trail. The Prairie Grass Trailhead offers free camping, public restrooms, a pavilion, an information kiosk, bike rack, brochures, and more. The “and more” is where you might start to note the effort and thoughtfulness that has gone into the site. Campers have access to an outdoor shower positioned at the end of a stand of pines where a cute little path through the pines makes for a Zen moment. Local wildflowers are planted throughout, and there’s an art installation that spells out L-O-N-D-O-N that was created by local high school students.

It’s no wonder a thru-hiker wrote to the Friends of Madison County Parks and Trails a few years ago to say London was, “one of the most impressive trail towns I’ve ever visited.”

Those amenities – and the path itself – do not occur on their own. They are carefully planned, funded, and built by people who are passionate about London and its place along the Ohio to Erie Trail. Every innovation – from the sculpture to the outdoor shower – required a combination of vision, enthusiasm, and persistence on the part of local folks. Wayne Roberts, for example, stood up at a public meeting to speak in support of trails more than 20 years ago and he’s still advocating for trail improvements and trail towns today. There’s also the municipal staff that picks up the phone to share the after-hours restroom access code with campers.

The people of London also show their support for trails beyond the path itself. Go into town and you’ll come upon the London Coffee Peddler, decked out with bike décor, a “cyclists welcome” sign in the window, and an owner who can make a bike repair about as quickly as he can brew an espresso. You might also encounter a group of cyclists staging their weekly Monday night ride in the parking lot of Phat Daddy’s Pizza. The shop also offers food discounts to anyone wearing a helmet.

The amenities are important and make all the difference in trail experiences. It’s important to remember that there are people behind the amenities and every other delightful, well-maintained portion of trail. It’s this attitude and devotion to trails that positions a community to better receive and accommodate trail users.

other forms of community development, the Trail Town approach is not intended as a short-term solution. The first program – arguably the most successful – was operated for 10 years.

Staffing

The program as currently envisioned (and described on the following pages), would benefit from having the equivalent of 2-3 full-time program staff and additional support and commitments via partners and participating communities. For comparison purposes, programs in other places vary in terms of their staffing. The Trail Town Program® along the GAP had two full-time professional staff as well as a team of AmeriCorps fellows during its first few years of operation. The program later partnered with the Maryland Department of Planning, with two professional planners committing approximately 50% of their hours to the effort. Other programs operate with a single staff member dedicating only a portion of their time to trail town management. The depth and outcomes of the programs vary, in part, based on staffing resources and the overall program budget.

Regional Leadership

Regional initiatives require regional coordination and partnership. The Central Ohio Trail Towns program will convene a regional committee that meets on a regular basis to discuss the overall initiative, local community progress and challenges, and ways of providing ongoing support to participating communities. An example of another regional program that has been convening in this manner is the Canal Towns Partnership along the C&O Canal Towpath. The group has been meeting nearly monthly since the Canal Towns program was launched in 2010.

ANTICIPATED PARTICIPATION BENEFITS

Communities always have choices. Jurisdictions located along the OTET and other Trails of Regional Significance will not be mandated to join a trail town program. However, there are benefits to tying into a regionally branded trail town effort.

The program is expected to come with support and resources that result in more walkable and bikeable

communities that enjoy the benefits of increased trail use and trail user spending. Visiting trail users will draw conclusions about communities and the services and hospitality they offer when they see a “trail town” or “trail friendly” label. Besides trail use impressions, tangible resources and support can aid communities that are looking for every advantage in improving their vitality.

Program benefits will ultimately depend upon the amount of funds secured to operate the program. Participating communities may experience benefits such as:

- Recognition as a trail town in marketing materials like the COG website, brochures, and others,
- Trail Town logo customized to include a town name,
- Gateway or highway signs that identify the community as a trail town,
- Access to technical assistance concerning trail development and active transportation,
- Access to other technical expertise via partners in public health, tourism, and community and economic development, and
- Increased regional connectedness in which communities share a sense of connection and towns enjoy enhanced physical connections, making it safer and more intuitive to get between trail and town.



Example Community Gateway Sign
Source: Cycle Foward

When Regional Planning Meets Trail Towns

The consulting team is not aware of any multi-community trail town programs initiated by a regional planning entity. The involvement of a regional entity or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will help achieve the end goal of more walkable and bikeable communities. Easing the transition between “trail and town” with well-planned active transportation projects can be a challenge for typical trail town initiatives without the involvement of their planning community. Regional leadership is expected to elevate the Central Ohio program in this respect. As referenced in Part 1 of this document, the 2020 Central Ohio Greenways survey found that nearly 75% of respondents reported walking or biking to a trail from their home, indicating the need for safe bike and pedestrian infrastructure connecting neighborhoods, jobs, and other destinations to trails. Additionally, most respondents said that they *will not or prefer not* to bike on streets, demonstrating a clear need for safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure connecting to trails. Addressing active transportation and safe routes to and from the trail – and throughout the community – will become part of the expected “next generation” of trail towns, with Central Ohio leading the way.

The involvement of the planning community may take shape at a regional scale through the local MPO, rural planning organization (RPO), or other regional efforts. Suburban and urban communities may require different resources, although participation benefits and requirements should be consistent. MORPC, the region’s largest MPO, could support regional coordination and may offer additional resources for participating communities by leveraging and expanding existing Central Ohio Greenways program offerings. For example:

- MORPC’s technical assistance program could help communities identify routes that would

best connect neighborhoods and job centers via trails, and to trails; supporting residents of all income levels to improve their economic circumstances.

- The Attributable Funds program and other MORPC managed funding streams could be aligned to further support trail town initiatives. Recently, MORPC committed to dedicating a larger percentage of transportation funds to stand alone bike and pedestrian projects than has been allocated in the past.
- MORPC’s regularly held Central Ohio Greenways Forums could be aligned to connect communities with partners across the entire region that can advance trail towns. These forums could be a regular space for cross-jurisdiction and cross-sector partners to collaborate on marketing initiatives to advance trail towns.
- A Central Ohio Greenways’ working group could evolve into a regional Trail Town Initiative Steering Committee group.

Additionally, MORPC and CORPO may be positioned to offer services such as:

- Administering a grant pool focused on trail town projects.
- Evaluating scoring criteria for active transportation funds to prioritize funding for certain trail related activities within designated trail town communities.
- Collaborating with non-profit organizations, such as the newly established RAPID 5 Project, toward trail town ideas and incorporating amenities into designated recreational waterways.
- Collaborating with Destination Marketing Organizations and other organizations to advance tourism opportunities and develop a marketing strategy.

BECOMING A TRAIL TOWN

Communities around the country have recognized the benefits of trails and being part of trail town initiatives that help them leverage trails and the outdoor economy. Benefits like the ones mentioned above make it easier for jurisdictions to signal that they are trail-serving communities and are part of a larger system. A designation process has been established to ensure that participating communities meet the promise of the trail town model and the Central Ohio Trail Towns program.

Eligible Communities

- ✓ Should be able to accommodate trail users with business services
 - ✓ Should be located within 2 miles of a Central Ohio Trail of Regional Significance*
 - ✓ Must declare a commitment to designation as a Trail Town via city or village council
 - ✓ Will have to maintain their trail town designation from year to year
- *Should be committed to active transportation infrastructure that allows people to safely walk and bike between the trail and community.

Participation Requirements

1. The community should be able to accommodate trail users with related business services such as those identified with in the Available Services Matrix (see page 108). Not all listed services are needed to qualify, but some existing services should be in place and the community should strive to add other services.
2. The local council or township trustees vote on a resolution indicating its intent to seek trail town designation through the Central Ohio Trail Towns program.
3. A volunteer committee or task force is organized, including no less than five individuals and two people willing to co-lead the group. The committee should include people from a cross-section of the community: a local trail board member, business representatives, a municipal employee, residents, education, healthcare, etc.
4. The committee shares “job descriptions” or volunteer agreements for members so they know the kinds of involvement that may be asked of them. Example agreements will be provided to the communities.
5. The community applies for trail town designation.
6. Upon designation, the local committee appoints a committee member to participate in regularly held regional trail town meetings that encourage cooperation and information sharing. The committee will also appoint an alternate. These individuals do not need to be the co-leads.
7. The community agrees to co-host a ribbon cutting or some other celebration upon designation.
8. The community council votes annually to demonstrate ongoing commitment to the program, choosing to stay invested in the program.
9. The community or a sponsoring entity should provide annual financial support with the amount to be determined at a future date. The capacity to pay this amount should not constitute designation. The next section addresses ensuring equitable access to the program.
10. The committee and community at large look for ways to integrate the trail into local culture through events, programs, and other means to increase the likelihood that local residents will use and benefit from the trail.
11. The community agrees to include language for the protection of its trail and connecting infrastructure when updating land use plans, municipal master plans, and local ordinances.
12. The community affirms its commitment to installing and maintaining trail amenities such as parking, restrooms, wayfinding, and public art.
13. The community has recommended a route for pedestrians and cycles to safely travel from the trail to community amenities and businesses.

Equitable Access to the Program

In recognition that an ongoing financial contribution could pose a hardship for some communities, the program should explore offering the following options to ease the burden:

1. Empowering communities to seek financial sponsorship from a local nonprofit or civic organization such as a chamber of commerce, trail organization, or Rotary group, or even from for-profit businesses.
2. Discounting the amount expected of communities below a certain population.
3. Permitting county-level participation, leveraging county resources to the benefit of qualifying trail-adjacent communities. Examples of county participation exist along both the Appalachian and Continental Divide trails.
4. Dedicating resources and time to seek grant funding for the program as a whole to reduce the local community burden.

CASE STUDY

Sunbury's Zoning Ordinance adds "Teeth" to its Vision for Trails

Policies and political leaders greatly affect our built environment and determine our quality of life. Sunbury's commitment to ensuring that trails and active transportation enhance the quality of life for residents is evident as they recently revised their Zoning Ordinance to include general development standards for multi-use trails. The new standards are now intertwined into numerous land use zoning classifications (R-1, R-2, R4, R-5, PRD, PSFD, C-1, C-2, PCD, I, PID), stating that:

Multi-Use Trails shall be included within the design and layout of all developments in accordance with S81.16.25.¹

This is significant because Sunbury is a growing community. Its population increased by 51% since the 2010 Census. The ordinance requires any new residential, commercial, or industrial development to include trails in the plans. Essentially, Sunbury is not only planning for trails, but is also requiring them in new developments. Whether these are connectors to the Ohio to Erie Trail or others that generally improve community connectivity, they will make it easier for recreation opportunities, for residents to get from place to place, and even to access neighboring communities by trail.

Currently, Sunbury has one trailhead along the Sandel Legacy Trail portion of the Ohio to Erie Trail, which continues to the southwest and connects to the Village of Galena. Additionally, there is a short section of trail between Walnut and Cherry streets on the eastern side of Sunbury. Between the Sandel Legacy Trail and the segment between Walnut and Cherry, southern Sunbury is well connected by trail. However, the central, northern, and western areas of the city would greatly benefit from an increase in trail connectivity, especially as these areas have experienced an increase in population. The city's commercial district is located on two main roads within central Sunbury and is fairly disconnected from the trail network. This leaves residents with no other option but to drive to the commercial district where they do their grocery shopping, get their hair cut, grab a bite to eat, and drive home.

The change to the zoning ordinance, which now requires trails to be built with all new development, raises hope for improved connectivity. Connecting the commercial district and other areas will allow people to access their destinations by trail rather than vehicle, ultimately improving the quality of life for local residents. Sunbury has demonstrated that visionary elected leaders and residents can affect change through policy.

¹ City of Sunbury Delaware County Ohio. Revised Zoning Ordinance of 2022.(2022), 81, 84, 93, 97, 108, 119, 123, 130, 142, 148, 156. <https://sunburyvillage.com/DocumentCenter/View/1150/Final-Draft-V4-Proposed-2021-Revisions-to-Zoning-Ordinance-of-2018-1-21522-1>

Achieving equity might also be approached by proactively engaging underserved communities that may not already have a strategic focus on leveraging trails. This would ensure that some of the least-resourced communities are made aware of the program and have opportunities to seek designation.

Finally, equity within the program might be achieved by creating sub-designations (rural, suburban, urban, exurban). This could potentially make it possible to secure resources based on community typography and ease the requirements of communities with limited resources. The benefits of this approach should be carefully considered to avoid unnecessarily complicating the program structure.

AREAS OF FOCUS

There are six areas of focus that should be included in the framework:

1. A cohesive regional trail town brand
2. Wayfinding
3. Local business collaborations
4. Economic development catalysts and tourism activities
5. Infrastructure
6. Art/Culture/Recreation

The eventual administrator will focus its programmatic efforts in these six areas. Included here are recommendations and examples that may impact future program delivery while leaving room for flexibility for both regional administration and local community implementation. Following the general guidance of this section is a **Sample Implementation Timeline** that offers specific implementation ideas.

1. A COHESIVE REGIONAL TRAIL TOWN BRAND

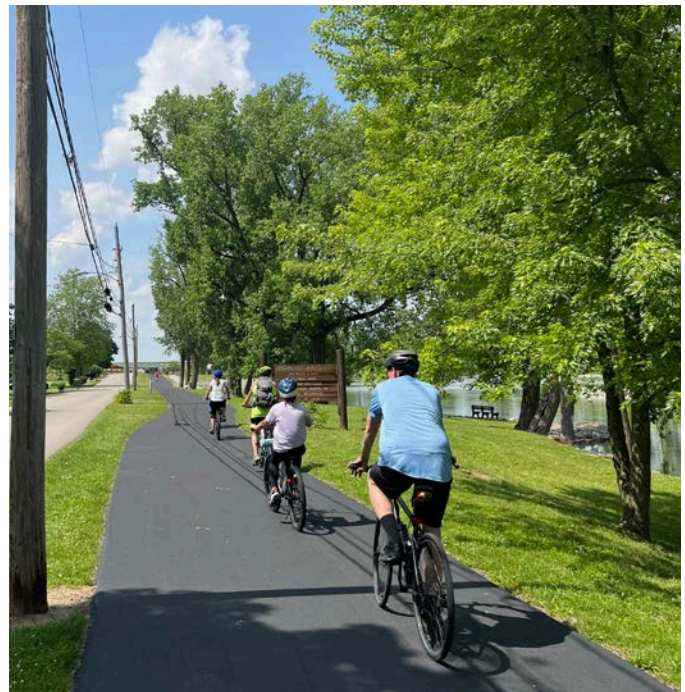
Anticipated Program Scope

Developing and maintaining a regional brand for the Central Ohio Trail Towns initiative and participating communities.

Details

Developing a brand for the trail town initiative is one of the earliest and most effective ways of building awareness of the program, participating communities, and even the trails themselves. Most existing trail town programs have a trail-wide, regional, or statewide brand with a logo that can be customized to include the names of participating communities. **This is a great way to foster pride and connectedness among the communities and signals to trail users that they are places offering services and hospitality.**

A brand is more than a logo and a color palette; a brand is an identity which the logo, colors, and materials help communicate. It is also a promise. A brand promise is communicated not only visually through logos, brochures, and social media posts, it is also reinforced through messaging, programs, and community and personal interactions. Central Ohio Trail Towns is likely to involve the promise of more walkable and bikeable communities that experience the benefits of increased trail use. Developing a brand is a starting point. Keeping the promise as the trail town initiative unfolds will result in an improved sense of place, community pride, and program success.



Trail around Richwood Lake in Richwood, OH
Source: Toole Design

Existing Trail Town Brands

Most existing trail town or trail community logos appear in a circle or square format, often with a wavy trail running through the center, and sometimes with a hiker or biker on that trail. Most logos also incorporate blue and green, as do most trail brands. It could be interesting to take a different visual approach. Examples of some of the existing brands follow.

Branding Considerations

The program should consider the following as it initiates a branding process:

- Central Ohio Greenways is an established entity with its own brand. When a trail town program is initiated, “Central Ohio Trail Towns” and any associated logos can be nested within the larger COG brand. The need for trail town brand elements will provide the opportunity for updating the COG brand, if desired. For both trail towns and Central Ohio Greenways generally, the COG should strive for a brand that is a marker of high-quality trail amenities and destinations. The brand should identify the region’s unique qualities, trigger excitement and interest, and reflect the quality of the trail system and adjoining communities.
- The three-word term “Trail Town Program®” is copyright protected. The program name should avoid using this phrase on its own. Instead, the program name should speak to the geographic scope of the program, for example:
 - » Central Ohio Trail Towns
 - » Central Ohio Trail Town Program
 - » Central Ohio Trail Communities
 - » Central Ohio Trail Places
- Communities sometimes find the term “town” inappropriate for their communities. If Ohio communities are classified only as municipalities (villages, cities, and incorporated areas) and townships refer to unincorporated areas, selecting different terminology may be warranted (although most people understand the general meaning of “trail towns”).

Existing Trail Town Brands Within Ohio



Some of the Most Recently Established Trail Town Brands



Example of a Logo Adapted to Include a Community Name



- When hiring a creative agency to develop the brand, they should be tasked with considering the implications of being one of the first Ohio trail town efforts. Some considerations include:
 - » If the state ultimately creates a statewide program, will the Central Ohio brand persist?
 - » Will communities be co-branded if a statewide program is implemented?
 - » How will the branding be impacted if the main spine trail (the OTET) develops a trail-wide program? Would the Central Ohio OTET communities continue as “Central Ohio Trail Towns,” take on an “Ohio to Erie Trail Town” identity, or both?

However the effort is branded – trail towns, trail communities, gateway communities – the concept remains the same, as does the importance of developing and adhering to a regional brand. The program administrator will want to ensure that brand standards are enforced, and more importantly, that the program and participating communities meet the brand promise.

Marketing and Communications

While not the same as branding, a marketing and communications strategy should be developed and integrated into the program. Consider outsourcing marketing to a tourism bureau or other partner that specializes in marketing places. In addition to marketing to potential visitors, Central Ohio trails and trail experiences should be marketed to area residents.

Recommendations

- Hire a creative agency to develop a regional trail town brand.
- Develop a brand guide that clarifies permitted uses by designated communities and others.
- Remember to maintain the “brand promise” through ongoing communications, interactions, and program offerings.

2. WAYFINDING

Anticipated Program Scope

Working as a regional trail community to improve wayfinding to and from participating communities and within the larger COG trail system.

Details

Trail wayfinding is an effective and affordable way to guide and assist trail users, emphasize a local or regional brand, create a sense of place, promote community and economic development, and support existing trails. Trail wayfinding provides additional benefits. It:

- Encourages people to bicycle and walk for transportation by highlighting how easy it is to get to destinations on trails,
- Gives trail users the confidence to explore farther than they ordinarily would,
- Guides trail users to key destinations that may be slightly beyond the trail,
- Reduces confusion at trail junctions,
- Brings awareness to historical areas, landmarks, outdoor recreation, and natural areas for locals and visitors, and
- Helps first responders identify the location of a trail user in the event of an emergency by providing trail names and mileage.

A thoughtful wayfinding system offers much more than signs pointing to locations. Instead, the system influences decisions and behaviors and is mutually beneficial to local and visiting stakeholders. Wayfinding systems can even include non-signage elements such as public art, “gateway moments,” and painting and line markings on trails and sidewalks

Core Wayfinding Principles

To create a successful wayfinding system, Central Ohio Trail Towns should keep several guiding principles in mind. These principles can help focus the messaging and provide an overarching framework when difficult decisions need to be made about the placement of trail wayfinding signs and the destinations listed on them.

Principle 1: Keep it Simple

Easy to use and intuitive wayfinding helps trail users navigate and understand where they are in relation to nearby landmarks and destinations. Information should be clear, legible, and simple enough to be understood by a wide audience. Wayfinding must be concise, revealing enough information about routes and destinations without overwhelming the user. Information on each sign should be kept to a minimum to avoid confusion and facilitate understanding. Wayfinding should also be placed efficiently to minimize sign clutter.

Principle 2: Be Consistent

Wayfinding signs should be predictable and consistent. When information is consistent, it can be recognized and quickly understood. Wayfinding signs should have

common styles, fonts, colors, and materials along a trail corridor to promote continuity and help users quickly understand and interpret messages. Sign frequency and placement along a trail corridor should be consistent as well so that users know what to expect.

Principle 3: Design for the Casual User

Wayfinding on trails should be designed for people who are casual users, who prefer low-stress conditions, and for people who have not been on the trail before. This may include:

- People new to trails and/or bicycling or people who only utilize bicycles a few times a year,
- Those unfamiliar with the trail or area through which they are traveling, and
- Visitors and tourists.

CASE STUDY

Centerburg's "Moment of Arrival" Shows Heart and Sense of Place

Ohio to Erie Trail users experience two gateway moments as they arrive in Centerburg. Located near the geographic center of Ohio, Centerburg has two trail access areas: the Memorial Park trailhead and the trail access next to two local eateries, Kolacheez Coffee Bar and Pizzaburg.

Those traveling from nearby Mount Vernon will first encounter the Memorial Park trailhead. An otherwise unassuming building stands out with a large trail map and eye-popping metallic art pieces that pay homage to the trail and its railroad history. In the center of an adjacent field, a large rock is labeled for its location in the center of Ohio. While possibly not the exact geographic center, the rock gives people a reason to stop, learn, and take a photo.

Centerburg's true "moment of arrival" is about a mile southeast, where the trail access is nearly in the shadow of a massive grain elevator. Sense of place certainly comes through when you bike or walk upon a grain elevator in the heart of Ohio.

With the elevator, a cross street, and the eateries clustered in this area, it is evident that you have reached a downtown area. This may have been enough of a gateway moment, but the Heart of Ohio Trail Board also invested in some trail-friendly amenities. Clustered together are a pair of benches, bike repair station, bike rack, and a donation box. Adding some levity to the stop is a large, framed selfie station that tells people they are at the midpoint of the trail. It even includes a hashtag: #heartofohiotrail. With the grain elevator in the backdrop, the selfie station is an attractive photo opportunity. All in one location, the group has demonstrated strong marketing, fundraising savvy, and a warm welcome.

These amenities are just the start. The group is raising funds to build a welcome station at this location. The fundraising is currently underway, and they are clear on their purpose. As board member Sandra Dove indicates, "Having a physical welcome station is important to us as we are in the Heart of Ohio and the midway portion of the Ohio to Erie Trail."

While not a core principle, the regional nature of Central Ohio Trail Towns merits considering the implications of a regional wayfinding system. Decisions about balancing local community autonomy, existing trail brands, and a regional brand and wayfinding system must be made carefully and thoughtfully. Any wayfinding or sign system should be supported with a sign guide so that local trails and communities have clear direction (and support) in producing and installing signs.

National and State Guidance on Bicycle Wayfinding and Trail Signs

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD 2009 edition) defines the signs and standards for traffic control devices on all “public streets, highways, bikeways, and private roads open to public travel”. It is published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Ohio MUTCD (OMUTCD 2012 edition) chapters 2B and 9B provides additional guidance for placement of traffic control signs. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide provides additional information that supplements the MUTCD. The guide explains the use and benefits of different sign types for bicycle wayfinding. It also provides guidance on where to use signs: on what types of routes and how to place signs at intersections. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide provides guidance based on current best practices in large cities. It covers types of signs and destinations, pavement markings, typical applications, and design guidance.

While these guidance documents represent the standard, wayfinding signage doesn't always follow these guidelines. There are two main reasons for this:

- 1.** The funding agencies for wayfinding systems on paths are not typically held to MUTCD standards. Frequently, funds for path wayfinding come from state departments of natural resources, local or regional parks agencies, or private organizations or individuals.
- 2.** On paths and trails, many users are pedestrians, and some wayfinding systems are therefore designed exclusively for pedestrians. Part 9 of the MUTCD does not cover pedestrian traffic control for paths and trails. The MUTCD does note that pedestrian wayfinding signs may differ from bicycle wayfinding, such as by using smaller fonts and not including retroreflectivity.

Lastly, it is important to note that these guides do not provide information on how to implement a wayfinding system within a specific municipality or region.

Great Allegheny Passage Sign Guidelines

When the Trail Town Program® was launched in 2007, the Great Allegheny Passage did not have a standard wayfinding system. Because the trail was built in segments (with local trail identities) over the course of more than three decades, there was no consistent wayfinding system. The GAP's brand was in place and the Trail Town Program's brand had been recently established, but these brands were not reflected in directional or other signs. In fact, a 2008 visitor survey revealed that the top thing that would have made people's trail trips better was improved signage. It was time for a change. The GAP Conservancy and the Trail Town Program® hosted a trail-wide summit focused on signage. The outcome was hiring a design agency to create the [Great Allegheny Passage Graphic Identity & Sign Guidelines Manual](#). The detailed manual addressed graphic identity and how it should be incorporated into various sign types. It included both the existing GAP trail brand and the new Trail Town brand. Developing the manual was an important step bringing visual continuity across a 150-mile trail system.

Typical Trail Wayfinding Sign Types

There are four basic trail wayfinding sign types. Each has a unique purpose, location, and message; however, all four work together. The first three types of signs guide people along the designated trail, while the fourth sign type directs people onto the trail from adjacent networks. Listed below is the main purpose for each type of sign:

1. Decision – Shows connections and marks the junction of two or more facilities and provides turning guidance through the junction. Also provides distance to key destinations.
2. Confirmation – Informs people that they are traveling on a trail. Can provide mileage markers or distance to a key point ahead.
3. Turn – Indicates where a trail turns, either from one street on to another street or through a difficult or confusing area.
4. Off-Trails – Informs people traveling on streets or other facilities not designated as trails that trail or other facilities exist nearby or within a certain distance.

There are other types of signs that are not necessarily wayfinding but are commonly found on or along trail facilities including interpretive signs that highlight history or landmarks, warning signs that alert users on intersecting facilities, street name or trail name signs, and others.

Recommendations

- Develop a Wayfinding protocol – As a starting point to accomplish this task, the structure of this protocol is organized around these framing questions:
 1. What objectives are intended to be met with this wayfinding system?
 2. Who is the wayfinding user?
 3. What are the needs of a wayfinding user?
 4. In what ways can the wayfinding system be customized for local conditions?
- Inventory signs and branding within the region – Establish a GIS-based inventory of all existing signage and sign types for both asset management and maintenance considerations.
- Develop a Wayfinding Sign Guide. This may include reviewing existing signs and branding within the region, understanding federal/state/local regulatory sign guidance, identifying destinations, naming conventions, theming, sign types and placement considerations, sign layout and design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance.
- The regional trail town program should seek grants and other funds to help support wayfinding installations. Additionally, local communities should be proactive in installing signs when they are in the position to do so independently.

3. LOCAL BUSINESS COLLABORATIONS

Anticipated Program Scope

Educating local businesses, gaining their support, and offering programs that position them to increase trail-related revenues.

Details

While not the exclusive focus of trail towns, realizing local economic benefit is a leading desired outcome of the approach. A successful regional trail town initiative provides tangible value to local trail-serving businesses. **Raising awareness about the initiative, the benefits of trails, and trail user needs is an important part of trail towns.** The program staff and regional leadership should work to educate and engage the business community and offer programs that position businesses to access the trail market. Specific program ideas are offered below in the Recommendations section, but before acting upon them the program must raise awareness and demonstrate both the value and potential of the trail market.

The following are examples of organizations that can be recruited as partners or can be asked to create a platform for the program:

- Regional and local chambers and merchant associations
- Regional and local Main Street organizations
- Local civic organizations (Rotary groups and others)

- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)
- Councils of Government
- Any regional community and economic development organizations
- Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)
- Regional Councils of Government
- Ohio Office of Tourism
- Ohio Department of Development
- Ohio Trails Partnership
- State Office of Outdoor Recreation (if established)
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources
- Ohio Department of Transportation
- Trail focused/supportive non-profit organizations

Early steps in reaching these groups include requesting to speak at meetings and asking them to share program information in their communications. Similarly, outreach to local and regional media can ultimately help reach businesses and business organizations. As noted previously, the regional trail town administrator and local trail town committees should work together in implementing an overall marketing and communications strategy that includes business outreach and education.

One opportunity for raising awareness among the business community and business organizations is creating a trail champions task force comprised of those that understand the benefits of trails and are willing to help generate additional support and enthusiasm. This group can potentially grow out of one of MORPC's existing forums. MORPC hosts trail forums that bring together trail partners three times a year. A focus of one of those trail forums could relate to the "business of trails" and be formatted specifically for trail-serving businesses and organizations.

What do Businesses Need?

- Information on the trail market and trail user needs
- A familiarity with local and regional trails and trail-serving businesses and amenities beyond their community
- Information on the economic impact of trails (and the trail local to their communities)
- Ideas for how to better attract trail users to their business
- Programs and resources that make it easier for them attract trail users to their businesses
- A network of peers they can look to for support, ideas, and business collaborations

Economic Research

One important way of advising the business community of the value of regional trails is to provide economic research that demonstrates the impact of trails. The Trail Town Program® along the GAP conducted an economic impact study in 2008-09 that studied the 2007-08 seasons. The study was underway within a year of establishing the program. This economic research paired with an annual trail count program resulted in having data to support the program's claims of economic benefit. The program also tracked business openings and expansions, and shared anecdotal success stories from businesses along the trail. Having this information will justify the initiative and enable staff to capture the attention of busy business owners.

If the program is not able to secure funds to conduct a professional study, it can work with its partners and participating communities to collect data in other ways. Any data collected is better than having no data at all. Some possible ways of gathering helpful information are:

- Conduct trail user intercept surveys and work with a local university to analyze the results.

- Install automated trail counters and work with a local university or a data-savvy volunteer to interpret the results. The Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy has volunteers collect manual counts to help verify the accuracy of the counters. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is experienced in both intercept surveys and trail count programs. MORPC manages a regionally recognized trail count program and is in the process of expanding the program to include more trails.
- Recruit trail-serving businesses to consistently ask key questions of customers:
 - » What brings you to town?
 - » Where are you from? (or What's your Zip Code?)
 - » If using the trail, a follow up question asking for details on their trip: "How far are you going today?" or "How's your trip been?"
- Share economic impact information on comparable trails. As much as possible, the comparisons should be relevant in terms of trail type, length, and location. The Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy updated its economic research in 2021 and may provide a fair example of the impact that is possible along the OTET. Additionally, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy conducted an economic analysis of

the Great American Rail-Trail; all four sponsoring communities are located along the Great American. Regionally, MORPC conducted an Impact of Trails study in 2021 that looked at trail benefits in the region's most urbanized county, Franklin County.

- Do not discount the value of sharing information not directly related to economic impact. Most businesses are owned and operated by local residents who care about their communities and understand the connection between improved quality of life and their bottom line.

Direct Business Assistance

When the program is established, any number of business assistance programs can be developed to help businesses better serve the trail market. Examples are included in the next section and repeated in the Sample Implementation Timeline.

Recommendations

- Partner with business organizations to raise awareness of the trail town initiative, the benefits of trails, and trail user needs.
- Collaborate with area CDFIs to secure funds for a loan pool available to trail-serving businesses.
- Create a trail-friendly business designation. Consider offering a basic supply kit that has bike repair and other items as a benefit. This will help equip communities without bike shops to meet trail user needs. In creating the program, staff should consider any existing programs that may already be in place. For example, some Central Ohio businesses may already participate in the Bicycle Friendly America program, and locally, the Knox County Health Department may be considering a trail-friendly designation program. Collaboration opportunities should be explored, particularly with Knox County. If communities, businesses, and universities are seeking Bicycle Friendly America designations, the trail town staff may want to support them in this. While being a trail town entails more than fostering a cycling culture and supporting infrastructure, this is an esteemed designation that would reinforce perceptions about the local trail- and bicycle-friendly climate.



Fuller Center Ride lunch at Wilson's
Source: Wayne Roberts

- Some education and marketing may be needed to help people distinguish between the different programs and why all the designations contribute to a vibrant trail-oriented region.
- Work with economic development entities to explore the possibility of establishing a business incubator that will support emerging businesses in the realm of trails and hospitality.
- Offer hospitality training for frontline staff that focuses on recognizing trail users, providing trail information, meeting trail user needs, and services available in other trail communities. The training could include information on other area attractions so that interactions can include sharing information about things to do while not on the trail. The Points of Interest inventory provides a starting point for content.
- Establish a small business grant program or competition that encourages businesses to invest in serving outdoor recreation users. Examples include:
 - » The York County Trail Towns BLOOM Grant (see the callout below),
 - » The Oil Region Alliance “Get on the Trail” Business Plan Contest, and
 - » Various small grant programs that reinvest lodging tax revenues.

York County Trail Towns BLOOM Grant

In York County, Pennsylvania, the York County Economic Alliance operates York County Trail Towns. The program along the 21-mile York Heritage Trail, includes seven participating communities and a dozen “trail-friendly” businesses. The program provides a platform for focused economic development, offered by an organization dedicated expressly on economic development. The program’s BLOOM Grant, offered with funding through the BLOOM Business Empowerment Center, is intended to accelerate business growth. The latest grant round allocated \$30,000 for distribution. Grants up to \$3,000 are available for projects that are intended to increase the portion of the business related to outdoor recreational users, and/or to make the business more trail user-friendly. Eligible projects included improved marketing and promotions aimed at recreational users, expanding inventory, physical improvements (such as better lighting, storefront enhancements, and façade repairs), and the addition of bike-friendly amenities (such as bike racks, water, and restroom improvements).

The YCEA launched the York County Trail Towns program in June 2020 to support five communities adjacent to the York County Heritage Rail Trail: City

of York, Seven Valleys, Glen Rock, Railroad, and New Freedom. In 2021, the program expanded to include Hanover and Wrightsville to leverage other outdoor recreational amenities. The Trail Towns program provides a platform for focused economic development by increasing trail tourism and supporting and encouraging businesses to provide services and amenities to the nearly 500,000 trail users who pass through the communities each year.

The York County Trail Towns edition of the BLOOM grant program will allocate \$30,000 across the seven Trail Town communities for this grant round. This funding comes through the BLOOM Business Empowerment Center, an entity of the YCEA which works to accelerate small business ownership and success, promote Pathways to Prosperity for talent development, and advance representation in leadership and access to opportunities. Designated Trail-Friendly businesses or those located in the seven communities were given priority consideration, as were businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The latter should be considered by the COG Board with their commitment to leveraging tourism to achieve equity.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CATALYSTS AND TOURISM ACTIVITIES

Anticipated Program Scope

Supporting current and potential trail tourism opportunities in participating communities, as well as exploring ways to support residents of all income levels with complete routes that move people between their homes, schools, and places of employment and entertainment.

Details

Addressing Gaps in Business Services

Gaps in business services exist in virtually all trail communities. As part of the planning process, the project team developed an Available Services Matrix, adapted from one used by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy for its A.T. Community™ program. The matrix developed for Central Ohio Trail Towns includes business services that are typically desired by trail users. In addition to business services, the matrix identifies other services such as public restrooms, library/computer/internet, ATMs, and trailhead parking and information. Committee members completed the matrix for the four sponsoring communities. The completed matrices can be viewed in Appendix C.

The matrix identifies the availability of services and, to an extent, the level of availability with options ranging from “widely available” to “not available.” The option selected may depend on how many such services there are to choose from, business hours, and the centrality of the location. The existence of a service does not indicate the quality of the service, the atmosphere, or how trail-friendly a business is.

The absence of a service does not necessarily mean the community needs the service. For example, none of the sponsoring communities have an outfitter (a shop that sells outdoor clothing and equipment). This does not suggest that the communities should pursue one. It is possible that a market analysis would find that the smaller communities could not support such a business. One of the only outfitters along the entire Ohio to Erie Trail is Roads Rivers and Trails in Milford (pop. 6,878). Milford is positioned along multiple trails:

the Ohio to Erie Trail, the Buckeye and North Country trails, and several other routes. An outfitter appears to be a needed service in Milford. In the Central Ohio Trail Towns sponsoring communities, a combination of full-service bike shops and bike rentals would likely suffice.



Helmet Fitting at a Bike Rodeo
Source: Wayne Roberts

The work of Central Ohio Trail Towns is to distinguish the difference between missing business services and those for which there is a market. Factors to be considered in recruiting specific businesses or encouraging business expansions include:

- Local population/trade area,
- Whether existing services in adjacent trail communities meet user needs,
- Whether the business can be supported year-round or generate adequate seasonal income, and
- Whether the business service is consistent with local community values and sense of place.

The completed matrices for the sponsoring communities suggest the following:

Centerburg

- The most obvious missing services are traditional indoor lodging, camping, and a full-service bike shop

with rentals. A bike shop may be opening at The Animal Station (feed store and pet supply). Other areas for improvement include directional signage, more bike racks, and public restrooms. The planned Midway Welcome Center along the OTET would address the availability of restrooms and some of the current wayfinding shortcomings.

- Two potential “hidden gems” include the grocery store (which is said to be a bike-friendly establishment that may be considering building a connector path to the OTET) and The Animal Station.

London

- The most obvious missing services are traditional indoor lodging and a full-service bike shop with rentals. A local family may be planning to open a bed and breakfast, which would address the lack of indoor lodging.
- A popular gem is the London Coffee Peddler, which offers some bike repairs, parts, and assistance to trail users. In a community without a bike shop, this should not be underestimated.

Mount Vernon

- The most obvious missing service is camping.
- Mount Vernon would also benefit from having more bike racks throughout the business district. As a university community that values the arts, custom/creative bike racks would be appropriate for Mount Vernon.



GOBA in London, 2006
Source: Wayne Roberts

Sunbury

- The most obvious missing services are indoor lodging, camping, and a bike shop.
- There is limited vacant space for new businesses in the downtown area. The charming town square is nearly entirely occupied. Focusing on quality improvements where needed, rather than new business recruitment, is advised. (Trail-serving businesses like bike shops, B&Bs, shuttle operations, and so forth could be established outside of the downtown core.)
- The city would also benefit from additional bike racks and more directional signage to and from the trail.

Across the Communities:

- There is only one existing bike shop among the four sponsoring communities. This demonstrates a market vulnerability for this part of the Ohio to Erie Trail. Full-service bike shops (as well as bike rentals) should be more readily available on a destination trail of this scope. Centrally located Columbus has a number of bike shops, but additional shops, rentals, and parts should be available in other trail communities.
 - » Important to note is that the majority of Central Ohio Trail Community survey respondents selected either walking/hiking or jogging/running as their primary trail activity (as opposed to biking). A business that includes running shoes and apparel (paired with bikes or otherwise) may be worth considering.
- The Ohio to Erie Trail organization reports that they receive frequent inquiries about shuttle services, baggage transport, and lodging accommodations that can support larger groups.
- Helping an existing business to expand services, add product, or make capital improvements is often easier than attracting new businesses.
- Some of the smaller communities could benefit from hosting satellite locations of enterprises in other locations or carrying well-known products from other locations. For example, along the GAP, a mosaic studio carries regionally popular ice cream

sandwiches to draw people in for purchases. On the OTET, instead of recruiting a craft brewer to open in one of the villages, an existing eatery could be encouraged to have a regional brew on tap.

- Turning an eye to the quality of existing products and services tends to be an opportunity in most trail communities. Consider the quality of the atmosphere, customer service, products, and the general “feel” of the community and its establishments. Is there outdoor seating? Do people from other places feel welcome? Is there a positive, bustling energy?

Other Economic Development Catalysts and Tourism Activities

Tourism industry jobs are sometimes criticized for being seasonal and/or low paying. Rather than accept the typical trail town opportunities (lodging, bike shops, eateries), illustrate for communities and businesses the full potential for trail tourism. Ways of increasing the economic benefit of tourism are to attract more people, generate return visits, and increase per trip spending. One way of increasing per trip spending is offering travel

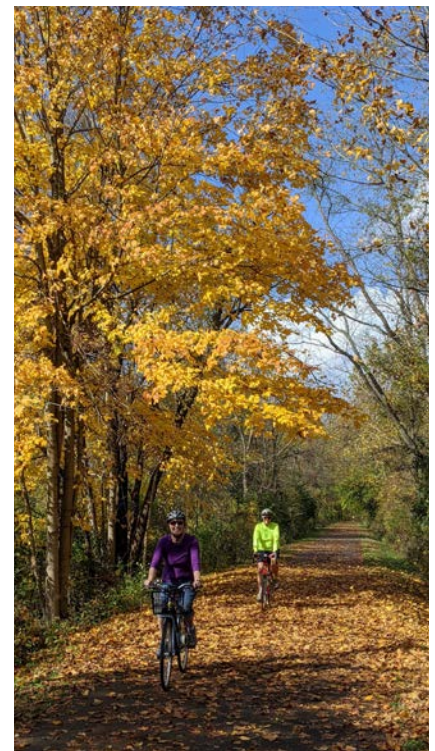
“experiences” at a price point that is appropriate to the experience. “Experiential travel” is a trending niche in tourism and hospitality – one that engages the senses and attracts audiences willing to pay for unique and memorable experiences. Trail businesses and other trail-adjacent attractions have yet to fully capitalize on the potential that exists in providing experiences (while also taking some of the logistic work out of the hands of visitors).

Additionally, the Ohio to Erie Trail continues to field questions related to shuttling and luggage transfer services, indicating there are unmet needs related to trip planning logistics and support. Helping businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs understand market needs (ranging from touring cyclists to those who are looking for shorter trips) would be an appropriate role for a regional trail town program.

Training programs for frontline staff and other ambassadors will strengthen local trail culture, improve visitor interactions, and further support the trail economy. Collaborating with tourism partners in developing training programs will result in better content and results.



High Wheelers in Mount Vernon
Source: Randy Cronk



Fall in Mount Vernon
Source: Randy Cronk

Finally, tourism is not the only way in which trails are economic development catalysts. Trails are part of a larger active transportation network. Complete networks that connect residential areas to employment

centers and other community assets benefits residents of all income levels and positions employers and the economic development community to tout the quality-of-life benefits associated with trails.

Table 1. Available Services Matrix

Available Services	Widely Available	Available	Limited Availability	Not Available
Traditional indoor lodging (hotel, B&B, etc.)				
Private rentals (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.)				
Camping				
Bike rental (or bike share)				
Bike shop/repair				
Other businesses offering basic bike repair tools and parts				
Bike repair stations (self-serve, free)				
Outfitter				
Restaurants				
Coffee shop				
Bakery				
Bar/craft brewery				
Grocery store				
Farmers market				
Pharmacy/medical facility				
Library/computer/internet				
Visitor or welcome center				
Post office				
Public restroom				
ATMs				
Laundry				
Shuttle services				
Public transportation				
Taxi or car rental				
Active ride share community (Lyft, Uber)				
Trail souvenirs				
Trail directional signage				
Trail information kiosk				
Bike racks				
Trailhead parking				

Recommendations

- Make the Available Services Matrix part of the formal application process and work with economic development partners to develop a simple trail-based Market Analysis Template for communities and businesses to use in considering the viability of added services.
- Collaborate with area CDFIs to secure funds for a loan pool available to trail-serving businesses.
- Program administrators initiate solutions to filling the most needed gaps in services with an emphasis on Central Ohio. See Sample Implementation Timeline for additional details.
- Conduct a study or analysis of what trail/active transportation improvements will best connect residential areas to employment centers, with an emphasis on neighborhoods in which residents rely on public and active transportation networks.
- Educate businesses on “experiential travel” and encourage the development of trail experiences that elevate the tourism offerings, bringing visitors into communities at higher price points.
- Develop a frontline staff training program in collaboration with tourism partners.



Mountain State Trail Riders, October 2021

Source: Randy Cronk

5. INFRASTRUCTURE

Anticipated Program Scope

Recommending appropriate infrastructure per community characteristic and culture. Supporting communities in their efforts to establish and maintain such infrastructure.

Details

Active Transportation is an umbrella term for all the ways people can get around without using a motorized vehicle. This term emphasizes the role of physically active forms of transportation in improving community health. It reinforces that bicycling and walking are valid forms of transportation, not just forms of recreation, and it is a more inclusive term that reflects the use of mobility assistance devices; such as wheelchairs and scooters, and other modes like skating or skateboarding. Active transportation also implies a more comprehensive approach to the transportation system which recognizes the importance of active transportation in accessing other modes, and addresses associated infrastructure like bike racks and wheelchair ramps.

Active transportation can provide many community benefits, even beyond personal mobility; such as quality of life, public health, economic development, and environmental quality. To obtain these benefits, it is important to invest in the infrastructure and programs that support active transportation.

Quality of Life/Public Health

Comfortable and accessible bicycling and walking provide a host of quality-of-life benefits. They increase the number of travel options for everyone and can lead to a sense of independence in seniors, young people, and others who cannot, or choose not, to drive. Providing a high-quality active transportation network is important for residents who do not have full access to a vehicle. This includes people who are under 16 years-old, unlicensed adults, suspended drivers, and people who live in households with more drivers than vehicles.

Active transportation options are associated with inviting places for people to live and work. Bicyclists often report greater satisfaction with their commute than people who drive to work.

In communities that have invested in bicycling and walking infrastructure, bicyclists and pedestrian commuters report the highest levels of “commute well-being,” which is a measure of commute-based stress, confidence in arrival time, boredom or enthusiasm, excitement, pleasure, and ease of trip.

Increased opportunity for recreation and destination-oriented trips using active modes of travel are key to reducing obesity and, by extension, the risk for developing chronic diseases. Physical activity, including walking and bicycling, can help prevent or treat some mental health conditions. Physical activity reduces depression, can improve the quality of sleep, and has been shown to improve cognitive function for older adults. Active transportation can also improve social conditions in communities, which contributes to positive mental well-being among residents.

Economic Development

There is broad consensus across the country, and in Ohio, that investing in active transportation produces a positive return on investment for host communities. This is especially true when it comes to trails, which serve as major regional attractions for recreational riders. Trail-based tourism is an economic boon for many small communities, supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and increasing property values. For example, annual trail tourism spending along the Great Allegheny Passage in Maryland and Pennsylvania exceeds \$121 million. Additionally, COG’s 2021 Impact of Trails Report estimates that the fully completed Regional Trail Vision is expected to support \$75 million annually in direct spending related to trails. Businesses such as bicycle shops are also needed to support a strong bicycling community, providing opportunities for new entrepreneurial activity.

CASE STUDY

Mount Vernon Underpass the Latest in a Series of Connectivity Efforts

Connectivity is an essential component of networks. Whether the network includes streets, trails, sidewalks, transit, or all of the above, people depend on connectivity. Mount Vernon understands the value of connectivity in regards to trails and active transportation, and have committed to a vast active transportation network.

Mount Vernon’s trail network runs through the central part of Mount Vernon. From western border to eastern border, there is barely a gap in the city’s Ohio to Erie Trail segments: The Heart of Ohio and Kokosing Gap trails. Local trailheads are equipped with amenities such as bike fix-it stations, indoor restrooms, water fountains, a little free library post, free public parking, wayfinding signage, pedestrian crossings, and a pavilion. The Kokosing Gap trailhead even has an art installation for a photo opportunity. An “I ‘heart’ KGT” installation invites local and visiting trail users to take a selfie and mark their time in Mount Vernon. Amenities such as these can be just as important as connectivity, as they allow users to easily stay on the trail and find any basic needs. People also pick up on local enthusiasm and support for trails.

A main piece of infrastructure that vastly improved Mount Vernon’s trail network was the creation of a trail underpass that ushers trail users beneath a busy at-grade road crossing. When recently asked what trail-related improvements he is most proud of, Mount Vernon Mayor Matthew Starr immediately cited the safety improvement at the underpass. It greatly improves trail accessibility and decreases stress for trail users and drivers alike. Mount Vernon continues investment in its trail and active transportation, and residents and local leaders seem to enjoy it. Starr went on to describe the trail network, “like one big playground.” Having sidewalks, trails, parks, plazas, and river access all located in close proximity to one another means users are able to enjoy a vast array of activities easily, all due to connectivity.

Environmental Quality

Support for bicycling and walking comes in part from concerns about greenhouse gas emissions, stormwater runoff from highway facilities, and other environmental implications of widespread personal vehicle use. Shifting to bicycling and walking trips and concentrating development in dense walkable and bikeable communities can reduce transportation-based emissions and sprawling land use that impacts the natural environment.

Exhaust from automobiles increases local air pollution, which can cause or trigger respiratory and cardiovascular problems. People with sensitivities to air pollution, including older adults, children, and those with diseases such as asthma or congestive heart disease, are more likely to be affected by contact with pollution from particulate matter, which includes pollutants from automobile exhaust. Multiple studies have found that low-income, minority communities bear the greatest burden of auto-related emissions due to proximity to high-volume roads. Reducing the number of vehicles on the road can reduce air pollution and improve air quality. Researchers have proposed that increasing the supply of active transportation



Trail access on the east side of London
Source: Cycle Forward

facilities (e.g., sidewalks, bike paths, etc.) can help reduce exposure to harmful pollutants.

Providing Active Transportation

Several studies have shown that most people feel safer and more comfortable walking and bicycling on streets with low vehicle volumes and speeds, or on higher speed and higher volume streets with increased separation and protection from vehicle traffic. In fact, approximately half of the population has little tolerance for interacting with vehicles unless vehicle speeds and volumes are very low. Designing active transportation facilities as described above (i.e., greater separation on roads with higher traffic volumes and speeds) not only increases comfort for users, but also accommodates a wider range of users with various abilities and ages. The term “All Ages and Abilities” is used to describe active transportation facilities designed for people from age 8 to 80.

Beyond safety and functionality, the quality of the travel environment has a big effect on active transportation users. A high-quality active transportation environment that addresses physical comfort and safety and has visual interest and coherent wayfinding is likely to draw more users and result in more enjoyable trips. The design of bicycle, pedestrian, and trail facilities should consider the needs of the users as well as physical context. Elements that can make a path more of a place include street trees and plantings; shade; opportunities for seating, resting, and gathering; wayfinding signs and cues; and separation from parking lots.

Bicycle, pedestrian, and trail facilities should be designed to accommodate these interactions by being intuitive to understand and navigate: organizing users, indicating proper positioning, and creating predictable movement. A large part of this approach is understanding the operational spaces of each user type, accounting for the speed differential between people who walk and people who bike, and accounting for the expected volume and mix of users.

Maintenance

The long-term performance of bicycle and pedestrian networks depends on both the construction of new facilities and an investment in continued maintenance. Maintaining bicycle and pedestrian facilities is critical

to ensuring those facilities are accessible, safe, and functional.

Coordination & Responsibility Between Agencies

Many jurisdictions struggle with confusion around which entity, city, village, county, or state, is responsible for the maintenance of trails and other active transportation facilities. Frequently, there is no documentation showing who is responsible for maintenance of existing facilities, which can prolong unsafe conditions for trail users. Coordination between the government agencies is key for effective maintenance programs.

Intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) are used to codify the roles and responsibilities of each agency regarding ongoing maintenance. For example, a local government may agree to conduct plowing, mowing, and other maintenance activities on trails in its jurisdiction that were built by another agency. Clarifying who is responsible for maintenance costs and operations ensures that maintenance problems are resolved in a timely manner.



Snow during the Bike Buckeye Lake Children’s Bike Giveaway
 Source: Bike Buckeye Lake

Table 2. Maintenance Activities Table

Different facility types require different types of strategies to be maintained. Table 6 breaks down maintenance activities and strategies for each by facility type.

Frequency	Maintenance Activity
As Needed	Tree/brush cleaning and mowing
	Sign replacement
	Map/signage updates
	Trash removal/litter clean-up
	Replace/repair trail support amenities (parking lots, benches, restrooms, etc.)
	Repair flood damage; silt clean-up, culvert clean-out, etc.
	Patching/minor regrading/concrete panel replacement
Seasonal	Sweeping
	Snow and Ice Control
	Planting/pruning/beautification
	Culvert/drainage cleaning and repair
Yearly	Installation/removal of seasonal signage
	Surface evaluation to determine need for patching/regrading/re-striping of bicycle facilities
	Evaluate support services to determine need for repair/replacement
5-year	Perform walk audits to assess ADA compliance of facilities
	Repaint or repair trash receptacles, benches, signs, and other trail amenities, if necessary
10-year	Sealcoat asphalt shared use paths
	Resurface/regrade/re-stripe shared use paths
20-year	Assess and replace/reconstruct shared use paths/sidewalks

Life Cycle Cost

Whenever trails are constructed, maintenance funding is needed. This is often not considered, and maintenance is absorbed within existing staff resources and operating budgets. A lack of maintenance can then result in higher long-term costs, with premature replacements required due to a lack of regular maintenance.

For hard surfaced trails, the primary maintenance consideration is pavement or surface preservation. Over the life cycle of a trail, there are different strategies for pavement preservation, and lower-cost preventative maintenance or rehabilitation may defer more costly reconstruction. Preventative maintenance includes strategies such as patching, grinding, concrete raising, and panel replacement. The entity responsible for maintenance should keep consistent records of pavement conditions of trails to track maintenance performed and predict future needs.

Maintenance for trails can be funded by [ODNR's Recreational Trails Program](#), the Ohio Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives program, and the MORPC administered Attributable Funds Program. Trail maintenance funding case studies are provided in [How Communities are Paying to Maintain Trails, Bike Lanes, and Sidewalks](#) report published in 2014 by the Alliance for Biking & Walking and The League of American Bicyclists. Also, in 2020, ODOT published a Maintenance Overview as part of Walk.Bike.Ohio efforts that provides funding strategy examples, such as cost sharing programs, utilizing municipal borrowing power, assessing repairs at time of property sales, and sliding scale fees. It should be noted that strategies outlined in Walk.Bike.Ohio are mainly targeted at pedestrian facilities.

Frequency

The first step to approaching maintenance is to understand how often maintenance should be performed. Many activities, such as signage updates or replacements, are performed as needed, while other tasks such as snow removal are seasonal (see Table 6). Creating a winter maintenance approach is important to encourage year-round travel by walking and biking. One key component of this approach should be identifying priority routes for snow removal.

More information on winter maintenance such as types of equipment needed for different facility types and how to consider snow removal in the design of facilities can be found in [Toole Design's Winter Maintenance Resource Guide](#).

Creating a strong maintenance program begins in the design phase. The agency that will eventually own the completed project should collaborate with partners to determine the infrastructure placement, final design, and life cycle maintenance cost.



Heart of the Ohio Trail in Centerburg
Source: Cycle Foward

Funding Strategies

Active transportation projects comprise a fraction of overall transportation network construction and maintenance. While they generally do not serve as many users as highways, bridges, and other critical infrastructure, they can have a substantial positive effect on local economies. Additionally, providing opportunities for active living promotes public health and may reduce the burden on taxpayer funded healthcare systems over time. In this light, active transportation infrastructure is a critical component of a complete transportation network and results in a positive return on investment for communities that fund such projects. Several state and federal funding sources can be used to supplement local funding sources to build out trail networks and fund related programming efforts. Specific trail-focused funding is available through the Clean Ohio Trails Fund (ODNR), Recreational Trails Program (ODNR), and Green Space Conservation Program (OPWC).

Additional funding sources include the Transportation Alternatives Program (MORPC), Highway Safety Improvement Program (ODOT), and Safe Routes to School (ODOT). The Ohio Department of Health has developed an [Active Transportation Funding Matrix](#), Walk.Bike.Ohio offers a [Funding Overview](#) resource, and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy also has [potential funding sources](#) listed on its website.

Recommendations

- Offer technical assistance related to infrastructure improvements to local communities.
- Host educational forums focused on infrastructure and maintenance needs.
- Operate small grant programs to support community-level infrastructure improvements.
- Require maintenance plans for all new projects that receive regional trail town support.



Tour de Buckeye Lake
Source: *Bike Buckeye Lake*

6. ART/CULTURE/RECREATION

Anticipated Program Scope

Facilitate the incorporation of public art into the trail town program and encourage local communities to treat art as a way of bolstering enthusiasm and signaling trail culture.

Details

Art is often part of a good wayfinding system. Strategically placed art can help to entice people to move between trail and town. In Frostburg, Maryland, on the Great Allegheny Passage, the community uses art to draw people up a series of switchbacks toward town (see callout). In this instance, art is helping people to find their way into town (and make the decision more enticing).

Art can be a vibrancy indicator (it says “something is happening in this community”), is a great way of involving and enthusing community members, and can do some “heavy lifting” for communities (art can include all sorts of messaging, whether that be directional, about local history, culture, values, or otherwise).

Hosting a regional art initiative is a way to generate enthusiasm and a sense of connectedness early in the life of Central Ohio Trail Towns. Such a program can provide a fun and engaging rallying point for multiple communities and still allow for local community autonomy and unique expression.

Recommendations

- Inventory existing art along and near the Central Ohio Greenways Trails
- Host a regional art program. Examples include:
 - » The Great Allegheny Passage, which received a grant to install one piece of public art in each of the initial trail towns.
 - » Trent-Severn Trail Towns, which sponsored a Trent-Severn paddles program.
 - » Multiple other regional trail town initiatives; art is all around us and brings a sense of vitality to trail communities.
 - » Encourage independent art initiatives in participating trail communities and within private trail businesses. In Dayton, Ohio, for example, a local brewery once had artists compete to create their Trail Town beer label.

Frostburg Art Installations Draw Users Up the Mountain

Nicknamed, the “Mountain City,” the college town of 8,500 people faces a true uphill challenge in getting people off the trail. Frostburg is positioned just 16 miles from the GAP’s Mile 0 terminus (or starting point, depending on where you start your trip). It can be hard for cyclists taking a longer ride to break momentum at Frostburg. Even so, the town has taken all the right steps in inviting cyclists into town. The trail access has a covered rest area with an information kiosk, brochures, potted plants, benches, and a bike rack. The community has also built switchbacks to ease the ride up toward town. Interpretive panels, colorful banners, and enticing bike-themed sculptures are placed along the switchbacks. The sculptures, aptly titled “Climb and Glide” (depending on whether you are going up or down) are so alluring and unique that they help to draw people toward town.

SAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

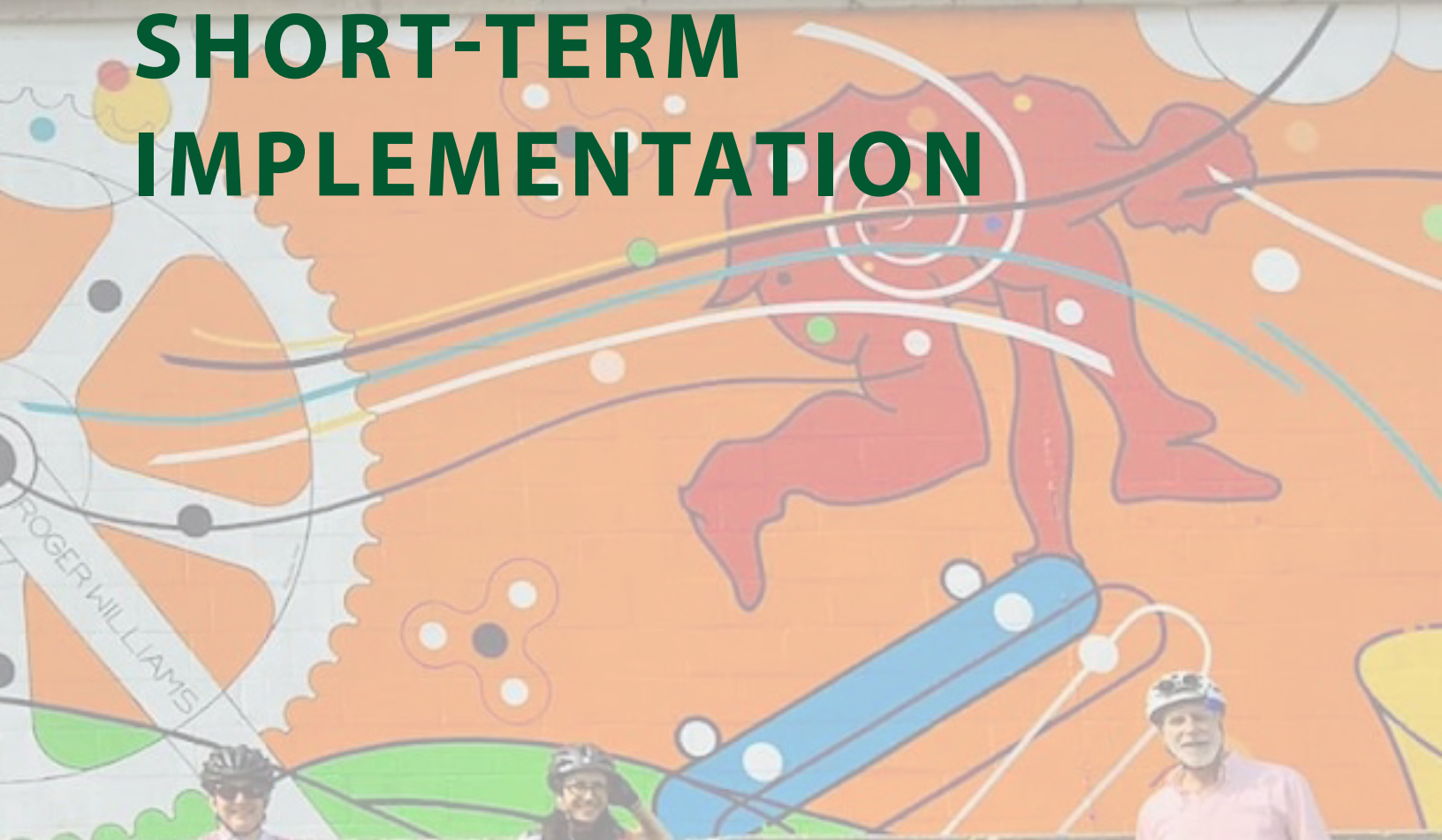
Potential Actions	Short-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
A Cohesive Regional Trail Town Brand			
Hire a creative agency to develop a regional trail town brand.	X		
Develop a brand guide that clarifies permitted uses along the trail by designated communities and others.	X		
Remember to maintain the “brand promise” through ongoing communications, interactions, and program offerings.			X
Infrastructure			
Offer technical assistance related to infrastructure improvements to local communities. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of complete streets policies. • Advocate for targeted state and federal funding for trail and active transportation funding. 			X
Host educational forums focused on infrastructure and maintenance needs.	X		X
Operate small grant programs to support community-level infrastructure improvements.		X	
Require maintenance plans for all new projects that receive regional trail town support.			X
Local Business Collaborations			
Conduct economic and trail use research to the extent that is feasible for the program	X		X
Partner with business organizations to raise awareness of the trail town initiative, the benefits of trails, and trail user needs; potentially organize a “Trail Champions Business Task Force” to ensure that communications are strategic and targeted.	X		X
Collaborate with area Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) to secure funds for a loan pool available to trail-serving businesses.	X		X
Create a trail-friendly business designation. Consider offering a basic supply kit that has bike repair and other items as a benefit. This will help equip communities without bike shops to meet trail user needs.		X	
Work with economic development entities to explore the possibility of establishing a business incubator that will support emerging businesses in the realm of trails and hospitality.		X	
Offer hospitality training for frontline staff that focuses on recognizing trail users, providing trail information, meeting trail user needs, and services available in other trail communities. The training could include information on other area attractions so that interactions can include sharing information about things to do while not on the trail. The Points of Interest inventory provides a starting point for content.		X	X

Potential Actions	Short-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
Establish a small business grant program or competition that encourages businesses to invest in serving outdoor recreation users. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The York County Trail Towns BLOOM Grant (see callout in Business Collaborations section). • The Oil Region Alliance “Get on the Trail” Business Plan Contest. • Various small grant programs that reinvest lodging tax revenues. 		X	
Economic development catalysts and tourism activities			
Make the Available Services Matrix part of the formal application process and work with economic development partners to develop a simple trail-based Market Analysis Template for communities and businesses to use in considering the viability of added services.	X		X
Local task forces complete matrix as part of application process (the four sponsoring communities have already done this); Upon designation, communities review matrix results and consider what business gaps to prioritize.	X		X
Collaborate with area CDFIs to secure funds for a loan pool available to trail-serving businesses.		X	
Program administrators initiate solutions to filling the most needed gaps in services with an emphasis on Central Ohio. Possible tactics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail-wide topical summits (lodging, shuttling, etc.) that enable people to learn and connect across communities. • Market analysis and other research: topics deserving of research are the bike shop and lodging needs of OTET trail users as well as the same needs on connecting trails and other trails of regional significance. Consider what the current and future markets support in terms of the types and locations of trail-serving businesses. • Pilot demonstration projects with direct start-up support to new businesses or those operated by a nonprofit. The Continental Divide Trail Coalition, for example, runs a shuttle service to fill a shuttling need that is not met by the private market. The Schuylkill River Greenway in Pennsylvania piloted a “Rec Hub” bringing bike rental and beer garden pop-ups to trail communities before ultimately establishing its own LLC outfitting service. 		X	
Conduct a study or analysis of what trail/active transportation improvements will best connect residential areas to employment centers, with an emphasis on neighborhoods in which residents rely on public and active transportation networks.		X	
Educate businesses on “experiential travel” and encourage the development of trail experiences that elevate the tourism offerings, bringing visitors into communities at higher price points.	X		
Develop a frontline staff training program in collaboration with tourism partners.		X	

Potential Actions	Short-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
Wayfinding			
Develop a wayfinding protocol; consider key framing questions before considering design options.	X		
Inventory signs and branding within the region – Establish a GIS-based inventory of all existing signage and sign types for both asset management and maintenance considerations.	X		
Develop a Wayfinding Sign Guide.		X	

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PART THREE: SHORT-TERM IMPLEMENTATION



PART THREE: SHORT-TERM IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section recommends short-term implementation projects that local communities can pursue regardless of trail town designation. The projects emphasize the “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” approach to placemaking – improvements that can be made relatively quickly and affordably and which demonstrate that change is occurring.

Recommendations range from on-trail amenity improvements to amenities that would improve the connection to a community’s downtown area. Each recommendation contains a description of the implementation, price ranges, and resources for how the project could be implemented. **Most recommendations stem from issues and opportunities identified in preparing Part 1 of this report and via steering committee discussions. Potential locations are provided for numerous recommendations. These locations were chosen based on survey results in Part 1, as well as observations made during field visits.**

The recommendations are intended primarily for the sponsoring communities, but can be adapted by other Central Ohio communities. Participating communities can decide whether they want to take on these or similar projects as a regional trail town effort is being designed.

These ideas and examples shared in the following pages are intended to inspire and inform communities. A public process is strongly recommended to garner community buy-in for potential amenities, projects, and locations.



Dog Themed Fountain in Downtown Mount Vernon
Source: Cycle Foward

Price Ranges

High: Over \$3,000

Medium: \$1,000 to \$3,000

Low: \$1,000 and under



Trailapalooza 2022, Centerburg
Source: Stacy Smith

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

PAINTED TRAIL CROSSINGS

Description: Painted trail crossings at intersections could help bring attention to the trail, increase safety, and attract additional visitors. Painted trail crossings could be implemented at any type of intersection, however they might be most helpful on roadways with high traffic volumes and high vehicle speeds.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2022/06/08/crosswalk-art-safety-bloomberg/>

Potential Locations

- Intersections with high traffic volumes and/or speeds



TRAIL RECREATION

Description: Encourage community interaction and engagement by starting a group-based, trail activity such as community birdwatching, water activities, dog walking, hiking, biking and other outdoor activities centered around the trail. Organizers can partner with existing groups or create new ones. This could bring new users to the trail and could benefit the economy.

Price: Low to High

Resources

- <https://www.metroparks.net/seniors/>
- <https://web1.myvscloud.com/wbWSC/ohfranklin Cty wt.wsc/search.html?display=detail&module=AR&sort=BeginDate>

Potential Locations

- Trailheads



WALK & BIKE ROUTES

Description: Local events and destinations are opportunities to organically increase the number of trail users. Maps of walking and bicycling routes can correspond to event or destination themes and include mini flags along the trail to different locations.

A paper version and online version should be provided to the community to maximize outreach.

Price: Low

Resources

- <https://mapmaker.nationalgeographic.org/>
- <https://www.behance.net/gallery/18605117/Festival-map>
- https://www.columbus.gov/uploadedFiles/Public_Health/Content_Editors/Planning_and_Performance/Healthy_Places/WeinlandPark_1pageforweb.pdf

Potential Locations & Events

- Fairgrounds
- Festivals
- Concerts



Weinland Park, Walking Maps, Columbus, Ohio

Source: City of Columbus

TRAIL DAYS FESTIVAL

Description: Attract residents and visitors to the trail by creating an annual national trail days festival. The festival should be in partnership with all of the trail towns and could include races, markets, performances, lodging, contests, presentations/demonstrations, tournaments, etc. This would bring awareness to the trails and boost the economy.

Price: High

Resources

- <http://www.visitdamascus.org/traildays.html>

Potential Locations

- Trailheads



FITNESS

- **Exercise Equipment:** Greater than half (53%) of survey respondents cited health benefits as their primary reason for using trails, and 38% of respondents cited recreation. Wooden exercise equipment is easy to install, maintain, and requires minimal effort. Implementing such fitness amenities could increase trail usage, but could also bring different populations to the trail who might not have been using the trail before.
- **Exercise Class:** Exercise classes can help attract additional residents to the trail while also providing services for those who already use the trail for health purposes. The type of classes can vary and may include yoga, Pilates, Zumba, boxing, CrossFit, running, biking, etc.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <https://www.unisport.com/timber-outdoor-gym>
- <https://www.kompan.us/sport-fitness/wooden-fitness>

Potential Locations

- Trailheads
- Parks along the trail



BIKE FRIENDLY BUSINESS

Description: Create a bike friendly business designation program and encourage local shops and restaurants to participate. Creating visually attractive trail-friendly window decals will allow trail users to know which businesses are a part of the program. Most bike-friendly business programs require their businesses to provide free water refills and have a restroom that is available to trail users. Lodging options should advertise services and accommodations that cater to cyclists and hikers, such as allowing bikes in the room, bike parking, etc. Offering trail punch cards that allow customers a discount for using the trail multiple times or a discount upon proof of using trail (bike helmet, walking stick, etc) could increase usage and boost the economy.

Resources

- <https://www.bikeleague.org/business>
- <https://fwtrails.org/trail-info/trail-friendly-businesses/>

Potential Locations

- Trail Towns

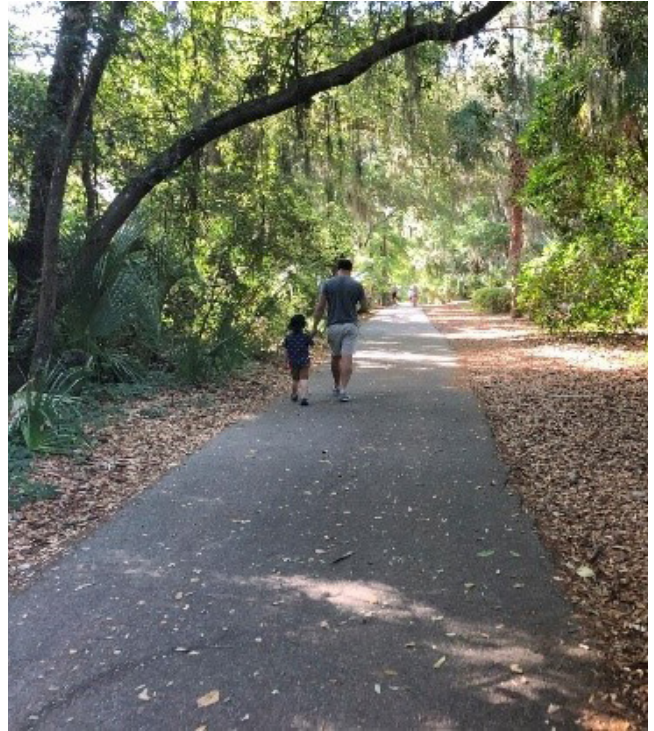


SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Description: Safe Routes to School often incorporate trails as part of their programming. Not only can Safe Routes to School funds be used to build trail connections to schools and neighborhoods, they can also be used to establish programs that encourage the use of existing trails for walking or biking to school. For example, a “walking school bus”-type program organized and led by adults, such as teachers or caregivers, can create a safe environment which encourages more students to walk or ride a bike to school. This program would improve air quality; mental health; increase physical activity and independence; and would expand students knowledge of nature and trails.

Resources

- <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/programs/safe-routes-srts/safe-routes-to-school-srts>
- <https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/activity/walking-trails-with-fitness-stations/>
- <https://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>
- <https://www.walkbiketoschool.org/>
- <https://www.qctrails.org/learn-more/for-educators>



TRAILHEAD KIOSKS

Description: Visitors often do not know all that a community has to offer when they are traveling along the trail. A kiosk that has room for point of interest brochures, a regional map of the trail, photos of the trail and community, mileage charts, a website for real-time trail conditions, and contact information, for example, can help visitors and trail users know what the community has to offer. Brochures and infosheets could be located at trail heads, community centers, resource centers, schools, and businesses. All trailheads should have bulletin board maps with QR codes to support these materials electronically as well.

Price: Low to High

Potential Locations

- Trailheads



ART FEATURES

Description: Art installations along the trail can be a strategy to increase awareness and usage of the trail for residents and visitors alike. Paint along the trail, whether that is on walls or on the asphalt can create a sense of place and general talking points. Sculptures are another way to increase ties to the community. Lastly, light art, which is not very common, can be a temporary and easily replaceable placemaking strategy.

Price: Low to High

Resources

- <https://www.railstotrails.org/build-trails/trail-building-toolbox/design/public-art/>
- <https://blinkcincinnati.com/>

Partners

- ArtWorks
- Cincy Nice
- AGAR
- Carol Ann and Ralph V. Hale
- Jr. Foundation
- Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber



PROGRAMMING

Description: Programming, within trail side parks and plazas, are an inexpensive but interactive way to bring visitors of all ages to the trail. Activities could range from physical games, such as cornhole or shuffle board, to painted interactive activities, such as hopscotch. Additionally, signage can be used throughout the trail to create interactive activities for children, such as “I Spy” games, chalk activities, and storybook trails. Storybook trails include book page sign panels along the trail for children to read and interact with.

Price: Low to High

Resources

- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- <https://www.communityworkshopllc.com/diy-community-cookbook>
- <https://www.communityworkshopllc.com/goodstuff/2020/23/giant-lawn-games>
- <https://www.knoxcountylibrary.org/storybook-trails>



SHUTTLE PROGRAM

Description: A shuttle program could transport older adults and others groups that may have mobility challenges directly to the trail for weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly exercise and socialization. This would increase trail usage by providing direct access and transportation assistance to some of our most vulnerable populations. Communities could explore partnering with local senior centers, disability care centers, or recreational centers.

Price: Medium

Resources

- <https://www.metroparks.net/seniors/#program-descriptions>
- <https://www.mvrpc.org/transportation/services-non-drivers/senior-transportation>



POP-UPS

Description: Pop-ups that travel along the Ohio to Erie Trail could make the trail more attractive to those who are interested. Pop-ups could include a bird watching booth where the booth would have binoculars and hiking sticks or little book libraries where the booth could lend out guidebooks, backpacks, etc.

Price: Medium

Resources

- <https://breweriesinpa.com/trails-on-tap-a-pop-up-traveling-beer-garden-comes-to-schuylkill-river-trail/>



TEMPORARY WAYFINDING SIGNS

Description: Increased amounts of wayfinding signs throughout the region would be beneficial for trail users and residents. Ideally, these would be located at a planned visitor center and may be beneficial to install in advance of construction. However, for communities that do not have a visitor's center, these should be installed at trailheads and throughout the city to assist trail users. Canvas-like temporary wayfinding would allow the city to test locations for additional permanent signage. Temporary wayfinding signs would also be beneficial during festivals to direct trail users to events.

Price: Low

Resources

- <https://guidestudio.com/wayfinding/>
- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>



“MAKE YOUR MARK” SPACES

Description: Art and volunteer activities are great ways for residents to engage with their community and build community spirit. Trail users can “make their mark” by tying yarn or fabric on bridges or a painted rock garden. Community members can also collaborate with local artists to paint murals in the park, collect bottles to recycle into park benches, or even take home DIY projects from the visitor center and then bring back the project to be displayed.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <https://www.decorhomeideas.com/diy-painted-rock-flowers-garden/>
- <https://modpodgerocksblog.com/10-painted-rocks/>
- <https://www.balconydecoration.com/an-amazing-street-art-as-tree-yarn-bombing/>
- <https://www.emmaleith.co.uk/tutorials-power/2016/4/19/ten-tips-for-a-successful-yarnbomb>



TRAILHEAD FARMERS MARKET

Description: A farmer's market that occurs regularly can provide economic benefit to the city of Sunbury and will also allow residents and visitors to become familiar with the trail. Locating the market near a trailhead and having the event regularly would give residents and trail users a reason to utilize the trail often.

Price: Medium

Potential Locations

- Trailhead



BIKE FIX-IT STATION UPGRADES

Description: A few of the communities participating in this effort have already implemented bike fix-it stations. Incorporating fix-it signage with instructions on how to fix certain issues - and guiding users on how to fix their bikes - could allow cyclists to better use the fix-it stations. The signage could also include links to YouTube videos or other resources. This would be helpful for quick fixes that trail users can do themselves, until they can get to a location with a bike shop if they need further repairs. Additionally, implementing a program where local bike shops offer periodic training on how to fix a bike at trailheads could improve knowledge of trail users.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <https://www.bikeride.com/guide/>
- <https://www.thecrucible.org/guides/bike-maintenance/repair-a-bike/>
- <https://greatist.com/fitness/lifting-heavier-vs-more-reps#high-reps-combined-with-high-weight>

Potential Locations

- Trailheads



TRAIL WELCOME CENTER

Description: A trail welcome center allows space for trail and park visitors to learn about the trail in a structured environment. With an interactive learning and engagement board, visitors have a chance to access information about the trail and make suggestions about park resources. This recommendation is most appropriate for larger towns with an opportunity to partner with a local business to house the welcome center. For smaller towns a more elaborate kiosk at trailheads should be sufficient.

Price: Medium to High

Resources

- <https://www.nps.gov/cuva/boston-mill-visitor-center.htm>
- <https://www.crescochamber.com/welcome-center.html>
- <https://www.virginia.org/listing/virginia-creeper-trail-welcome-center/15748/>

Potential Locations

- Trailheads

TRAIL AND PARK STAFF TOURS

Description: Hospitality and interactions with trail users can be improved if trail and park staff are familiar with the parks and trails within their network. Scheduling tours for staff throughout the year can improve the trails and parks, due to staff being more familiar with the aspects their trail and park networks.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/partnerships-for-better-trails>

WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA

Description: Creating a website or social media group, such as a facebook group, provides an easy, quick, and accessible medium for people to give input, receive information, ask questions, and get involved. Websites and social media pages may contain informations such as real-time trail conditions, contact information, trail resources, lodging, activities and events, local businesses, and any other town and trail specific information. Websites will need to be updated regularly, so careful consideration to information that can reasonably be collected and regularly updated is imperative. Regularly sharing updates with All Trails is an alternative to creating a new website or social media page.

This recommendation may be more impactful if it is overseen by the entity managing the Trail Town Effort. However, individual communities may find value in starting with their own effort.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/ohio/heart-of-ohio-trail--2>

Partners

- AllTrails

TEMPORARY WATER FOUNTAINS

Description: Having numerous locations along a trail or near the trail to be able to refill your water bottle is important to trail users. Temporary, portable water fountains, located near trailheads can be beneficial for residents and visitors who do not have time to go into town to refill their water bottles or just want a quick water break.

Price: High

Resources

- <https://drinkflowater.com/>
- <https://quenchbuggy.com/>

Potential Locations

- Trailheads

FESTIVAL AND TRAIL PARTNERSHIPS

Description: Throughout the year, numerous festivals occur in communities along trails. Utilizing the trail for an event that is part of a larger festival could educate visitors and residents about the trail. For example, the Oldtime Festival is an annual festival in Centerburg. Hosting a race, a hayride, or farm themed events near trailheads or on the trail could provide economic benefits for both the trail and the festival.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <https://vacationraces.com/trailfest/grand-circle-trailfest/>

Potential Locations

- Trail Towns
- Trailheads

GEAR SWAP

Description: Hosting gear swap events for hikers, cyclists, and runners could provide greater access to those who need new or upgraded gear. Additionally, gear swaps can be a way to fundraise for other programs or projects.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <https://nw-trail.org/trail-sisters-gear-swap-and-ride-recap/>
- <https://www.fallsareasingletrack.org/news/bike-and-outdoor-gear-swap-organized-to-help-fund-trail-building>

Potential Locations

- Trailheads
- Welcome/Visitor Centers

LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are community specific, but may apply more broadly to other communities as well.

MOUNT VERNON RECOMMENDATIONS

BIKE LANE

Description: A protected bike lane could improve the connection between the trail and downtown. To add a placemaking component, the barrier between the road and bike lane could include images or art related to dogs. This would continue the dog theme from the South Main Plaza water fountain. According to the report, there "is an existing on-street bikeway along Howard and Plum Alley; however, this route may also be a barrier to bicyclists due to higher speeds and volumes along South Gay Street." A protected on-street bike lane would improve connectivity to the trail and provide opportunities to add wayfinding directing riders towards the trail.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/working/engineering/roadway/manuals-standards/multimodal>
- <https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=78498>

Potential Locations

- On Gay Street from Howard Street to East Chestnut Street
- Along the Public Square Traffic Circle



PARTNERSHIP WITH PARKS

Description: A partnership with the parks throughout Mount Vernon could draw more visitors to both the trail and parks. For example, Ariel Foundation Park is already a huge draw for residents. Encouraging visitors to travel via the trail to the concert series or other events at the park could increase usage along the trail and within the park.

Price: Low

Potential Park Partnerships

- Ariel Foundation Park
- Memorial Park
- Phillips Park



PILOT BIKE SHARE

Description: A rental bike or bike share program could be beneficial for those who do not own a bike or are visiting the city. A program like this could make the trail and cycling more attractive to residents and visitors. There is an opportunity to make this a partnership with the city and the existing bike rental program offered by Y-Not Cycling and Fitness Collaboration by advertising the program near trailheads.

Price: Medium to High

Resources

- <https://www.we-cycle.org/ebike/>
- <https://www.ynotcycling.com/buyers-guides/bike-rental-pg74.htm>

Potential Locations

- Y-Not Cycling and Fitness Collaboration
- Memorial Park
- Ariel Foundation Park



PARKLETS

Description: Parklets provide outdoor seating areas for restaurants and shops, typically located within curbside parking spaces. Adding parklets within downtown Mount Vernon would be beneficial to local shops and restaurants, while also encouraging active transportation and enjoyment of the outdoors. The bridge along South Main Street was identified as a barrier for on-road bicyclists, adding the parklet near this location can help reduce higher speeds in the area.

Price: Medium to High

Resources

- <https://parkade.com/parklet-guide-and-how-to-build-a-parklet>
- <https://bgindependentmedia.org/first-parklet-locations-selected-for-downtown-bg/>

Potential Locations

- Stein Brewing Company
- South Main Street Plaza
- Dave Cosmic Subs
- Happy Bean Coffee Shop
- Paragraphs Bookstore



BIKE RACKS

Description: An increase in bike racks throughout the city, especially in downtown Mount Vernon, would improve user experience. For example, installing dog-themed bike racks that match the Fountain of Dogs in Downtown Mount Vernon is a great way to build community pride while also creating photo opportunities.

Price: Medium to High

Resources

- https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/funding/funding_opportunities.cfm
- <https://www.madrax.com>
- https://www.uline.com/Grp_627/Bike-Racks

Potential Locations

- Y-Not Cycling and Fitness Collaboration
- Memorial Park
- Ariel Foundation Park



MAP 3. MOUNT VERNON SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION MAP



CENTERBURG RECOMMENDATIONS

PILOT BIKE FACILITIES

Description: Part One of this report identified that there are “no defined bicycle routes beyond the trail”. A pilot bike infrastructure implementation project that lasts a few days, also known as a demonstration project, could help connect residents to the trail, and help visitors navigate the city. The demonstration project could occur during summer when there are a high number of trail users, and consist of pop-up or temporary bike lanes and bike boulevards. A potential location for the demonstration project is along North Hartford Avenue and East Main Street to bring people into the business district. The image to the right shows a recent one-day pilot project with two-way separated bike lanes in California.

Price: High

Resources

- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>

Potential Locations

- North Harford Avenue
- North Clayton Road
- West Main Street



BIKE RACKS

Description: According to Part One of this report, there are a limited number of bike racks along Main Street. Bike racks would help accommodate cyclists using the trails and would invite trail users further into town, as there would be a safe place to lock bikes.

Price: Low to Medium

Resources

- <https://www.madrax.com/bike-parking-guide>
- <https://www.dero.com/bike-parking-guide/>

Potential Locations

- Main Street
- Memorial Park



PARKLET/PEDESTRIAN PLAZA

Description: Implementing a parklet or pedestrian plaza at the Parking Lot of Kolacheez Coffee Bar & Pizzaburg trailheads could be beneficial for trail users and increase economic activity. A parklet or pedestrian plaza could give space back to the community to come and enjoy local restaurants outside by the trailhead.

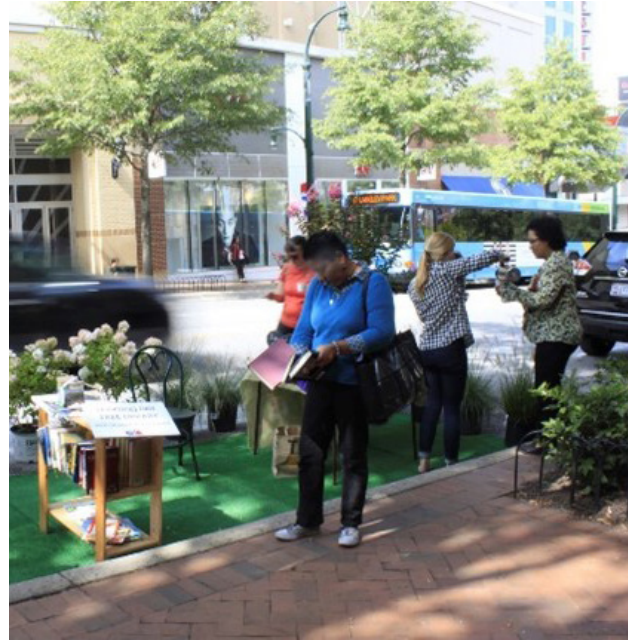
Price: High

Resources

- <https://parkade.com/parklet-guide-and-how-to-build-a-parklet>
- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- <https://bgindependentmedia.org/first-parklet-locations-selected-for-downtown-bg/>

Potential Locations

- Pizzaburg/Kolacheez Coffee Bar



OUTDOOR MUSIC

Description: Centerburg's most listed point of interest was "festival". Adding a monthly mini-concert or show at the trailhead would be a great way to engage the community. The addition of a public piano could also be a musical component to introduce to the community. Recurring mini-concerts or shows would bring visitors and residents to the trail and spur economic activity. Alternatively, tie into existing events like the Oldtime Farming Festival and Heart of Ohio USA festival, both located adjacent to the trail in Centerburg.

Price: Medium

Resources

- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- <https://pianos.pub/>
- <https://www.playmeagainpianos.org/why-public-pianos#:~:text=A%20public%20piano%20changes%20the,to%20talk%20%2D%2D%20to%20STRANGERS.>

Potential Locations

- Trailhead: Midway Station Welcome Center
- Memorial Park



TRAILHEAD FARMERS MARKET

Description: “Good food” is one of the top responses for points of interest in Centerburg. Adding a monthly farmer’s market located near the trailhead could attract more residents and trail users and spur economic vitality. Recurring farmer’s markets would also give residents and trail users a recurring reason to utilize the trail. There have been a few farmer’s markets at Animal Station, which is located to the south of the Midway Station Welcome Center trailhead, however the farmer’s markets have not been a regular event.

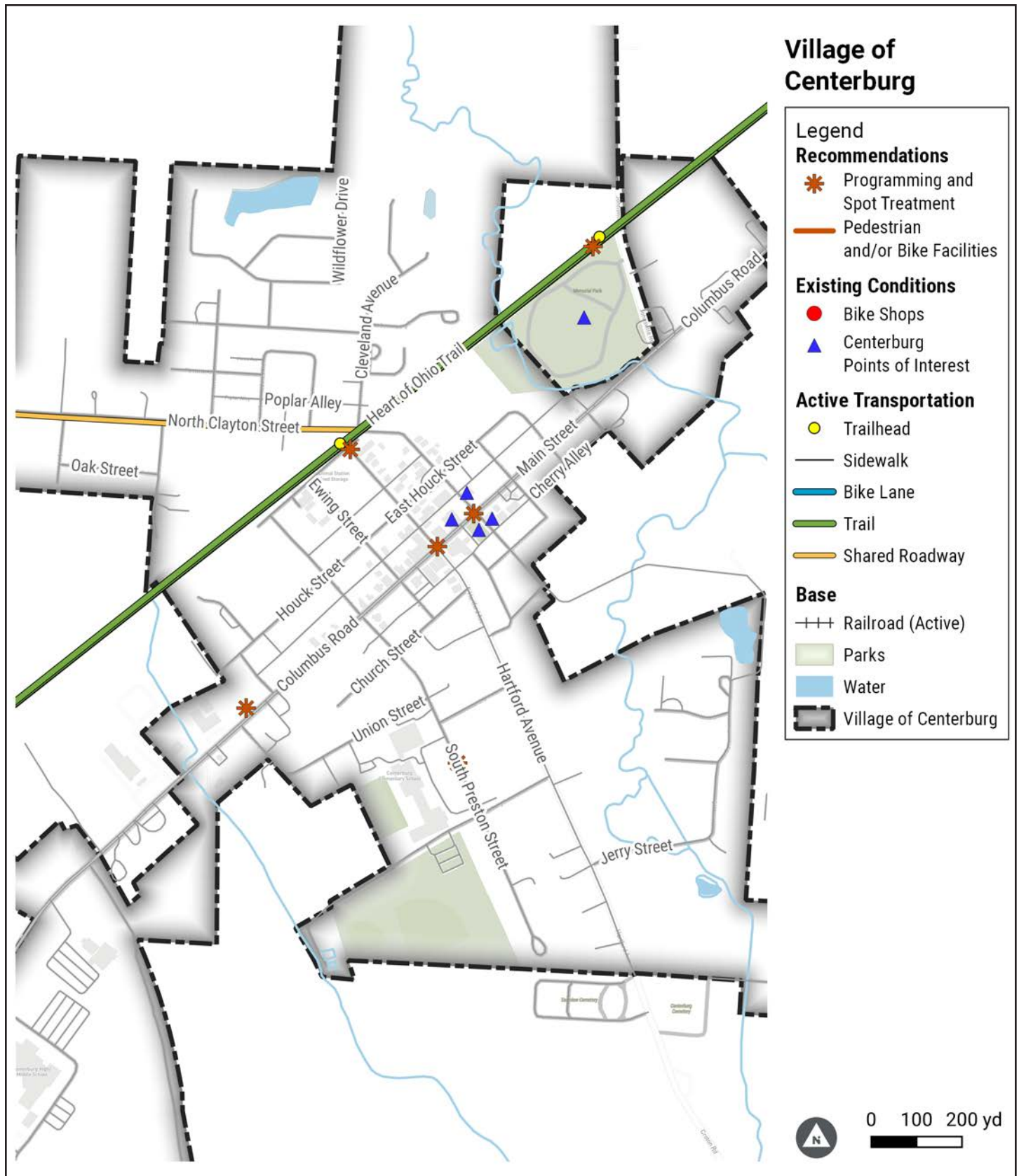
Price: Medium

Potential Locations

- Trailhead: Midway Station Welcome Center
- Memorial Park
- Main Street



MAP 4. CENTERBURG SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION MAP



SUNBURY RECOMMENDATIONS

PARKLET/PEDESTRIAN PLAZA

Description: A parklet or pedestrian plaza at the Sandel Legacy Trailhead would benefit the entire community and visitors traveling along the Trail. The Sandel Legacy Trailhead has a parking lot with ample parking where the plaza could be implemented. Additionally, the trailhead near the community’s middle school and a large employment center provides easy access for residents and workers. Parklets could be implemented within downtown Sunbury as well.

Price: High

Resources

- <https://parkade.com/parklet-guide-and-how-to-build-a-parklet>
- <https://bgindependentmedia.org/first-parklet-locations-selected-for-downtown-bg/>

Potential Locations

- South Vernon St: Yum-Ee Donuts, Wah Yuen, Firehouse Tavern
- East Cherry Street: SURVE, Sunbury Grill
- Shopping Plaza: At W. Cherry Street and N. State Street



BIKE RACKS

Description: The addition of bike racks to downtown could make Sunbury more welcoming to bicyclists and trail users. The city has a possible historical account of Johnny Appleseed visiting the town. Apple-shaped bike racks could pay homage to the city’s proud history and provide as a fun photo opportunity which could engage and draw more people to the trail.

Price: Medium

Resources

- <https://www.madrax.com/bike-parking-guide>
- <https://www.dero.com/bike-parking-guide/>

Potential Locations

- Sunbury Town Hall
- Sunbury Memorial Park
- West Cherry Street
- North State Street



PILOT PEDESTRIAN AND BIKE FACILITIES

Description: Part One of this report identified that, “there are key gaps on several streets including South Columbus Street and East Granville Street (State Route 37)”. Implementing a mix of pilot bike lanes and bike boulevards could help bicyclists travel through the city easier and better connect the trail to Sunbury. Furthermore, researching where shared use paths could be implemented, so both pedestrians and cyclists are able to easily access the trail would be the most beneficial. This research has been conducted as part of MORPC’s Sunbury technical assistance project 2022.

Price: High

Resources

- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/working/engineering/roadway/manuals-standards/multimodal>
- <https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=78498>

Potential Locations

- North State Street
- State Route 61



LITTLE FREE LIBRARY POST

Description: The Sandel Legacy Trailhead is located near the community’s middle school, making it an ideal location for a little free library location. To go along with the apple-theme, an apple shaped little library could be installed.

Price: Low

Resources

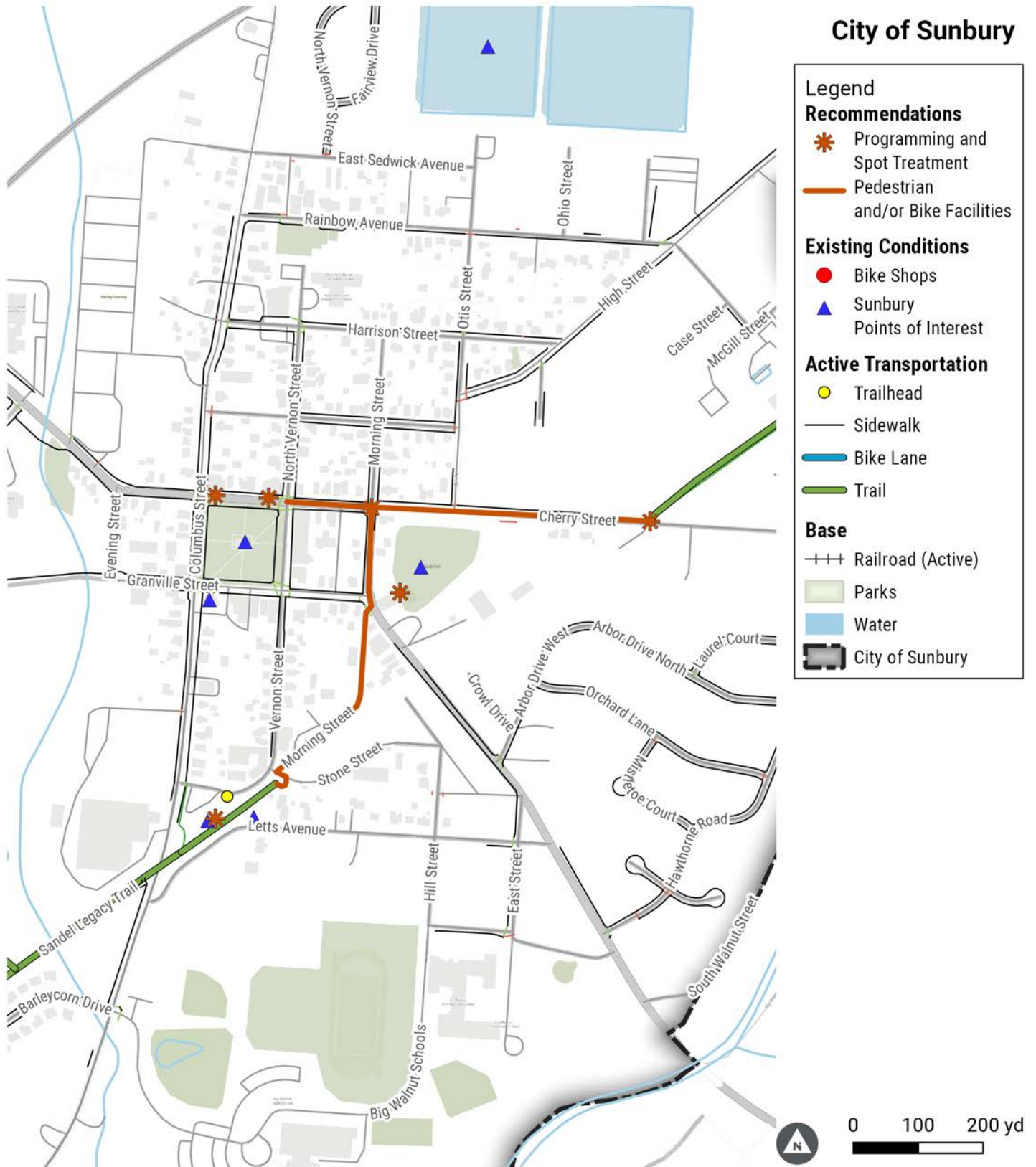
- <https://littlefreelibrary.org/>
- <https://littlefreelibrary.org/start/>
- <https://littlefreelibrary.org/build/>

Potential Locations

- Trailhead: Sandel Legacy Trail



MAP 5. SUNBURY SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION MAP



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LONDON RECOMMENDATIONS

STUDENT WELDED BIKE RACKS

Description: Part One of this report identified that London has few bicycle facilities besides signed connector routes and a few noticeable bike racks in the downtown area. Bike racks could be constructed by the student welding class that constructed the “LONDON” sculpture. Bike racks invite trail users to stop in town, spending time and money. And bike racks built by local students would add to the sense of community pride.

Price: Low to Medium

Potential Locations

- South Main Street: London Coffee Peddler, London State Theater, Huntington Bank, London Nutrition,
- High Street: Vallery Farmhouse Bakery, Terry Family Ice Cream Shoppe
- Lafayette Street
- Cowling Park
- M&M Diner



HISTORICAL PLAQUE

Description: One of the most frequently mentioned points of interest for London was “historical museum”. Cater to residents’ interest in history by installing plaques to memorialize local historical events along the trail. Celebrating local history is a way to draw visitors into the community as well, promoting tourism and local spending.

Price: High

Resources

- <https://www.ohiohistory.org/preserving-ohio/history-preservation-where-you-live/ohio-historical-marker/>
- https://remarkableohio.org/themes/markers/images/Ohio_Historical_Marker_HANDBOOK_2020.pdf

Potential Locations

- Areas with cultural or historical significance



SHARED USE PATHS

Description: Shared use paths along the bike route could prove beneficial to walkers, cyclists, and any other users. Shared use paths could allow more users to feel comfortable accessing different parts of the trail rather than sharing the road with cars.

Price: High

Resources

- <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/working/engineering/roadway/manuals-standards/multimodal/05/05>

Potential Locations

- Along signed bike route



PILOT BIKE FACILITIES

Description: Part One of this report identified two on-road signed bike routes. Piloting on-street bike facilities along these routes, such as temporary or pop-up bike boulevards and/or bike lanes, that create a more comfortable space for cyclists could help the city understand which roads should receive the most utilization in the future for bike infrastructure.

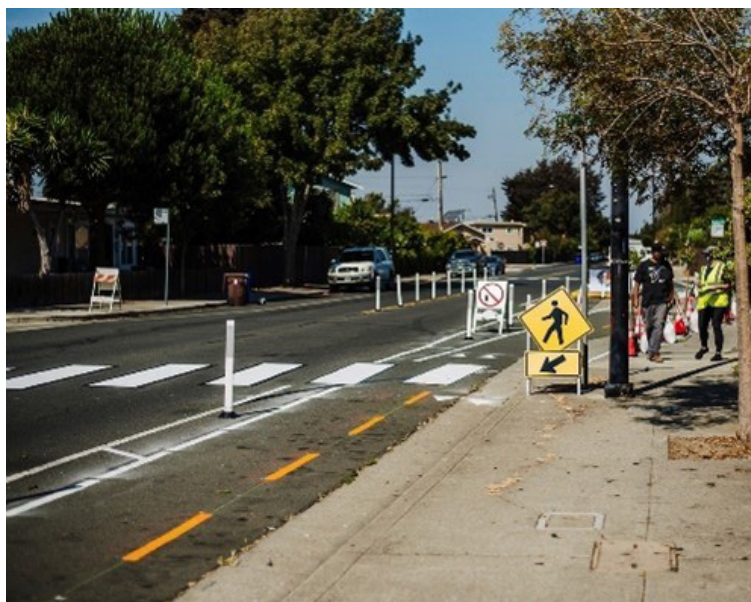
Price: High

Resources

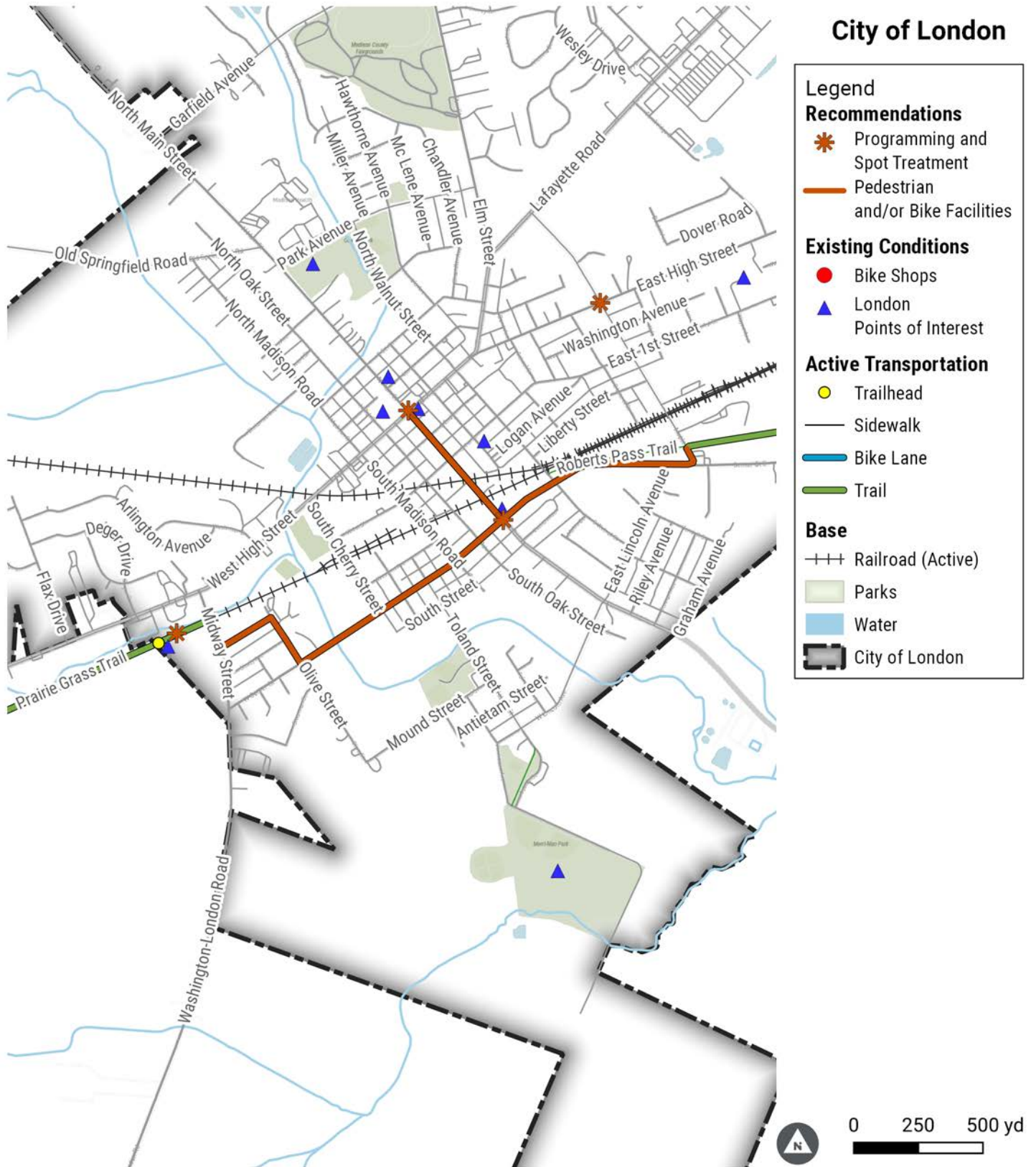
- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/working/engineering/roadway/manuals-standards/multimodal>
- <https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=78498>

Potential Locations

- Midway Street
- West High Street
- South Main Street
- East 1st Street
- South Walnut Street
- Richardson Avenue
- Olive Street
- West Center Street



MAP 6. LONDON SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION MAP



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A photograph of a steam locomotive and a passenger train on tracks. The locomotive is on the left, and the passenger train is on the right. The tracks are on a gravel bed. In the background, there is a paved path, trees, and a blue sky with white clouds. A person is walking on the path. The text "APPENDIX A: SAMPLE COMMUNITY CHECKLIST AND APPLICATION" is overlaid on the image in green, bold, sans-serif font.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE COMMUNITY CHECKLIST AND APPLICATION

Sample Trail Town Application and Checklist

This sample trail town application and community checklist is intended to provide an example for the program staff in developing a document specific to Central Ohio Trail Towns.

Eligible Communities:

- ✓ Should be able to accommodate trail users with business services
- ✓ Should be located within two miles of a Central Ohio Trail of Regional Significance and be committed to active transportation infrastructure that allows people to safely walk and bike between the trail and community
- ✓ Must declare the municipality's commitment to Trail Town designation by passing a related resolution (see Resolution document)
- ✓ Will have to maintain their trail town designation from year to year

Community Name _____ **Trail Name** _____

What is the distance between the trail and downtown area? _____

Applicant Organization _____ **Nonprofit?** Yes _____ No _____

If no, what partner organization can accept loans and funding for Trail Town projects?

Primary Contact (can be a volunteer or professional staff member)

Name _____

Title/Organization _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Partnering Organizations (List all involved organizations)

What does your community hope to gain from the Central Ohio Trail Town Program?

(Check all that apply.)

- Being part of a larger network
- Tangible community improvement ideas and opportunities
- Improved active transportation infrastructure allowing safe pedestrian/bicycle access throughout the community
- Increased recognition and visibility
- Increased tourism and economic health
- Partnerships with other communities and organizations
- Improved pride in place and sense of connection to regional trails
- Other _____

What can a Trail Town designation do for your community? How can your community help elevate tourism and active transportation infrastructure in Central Ohio?

Has your municipal leadership passed the provided council resolution stating that it supports this Trail Town designation request and will actively support and partner with the Trail Town Action Committee?

(Required for designation; sample resolution supplied.)

YES **NO**

Can you meet the following program requirements?

ELIGIBILITY

1. Is the community located within two miles of a Central Ohio Trail of Regional Significance?
2. Can the community accommodate trail users with at least some related business services (such as food, lodging, and bike repair)?
3. Will the local council or township trustees vote on a resolution indicating its intent to seek and maintain trail town designation through the Central Ohio Trail Towns program?

PREPARATION/APPLICATION PHASE

1. Can the community, either the municipality or other organization(s), provide annual financial support to offset program costs in the amount of \$_____?
 - a. Is your community in need of financial assistance related to this financial contribution?
2. Is there a volunteer committee or task force with at least five individuals and two people co-leading the group? (The committee should include people from a cross-section of the community: business representatives, a municipal employee, residents, education, healthcare, etc.)
 - a. Please list the committee members and indicate the co-leads:
3. Has the local council or township trustees passed the resolution referenced above?
4. Has the local council or township trustees reviewed and endorsed this application?
5. Does the community affirm its commitment to installing and maintaining trail amenities such as parking, restrooms, wayfinding, and public art?
6. Does the community have a recommended route for pedestrians and cyclists to safely travel from the trail to community amenities and businesses?

Please describe the recommended route(s) between the trail and community amenities and businesses. Explain whether the route already exists and what infrastructure (such as bike lanes, share the road signs, bike route signs, and sidewalks) is in place. If a safe route is not already in place, what safety and connectivity improvements would you like to implement?

POST-DESIGNATION/PROGRAM PHASE

7. Are committee members willing to sign a volunteer agreement and hold each other accountable to follow through?
8. Can the committee appoint a member to participate in regularly held regional trail town meetings intended to encourage cooperation and information sharing between communities? The committee should also appoint an alternate. These individuals do not need to be the co-leads.
 - a. Please list the main point of contact and the alternate for the regional committee:
9. Will the community be able to co-host a ribbon cutting or some other celebration upon designation?
10. Does the committee agree to complete and/or review the Available Services Matrix (provided) and use it to inform conversations about needed trail user services?
11. Is the committee and community at large willing to look for ways to integrate the trail into local culture through events, programs, and other means to increase the likelihood that local residents will use and benefit from the trail?
12. Does the community agree to include language for the protection of its trail and connecting infrastructure when updating land use plans, municipal master plans, and local ordinances?

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APPENDIX B: SAMPLE COMMUNITY RESOLUTION



Sample Community Resolution

Whereas, Central Ohio Greenways (COG) is a trail network of national significance spanning 230+ miles, connecting Central Ohio to other parts of the state and country;

Whereas, these trails are traveled more than 12 million miles annually and provide economic, quality of life, and health benefits to the community;

Whereas, Central Ohio is expected to be a region of three million people by 2050, bringing an increased demand for more walkable neighborhoods and transportation options, and trails have become a critical element for providing a high quality of life to a diverse population;

Whereas, _____ (name of community) is in close proximity to a Central Ohio Trail of Regional Significance, namely the _____ (name of trail);

Whereas, “trail town” and “trail community” programs have successfully impacted communities along other long-distance multi-use trail systems such as the Appalachian Trail, Great Allegheny Passage, C&O Canal Towpath, and the North Country National Scenic Trail;

Whereas, regional trail and community advocates recognize the value of intentionally connecting the waterway to adjacent communities and other points of interest;

Whereas, the community of _____ is an ideal destination for trail users and is committed to fostering a culture of trails and hospitality;

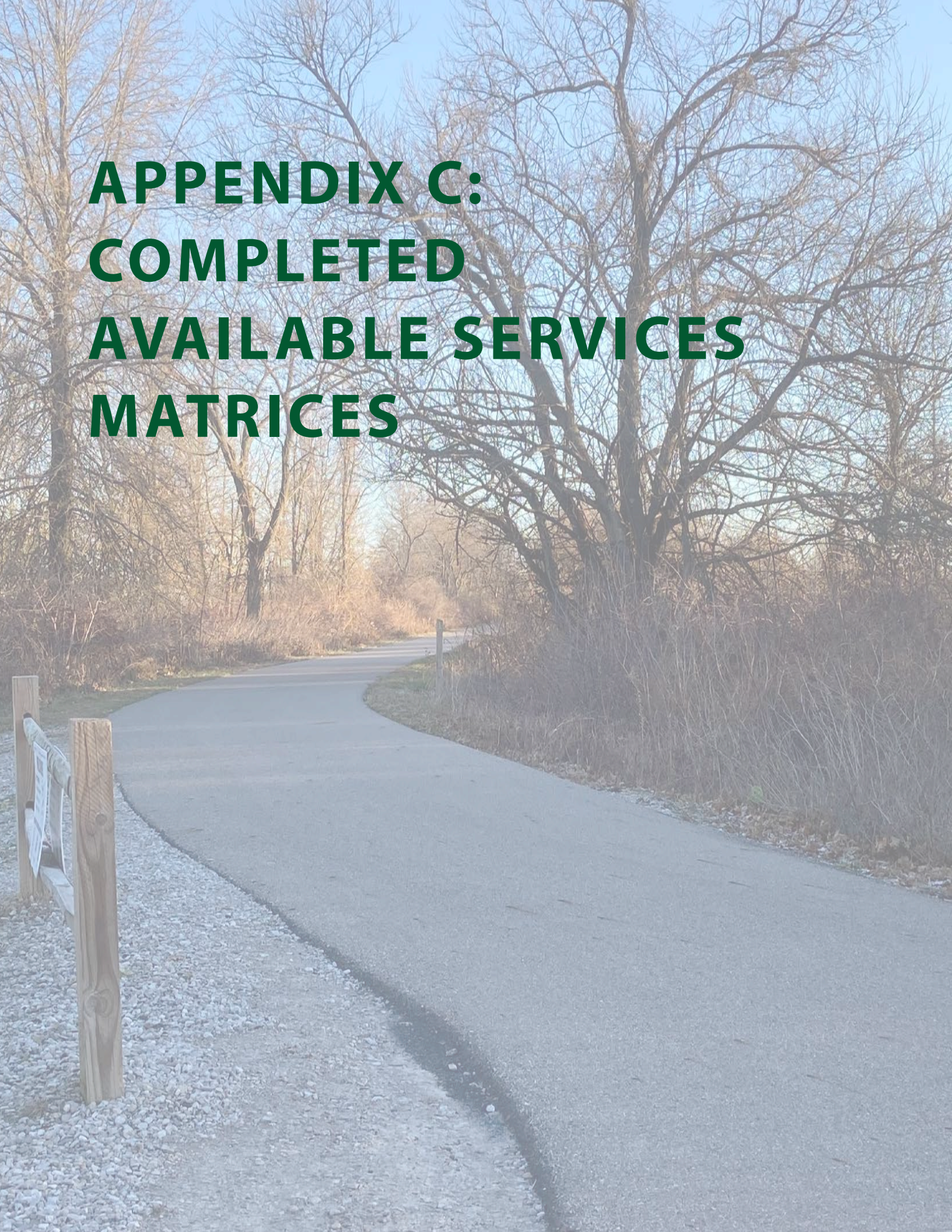
Whereas, area communities stand to benefit by embracing the TSW as an asset to be protected and celebrated;

Whereas, both the regional environment and local business communities expect to benefit from increased trail use and visitation;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that, if accepted, the [CITY/MUNICIPALITY OF] _____, acting by its council/trustees intends to participate in the Central Ohio Trail Town Program; work collaboratively to support the vision of a program that connects local communities; fosters a culture of hospitality and which celebrates trails as necessary assets; and encourage local residential and business communities to use and connect to trails; and warmly welcome trail visitors.

Adopted the _____ day of _____ in the year 20XX.

Attest: _____

A paved path curves through a wooded area with bare trees and a wooden fence in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

**APPENDIX C:
COMPLETED
AVAILABLE SERVICES
MATRICES**

As part of the Trail Town Framework planning process, project steering committee members shared their understanding of available services in the four sponsoring communities. The following matrices reflect what was learned from the committee members. The intent of the matrix is to help communities to consider what services may be needed in their communities, not to “check all the boxes” or draw comparisons between communities. It is possible that services vary from what is reflected here and that the availability of services has changed since the committee was queried in May 2022.

CENTERBURG AVAILABLE SERVICES (5 TOTAL RESPONSES)

Available Services	Widely Available	Available	Limited Availability	Not Available
Traditional indoor lodging (hotel, B&B, etc.)				✓
Private rentals (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.)			✓	
Camping				✓
Bike rental (or bike share)				✓
Bike shop/repair				✓
Other businesses offering basic bike repair tools and parts			✓	
Bike repair stations (self-serve, free)		✓		
Outfitter				✓
Restaurants		✓		
Coffee shop		✓		
Bakery		✓		
Bar/craft brewery			✓	
Grocery store		✓		
Farmers market		✓		
Pharmacy/medical facility		✓		
Library/computer/internet		✓		
Visitor or welcome center				✓
Post office		✓		
Public restroom				✓
ATMs	✓			
Laundry				✓
Shuttle services				✓
Public transportation				✓
Taxi or car rental				✓
Active ride share community (Lyft, Uber)				✓
Trail souvenirs		✓		
Trail directional signage			✓	
Trail information kiosk		✓		
Bike racks		✓		
Trailhead parking		✓		

LONDON AVAILABLE SERVICES (2 TOTAL RESPONSES)

Available Services	Widely Available	Available	Limited Availability	Not Available
Traditional indoor lodging (hotel, B&B, etc.)			✓	
Private rentals (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.)			✓	
Camping		✓		
Bike rental (or bike share)				✓
Bike shop/repair				✓
Other businesses offering basic bike repair tools and parts			✓	
Bike repair stations (self-serve, free)		✓		
Outfitter				✓
Restaurants		✓		
Coffee shop		✓		
Bakery		✓		
Bar/craft brewery			✓	
Grocery store	✓			
Farmers market		✓		
Pharmacy/medical facility		✓		
Library/computer/internet		✓		
Visitor or welcome center				✓
Post office		✓		
Public restroom	✓			
ATMs	✓			
Laundry			✓	
Shuttle services			✓	
Public transportation				✓
Taxi or car rental				✓
Active ride share community (Lyft, Uber)			✓	
Trail souvenirs				✓
Trail directional signage		✓		
Trail information kiosk		✓		
Bike racks		✓		
Trailhead parking		✓		

MOUNT VERNON AVAILABLE SERVICES (8 TOTAL RESPONSES)

Available Services	Widely Available	Available	Limited Availability	Not Available
Traditional indoor lodging (hotel, B&B, etc.)	✓			
Private rentals (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.)		✓		
Camping			✓	
Bike rental (or bike share)				
Bike shop/repair		✓		
Other businesses offering basic bike repair tools and parts		✓		
Bike repair stations (self-serve, free)		✓		
Outfitter				?
Restaurants	✓			
Coffee shop		✓		
Bakery		✓		
Bar/craft brewery		✓		
Grocery store		✓		
Farmers market		✓		
Pharmacy/medical facility		✓		
Library/computer/internet		✓		
Visitor or welcome center		✓		
Post office		✓		
Public restroom		✓		
ATMs	✓			
Laundry		✓		
Shuttle services			✓	
Public transportation		✓		
Taxi or car rental			?	
Active ride share community (Lyft, Uber)			✓	
Trail souvenirs			?	
Trail directional signage		✓		
Trail information kiosk		✓		
Bike racks			✓	
Trailhead parking		✓		

SUNBURY AVAILABLE SERVICES (6 TOTAL RESPONSES)

Available Services	Widely Available	Available	Limited Availability	Not Available
Traditional indoor lodging (hotel, B&B, etc.)				✓
Private rentals (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.)			✓	
Camping				✓
Bike rental (or bike share)				✓
Bike shop/repair				✓
Other businesses offering basic bike repair tools and parts			✓	
Bike repair stations (self-serve, free)				✓
Outfitter				✓
Restaurants	✓			
Coffee shop				✓
Bakery		✓		
Bar/craft brewery		✓		
Grocery store		✓		
Farmers market		✓		
Pharmacy/medical facility		✓		
Library/computer/internet		✓		
Visitor or welcome center				✓
Post office		✓		
Public restroom			✓	
ATMs	✓			
Laundry		✓		
Shuttle services				✓
Public transportation			✓	
Taxi or car rental				✓
Active ride share community (Lyft, Uber)			✓	
Trail souvenirs				✓
Trail directional signage			✓	
Trail information kiosk				✓
Bike racks			✓	
Trailhead parking		✓		

1

Ohio to Erie & Little Miami Trail

Milford - Welcome 
    .3 mi

Miamiville 
  3.2 mi

Loveland 
    8.7 mi

Trail controlled and maintained by ODNR
Division of Parks and Recreation

