

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL TOWN HANDBOOK



2024



*A guide for Canalway Trail communities to become certified
Empire State Trail Towns*



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Empire State Trail Town Program

An Empire State Trail Town is more than a destination with access to trail-based services, amenities, and facilities. It's a community that recognizes the value of the trail and has committed its time and resources to foster a "trail culture" and make the associated improvements in process, policy, and physical infrastructure.

Recognition as a "Trail Town" signifies a community-wide commitment to the surrounding trail network. The Empire State Trail Town program, managed by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) with support from the New York State Canal Corporation and New York Power Authority, will offer technical assistance to select communities along the Empire State Trail that offer high-quality trail-based services and amenities and demonstrate a commitment to policies and programs geared towards cyclists and pedestrians. The support and resources provided by PTNY will help each community meet key goals and educate community leaders, residents, and others on the benefits of embracing the trail as a driver of economic growth and community building. Please note that this is not a grant program, but rather an opportunity to grow capacity, make cultural changes, and identify priorities for future funding opportunities.

Background

Trail-based tourism can be an economic driver and foundation for community-building in municipalities along the Empire State Trail. Across the country, programs have been developed to demonstrate the valuable relationship between a community and a neighboring long-distance trail. The Empire State Trail Town program builds on the successes of these various programs, pulling in different aspects from each that fit the unique context of the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails.

The Erie Canalway Trail receives more than [3 million visits each year](#), including everyone from locals out for jog to visitors from out of state who are there to travel the 360-mile trail from Buffalo to Albany and beyond. Trail users stop in trailside communities along the way to refuel and rest up, boosting spending at local businesses in the process. Each of these visitors sees the trail and the communities along it as a destination and wants to know what makes each community unique, whether that's by spending the night in a historic bed & breakfast or fueling up on donuts at the local bakery. According to a [2014 study of the economic impact of the Erie Canalway Trail](#), non-local visitors who stay at least one night as part of their trip spend over \$1,100 per visit (over \$1,400 in 2023 dollars), spending that ends up having multiplier effects within the local economy.

The Empire State Trail Town program was created to help communities take full advantage of their location along the Erie Canalway Trail. Through participation in the Empire State Trail Town program, communities will set a consistent baseline of expectations for visitors, in terms of what services to expect and how to find them. Establishing this baseline and promoting the services and amenities available will help guarantee that trail users have a positive experience, boosting the Trail Towns' reputations as outdoor recreation destinations.

This program will also support local tourism by offering a platform to talk about the importance of creating a sense of place and safe places for both visitors and residents to recreate. Through the creation of a “trail culture,” communities will begin to see the trail as part of their community’s identity and see the success of the trail as a tourist attraction as part of their community’s success.

This guide outlines a step-by-step process for PTNY and participating trail town communities to help transform communities into places where a “trail culture” drives decision-making and future planning efforts.

Goals

Participation in this program will enable each community to think about achieving long-term goals as a result of its dedication to the program objectives. The following goals are intended to serve as long-term targets for trail towns:

- Make communities more trail-user friendly.
 1. Increase the frequency with which residents and visitors walk or bike both on and off the trail
- Help communities realize economic benefits of the Canalway Trail.
 1. Increase the number of Canalway Trail users who spend money either at retail businesses or at a bar or restaurant as part of their trip
 2. Increase the number of Canalway Trail users who choose the community for an overnight stay

Objectives

To reach these long-term goals, the Empire State Trail Town program uses specific targeted strategies to achieve the following objectives. While the strategies are organized under the primary objective they seek to achieve, many of the strategies will help to accomplish several of the objectives simultaneously.



NETWORK: Form a network of individuals (including representatives of the municipality, engaged residents, volunteers, and members of the business community) dedicated to the Trail Town vision

Strategies:

- a. Form a Trail Town steering committee and delegate roles
- b. Engage with the greater community and invite them to learn more about the Trail Town effort
- c. Certify qualifying tourism-oriented businesses as Bike Friendly New York
- d. Host or participate in a Canal Clean Sweep event in April and engage volunteer groups to adopt eligible sections of trail



RESEARCH: Conduct research and assessment to identify each Trail Town's strengths and areas for improvement, as well as understand current use of the trail

Strategies:

- a. Complete the Trail Town self-assessment (by the Trail Town steering committee)
- b. Participate in an in-person Placemaking Workshop and Bike Around assessment to evaluate the existing strengths and areas for improvement in relation to visiting trail users, to be hosted by each Trail Town and facilitated by Parks & Trails New York during the summer
- c. Collect trail use data using electronic counters



PROMOTION: Increase the visibility of the Trail Towns as destinations

Strategies:

- a. Identify and compile content including a community tagline, signature assets and events to be included on a Trail Town landing page on www.CycletheErieCanal.com
- b. Update municipal websites and community resources with information on the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail
- c. Host a celebratory welcome event for the 700+ riders that pass through each Trail Town as part of PTNY's Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour



ADVANCEMENT: Establish a plan and process to guide continued work toward Trail Town goals beyond the direct assistance provided by PTNY

Strategies:

- a. Develop and adopt a Trail Town action agenda, which will outline short and long-term priorities as well as a plan for implementation, to be prepared jointly between PTNY and the Trail Town steering committee
- b. Participate in Empire State Trail Town virtual events to share progress and network with other Trail Towns

Benefits of Becoming an Empire State Trail Town

Short-term Benefits of becoming an Empire State Trail Town

Technical Assistance	Promotion
Two-day, in-person workshop facilitated by PTNY to include a placemaking workshop and Bike Around assessment	A dedicated subpage on www.cycletheeriecanal.com , including recognition of bike friendly businesses and amenities on an interactive map
Installation of one Eco-Visio electronic trail counter on the community's trail during the tourism season and analysis and interpretation of collected trail use data by PTNY	Promotion via Erie Canalway Trail social media networks, Parks & Trails New York's newsletter, and traditional media
Training resources to help volunteers learn how to conduct outreach and certify Bike Friendly businesses	Special recognition on PTNY's Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour
Access to a network of other Trail Towns for sharing of successes and strategies for overcoming challenges	Window decals for participating Bike Friendly New York certified businesses
Preparation of a Trail Town Action Agenda by PTNY in collaboration with Trail Town committee	Access to the Empire State Trail Town logo and branding (<i>when available</i>)

Long-term Benefits of becoming an Empire State Trail Town

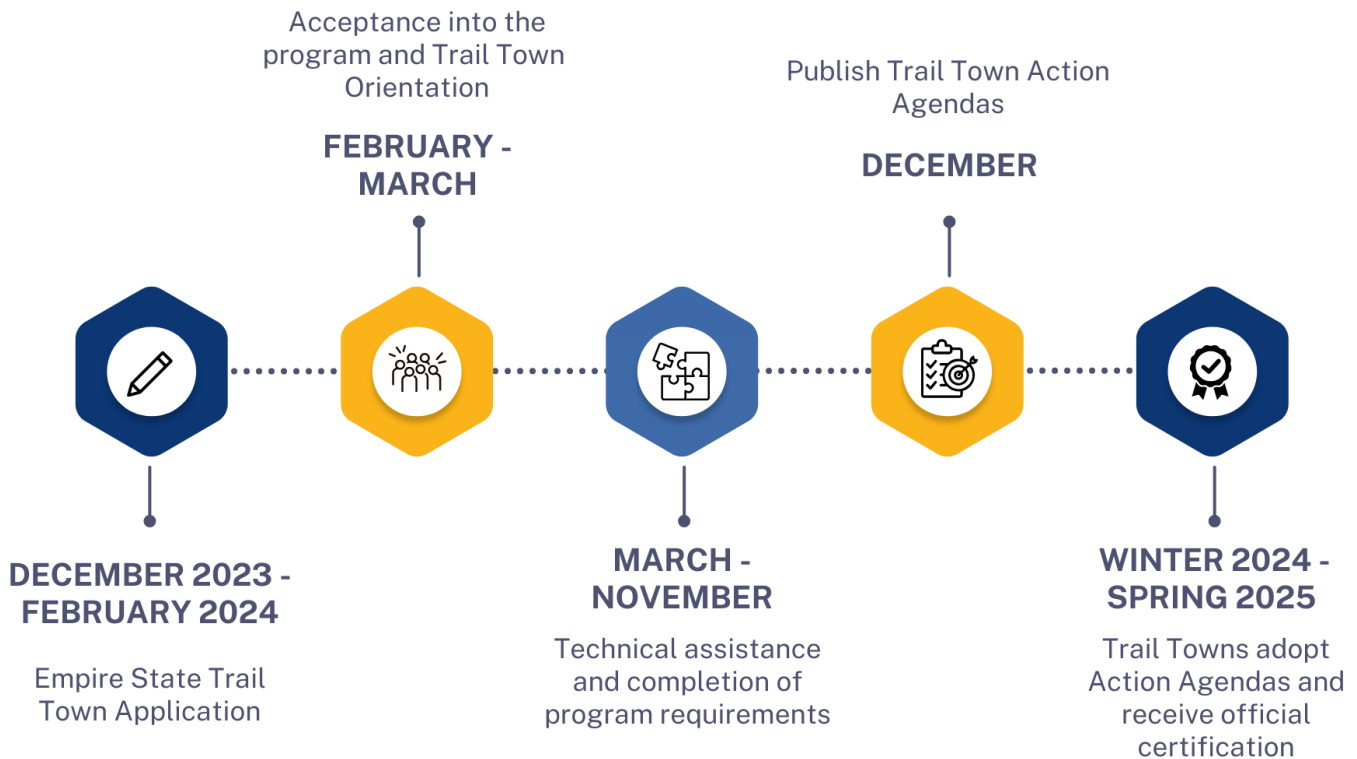
Increased visitation by trail users to the community and local businesses, boosting the local economy
Increased sense of place and cultural sustainability
More walkable, bikeable streets
Higher quality of life for residents and more desirable place to live

Applying to Become an Empire State Trail Town

Process Overview

The Empire State Trail Town program is an official designation available through a [competitive application](#) and certification process with guidance provided by Parks & Trails New York. In order to become certified, a community must be accepted to participate in a nine-month technical assistance program as a “provisional trail town.” The selected communities will work with PTNY to develop a network of groups and individuals committed to the Trail Town initiative, conduct research and assessment, develop promotional resources and strategies, and create and adopt an action agenda to guide future Trail Town work. The program is not intended to be onerous, so the program focuses on proven strategies that provide municipalities with the tools to embrace and benefit from their location along a long-distance trail.

Upon completion of the Trail Town program and adoption of the Trail Town Action Agenda, the participating communities will be publicly designated as official Empire State Trail Towns.



Application Requirements

Municipalities along the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails are invited to apply using a [web-based application](#) to become a provisional trail town. Applicants will be asked to meet the following criteria:

- Be located directly on or near the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail (preferably within three miles of a trail access point and connected via another trail or along low-traffic roads.)
- Offer publicly accessible restrooms and drinking water (can be a business whose restrooms are open to the public and/or that offers access to water to trail users/the public.)
- Offer at least one overnight accommodation that is welcoming to trail users (this can be a hotel, motel, bed & breakfast, or camping area.)
- Offer at least one place that trail users can get food and drink (this can be a grocery or convenience store or a restaurant that welcomes trail users.)
- Offer at least one outlet for information on the community (this can be a visitors/welcome center, chamber of commerce, library, or village hall, or a regularly updated trail-oriented bulletin board or kiosk.)
- Have at least one bike rack in the community's downtown or main business area for bicyclists to safely park their bikes.
- Demonstrate the support of a community partner (non-profit or other community organization) willing to commit time and resources into the trail and the Trail Town initiative. PTNY will require a letter of support demonstrating this commitment from the identified partner organization.¹

The application will also require prospective Trail Town communities to address the following:

- Why the community should be certified as an Empire State Trail Town, including what makes the community unique among trailside communities.
- Notable attractions in the community that serve as a draw for trail users.
- Notable festivals and events in the community that currently or could potentially be a draw for trail users or incorporate the trail in the event's execution.
- A list of any trail-friendly policies or ordinances in place or being pursued by the municipality, such as a complete streets ordinance, Vision Zero policy, or 25 mph municipality-wide speed limit.
- A list of relevant planning initiatives or projects underway in the community, especially work that integrates or supports the growth of a trail culture.
- An explanation of how a Trail Town effort in the community would incorporate historically underserved populations, such as low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, older adults and/or people with limited English proficiency.
- Proposed Trail Town steering committee, including potential committee members, along with their contact info (email preferred), the organization, if any, that each member represents, and a brief description of the committee's proposed structure.

¹ This can be a bicycle/pedestrian advocacy group, an environmental group, a Merchants Association, a community volunteer group like a Rotary or Lions club, etc.

Application Timeline

Friday, December 15, 2023	Application opens
Wednesday, January 10, 2024 @ 10am	Program overview webinar
Friday, February 2 @ 5pm	Application period closes
Late February	Trail Towns notified of selection
Wednesday, March 6 10am-12pm*	Trail Town Virtual Orientation
March 11-29	First Individual Steering Committee Meetings with PTNY
Sunday, March 31	Trail Town MOA due to PTNY

** SAVE THE DATE: Representatives from the application team MUST be able to attend the orientation, to be held via Zoom on Wednesday, March 6, 2024.*

PTNY will evaluate all submissions based on the Trail Town criteria, as well as the quality of the responses to the open-ended questions and the extent to which they indicate that the community is prepared to be an Empire State Trail Town. If fewer than three applications are received that have completely met the Trail Town criteria, PTNY will review and select those communities that offer the most promise for meeting the trail town criteria. Upon selection, each municipality will be required to agree to a Memorandum of Agreement to formalize participation in the program and expectations for the year.

Based upon the evaluation, PTNY reserves the right to invite any or all applicants for a virtual interview before making a final selection. Such an invitation does not commit PTNY to pay any costs incurred in participation in this interview and does not guarantee that the invited community will be selected as a provisional trail town.

2024 Empire State Trail Town Program

PTNY will provide direct assistance to three communities in 2024, guiding each through a series of strategies designed to create a sustainable process of advancing each Trail Town as a community with high quality of life for residents and services and amenities for visitors. Work will result in the establishment of baseline trail use data, a promotional Trail Town landing webpage, and an action agenda, to be adopted by the provisional trail towns at the end of the program. The action agenda will include an existing conditions analysis informed by the Trail Town self-assessment and participatory workshop and will identify both short and long-term priorities. The action agenda will conclude with an implementation strategy, developed by the Trail Town committee for accomplishing these priorities, enabling the community to pursue Trail Town goals in subsequent years.

Throughout the duration of the program, the selected communities will be considered “provisional Trail Towns,” although for the purposes of this handbook, they may be simply referred to as “Trail Towns.” Upon completion of the nine-month program and the adoption of the action agenda, the participating communities will then be certified as official Empire State Trail Towns. The following pages outline the main program elements and activities that will make up the rest of the year. They are organized essentially by timeline, but it should be noted that some efforts may overlap. See pages 15-18 for a chart of the program overview and timeline, including important dates to note.

Orientation (March)

Upon acceptance as a provisional Empire State Trail Town, communities will be required to attend the virtual Trail Town Orientation, facilitated by Parks & Trails New York. At minimum, one representative of the Trail Town’s municipality and one representative of the Trail Town’s supporting community organization is required to attend, however this is an opportunity to introduce anyone who may play a role in the effort to the Trail Town program. Trail Towns are encouraged to invite anyone they identified as potential members of the steering committee in their application, as well as members of the local business community, tourism council, or interested residents.

This two-hour workshop will introduce the accepted provisional Trail Towns to outdoor recreation tourism, outline what trail users are looking for, and demonstrate how the program will help Trail Towns become high-quality recreation destinations. The orientation will also provide a space for participating communities to network with the other Trail Towns. Representatives from previously designated Empire State Trail Towns, will give a brief overview of their Trail Town experience, and be on hand to answer questions that the new communities might have.

A portion of this session will be devoted to next steps, including developing the Trail Town steering committee and conducting the self-assessment. This section will include recommendations as to what types of groups could be represented in the steering committee, as well as ideas for how the committee could be structured.

The last segment will consist of breakout rooms for each community, in which the participants from each Trail Town will evaluate who is already represented and what additional stakeholders might add value to the steering committee. At the end of this orientation, participants should have a solid understanding of the responsibilities of each Trail Town and what steps should be taken to form the steering committee.

Steering Committee Formation (March)

After the orientation, Trail Towns will be responsible for conducting the necessary outreach identified during the orientation to form their steering committee. Potential groups to include in the steering committee are trail or recreation groups, business owners, chambers of commerce, merchant associations, community organizations, Main Street organizations, town council and officials, county government, and interested citizens/advocates. At this point, it is also wise to consider the roles that each committee member will take on. At minimum, there should be:

- **A primary contact** with PTNY (most likely the person that led the application submission)
- **A steering committee coordinator** (who may be the same person as the primary contact)
- **A business liaison.** This person will be responsible for coordinating with local businesses for Bike Friendly NY certification and lead-up to the Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour. Someone already involved with the business community through the Chamber of Commerce, BID, or a business owner themselves, may be a good fit.
- **A promotion and marketing liaison.** This person will be responsible for or help with communicating about the Trail Town effort and events to the general public and the media
- **Events liaison.** This person will be responsible for assisting with planning the logistics of in-person events, including the Placemaking and Bike Around Workshop and the Cycle the Erie Canal celebration

These positions may overlap, or they may end up being committees, but thinking about them early on will help set the committee up for success.

Self-Assessment (March - early May)

Once a committee has been established, each Trail Town steering committee must meet on its own to complete their Trail Town Self-Assessment. This assessment is designed to encourage communities to take initial stock of their recreation and hospitality assets, and to start thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of their communities in terms of attracting bicycle tourists and encouraging residents to walk or bike.

This assessment will require deep thinking, and it is recommended that groups set aside several hours to complete it. There will be a copy available as a document for steering committee members to brainstorm; however, the final assessment should be submitted through the online form provided.

Bike Friendly New York Business Certification (May – September)

Parks & Trails New York will provide each Trail Town with the tools to help tourism-oriented businesses in their community apply to become certified as “[Bike Friendly New York](#)” businesses. Part of the Trail Town assessment will include identifying potential Bike Friendly businesses which should serve as the initial list that the Trail Town targets for certification.

PTNY will host a webinar specifically designed to inform businesses, chambers, and tourism agencies about the benefits of Bike Friendliness and Bike Friendly NY business certification. The webinar will provide businesses with the tools to pursue certification, and for business-related entities to support certification.

Trail User Counts (May - September)

Parks & Trails New York will facilitate trail use data collection and analysis through installation of electronic trail counters. PTNY will install one EcoVisio electronic trail counter in each Trail Town during the spring, to remain in place through at least the fall, in order to capture trail use during the tourism season. While PTNY will be responsible for installation and take-down, one steering committee member

will be tasked with retrieving the data through an app when requested by PTNY. PTNY will include an analysis of this trail count data as part of the action agenda, to be developed in the fall.

Placemaking and Bike Around Two-Day Workshop (June)

The Trail Town, in partnership with PTNY, will host, promote, and participate in an in-person Placemaking Workshop and Bike Around assessment to identify the Trail Town's unique identity and evaluate the existing strengths and areas for improvement for the community as an outdoor recreation destination, to be led by Parks & Trails New York during the summer. These two workshops will build on the Trail Town self-assessment and will serve as the foundation for developing the web-based promotional resources as well as the action agenda.

a. Placemaking Workshop

This workshop will take place in the evening and kick off with an introduction to the Trail Town model and a background on outdoor recreation tourism. From there, the workshop will serve as an opportunity for participants to brainstorm its top assets (places, businesses, events, and experiences), and gaps or areas for improvement. All are welcome to join the placemaking workshop, and it is recommended that the Trail Town steering committee advertise the opportunity to anyone interested in participating in the effort. The Trail Town steering committee will be responsible for coordinating the venue for the placemaking workshop (a library or other community space is recommended), and for promoting the opportunity to the community.

b. Bike Around Assessment

The Bike Around Assessment will take place the morning following the Placemaking Workshop. The goal of the Bike Around is to help the Trail Town experience their community from a visiting cyclist's perspective. The route of the Bike Around will take riders from the trail to the business district and any other identified points of interest, and finally back to the trail. The ride is intended to be conducted at a slow pace to allow for observation and assessment and will include many opportunities to stop and discuss specific elements or conditions of the built environment, including trail or road surface, wayfinding signage, litter or debris, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and other amenities and services for cyclists. The ride will finish around lunchtime so that the group can convene at a local establishment to debrief and discuss what they experienced.

PTNY will propose a route, but the Trail Town steering committee will be responsible for reviewing the route to ensure that it is a reasonable and safe ride for all involved, and hits the major points of interest. The steering committee will also be responsible for coordinating a location to have lunch and debrief after the ride.

As an outcome of the two-part workshop, PTNY will compile a list of short-term recommendations that the Trail Towns can implement immediately to improve the trail user experience and take advantage of trail tourism that very season.

Web-based Promotional Resource Development (June - November)

Based on ideas generated during the placemaking workshop, the steering committee will have the tools to complete a worksheet that will inform the development of the Trail Town landing page. This worksheet will request a community tagline, a list of community assets and events to be highlighted, and trail access information. The committee will go over the worksheet with PTNY at the check-in meeting in late July, at which point they can make edits as needed.

Note: to maintain designation as an Empire State Trail Town, this information will need to be verified and updated in April (prior to the tourism season) each year.

Cycle the Erie Canal Welcoming Celebrations (July)

Trail Towns along the Erie Canalway Trail are encouraged to celebrate the arrival of New York's largest cross-state bike ride in their community. On the ride, Parks & Trails New York will give special shout-outs to the Trail Towns, highlighting them to the 700+ cyclists passing through. Each community should strive to make the cyclists feel welcome. This can also serve as an opportunity to get more folks excited about the participating communities as Trail Towns and show what an important visitor demographic trail users are. Trail Towns should make sure local businesses are aware that the tour is coming and that they are open during the time/date that cyclists will be passing through. Trail Town committees may also coordinate welcome greeters or signs at the entrance to the community, and/or bigger celebrations, with live music, market stands, history tours, and/or other activities that might encourage visitors to stay a little longer in each community.

Trail Towns on the Champlain Canalway Trail may identify a different community event during the summer to tie Trail Towns into, or may plan their own event, such as a community bike ride on the trail. PTNY will be available to brainstorm ideas.

Turning Assessment into Action Check-ins (July)

PTNY will check in individually with each Trail Town to debrief about the Placemaking and Bike Around Workshops and Cycle the Erie Canal celebrations/other trail events. PTNY will then outline the next steps for developing the Trail Town landing page and creating the action agenda.

The Action Agenda

a. Action Agenda Development (September-October)

Based on data gathered from the self-assessment, placemaking workshop and bike around, PTNY will develop an action agenda that includes an analysis of existing conditions (including an analysis of trail use) and a list of long- and short-term priorities tailored to each community. During this process, PTNY may need to reach out for more information or clarification on certain subjects. When the draft priorities are complete, PTNY will provide the steering committees with the action agenda for feedback, as well as provide them with an "Implementation Worksheet," which will help the committee think through how the recommendations will be implemented. The committee will be required to identify who will be responsible for the effort after this year, who

will be the primary contact with PTNY, how progress on the priorities will be tracked, and how the action agenda will be adopted. This strategy will then serve as the final section of the action agenda.

b. Individual PTNY/Trail Town Check-Ins: Moving the Action Agenda Forward (November)

After the Trail Town steering committees have reviewed the draft priorities and completed the implementation worksheets, PTNY will facilitate a conversation to discuss feedback.

c. Finalization of the action agenda (December)

Upon submission of the implementation worksheet, PTNY will include this language into the final action agenda. The final version of the action agenda will then be returned to the Trail Town steering committee for approval.

End-of-Year Debrief (December)

This final meeting will serve as an opportunity for all the Trail Towns to share their experiences and debrief about how the program went. PTNY will facilitate a discussion so that steering committee members can share their experience and present their next steps since each Trail Town's action agenda will be different. Trail Towns will also have the chance to provide feedback on the organization of the program so that it may be improved. PTNY will also outline the requirements for maintaining designation as an Empire State Trail Town year after year.

Action Agenda Adoption and Promotion of Designation (Winter/Spring 2025)

Once the final Action Agenda is in the hands of the Trail Towns, the steering committees must then pursue a commitment on behalf of the municipality to make an effort to carry out the recommendations. The specific strategy will be identified in the implementation worksheet completed as part of the Action Agenda development, but in most cases it will be a municipal resolution. This type of public commitment will be the last component of the program, taking the community from a provisional Trail Town to an officially designated Empire State Trail Town. This will be a cause for celebration and the Trail Town steering committee should communicate it to the world. A press release and social media posts that outline some of the Trail Town's victories, high-priority next steps, and the publication of the Trail Town landing page should be developed and published. The trail towns are also encouraged to hold a public press event in the spring, which PTNY would make every effort to attend and help make a success.

Empire State Trail Town Program Timeline

Timeframe	Program Element	Method/ Location	PTNY role	Trail Town role	Outcomes	Objectives Addressed
March 6, 10am-12pm	Trail Town Orientation (all Trail Towns)	Virtual meeting	Facilitates meeting; Provides information on the program and next steps, including growing the network and conducting the self-assessment	Trail Town applicants invite any potentially interested members of the community	Work plan and next steps understood; Outreach targets for steering committee established and invited to steering committee development meeting	Network
March 11-29	First Individual Steering Committee Meetings with PTNY	Virtual meeting	Facilitates meeting and introductions; Answers questions and provides guidance on Steering Committee structure & Trail Town Self-Assessment	Steering Committee joins prepared to discuss roles and responsibilities of Steering Committee members; Seeks clarification of Self-Assessment	Trail Town steering committee established and roles determined; Plan for completing the Trail Town Self-Assessment established	Network, Advancement
April 19-21	Canal Clean Sweep	In-person clean up	Facilitates host registration and helps promote events seeking volunteers	Steering Committee coordinates a clean-up event, or partners with existing host(s)	Trail Town steering committee builds out a public presence and expands network of those interested in stewarding the trail	Network
March-April; Self-Assessment due to PTNY by May 10	Trail Town Self-Assessment	Meeting (virtual or in-person) by each Trail Town	Provides self-assessment form as document and online form; Available to answer questions	Steering committee fills out self-assessment (leave at least 2 hours to complete)	Strengths and weaknesses of Trail Town identified, potential Bike Friendly businesses identified	Research, Promotion, Advancement

May – September (May 1 Webinar)	Bike Friendly New York Business Training and Certification	Virtual Webinar and Individual outreach	Provides training on what makes a business Bike Friendly, the benefits of attracting trail users, and how to apply for certification	Representatives from Trail Town participates in training; Conducts in-person outreach to certify businesses as BFNY	Qualifying businesses informed about Trail Town mission and certified for inclusion on Trail Town landing page and other PTNY promotion	Network, Promotion
May-September	Trail User Counts	On the Erie Canalway Trail	PTNY installs EcoVisio trail user count for duration of tourism season; Provides analysis of electronic and manual counts	Provide volunteers to conduct manual trail counts; Member of Steering Committee assists with retrieving data from electronic counter.	Trail use data collected to understand current trail use trends in each Trail Town	Research
Week of June 10-14	Two-Day Workshop: Placemaking Workshop and Bike Around Assessment	In each Trail Town (in person)	Facilitates placemaking workshop; Crafts Bike Around route and leads Bike Around assessment and post-ride debrief; Develops Short-Term Recommendations	Steering committee coordinates venue for Placemaking workshop and lunch venue for post-Bike Around debrief; Provides feedback on Bike Around route; Promotes the workshop in the community; Participates in workshop and Bike Around	Through conversation and on-the-ground assessment, Trail Towns identify community identity, key assets, strengths, and weaknesses for use in promotional resources and in identifying priority recommendations.	Network, Research, Advancement
June-November	Development of Web Based Promotional Resources	Individual work with communication as needed	Develops Trail Town landing page on cycletheeriecanal.com , including an interactive map	Compiles content for inclusion on the Trail Town landing page, including a tagline, key assets, attractions, and events, trail access information, and certified BFNYs	Creates a promotional resource for the Trail Town with key information for visitors.	Promotion

July 7-14	Cycle the Erie Canal welcome celebrations	In each Trail Town (in person)	Provides ideas for welcoming CTEC riders; Highlights Trail Towns to cyclists; Includes Trail Towns in regional press releases	Coordinates or participates in welcome event for CTEC riders; Ensures business community knows about CTEC	Raises the profile of the Trail Towns to 700+ CTEC riders and across the region through news media	Network, Promotion
Week of July 22-26	Individual PTNY/Trail Town Check-ins: Turning Assessment into Action	Individual virtual meetings	Facilitates debrief on Workshop and CTEC; Shares framework for developing content for Trail Town landing page	Provides feedback on Workshop and CTEC	Serves as a chance to transition from the research phase to the development of promotional and planning materials	Promotion, Advancement
September - October (PTNY provides draft of Action Agenda and Implementation Worksheet to Trail Towns by early October)	Development of draft Action Agenda	Individual work	Analyzes trail use data and other existing conditions; Crafts short-term and long-term priorities, based on research and assessment	Steering committee available to answer PTNY requests for information; Reviews and provides feedback on draft action agenda; Steering committee submits implementation strategies	Develops a roadmap for the Trail Town to continue work toward making the community an active transportation & recreation destination	Advancement
Week of November 4-8	Individual PTNY/Trail Town Check-Ins: Moving the Action Agenda Forward	Virtual meetings with each Trail Town	Facilitates discussion regarding feedback to draft action agenda; Facilitates discussion on next steps and how the Trail Town will implement the action agenda	Steering committee provides feedback on draft action agenda and completes the implementation worksheet prior to the meeting	Serves as an opportunity for each Trail Town to have ownership over their priorities and identify how they will pursue these strategies in their community's context	Advancement

December (Final action agenda sent to Trail Towns by early December)	Finalization of Action Agenda	Individual work	Finalizes each Trail Town's action agenda	Begins to make plans for official adoption of the Action Agenda	Serves as a culmination of the year's work; Demonstrates each Trail Town's commitment to pursuing continued growth.	Advancement
Week of December 9-13	All Trail Towns End-of-Year Debrief	Virtual Meeting (all Trail Towns)	Facilitates discussion	Steering committee members discuss their experience and present their next steps; Steering committee members provide feedback on program organization	Serves as an opportunity for all the Trail Towns to share their findings and debrief about how the program went.	Advancement
Winter/Spring 2025	Action Agenda Adoption and Promotion of Designation	Individual work	Provides support as needed for Action Agenda adoption and media promotion; Recognizes town with an official "Certification Certificate"; Makes social media posts when Action Agendas are adopted to celebrate official certification	Steering committee members coordinate adoption; Coordinate promotion strategy to celebrate certification	The Trail Town initiative gains official recognition; Promotes the Trail Town concept and certification to a wider audience	Advancement, Promotion

Maintaining the Empire State Trail Town Designation

Once each Trail Town is certified as an official Empire State Trail Town, its continued certification will be dependent on fulfillment of the following requirements each year:

1. Continue to meet the Trail Town criteria

Certified Trail Towns will be required to continue to meet the baseline Trail Town criteria, including:

- Publicly accessible restrooms and water (can be a business whose restrooms are open to the public and/or that offers access to water to trail users/the public)
- At least one overnight accommodation that is welcoming to trail users
- At least one place that trail users can get food and drink (this can be a grocery or convenience store or a restaurant that welcomes trail users)
- At least one outlet for information on the community (this can be a visitors/welcome center, chamber of commerce, library, or village hall, or a regularly updated trail-oriented bulletin board or kiosk.
- At least one bike rack in the community's downtown area for bicyclists to safely park their bikes
- A location directly on or near the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail (preferably within three miles of a trail access point, and preferably connected by an off-road route or on low-traffic roads).

2. Annually verify Trail Town landing page content

Prior to each tourism season (April of each year), each Trail Town steering committee must verify with PTNY that the information on the Trail Town landing page is accurate. This will ensure that PTNY is able to provide the most up-to-date information to prospective visitors.

3. Attend the annual Trail Town Updates and Networking Virtual Meeting

PTNY will host periodic virtual meetings for all Trail Towns to provide updates about the Empire State Trail and Trail Town initiative and allow Trail Towns to share progress on their action agendas. Each Trail Town will be required to submit a brief written update prior to the meeting and must send at least one representative. This will provide an opportunity for communities to share victories and strategies for overcoming challenges.

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About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is New York's leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated since 1985 to improving our health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space. PTNY works to expand, protect, and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout our state for use and enjoyment by all. For more information, visit www.ptny.org.



About New York State Canal Corporation

The New York State Canal Corporation runs the New York State Canal System, which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. In 2017, the Canal Corporation celebrated the 200th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal, which occurred in the city of Rome on July 4, 1817. The Canal System includes the Canalway Trails, a network of approximately miles of multiple-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trails follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System as well as adjacent abandoned rail corridors. Together, the canals and trails create a world-class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic, and unique New York resource. To learn more about the New York State Canal and Canalway Trail System or to obtain a free map, please call 1-800-4CANAL4 or visit the Canal Corporation's website at www.canals.ny.gov.