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Imagine

Kingston Land Trust contemplates rail trails through Midtown

by Carrie Jones Ross

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Say what you will about Midtown, but it's got character. And with any luck, it might just have even more thanks to Parks & Trails New York selecting Kingston Land Trust to receive some assistance through its Healthy Trails, Healthy People program. The program is intended to increase the number of physically active New Yorkers by helping communities either create new

or increase traffic on existing multi-use trails.

Unlike many of its neighboring friends, Kingston currently has no established recreational rail trail, despite miles of unused rail beds. Through the grant, KLT will be entitled to help with technical issues, planning, public outreach, grant writing, fundraising, programming, and organizational development.

Parks & Trails New York will work with the land trust to garner community support and involvement to explore the feasibility of connecting existing rail trails outside the city to the Midtown area. It started last week with a tour of the forgotten and littered railbed through Midtown, starting at Kingston Hospital and ending at the Trolley Museum at the Roundout.

"It's a feasibility grant that we have won," explained Rebecca Martin, executive director of the trust. "Parks and Trails New York will work with us to create an overall plan based on all of the elements, which we are just beginning the process. We have been working as a rail trail committee to understand the rail beds and different collaborations necessary to accomplish our goal. Parks and Trails New York are familiar with Kingston, and it's really just the beginning of giving them all the info to discuss to proper steps."

Martin said that much of that process will involve outreach to community members, landowners, businesses, public officials in and outside of the city.

To be sure, it'll take some work to make the abandoned rail line into a rail trail. Railroad ties, mostly rotted through, currently line the railbed, which is littered with decades' worth of broken glass, felled branches, tires used baby diapers and worse.

Gregg Swanzey, Mohonk Preserve's grants manager, chairs the committee and sees nothing but potential and possibility when gazing down the neglected lanes: strolling, jogging, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing and more. "It will require a

lot of hands,” Swanzey acknowledged, “but think of what this would start; people could walk to work, to shop. It could get people to become more active in an urban setting, and connect sections of Kingston in ways they have never before been connected.”

For more information, visit Kingston Land Trust’s website at kingstonlandtrust.org, or call (845) 877-LAND.

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