

## Furthering Trails And Conservation

Imagine stepping out your door and finding a convenient and comfortable pathway that leads to your workplace, community library, local school, or favorite shopping area. Imagine hopping on your bicycle and following a traffic-free route to a park or restaurant you've heard about in the next town over.



While New York boasts many hiking trails, in recent years interest has grown in another kind of trail - one that is closer to where people live or work and offers both recreation and alternative transportation to a range of users, from walkers and bikers to stroller-pushing parents and in-line skaters. Often called multi-use, shared-use or community trails, these have become an important part of nationwide efforts to decrease traffic congestion and air pollution and to address the health risks of our generally inactive lifestyle.

Across New York today, many citizens not only envision enhancing the quality of life in their communities through such trails, but are banding together to make it happen. With fuel prices rising and growing awareness of health risks posed by sedentary living, the economic boost trails can give communities, and the threat of global climate change, trail advocates are attracting new allies from business and government. Parks & Trails New York has assisted coalitions in almost 30 communities seeking to develop new trails for transportation and recreation.

### Why CACs Should Care about Trails

While CACs/CBs have been involved in these grassroots efforts, we believe there are good reasons for them to play stronger roles in encouraging trail development:

1. Trail development can directly support open space protection. Corridors for trails can take the form of linear parks. Construction of a trail may convert a previously neglected or underutilized property into a place more residents care about. Municipalities may be more receptive to expenditures for land when accompanied by the concrete benefits associated with trails.
2. Trails can link conservation to other current concerns such as public health and economic revitalization, thus adding appeal among community officials faced with multiple needs and limited resources. National research has clearly linked the presence of places to exercise, including trails, to greater physical activity and the resulting improvements in community health.
3. Trails offer new ways to get people involved. The growth of National Trails Day and, in New York, the Canal Clean Sweep has shown that people will volunteer to keep trails in good condition.

Those who participate are more likely to assist with other stewardship needs.

4. Trails promote safety and responsible use in parks. The presence of more people has been shown to deter crime and inappropriate behavior.

### Beyond Your Community

When communities creating their own trail systems are plotted on a map, the shape of an emerging statewide network comes into focus. There will be primary corridors along the NYS Canal System, the Hudson River, and elsewhere. Branching from those will be secondary routes such as the Chenango Canal corridor and the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail. This network will enable people to travel within and between communities without reliance on motor vehicles. The network will become an outdoor tourism attraction, pumping new dollars into the economies of communities along it. CACs that promote local trail development can extend their conservation and open space protection impact beyond their own communities.

### Assistance with Trail Development Available to NYS Communities

If you have the vision and the passion but need assistance getting a trail project started or increasing the use of an existing trail, Parks & Trails New York can help through its Healthy Trails, Healthy People Program. Five communities will be selected to receive help with technical issues, planning, public outreach, grant writing, fundraising, programming, organizational development and other activities critical to the success of your project. Selection criteria include level of community support and commitment, involvement of partnerships, clarity of project goals and assistance requested, opportunities to increase physical activity levels within the community, and level of need. Preference will be given to communities with a high percentage of low income households.

For information go to <http://www.ptny.org/greenways/hthp> or call Parks & Trails New York at 518-434-1583. Although the deadline for this round is October 2; there will be future application rounds.

Potential applicants should contact Parks & Trails New York to discuss their projects before the submission deadline either this year or next. Healthy Trails, Healthy People is supported in part by a grant from the Healthy Heart Program of the New York State Department of Health.

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