



Canal
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NEWS RELEASE

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Village of Brockport Selected for Empire State Trail Town Program

As an Empire State Trail Town, Brockport will harness visitation to the Erie Canalway Trail to support and advance economic development

Parks & Trails New York also announces the release of Bicyclists Bring Business: A Handbook for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities to help Brockport and other communities market to and benefit from cycling tourists

(BROCKPORT, NY) – Parks & Trails New York, the New York State Canal Corporation, and the Village of Brockport are excited to jointly announce that Brockport has been selected as the pilot community for the new Empire State Trail Town program. The program will help Brockport benefit from its location along the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail.

As part of the program, PTNY staff will provide technical assistance and resources to help the community attract and profit from the growing bicycle tourism market, improve the trail and infrastructure for those that walk and bike in the Village, and establish a strong community identity tied to the trail. By promoting and supporting Brockport as a premier destination for cyclists, the program seeks to create long-term economic, health, and quality of life benefits for the entire community and surrounding area.

PTNY will work with the Village to establish a diverse Trail Town steering committee consisting of representatives from local businesses, organizations, institutions, and community groups. The steering committee will assist PTNY staff with data collection efforts and research to document existing conditions in the Village, and use these findings to create a detailed action plan that includes both short and long-term goals and recommendations. The action plan will help guide planning efforts, and will

help foster collaboration between Village stakeholders and the general public on event planning, advocacy, stewardship, and marketing.

With the completion of the Empire State Trail in 2020, the Erie Canalway Trail— the east-west leg of the statewide system— is growing in popularity. An economic impact study completed by PTNY in 2014 showed that the ECT attracts nearly 1.6 million annual visits and generates over \$250 million in annual economic impact. Trail use figures from 2021 estimated that the Erie Canalway Trail drew over 3.1 million annual visits, including over 58,000 visits to the trail in Brockport. The popularity of the Erie Canalway Trail is increasing as is, presumably, its economic impact. Communities along the Canalway Trail system, like Brockport, are in the perfect position to build on the national publicity of the Empire State Trail.

The Empire State Trail Town Program will be modeled after the successful Great Allegheny Passage Trail Town program established by the Progress Fund in 2007. A recent study estimated that tourism along the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage resulted in over \$121 million in economic impact in 2019, including an estimated \$19 million in tax revenue.

Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York, said, “We are thrilled to be working with the Village of Brockport as the first Empire State Trail Town. Brockport already has a great reputation and a lot to offer outdoor enthusiasts. We look forward to helping the Village build strong partnerships, create safer streets for bicyclists and pedestrians, and improve connections between the Erie Canalway Trail and Main Street businesses.”

New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said, “Over the past two years, the Empire State Trail has brought bikers, hikers, and walkers and more within a stone's throw of the very best recreation opportunities that New York has to offer. This new pilot initiative will usher in a new chapter for the trail and make the Village of Brockport a premier destination for cyclists and tourists alike while bolstering the local economy and quality of life for the community. By continually reinventing the experiences and partnerships along the Canal corridor, we are providing fresh opportunities for New Yorkers to experience every corner of the Empire State.”

Margaret Blackman, Mayor of the Village of Brockport, said, “Brockport is proud to have been selected as the Pilot Town for the new Empire State Trail Towns program. We look forward to discovering new ways to connect our downtown businesses to Empire State trail users and see our already strong connection to the Erie Canal benefit from this collaborative project.”

Bicyclists Bring Business Handbook

In order to help communities along the corridor benefit from their proximity to the Canalway Trail and take advantage of the economic benefits of bicycle tourism, Parks & Trails New York has also released an updated version of [*Bicyclists Bring Business: A Handbook for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities*](#). The new guide provides background data on the economic benefits of bicycle tourism, and walks communities through the strategies that community leaders and business owners can use to attract bike tourists and tap into the bicycle tourism market.

The guide presents the essential steps of how Canalway Trail communities can benefit from trail users, including strategies to attract bicycle tourists and provide them with a positive experience. The 40-page guide features data from background research on bicycle tourism and provides numerous examples of successful strategies employed around the country.

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About Parks & Trails New York:

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is the state's leading advocate for parks and trails. Since 1995, PTNY has worked in partnership with the Canal Corporation to create a trail system that is an asset to nearby canal communities and a destination for bicyclists from around the world. PTNY organizes Cycle the Erie Canal, an eight-day bicycle tour along the historic Erie Canal that attracts more than 650 participants each year. In 2021, the organization published an updated version of the popular guidebook, *Cycling the Erie Canal: A Guide to 360 miles of Adventure and History along the Erie Canalway Trail*. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

About the 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 Trail, a network of approximately 300 miles of multiple-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trail 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 trail 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.