

# **Delhi River Walk**

## **Suggestions for Next Steps**

**April 2005**



This report has been made possible through  
**Healthy Trails, Healthy People**  
A program of



**Parks & Trails**  
NEW YORK

to help communities across the state become more physically active  
through the creation of multi-use trails

Funded in part by a grant from the Healthy Heart Program  
of the New York State Department of Health

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## INTRODUCTION

Healthy Trails, Healthy People (HTHP), a program of Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), helps communities across the state become more physically active through the development of local multi-use trails. The effort is funded in part by a five-year grant from the Healthy Heart Program of the New York State Department of Health.

According to the New York State Health Department, in 2000, 56% of New York adults were overweight or obese. Medical research has shown that a sedentary lifestyle can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and an increased risk for some forms of cancer. Easily accessible, close to home, multi-use trails can provide no or low cost opportunities for everyone, irrespective of age or ability, to increase their level of daily activity and become more involved in their community. The goal of Parks & Trails New York is to work with New York State communities, such as Delhi, to build the vision, constituencies, and local support that are critical to long-term success of trail projects.



Overlook at Bridge View Park

## BACKGROUND

### Community Selection

Parks & Trails New York chose the Delhi River Walk for the first year of the Healthy Trails, Healthy People program because it met the following selection criteria:

#### **Existing interest in trail and open space development**

The Delhi Beautification and Community Activities Committees, working with the Village and the Catskill Outdoor Education Corps (an AmeriCorps program based at SUNY Delhi) had already developed a rustic walking trail along the West Branch of the Delaware River and community gateway at Bridge Side Park on the southeast side of the Route 28 Bridge. This gateway park was made possible through an easement granted to the Village by the State Department of Transportation. The Village and the AmeriCorps team had recently made improvements to Smith Pond Park, adjacent to the O'Connor Hospital. The Clark Companies, a local construction firm specializing in construction of major athletic fields had donated an open-air basketball court for the



creation of Clark Park. The Village, working with the Delhi Community Activities Committee, had recently received a grant to tear down the Arco building on property adjacent to the river. Finally, using grant money, the Beautification Committee purchased land adjacent to the river, developed it as River Walk Park and deeded it to the Village.

#### **Established and active community groups**

The Delhi Beautification Committee, Delhi Community Activities Committee, and Catskill Outdoor Education Corps program have an established track record of fundraising and project implementation, particularly in providing public access and open space improvements along the river at no cost to the Village.

#### **Corridor with potential links to community resources**

The potential River Walk would run parallel to Delhi's main street at a distance of one block, making it easily accessible to downtown residents and workers as well as visitors using downtown businesses and services. A trail roughly aligned along the riverfront corridor would also create a travel link between the downtown, O'Connor Hospital, the Delaware Academy campus, the planned community swimming pool, the Legion Field Recreation Complex, and four community parks along the full route – Smith Pond Park, Bridge Side Park, Clark Park basketball courts, and the new River Walk Park.

#### **Corridor with significant public ownership**

The proposed trail route includes three parcels (the two county office building parking lots and the county highway department salt shed) that are owned by Delaware County. The Legion Field Recreation Complex is managed for public use, and the four parks along the



route are publicly owned or managed for public use. The Village of Delhi owns sidewalk and street rights-of-way that would be used for portions of the trail route.

## Community Profile

Delhi is an incorporated Village and is the county seat of Delaware County, NY. Officially Delhi has a 2000 census population of 2,583 residents. The official data gives Delhi a slightly higher male population than the state and national average, and places almost half of its population in the age cohort of 16-24 years of age.

These two demographic features are probably explained by the presence of SUNY Delhi students living on or off-campus. SUNY Delhi is a Technical College of the NY State University System offering both four and two-year degrees, and has an enrollment of 2,200 students (approximately 65% reside on campus and 60% are male). Holding the 16-24 age cohort percentage equal to the NY State value would give a permanent resident number of 208 in the 16-24 group and resident student number of 1021. Based on this estimate, the population of the community would then be distributed as shown in the table below (data in italics indicate unofficial numbers based on estimate):



AGE	NUMBER	PCT. – Delhi	PCT. – NY	PCT. – US
<b>PERMANENT RESIDENTS</b>				
15 or younger	265	<i>17.0</i>	20.7	21.4
16-24	<i>208</i>	<i>13.3</i>	13.3	13.9
25-44	383	<i>24.5</i>	30.7	30.2
45-64	396	<i>25.4</i>	22.3	22.0
65 or older	310	<i>19.8</i>	12.9	12.4
Total Males	<i>702</i>	<i>44.9</i>	48.2	49.1
Total Females	<i>860</i>	<i>55.1</i>	51.8	50.9
Total Persons	<i>1562</i>			
<b>STUDENT RESIDENTS</b>				
Total Males	<i>613</i>	<i>60</i>		
Total Females	<i>408</i>	<i>40</i>		
Total Persons	<i>1021</i>			

Delhi residents are predominantly (87.8%) white. Official median income for all households is \$32,708, which is about \$10,000 lower than that for New York State and the U.S. as a whole. The high number of college students probably skews this number lower. However, the median income for those between 25 and 54 years of age is also \$10,000-20,000 lower than the NY State and U.S. median wage for the same age group so lower student incomes may only be a minor contributing factor. This income figure is not unexpected for a community in the Catskill region, which has one of the weakest economies in the state. Per capita income for persons of Hispanic ethnicity in Delhi is only 30% of the level attained by Hispanics in NY State and the U.S. as a whole. While incomes for all groups are lower in Delhi than state and

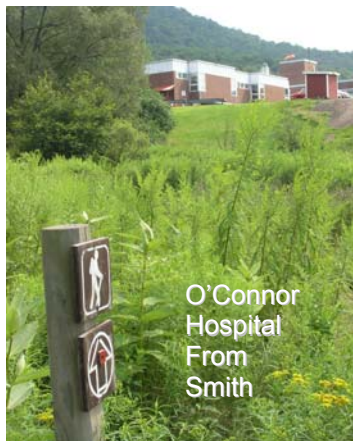
national averages, the gap is much larger than other minority groups (Black, Asian, and Native American) found in the community. Overall, these income numbers underscore the fact that there is not a great reserve of community wealth with which to build the trail. Use of donated materials, volunteer labor, and in-kind services will likely be critical to trail construction. A cash match for large grants might be difficult for the village to set aside given the size of its annual budget. If Delhi pursues larger grants to implement the trail, it may need Delaware County as a financial partner.

The official workforce (workers 16 or older) is modestly sized, numbering 990 persons. Almost 16 percent (15.6%) of these individuals walk to work. This is nearly 2.5 times the NY State rate and 5.5 times the U.S. rate. A relatively high number (8.1%) of residents also work from home, exceeding both the state and national rates. It is likely that the local pedestrian and cyclist network receives more than an average amount of use.

# COMMUNITY WALK & TRAILS WORKSHOP

## Preparation

Parks & Trails New York staff met with Mayor David Truscott and Dave DeForest, Project Director of the SUNY Delhi AmeriCorps program, on August 11, 2004 for a tour of the proposed trail corridor and to explain the Healthy Trails, Healthy People program. Mayor



Truscott invited Parks & Trails New York to offer a community workshop in September. He later confirmed that the Delhi Beautification Committee, Delhi Community Activities Committee, and the O'Connor Hospital would act as formal co-sponsors of the meeting.

Parks & Trails New York prepared and distributed press releases to local newspapers and radio stations and sent a meeting announcement to a contact list of individuals, organizations, county agencies, and businesses. The Mayor contacted several individuals about the trail proposal and sent invitations to landowners along the proposed route. Parks & Trails New York also prepared a meeting flyer, which was posted in the village by the Mayor and Beautification

Committee members.

## Format

A community workshop, held on September 22, 2004 in Delhi Village Hall at 7:30 pm, was attended by about 30 individuals, primarily village residents, but also with some individuals from surrounding communities. The Mayor led a guided walk at 5:00 pm to highlight and preview the proposed trail route through River View Park from the Delaware County Building parking lot to Bridge Side Park. This walk had about 25 participants.

The September 22<sup>nd</sup> evening workshop provided an overview of the Healthy Trails, Healthy People program and presented the health, social, economic, and conservation benefits of trails. Current images of key locations along the trail corridor as well as images of analogous trail projects in other communities were shown to highlight challenges and opportunities that would be faced in developing the proposed trail.

In the second part of the program, workshop participants gave personal feedback on the issues and opportunities associated with trail development.

## Participant Responses

One participant had a home along the river at Bridge Street and expressed concern with the proximity of the proposed route to her home and the possibility of people cutting through her yard. She was still open, however, to exploring alternative routes and trail designs that could address her concerns. Other attendees felt that privacy and crime/vandalism issues needed to be considered for any trail segment that might cross residential properties. Mayor Truscott stated that there was “zero chance” that the trail would be routed across residential property where there was opposition by the owner.

Most other residents spoke in support of the trail idea and conceptual route. A local high school teacher described utilizing the existing trail for classes and indicated she would like to see that trail improved and new segments built. A representative from the O'Connor Hospital spoke in support of the trail as a healthy lifestyle improvement for the community. A community resident suggested incorporating a fishing pier accessible by persons with disabilities (adjacent to the county offices parking lot) in the trail design as a resource for residents of the Countryside Care Center nursing home and other area persons with mobility limitations.

Some attendees raised practical planning concerns such as the issue of high water during spring floods given that the proposed route is in a flood plain. Several others stressed the importance of integrating the riverfront corridor trail with the Main Street corridor through strong signage and access links so residents and visitors can find and get to the trail easily. One attendee suggested the overall trail plan should also include ideas for streetscape improvements along Main Street. A few attendees mentioned the potential to extend the trail corridor south from Bridge Side Park to Smith Pond Park, the O'Connor Hospital, and beyond.



The Mayor closed the meeting by inviting individuals interested in working to further the trail effort to contact members of the Beautification Committee since it is willing to take an active role with this and other community development opportunities in the Village.



## PARTICIPANT SURVEY

A survey form was distributed at the meeting to gather information on participants' physical activity levels, interest in trail development, and assess the workshop. About half (14) of the workshop attendees returned survey forms. See Appendix A for the survey questions and results tabulation.

### Discussion of Results

#### Physical Activity

Six of 14 survey respondents (42%) indicated that they engaged in moderate physical activity 5 or more times per week. A further 6 respondents (42%) indicated that they were moderately active 3 times per week. All respondents indicated that they got at least occasional physical activity. These results differ significantly from the national average. According to a 2000 report on US physical activity levels from the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 74% of Americans are not regularly physically active and 28% get no physical activity at all. It is likely that those who are already active are a self-selecting group as advocates for new facilities that would facilitate their active lifestyle.



Walking was the primary form of exercise among survey respondents (3 additional responses indicated hiking). This correlates well with national data that indicates that in 2000 walking was the most frequently reported activity (38%) of Americans who engaged in any form of physical activity.

Trails were also extremely popular among respondents. Sixty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they used trails for exercise more than once per week. All respondents indicated that they used trails at least occasionally.

The primary reasons cited by those completing surveys for not exercising more were lack of time (4) and a lack of convenient places (3). This is an imperfect reflection of workshop participants since almost half (6) did not complete this question.

Survey responses indicate that a new trail in Delhi would receive regular use. Most (78%) of respondents indicated that they would use the trail at least once per week, with half (50%) indicating they would use the trail 3 days per week. A small number (3 or 21%) of respondents indicated they would use the trail only occasionally. These survey results echo findings of recent research that has shown that adults, especially women and older adults, who lived near safe places to exercise, including neighborhood trails, were more likely to be physically active. In a 2000 study of rural Missouri residents, 47.5% of persons who were regular walkers indicated that they walked more after the opening of a new trail and 57.7 % of persons who were not regular walkers reported increased physical activity due to trail use.

**Workshop Evaluation**

The workshops received a high overall endorsement with an average score of 4.3 out of a possible 5. Respondents generally rated other aspects of the workshop content and delivery with scores at or above 4 out of a possible 5. The weakest rated aspect of the workshop was whether they learned something new about the benefits of trails. This element received a score of 3.3 out of a possible 5, which is still higher than average but reinforces inferences drawn from the physical activity questions discussed above that workshop attendees were a somewhat self-selecting group already aware of trail benefits through personal experience. It should be a goal of future trail efforts in Delhi to reach out even further to build broader awareness of the trail opportunities and benefits in the less active segments of the community.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

The Next Steps offer suggestions for activities that the Delhi community could undertake to further development of the Delhi River Walk. They are intended to be suggestive, not prescriptive. Recommendations are based on Parks & Trails New York's experience with other projects within the state. Seven general activities were identified: **Promotion, Organization Building, Public Outreach, Landowner Outreach, Phased Construction, Issues Resolution, and Planning**

### Promotion

#### Develop an Active Program for the Corridor

Delhi has several assets with which to build awareness of the River Walk trail's potential: existing trails at Bridge Side Park, River Walk Park, and Smith Pond Park. It is recommended that the core group of volunteers and organizations plan and organize guided walks to bring residents and visitors to these sites. Routes can also include potential trail segments, where landowners are willing, or use village streets where needed to bridge segment gaps.

Walks can include presentations by naturalists, birders, geologists, historians, and other knowledgeable experts. This will increase public participation and deepen public appreciation for Delhi's special resources as well as showcase the trail's potential to connect people with them regularly.

Ideally, walks would be held regularly (monthly or bi-monthly) so that a wide segment of the community becomes aware of them and the River Walk idea through participation, word of mouth, or notices and articles in the local news. Regular events establish a public presence on a trail corridor as well as a track record for potential easement grantors to evaluate. Events also help legitimize the trail concept to the broader community. Collecting names and information from walk participants will help build a list of interested individuals who can be contacted to attend public meetings, talk up the project with friends, assist with fundraising, and receive bulletins / updates on trail progress. Evening is an ideal time to offer guided walks since Delhi residents can simply add a River Walk itinerary to their normal plans for an evening walk.

Effort can also be made to engage downtown workers through brief lunchtime guided walks. Young people are often great advocates for projects with which they have made a personal connection. Special walks targeted at school groups or classes, scout groups, and community recreation programs / summer camps will help reach this age group. Though older, SUNY Delhi students should be encouraged to participate in these. The Catskill Outdoor Education Corps could play a central role in reaching out to and organizing walks for all the target groups mentioned, since this kind of outreach is strongly tied to its mission and training.



Bridge View Park

## Organization Building

### Consider Forming a Trail Committee

Delhi is blessed with several active and effective community civic organizations, including the Beautification Committee and Community Activities Committee as well as the AmeriCorps program at Delhi. The Beautification Committee should consider establishing a



River Walk Trail Committee to act as a coordinator between these involved groups and to provide an organizational structure that will create a visible identity for trail efforts in the community.

Consult Parks & Trails New York's *Getting Started: A Guide to Planning Trails in New York State* for advice on establishing this committee. Because existing community groups are so well established, seeking non-profit status is probably not necessary. The trail committee would then be free to take on a less formal coordinating role among the existing

organizations.

The committee would ideally include several 'double-interest' members of both the Beautification and/or Community Activities Committees, an individual positioned to act as liaison with the village board and/or recreation committee, a local businessperson / chamber member, and a representative from a local physical activity promotion or local / county health department or facility (e.g. O'Connor Hospital). Ideally the committee would also include an adjacent landowner from the potential segment along the river, east of Main Street.

## Seek New Stakeholders and Partnerships

Existing community groups and their interested members are probably sufficient to form an effective committee. However, outreach should be broad and consistent in order to stimulate new involvement and membership on the trail committee.

- Use every public meeting, media contact, and guided walk as an opportunity to get the membership message out to the local and regional community.
- Invite school and scout groups to help with corridor projects and events.
- Ask school art classes to prepare posters promoting the trail or a trail-related event.
- Invite youth to participate in trail planning meetings.
- Seek active participation by County Health Department and County Planning staff.

## Celebrate Achievements, Recognize Participants, and Be Social

Keeping volunteers interested and motivated is a challenge when everyone's time is so limited. But investing in volunteers will reap huge future rewards. It is important to periodically remind participants of what they have achieved and recognize volunteers and local elected officials for their efforts and support.

Groups that have a fun, social dimension to their events or convey this spirit through interactions with new members and volunteers often are the most long-lived and successful at recruiting new blood. Follow their example and ensure that volunteer organizers are good with people and that each event includes at least some unstructured social time.

### **Public Outreach**

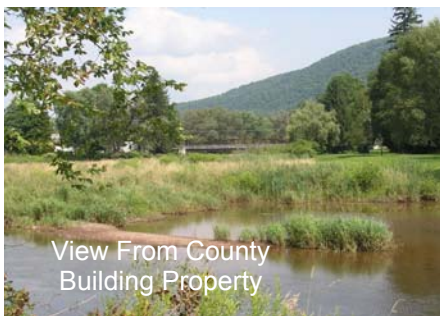
Extensive outreach to local and regional radio and print media was carried out by Parks & Trails New York in preparation for the September 22<sup>nd</sup> workshop. Flyers were produced by PTNY and distributed by Mayor Truscott for the event. There were a few articles announcing the workshop in local papers. Workshop attendees indicated hearing about the event through both print and radio outlets.

The Trails Committee should continue media outreach by using announcements and written synopses of its regular meetings as tools to increase awareness of the River Walk concept and update the larger Delhi community on its progress.

### **Landowner Outreach**

Mayor Truscott made written contact with all landowners along the proposed corridor prior to the community meeting to inform them generally of the initiative and provide specific information about the walk and workshop on September 22, 2004. At least one adjacent landowner did attend the evening workshop.

The Mayor and/or trail committee should make further personal contact with all landowners along the proposed route to assure their awareness of the trail initiative and that their concerns and interests will continue to be recognized and addressed. Ongoing contact should be maintained so landowners are informed of committee meetings, activities, and trail progress even if their parcel is not a current priority. Landowners should be informed that they will have specific input in trail routing and design details (such as desired screening and fencing) as part of access negotiation.



Before contacting landowners for access permission it will be necessary to determine what organization will hold or manage the access agreements and who will insure them if requested by the landowner. The most attractive arrangement to landowners would likely be for the Village to hold the agreements and extend its general liability insurance to the landowners as 'additional insured' parties. Management roles and responsibilities for the easement segment could be formalized through a cooperative management agreement between the Village, the Catskill Outdoor Education Corps, and the Delhi Beautification Committee either as a separate document or an extension to the access agreement.

Before contacting landowners, it might also be helpful for the trails committee to invite a representative from a local land trust (Catskill Center for Conservation & Development, e.g.) to discuss tips and hints for effectively approaching landowners to enlist their support and



cooperation. The Parks & Trails New York publication, *Getting Involved: A Community Trail Handbook for Landowners*, can be used as a tool to help answer common landowner questions about trails and access agreements. Distribution of this guide to individual landowners in a face-to-face meeting is a good place to begin discussions for potential access to their property.

The properties where access agreements should be explored are prioritized in the lists below:

#### Phase 1 – Short Term

- Next year
- Kingston Street sidewalk north to River Walk Park (if landowner is open to a formal easement, consider extra area to allow some ‘gateway’ treatments along Kingston Street similar to those at Bridge Side Park)
- River Walk Park to the County Building Parking lot and along its riverside edge (this access agreement should be extra-wide (30’+ - possibly pushing paved edge back slightly) in order to provide more space for attractive landscaping)
- Smith Pond Park to the northeastern edge of the O’Connor Hospital parcel
- Page Avenue at the southwestern edge of the county salt shed parcel north along the riverbank to the Legion Ballfield Complex



#### Phase 2 – Medium Term

- Next one to two years
- Southern edge of the Legion Ballfield Complex around the eastern edge of the fields & along the river side to the northwestern portion of property near future site of community swimming pool
- County Building parking lot to Main Street through alley next to bank
- County Building parking lot along the riverfront north to Bridge Street via detour west to Main Street to avoid cutting between residences on west end of Bridge Street bridge

#### Phase 3 – Long Term

- Next two to four years
- Smith Pond Park riverfront trail to the area where the old rail grade starts (south side of Sherwood Road and Main Street) – using a combination of east and west bank of West Branch of the Delaware River as appropriate for relocation of ‘mothballed’ highway bridge (in field at the intersection of Sherwood Road and Arbor Hill Road)
- Bridge Side Park south along steep riverbanks to Smith Pond Park
- Community swimming hole at weeping willow tree on shoreline south of Bridge Street through unused driveway / sewer right of way to Bridge Street sidewalk (as possible based on alternative landscaping design discussions with neighbors)

The sections below highlight a two-step approach to formalizing public access that could be taken with landowners of the parcels prioritized above to allow some trail use and development while building comfort with a more permanent arrangement:

### **Obtain Temporary Permissions**

In order to have regular guided walks and events in Spring & Summer 2005, it will be necessary to have permission to use several properties along the route. This can be accomplished with a formal easement, or with an informal, revocable agreement.

A revocable agreement is really just a written form of a verbal permission to use a portion of the owner's property. Revocable agreements can be rescinded at any time with a typical notice period of 30-60 days. Though generally less preferred as an agreement type, the revocable agreement tool can be used in place of a formal easement as a way to build trust and confidence when establishing a new landowner relationship. This tool would allow some description of the grantee obligation (if any) to the grantor with regard to extension of insurance coverage. See Parks & Trails New York's *Getting Involved: A Community Trail Handbook for Landowners* for more detailed information about types of access agreements.



### **Obtain Easements**

These more permanent (and preferred forms of trail access agreements) come in the form of a right-of-way easement, which is similar to the kind of agreement a homeowner has with a neighbor when they share a driveway. At its most fundamental, the easement gives the grantee the right to use a portion of the grantor's property. The agreement should describe the dimensions of the trail easement area, the effective term (ranging from several months – to perpetual), the parties to the agreement (including 3<sup>rd</sup> parties) and their responsibilities (if any), the specific rights to the land passed to the grantee (usually just a right of physical access plus the right to landscape and improve the trail – but may include 'conservation easement' restrictions on future development or the form of structures and facilities within the easement area).

#### **These easements should:**

- contain basic site plans or maps showing the rough location of the trail or the points on the parcel boundary where it enters and exits (to which rights of through access are promised)
- identify a trail corridor a minimum of 10' in width (preferably 15-25')
- allow for a minimum trail surface width of 5' (8-10' preferred)
- allow for an 'improved' trail surface (like crushed stone, road millings, and asphalt)
- allow for landscaping and trail surface improvements by volunteers associated with the trails committee, village staff, or AmeriCorps members and staff

## Phased Development

Delhi is blessed with existing resources and opportunities that could form a community trail system that would truly tie together the river corridor, inviting recreational greenspace, important community destinations, and centers of population, employment, and education. This seamless network would be a valuable asset to Delhi's quality of life as well as encourage a healthier lifestyle by providing inviting walking facilities that connect the center of the community with all its significant resources.

Walking is emphasized as the primary mode for this system due to the severe constraints posed by topography and land ownership throughout much of the existing and potential trail network. There is insufficient space in many locations to fit a bicycle path of modern standards. Additionally, the need to incorporate the existing sidewalk network for many key links would make this system inappropriate for use by proficient adult cyclists. However, it will be possible to use a basic trail surface design that would allow for its use by young children on bicycles. State traffic law also permits municipalities to pass a local ordinance that would allow children up to a certain age to ride their bicycle on the sidewalk. Thought should be given to making such a provision in Delhi if it does not already exist.



The initial development phases of Delhi's River Walk may involve creation of a rustic walking path. However, it is recommended that in the long term the trail be graded and improved with sub base and surfacing material of compacted limestone cinders / crusher fines or a 'paved' material such as soil binding resin, bound road millings, or fresh asphalt. A crushed limestone surface is preferable as it can be installed and maintained by volunteers with minimal equipment.

Yet, when compacted and 'weathered' it can provide an even, stable trail surface that can be used by bicycles at low speed and is accessible by persons with mobility limitations.

In order to comfortably accommodate groups of walkers, wheelchairs, and the occasional youth on a bicycle, the absolute minimum tread width throughout the system should be 5' (standard sidewalk width). A tread width of 8' on new or rebuilt sections of the trail is the preferred ideal (as right-of-way and topography allow). See Appendix C for detailed design and construction specifications for a trail facility.

The phased construction recommendations apply to the maps found in Appendix B. These maps depict the core current and potential facilities and routes for a River Walk trail system in the Village of Delhi. Existing facilities (sidewalks and trails) important to the system are shown in green.

### Phase 1 – Short Term

The next one-half to one to one and one-half years. These segments of the system are shown in bright yellow on the maps in Appendix B:

- Kingston Street north sidewalk north to River Walk Park – when easements are in place, clear grass in a small (5' wide) swath along the trail easement corridor and replace with

wood chips to add definition to the trail and give visual cue that it is ‘open’ for public use; **OR** immediately seek to implement 8’ stone dust pathway (as in Appendix C) with graded base through site with signage as described above; **AND** place signs at gateways (Kingston Street, River Walk Park entrance from parking area) and a few along the route to reinforce public use status

- River Walk Park to Delaware County building parking lot (northeast edge) – when easements are in place, clear grass in a small (5’ wide) swath along the trail easement corridor and replace with wood chips to add definition to the trail and give visual cue that it is ‘open’ for public use; **OR** immediately seek to implement 8’ stone dust pathway (as in Appendix C) with graded base through site and signage as described above; consider using native floodplain vegetation for landscaping to expand green space along entire parking lot edge; allow for potential handicapped accessible fishing ramp in trail design; seek input from NYS DEC (Fisheries - Boating Access Division) to ensure design is compatible with implementation of accessible fishing ramp; **AND** place signs at gateways (southern & northern edge and mid-point of county building parking lot) and along the route to reinforce public use status



- Smith Pond Park to Delaware Academy – define a pedestrian crossing with signs and pavement markings from parking area trailhead across Route 28 to access road south of Delaware Academy campus playing fields; build stone dust path (as in Appendix C) from access road across playing fields to join existing pedestrian path at tennis courts
- Smith Pond Park to O’Connor Hospital – when easements are in place grade and build stone dust pathway (as in Appendix C) with graded base linking trail south and west of parking area to northeast corner of Hospital parcel and parking lot; construct bridge to cross DOT drainage ditch/structure
- Southwest side of county salt shed property to Legion Ballfields Recreation Complex – when easements are in place mow and grade walking trail through meadow; sign as public trail at southern and northern termini and along route; add sub-base and crusher fine surface (as in Appendix C) only if and when base (underlying soil) is well graded

## **Phase 2 – Medium Term**

Legion Ballfields Recreation Complex

The next one to two years. These segments of the system are shown in gold on the maps in Appendix B:

- Delaware County building parking lot to Main Street – when easement on either south or north side (through alley on north side of bank) of parking lot are in place, clear grass in a small (5’ wide) swath along the trail easement corridor and replace with wood chips to add definition to the trail and give visual cue that it is ‘open’ for public use; **OR** immediately seek to implement 5’-8’ stone dust pathway (as in Appendix C) with graded base through site; **AND** place signs at gateway locations on Main Street and at east edge of parking lot as well as along the route



- Legion Ballfields (south side) to Legion Ballfields (north side) – when easements are in place, clear grass in a small (5’ wide) swath along the trail easement corridor and replace with wood chips to add definition to the trail and give visual cue that it is ‘open’ for public use; **OR** immediately seek to implement 5’-8’ stone dust pathway (as in Appendix C) with graded base through the woods along riverfront on east side of Ballfield Recreation Complex; **AND** place signs at southern and northern segment termini and along the route to reinforce public use status

### **Phase 3 – Long Term**

The next two to four years. These segments of the system are shown in red on the maps in Appendix B:

- Delaware County building parking lot north to Bridge Street **AND/OR** west to Main Street – implement 5’-8’ stone dust pathway (as in Appendix C) to link riverfront corridor with on-road portions along Main Street and Bridge Street; use extra time and funding to explore design alternatives that could be acceptable to neighbor of potential driveway / sewer right-of-way using screening landscaping and structures like latticework arbors
- Smith Pond Park to Old Rail Bed at Sherwood Avenue and Main Street – implement 5’-8’ stone dust pathway (as in Appendix C) with graded base; install ‘mothballed’ former Sherwood Avenue one-lane bridge at one of three locations along river marked with magenta bars to ‘close the loop’ between the Hospital, Delaware Academy campus and parks on the east bank of the river and the strip mall (former Ames), SUNY Delhi, and the Sherwood Avenue residential neighborhood on the west bank of the river
- River Side Park to Smith Pond Park – need significant grant funds or major AmeriCorps project to create stabilized side-hill bench along steep riverbank (possibly using helical pier & boardwalk type structure) to create 5’ wide path
- South Main Street Sidewalk – Work with county to seek DOT Enhancements or Spot Improvement funds to improve and extend 5’ sidewalk south along east side of Main Street south to where the old rail grade meets Sherwood Drive and Main Street
- Old Rail Bed – work with county and surrounding towns to encourage formation of a coalition to acquire and develop 7-mile former rail bed that could link Delhi with the hamlets of DeLancey and Hamden and the latter’s covered bridge
- *Existing Facilities:* While no short-term actions are needed to make these existing facilities walkable, it would be ideal to make some improvements over the long term:
  - Bridge Side Park – widen and surface trail with stone dust (as in Appendix C)
  - Smith Pond Park – re-route and/or re-grade some existing trails (find alternatives to extremely steep slopes), widen, and surface primary trail with stone dust (as in



Trail At Smith Pond Park



Appendix C); upgrade quality and condition of bridges/boardwalks to traverse wetland areas

- Village Sidewalks – consider conducting an inventory to ensure that segments along this priority network are in ideal condition including possible streetscape enhancements and amenities like landscaping and rest benches; it would be valuable to install a center island pedestrian refuge at the entrance of Elm Street at Main Street to enhance pedestrian safety and ease of negotiating this very wide (90') crossing.

## ISSUES RESOLUTION

The breakout groups identified several issues that were of concern and that need to be addressed for trail development to be a success.

### Liability

Liability is always a concern when communities begin to consider multi-use trail development. Fortunately, New York's General Obligations Law section 9-103 provides protections for trail landowners and those living adjacent to the trail. For a good description of the law see Parks & Trails New York's *Getting Started: A Guide to Planning Trails in New York State* and *Getting Involved: A Community Trail Handbook for Landowners*.

*Suggestions:*

- Ask the village insurance agents about whether their liability policy will cover public use of the corridor. The agent may want to know the types of uses that will be allowed. Experience with other municipally owned trails in New York indicates that trails generally have no impact on insurance premiums in contrast to facilities like playgrounds, skate parks, and public swimming pools or beaches.
- Learn about the General Obligations Law to aid in answering questions from landowners regarding liability concerns.

### Safety/Enforcement

Evidence shows that trails are generally very safe. Typically vandalism and other instances of negative use will decrease after an 'out of sight' corridor is converted into an active public trail, because it puts the eyes and ears of responsible adults on it regularly.

In 1998, the Rails to Trails Conservancy studied crime rates on 372 urban, suburban, and rural rail trails across the country and found the incidence of crime to be very low, especially when compared to national crime rates for urban, suburban, and rural areas. The study authors concluded that increased public use, good trail design, and a professional or volunteer trail patrol were important to ensuring trail safety. (The study, "Rail-Trails and Safe Communities," which contains a number of letters offering the perspective of law enforcement officials, can be found at ([www.trailsandgreenways.org/resources](http://www.trailsandgreenways.org/resources)).



Statistics from the Village Police Department show that Delhi is a safe community with low crime rates compared to state and regional rates. The proposed River Walk should echo that quality.

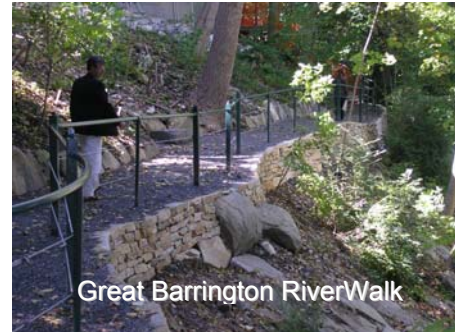
Current experience with the trails at Bridge Side Park and Smith Pond Park has been very positive since they were built. They enjoy strong levels of public use without incident. Currently several segments of the potential River Walk such as the section along the riverfront from the county building parking lot north to Bridge street is clearly used by neighborhood

residents and children as a short-cut route to the swimming hole and the center of town. To date this has occurred without complaints by private residents along the route.

### **Construction & Maintenance Costs**

The Village of Delhi has shown interest in the River Walk concept, but is concerned about its potential cost to the community budget. Many other communities have successfully developed trails with minimal municipal support.

The Great Barrington RiverWalk ([www.gbriverwalk.org](http://www.gbriverwalk.org)) was proposed by a coalition of community residents and environmental organizations that wanted to draw attention to the need to protect natural habitat along the Housatonic River. Using the non-profit status of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy, the coalition obtained donations, grants, and in-kind services and established a funded maintenance and enhancement program, but the community of Great Barrington was so enthusiastic about the new opportunity to walk the river's edge that the village now contributes an annual amount to the organization's budget for enhancements to the corridor.



Ontario Pathways, a grass-roots trail organization in Ontario County, bought and cleared a former rail-bed for public use in spite of active municipal opposition to the concept. They used fundraising and volunteer sweat equity to build, maintain, manage, and insure a valuable community resource.

In Delhi, the Beautification Committee and the Catskill Outdoor Education Corps have developed beautiful community public spaces at Smith Pond, Bridge Side, and River Walk Parks. Each of these facilities has public trails. Because of local donors and support from the O'Connor Foundation, these facilities cost the village nothing to develop and nothing to maintain. The village insures these passive park facilities through its general liability policy, but they have no effect on its premiums. The entire development of a village River Walk system could happen without municipal financial support (except for any desired sidewalk improvements or extensions).



However, the village's ultimate economic health may benefit from at least some local financial commitment to the trail project. Several state grants sources are available to assist with trail development costs. Such grants bring in money from outside the community where they are spent on local services and products. Certain trail-related grants only require a 20% local match meaning that the community would get back \$5 for every one it spent. The match does not need to be in the form of cash to get that outside money flowing. Many donated services, equipment use, or materials count toward meeting the local match. It is certainly possible to raise a sufficient level of matching funds through cash and in-kind support

from groups like the Delhi Beautification Committee, Catskill Outdoor Education Corps, and the O'Connor Foundation. However, if the village were to contribute resources, it would be possible to apply for larger grant amounts and thereby improve the quantity and quality of trail that could be completed during the life of the grant.

Nevertheless, Delhi's community organizations and municipal government have a limited resource base. Neither community groups nor the village government would want to take on a multi-million dollar project that would tie up their scarce resources for several years. A phased development approach using only volunteers from the Delhi Beautification and Community Activities Committees and the AmeriCorps team can certainly build a wonderful trail resource over time. However, enlisting municipal support at the village, town, and county levels will allow more rapid progress and inclusion of trail enhancements that would be unaffordable under a smaller grant scope of work.



## **Planning**

The bottom line for projects like the Delhi River Walk is that visible planning efforts significantly increase the chances of getting funded. State and foundation funders like to see that communities are thinking proactively about the future development and priorities of their community and that their investments will be reinforced by the community's future decisions as indicated by the goals and objectives in its formally adopted plans.

It is recommended that the trail committee develop a formal action plan for the River Walk trail incorporating recommendations contained in this report. An action plan would inventory conditions along the proposed and alternative routes, identify actions needed to bring those conditions to the final desired state, and provide rough estimates (including costs) of resources (human or material) that would be required. This action plan could serve as a blueprint that would guide the efforts and track the progress of the trail committee as well as a key resource to share with potential funders.

It is suggested that the Village of Delhi identify development of the River Walk as a significant community goal by incorporating elements of this report, a route map, and/or a trail action plan as an addendum to its comprehensive plan. It is also suggested that Delhi identify the trail route on its official map. Including the River Walk corridor in Town and County planning documents would also be desirable.

The most recent Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Delhi was adopted in 2002. The zoning code and map have recently been updated. These steps will make federal and state grants for projects, such as the River Walk, more competitive.

## CONTINUED PARKS & TRAILS NEW YORK SUPPORT

Parks & Trails New York recognizes that it takes time, sometimes as much as ten years, to develop the vision and build the constituencies and local support needed to ensure long-term success for trail projects. Parks & Trails New York's Healthy Trails, Healthy People program



anticipates multi-year support for communities that are actively committed to and involved with trail development. With the suggestions found in this report, the ongoing involvement of the Catskill Outdoor Education Corps, and the existing interest and commitment of local citizens, the Village of Delhi is well positioned to move forward with a trail development effort. As the project proceeds, the community is encouraged to contact Parks & Trails New York for further assistance and to apply for a second year of Parks & Trails New York support.



## APPENDIX A – WORKSHOP SURVEY RESULTS

### About You

1. All survey respondents indicated they were from the 13753 zip code, which includes the village proper and those portions of the Town of Delhi and surrounding towns inclusive of the hamlets of Fraser, Lake Delaware, Meredith, and West Delhi.

2. Favorite forms of exercise:

- (10) Walking
- (3) Hiking
- (2) Bicycling
- (2) Running
- (2) Gardening
- (1) Skiing

3. Are you limited in any way in any activities because of physical, mental, or emotional problems?

- (0) Yes
- (12) No
- (2) did not respond

4. Do you now have any health problem that requires you to use special equipment, such as a cane, a wheelchair, a special bed, or a special telephone?

- (0) Yes
- (14) No

5. I use trails for exercise:

- (9) More than once per week
- (1) Once per week
- (1) Once per month
- (3) Occasionally
- (0) Never

6. I engage in moderate physical activity (i.e. brisk walking, a sport, or physically active hobby):

- (6) 5 or more times per week
- (6) 3 times per week
- (0) Once per week
- (2) Occasionally
- (0) Never

7. Finding time to exercise is hard because (check all that apply):

- (4) No time
- (3) No convenient place to exercise
- (1) No safe place to exercise
- (0) No one to do it with
- (1) Not a priority
- (6) No response given

8. If Delhi had a public trail along the river within the village, I would use it for walking or other forms of moderate physical activity

- (1) 5 or more times per week
- (7) 3 or more times per week
- (3) Once per week
- (3) Occasionally
- (0) Never

Reasons offered: 'I have 400 Acres of land with trails' – respondent selected 'Occasionally'

## About the Workshop

9. Help us improve our workshop for other communities. Please rate the following aspects on a scale of 1 to 5

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Strongly Agree (5)
The trail benefits information was useful and relevant		4.3
The physical activity and health information was useful and relevant		4.1
The trail benefits presentation was delivered clearly and professionally		4.2
I learned something new about the benefits of trails	3.3	
The images of other trails helped me visualize what a trail in my community would be like	3.8	
The images of the proposed route/current conditions helped me visualize the proposed project		4.0
The breakout session was a good way to allow everyone's ideas and questions to be heard		4.1
The workshop helped gauge public interest in the trail		4.5
I would recommend the workshop to other communities considering trail development		4.3
I felt my opinions/contributions were heard and respected (6 non-responses)		4.1

10. Suggestions for improving the workshop:

- have maps on overlay
- make the map a projection (slide) so that it can be more easily seen
- shorten the presentation

11. Topics that should have been covered but were not:

- trail extension beyond present limits
- community involvement to help promote projects

12. Suggestions for other persons/groups to be involved:

- no responses given

13. I am interested in helping to develop a community trail

(8) Yes

(0) No

(6) No response

Reasons why? – no responses given

14. I learned about the workshop from:

(3) newspaper

(2) mailing

(2) poster

(2) friend

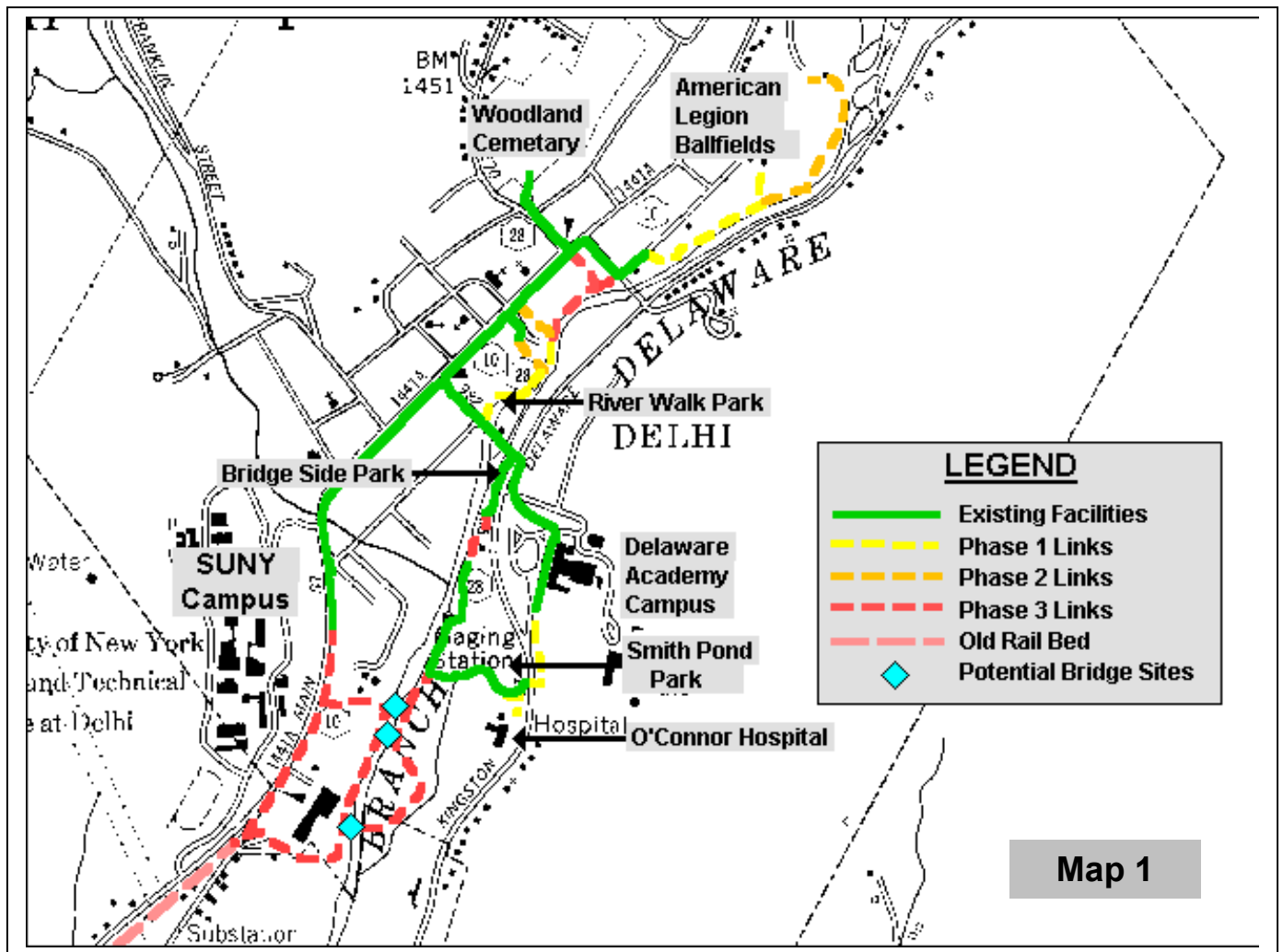
(0) telephone

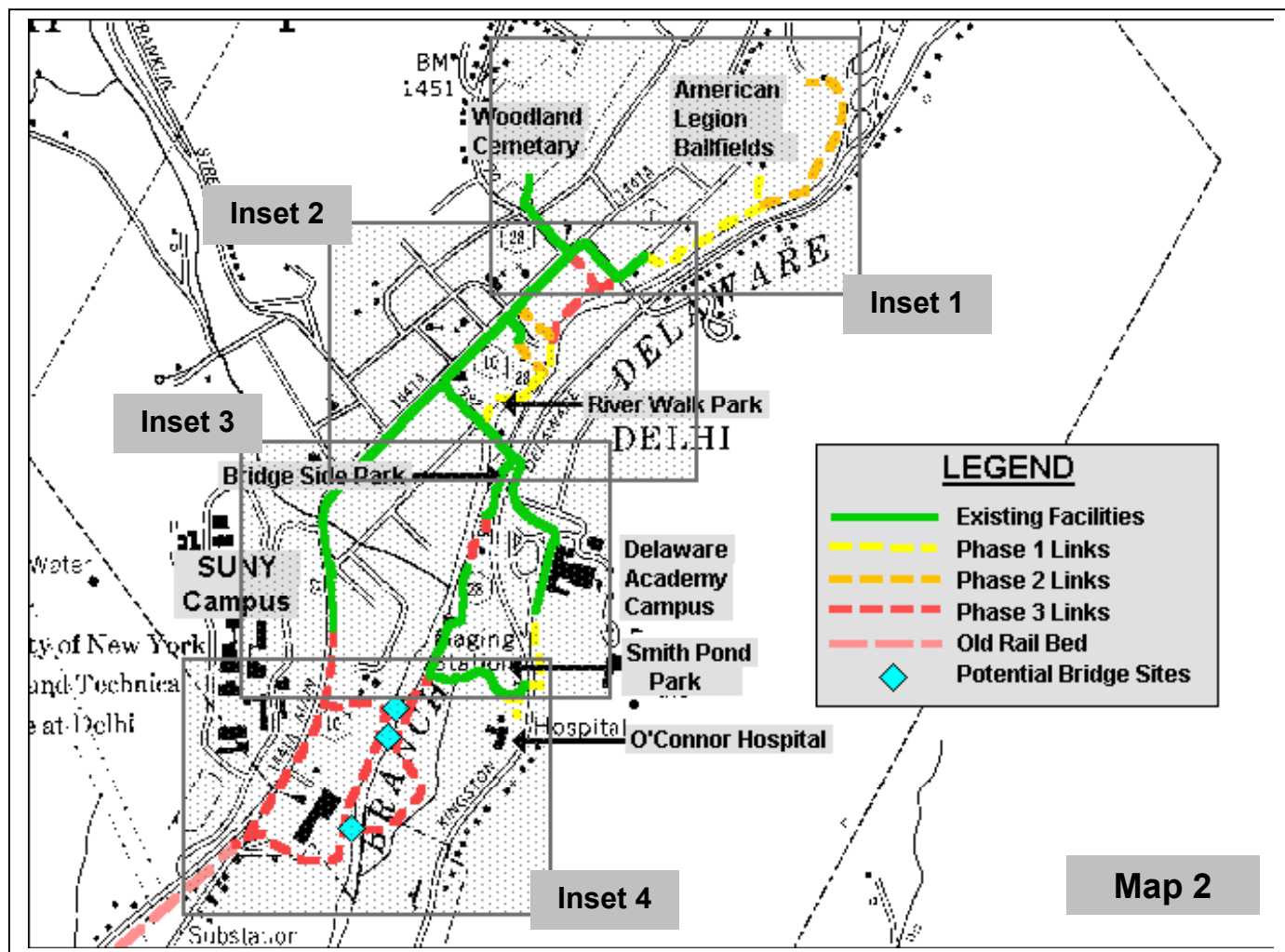
(0) email

(1) other

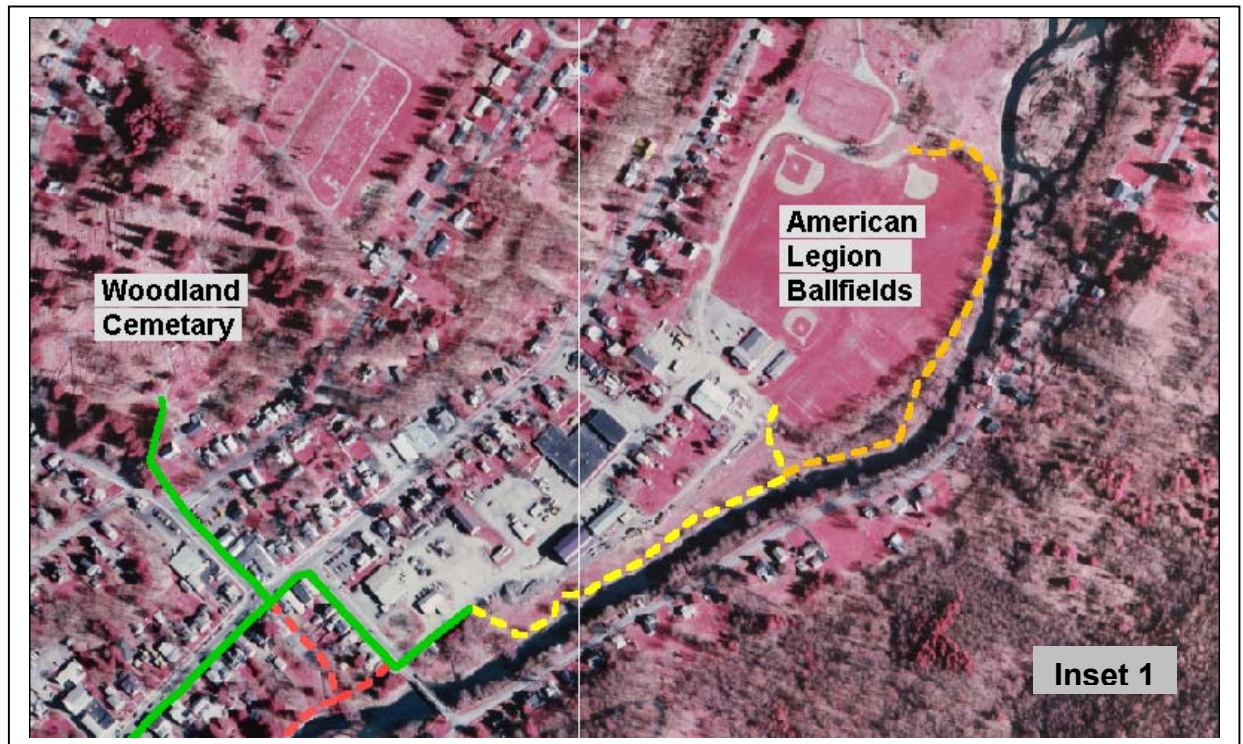
(4) no response given

## APPENDIX B – MAPS

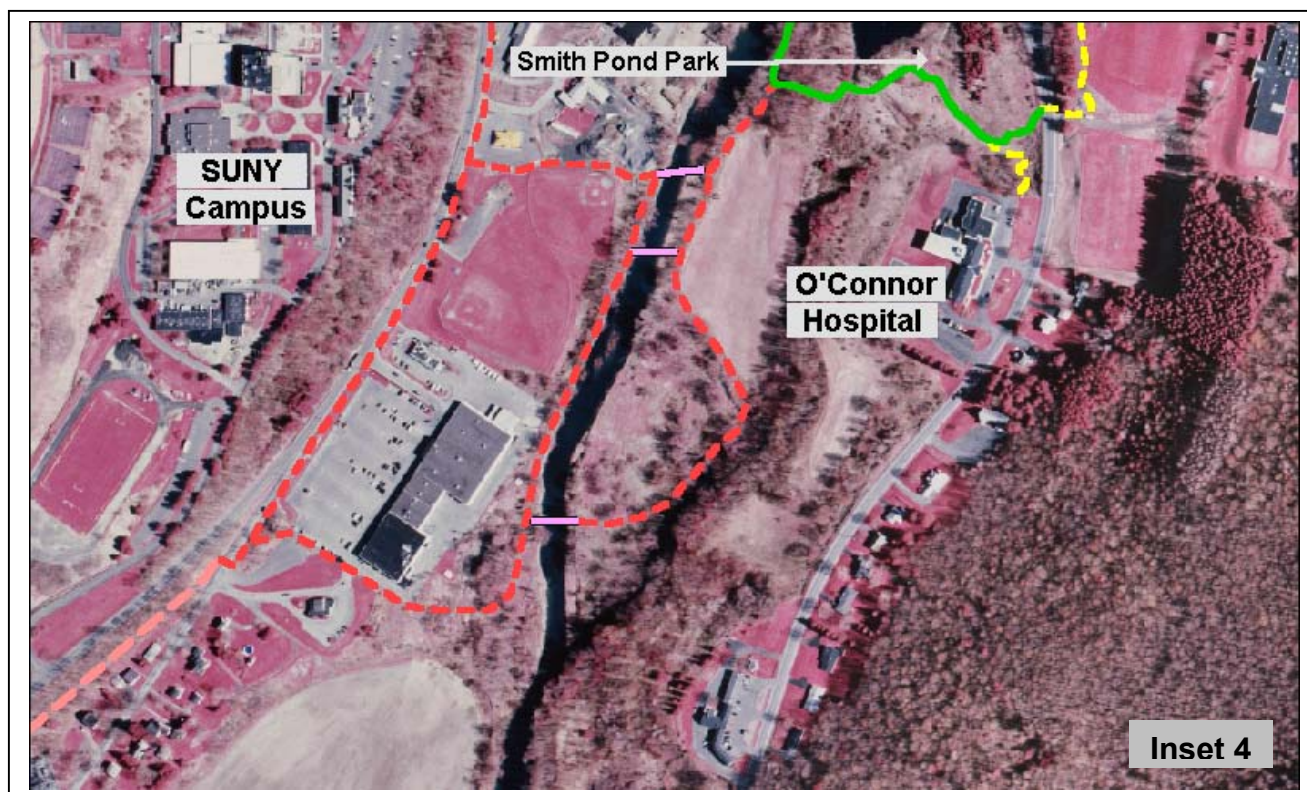
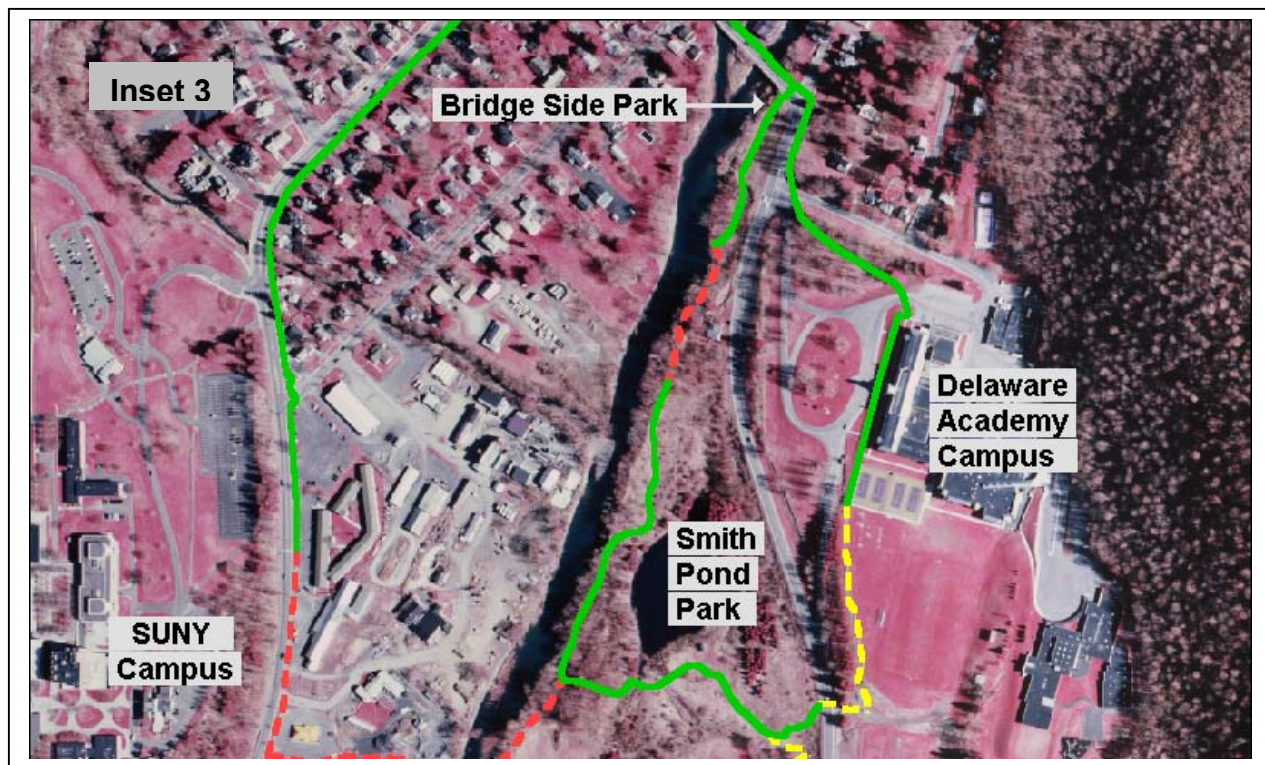


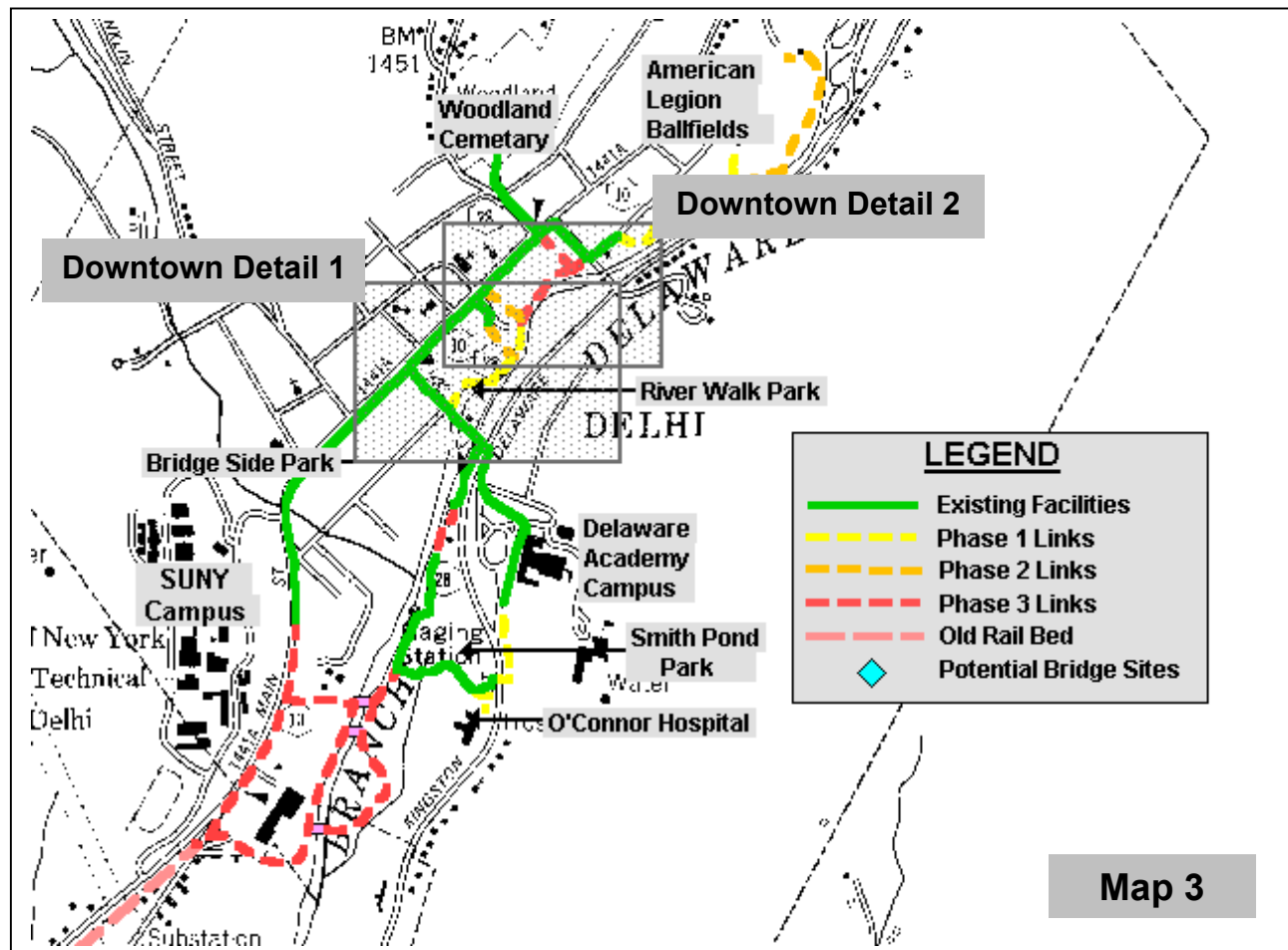




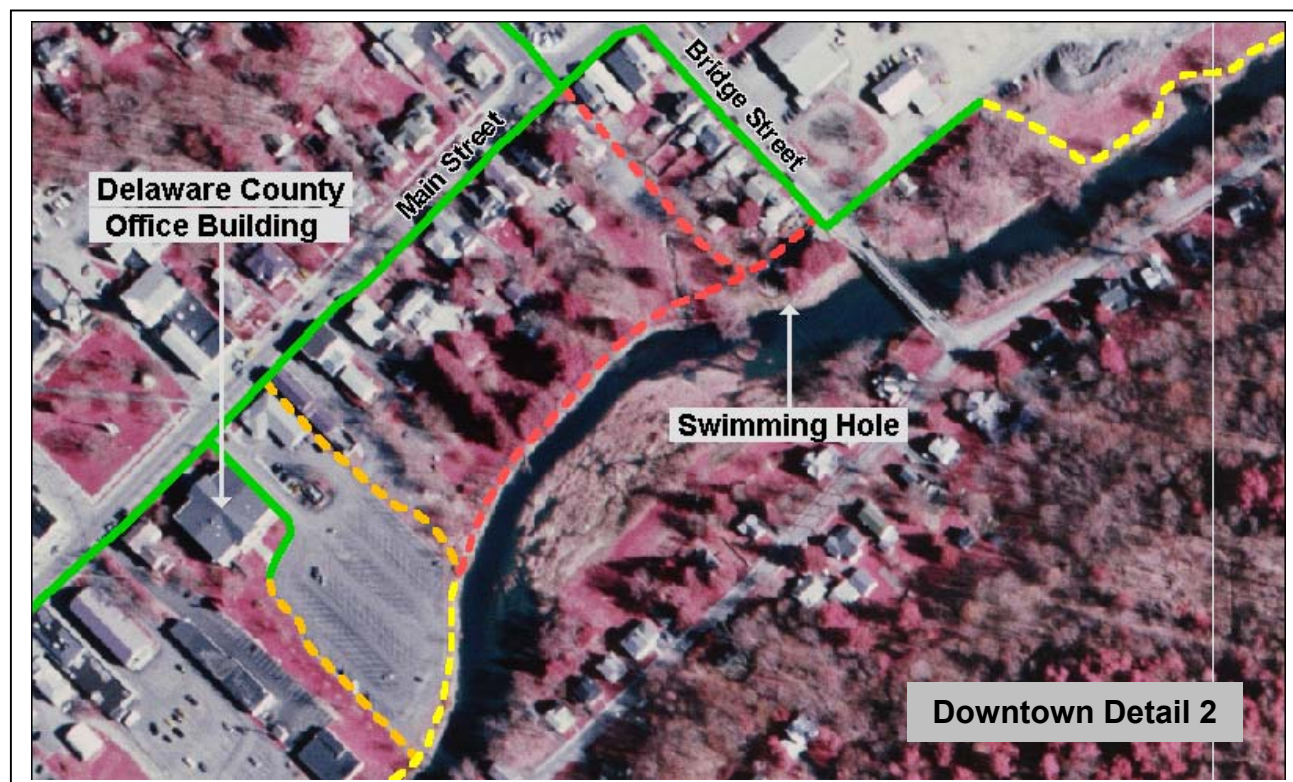








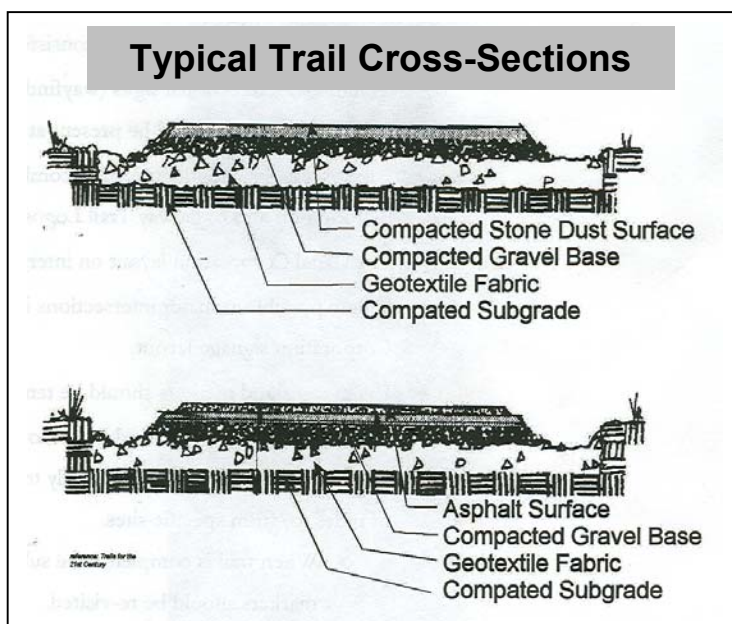




## APPENDIX C – TRAIL CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

### Trail Facility Specifications:

- 5' minimum trail tread width (8' preferred)
- 2' minimum graded clear areas/shoulders (3' preferred)
- Woven geotextile fabric set on undisturbed or compacted sub-grade
- 6" minimum compacted sub-base (NYS DOT Item #304.03 gravel) laid over geotextile
- 2" compacted surface layer of 'stone dust'
- 2" centerline crown to promote surface drainage
- Place rubber strips (commonly used for landscaped bed edges) perpendicularly across trail tread at least every 10 running feet of trail on any slopes with a running grade between 3 and 5 percent to help hold material in and prevent erosion
- Use a 'paved' surface material (asphalt or soil binding resin e.g.) on any slopes with a running grade over 5 percent



### Stone Dust Trail Surfacing Specification Data (Source: NYS Canal Corporation):

**Material Requirements:** Material shall consist of crusher run limestone. All materials furnished should be well graded and free from unsuitable materials.

#### **Gradation:**

Sieve Size Designation	Percent Passing by Weight
6.3mm	100
2.0mm	55-75
425 µm	10-40
75 µm	0-20

**Plasticity Index:** Plasticity Index of the material passing the No. 425µm mesh sieve shall not exceed 5.0.

**Elongated Particles:** Not more than 30 percent, by weight, of the particles retained on a 2.0mm sieve shall consist of flat or elongated particles. A flat or elongated particle is defined herein as having its greatest dimension more than 3 times its least dimension.