

# Manistee County-Wide Trail Committee

## Get Involved

The Manistee County Wide Trail Committee is dedicated to create a trail system that provides recreational opportunities throughout Manistee County with connections to existing trail systems in Northern Michigan by working directly with property owners and the numerous organizations that currently maintain trails throughout Manistee County.

Contact County Planner Rob Carson at 231.723.6041 if you want to be part of the adventure.



## Manistee County-Wide Trail Committee

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## Benefits to the Community

### Economic

Trails and greenways provide countless opportunities for economic renewal and growth. Increased property values and tourism and recreation-related spending on items such as bicycles, in-line skates and lodging are just a few of the ways trails and greenways positively impact community economies.

- A [2013 study](#) provided by the Maryland Office of Tourism Development to the East Coast Greenway Alliance provides data on trail economics.
- [Economic Impacts of the Erie Canal Trail](#) - this is a well-done report that shows compelling evidence that these projects rejuvenate small towns.
- A [compendium of white paper studies and reports](#) about the effects of a rail trail on adjoining property values.
- Assessing the Economic and Livability Value of Multi-Use Trails: [A Case Study](#) into the Tammany Trace Rail Trail in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana.



### Health

A region's trail network will contribute to the overall health of residents by offering people attractive, safe, accessible places to bike, walk, hike, jog, skate, and possibly places to enjoy water-based trails. In short, trail networks create better opportunities for active lifestyles. The design of our communities—including towns, subdivisions, transportation systems, parks, trails and other public recreational facilities—affects people's ability to reach the recommended 30 minutes each day of moderately intense physical activity (60 minutes for youth). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Physical inactivity causes numerous physical and mental health problems, is responsible for an estimated 200,000 deaths per year, and contributes to the obesity epidemic"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. \(1996\). Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General.](#)

In identifying a solution, the CDC determined that by creating and improving places in our communities to be physically active, there could be a 25 percent increase in the percentage of people who exercise at least three times a week.<sup>2</sup> This is significant considering that for people who are inactive, even small increases in physical activity can bring measurable health benefits.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, as people become more physically active outdoors, they make connections with their neighbors that contribute to the health of their community.

Many public agencies are teaming up with foundations, universities, and private companies to launch a new kind of health campaign that focuses on improving people's options instead of reforming their behavior. A 2005 Newsweek Magazine feature, *Designing Heart-Healthy Communities*, cites the goals of such programs (italics added): "The goals range from updating restaurant menus to restoring mass transit, but the most visible efforts focus on making the built environment more conducive to walking and cycling."<sup>4</sup> Clearly, the connection between health and trails is becoming common knowledge. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy puts it simply: "Individuals must choose to exercise, but communities can make that choice easier."

- [Health and Wellness Benefits of Trails](#)



## Quality of Life

Quality of life can be defined in many ways but consistently residents in areas where non-motorized trails are developed feel that their quality of life is improved. The increased recreational opportunities, health benefits being able to exercise more easily, safer and more enjoyable non-motorized transportation options, and increased sense of community pride are all commonly listed ways in which residents feel their quality of life has improved.

- [Rural Trails Survey Data](#)
- [A tale of three greenway trails: user perceptions related to quality of life](#)
- [Impact of Trails and Trail Use](#)
- [The Impacts of Rail-Trails, A Study of Users and Nearby Property Owners from Three Trails, National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program](#)



<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2002). Guide to Community Preventive Services.

<sup>3</sup> Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. (2006) Health and Wellness Benefits.

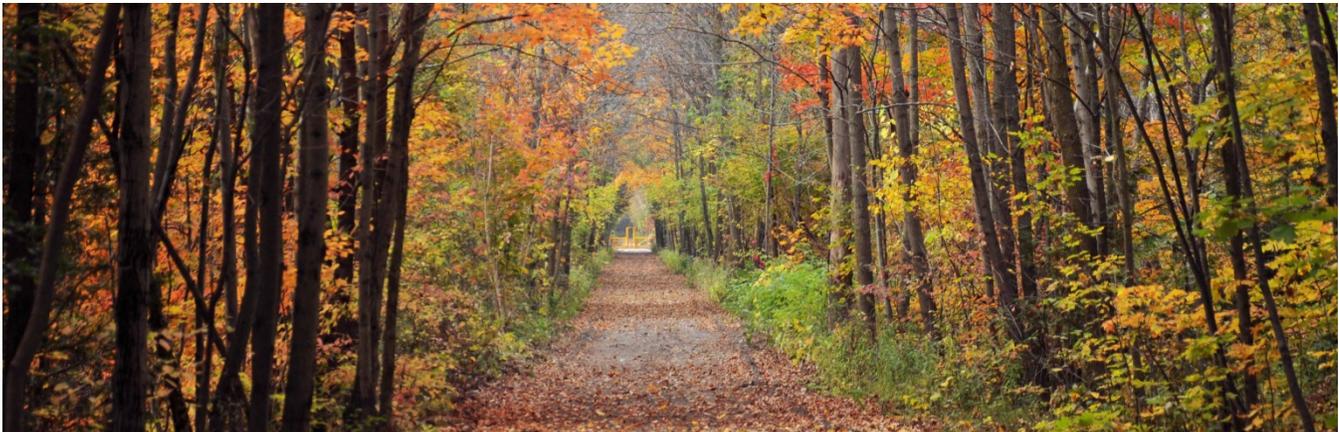
<sup>4</sup> Newsweek Magazine. (10/3/2005). Designing Heart-Healthy Communities.

## 5 Primary Concerns for Landowners Adjacent to Greenways

### Future Property Value

There are many examples, both nationally and locally, that affirm the positive connection between greenspace and property values (American Planning Association. (2002). How Cities Use Parks for Economic Development.) Residential properties will realize a greater gain in value the closer they are located to trails and greenspace. According to a 2002 survey of recent homebuyers by the National Association of Home Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders, trails ranked as the second most important community amenity out of a list of 18 choices (National Association of Realtors and National Association of Home Builders. (2002). Consumer's Survey on Smart Choices for Home Buyers.) Additionally, the study found that 'trail availability' outranked 16 other options including security, ball fields, golf courses, parks, and access to shopping or business centers. Findings from the Trust for Public Land's Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space, and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways (listed below) illustrate how this value is realized in property value across the country.

- *"Research shows that homes near trails often have higher property value, with a price premium ranging from five to ten percent in most studies."* – [Headwaters Economics. Measuring Trails Benefits: Property Value](#)



### Property Damage, Trespassing and Crime

Many landowners adjacent to potential greenways are rightfully worried about the impact of the potential trail may have upon crime, trespassing and property damage. Because of these concerns this has been a heavily studied topic across the US after trails have been built and the results of those studies are encouraging. This is best illustrated by a review summary of research articles on this topic:

*"Research suggests that crime rates are lower because the frequent use and busy areas tend to deter opportunistic crimes. People worry that greenways will attract strangers that may be potential criminals but contrary to the concern the majority of users are local citizens. In fact public use of greenways by locals is an innate deterrent to unlawful behavior in isolated areas"* - [Greenways Impact Research Review Summary](#)

- [Greenways and Crime On Nearby Properties: An Investigation of Reported Crimes Along Three Greenways.](#)

## Landowner Liability

While concerns about liability are understandable, real-world experience shows that neither public nor private landowners have suffered from trail development. The State of Michigan has laws that substantially limit public and private landowner liability. State law protects private landowners who open their land to the public for recreation as long as they do not charge a fee, and abstain from "willful and wanton misconduct" against trespassers such as recklessly or intentionally creating a hazard.



## Privacy

In designing the layout of the trail, the privacy of the adjacent landowners will be considered and steps will be taken to maintain the privacy of those land owner's properties. Potential steps that may be taken include trees, shrubs, fences and/or other landscaping.



## Partnership

All access through private property would have to be negotiated with landowners. Cities and Counties that have the trail defined in their Recreation Plan may require developers to dedicate a trail easement through any new development, much in the same way they can require a road, sidewalk, or park space. Many communities have used financial or other incentives to developers that make it worthwhile for the landowner to actually construct the trail themselves. However, the trail will usually be constructed by municipalities working with private and public landowners in willing partnerships for the betterment of their community.