Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

Prepared for the Town of Richlands, VA
October, 2013
Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

PROJECT TEAM

Elizabeth Gilboy
Director

Lara Browning
Landscape Architecture Project Coordinator

Matthew Dunn
Undergraduate Student, Landscape Architecture

Jen Jessup
Landscape Designer

Alyssa Malobicky
Undergraduate Student, Landscape Architecture

CDAC Team Members: Jen Jessup, Alyssa Malobicky, Elizabeth Gilboy, Matt Dunn, and Lara Browning
Acknowledgments

Rod Cury
Richlands Vice Mayor

Lynna Mitchell
Tazewell County Free Press

Richard Smith
Richlands Planning Commission Chairman

James Taylor
Richlands Public Works Director

Timothy Taylor
Richlands Town Manager

Richard Vance
Richlands Customer Service Representative

Members of the Planning Commission
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Project Description**  
5

**Design Process & Site Visit**  
7

**Inventory & Analysis**  
8

**Preliminary Design Concepts**  
28  
- Clinch River Access Points  
31  
- 4th Street and River’s Edge  
32  
- Front Street and Incubator Park  
33  
- Swinging Bridge Park  
34

**Community Meeting**  
35

**Final Design Concepts**  
36  
- Route Options  
40  
- Conceptual Master Plan  
41  
- Trail Zones and Identification Map  
42  
- Front Street and Incubator Park  
43  
- Case Studies: Railroad Crossings  
45  
- Supply Yark Parking Lot  
46  
- Buffers  
47  
- Swinging Bridge Park  
50  
- Riparian Buffer Planting Species  
51  
- Sustainable Materials  
52  
- Greenway and Property Values  
53

**Conclusion**  
54

**Appendix**  
55
Richlands, a small town in the mountains of southwest Virginia, is located near the origins of the Clinch River, a 135 mile river which flows through the Great Appalachian Valley before joining the Tennessee River. The Clinch, along with the Powell River, is considered one of the only ecologically intact (undammed) headwaters of the Tennessee River system and is the home of a number of rare and endangered species.¹

Originally established as a planned community whose economy would be supported by mining of rich coal deposits, Richlands was intended to be the Pittsburgh (PA) of the South by the Clinch Valley Coal and Iron Company of Philadelphia. The coming of the Norfolk & Western Railroad supported the capital investment to create a town that would manufacture products such as steel, brick, and glass. It also showcased the deluxe Hotel Richlands and other businesses as well as residential areas. Because the Town was uniquely situated along the Clinch River, the plan encompassed development and growth along both sides of the river. One particular stretch of railway, which paralleled the Clinch River, was used for transporting raw materials for brick manufacturing. It was this piece of original railroad track bed that paved a way to the future. In 2000, the Town of Richlands received a Transportation Enhancement grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to create a
Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

walking trail along the old railroad track in order to connect the Williams Field/Critterville Playground to downtown Richlands.\(^2\) The trail's official name is the Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway. A portion of the trail was built, but plans to connect the trail to downtown Richlands were not completed.

The Community Design Assistance Center was tasked with developing a conceptual design for a greenway that extends the existing walking trail approximately 1.67 miles to complete the connection to downtown and a historic swinging bridge. The goal would be to provide increased benefits and equal access to the river for the larger community.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Taken from the Nature Conservancy (1/29/13)  
\(<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/tennessee/placesweprotect/clinch-river.xml>\)  
\(^2\)Taken from the Town of Richlands Application (2/25/13)  
\(^3\)Taken from the Town of Richlands Application (2/25/13)
DESIGN PROCESS & SITE VISIT

The design process began with an initial site visit to Cleveland in June 2013. The CDAC team met with project stakeholders and walked along sections of the Clinch River and downtown Richlands to assess possible route options and focal areas. By gathering on-site data and documenting the site, the team was able to understand the opportunities and constraints for the greenway extension. This analysis would later influence the design concepts.

After careful consideration of all the factors, a set of preliminary conceptual design alternatives were developed and presented to the community in July, 2013. The team worked closely with the community members to better understand their vision for the greenway. After the presentation, tables were set up with different focal areas of the greenway where community members could discuss their interests. Based on community feedback, the design alternatives were then revised and combined into a final conceptual master plan.

The final master plans were presented at a second and final community meeting in September, 2013.
During the initial site visit to Richlands, the team inventoried existing site elements and analyzed site conditions. The inventory was predominantly based on topography, property ownership, vehicular and railroad circulation, open space areas, views, surrounding landscape character, potential access points to the river, and potential access points to the greenway from residential neighborhoods and the hospital. These items became the foundation for analysis studies that would lead to a conceptual understanding of possible routing options for the trail system.

The inventory and analysis maps can be seen on the following pages.
Richlands, VA
Inventory
"Brown's Field"
Potential Park Space
1:150

North

Existing Businesses
- Richlands Shopping Mall
- Parking lots
- Storage yards
- Private businesses

Possible Trail and Park Space
- Private property
- Adjoining Church
- Open green space

Residential

Civic
- Church property for sale
- Baptist Church

Swinging Bridge
- Pedestrian Transportation Access

Automobile Circulation

Clinch River

Inventory: Swinging Bridge Area

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DENSE TREES
WATER TANK
DENSE TREES

community design
assistance center

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Richlands, VA
Inventory
“Second St. Bridge” Potential Trail Entry
1:150

North

- Attractions
  - Farmers Market
  - Veterans Memorial
  - Brick Sculpture
  - Town Mural

- Residential

- Existing Businesses
  - Auto Repair
  - Shopping Districts
  - Private Businesses

- Municipal
  - Police Department

- Existing
  - Britt’s Park
  - Baseball Fields

- Urban Forested

- Automobile Circulation

- Railroad Circulation

- Clinch River
Inventory: Critterville Area

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Richlands, VA
Critterville Park Inventory
Scale 1:150

- Residential
- Commercial
- Urban Forest
- Existing Critterville Park
  - Baseball Fields
  - Playground
  - Basketball courts

- Existing Greenway
- Beginning of ascending gravel road

END OF EXISTING GREENWAY, POTENTIALLY CONTINUE TRAIL UP TO EXISTING GRAVEL ROAD AND SUPPLY YARD

EXISTING BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTIAL CLUSTERS HAVE NO DIRECT ENTRANCE INTO PARK

BEAUTIFUL VIEW OF HILLSIDE
VERY STEEP DROP

HP: 2168'
LP: 1923'

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Richlands’ Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

SITE ANALYSIS: 2

Very poor connection to neighborhoods on opposite side of Front St. Crosswalk and sidewalks needed.

Opportunity to connect residential and local businesses to trail.

Beautiful path established along bank through trailer park.

River St
Page St
Patton St
Allen St

Browns Field, potential nature park space, picnic area and access point to river.

Clinch St
460
Front St

Very narrow between building and bank. Bank restoration needed.

July 11, 2013

Richlands Walking Trail Extension
Trailer Park and Brown’s Field Site Analysis
No safe connection from residential neighborhoods to reach trail. Potential to make path going under 460

Temporary bridge for construction. Potential to keep bridge for trail crossover.

Possible end of trail connection to local businesses.

Vegnarow with underground power lines.
SITE ANALYSIS: 4

Potential to connect adjacent neighborhood

Tall grassland provides for an aesthetically pleasing section of trail and a buffer edge

Provide buffer for Private Property

Flat for trail to go on either side of stream

Possible connection from park to trail

Potential Crossover

Brown's Garden, potential sanctuary and passive area for picnics

Stretch of relatively flat land at bottom of slope

Potential Crossover

Private Properties

Potential to put trail on upper base

Potential to connect adjacent neighborhood

CLINCH RIVER

Richlands, VA
Site Analysis
1:500

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Richlands Walking Trail Extension

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Business Incubator and Front St. Bridge Site Analysis
Richlands Walking Trail Extension

Route Options

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North Richlands, VA

Site Analysis

Proposed Trail, Phase 2

Existing Trail, Critterville

Clinch River

Railroad Circulation

Second St.

Front St.

460

Railroad Ave.

Fairfax Ave.

Rockbridge Ave.

460

SCALE

0' 500' 1000' 250'

Minor Condition Issue
- No sidewalks
- Narrow space

Few Limitations
- Clear vegetation

Major Condition Issue
- Steep slopes
- Private property
- Heavy traffic

Primary Route Option

Infrastructure
- Improvements Needed

Richlands Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

Site Analysis: Route Options
Richlands Walking Trail Extension

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Potential Design Areas

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North Richlands, VA

Site Analysis

Proposed Trail, Phase 2

Existing Trail, Critterville

Clinch River Proposed Trail, Phase 1

Trail Scenarios Trail Character

Trail Character: Natural

Potential Amenities:
- Nature Park
- Community Gardens
- Wild Flower Garden
- Open Recreational Space
- Small Playground

Access Points

Event Pavilions

Trail Character: Urban

Potential Amenities:
- Connection to commercial district with the addition of an underpass

Trail Character: Natural

Potential Amenities:
- Connection to Historic District Neighborhood and Clinch River

Trail Character: Natural and Urban

Potential Amenities:
- Front Street property as potential pocket park and public entry point for walking trail.
- Supply Yard to be potentially used as parking area
- Incubator green space as potential downtown pocket park

Focus Areas

460 Front Street

Clinch River

Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design
After analyzing potential routes for the greenway, the design team chose to focus on several spaces along the greenway that either provided opportunities for parks and greenspace or offered challenges that needed further attention. These focal areas included Clinch River access points, the greenway along 4th Street, potential greenspace areas along Front Street and near the Business Incubator, and a potential park near the historic swinging bridge. The initial concepts for each of these areas are on the following pages.

**Clinch River Access Points**

In determining the best locations for access points along the Clinch River, the CDAC team considered multiple factors. First and foremost, topography was important. Access points should be in areas that have a gentle grade leading up to the river to minimize erosion and the need for construction. In addition, the team located potential access points that were or could be on public land. The team also took into consideration whether the access points should be within existing recreational areas or on developed land to prevent damage to riparian corridors. Locating the access points at opposite ends of the greenway would allow for pickup and dropoff locations to increase ease of maintenance.

When implementing the access points, it is recommended that pervious surfaces be used to reduce runoff, thereby protecting soil and controlling erosion. During construction, use erosion and sediment control measures such as silt fences, filter strips, and temporary vegetation cover, to prevent sediment from entering wetlands or open water. When necessary, restore eroding stream/riverbanks adjacent to the river access point. If not addressed, these banks will continue to erode and effect the health of the river and potentially threaten the structural integrity of the access point. After the access points are created, it is recommended that the riparian corridors in these areas be restored. Riparian buffers aid in filtering stormwater runoff, reducing flooding of developed areas, and preventing erosion problems. They also provide shade for streams and help rivers maintain a healthy aquatic life population. Streams lacking shade will suffer from higher water temperatures, thereby negatively impacting aquatic life.
**4th Street and River’s Edge**

Locating the greenway near 4th Street offers a number of challenges. In this area, there are private properties along the river with homes relatively close to the river’s edge. In addition, the slope of the river bank is steep on both sides of the river making greenway infrastructure more costly and difficult. In considering options for greenway placement, the team chose to place the greenway at the top of the slope on the residential side of the river, locating it above the steep river bank, but as far away from private residences as possible. In order to give residents more privacy, the design incorporates a strong buffer along this section of the greenway with private entrances for each residence. In addition, a fishing dock and scenic overlook was placed across from the Christian Academy to provide a safe viewing platform for residents and children.

**Front Street and Incubator Park**

Two greenspaces were identified as potential parks along the greenway near Front Street and the Business Incubator. These greenspaces are located near the heart of downtown and provide the opportunity to strengthen the appeal of downtown for both residents and tourists. In the park next to the Business Incubator, an entry patio provides seating and contains a kiosk with informational signage for Richlands. This signage could consist of a map of downtown featuring important destinations and could allow for events to be posted. Stepping down from the entry plaza, a patio with tables and chairs creates a space for people to have their lunch outside near the river. In addition, a more private resting area is located farther away from Front Street. This patio is well planted with shrubs and shade-trees to create a sense of privacy, yet maintains sightlines into the space for safety. It also provides a shaded nook for reading or resting.
Along Front Street, another pocket park was located after the bridge and before Veterans Drive. This park offers access to the greenway from downtown and provides a potential resting space with views of the river. An information kiosk, providing information on the greenway, is located at the entry to the park. Terraced grass and stone steps lead down to the trail. The steps provide a relaxed atmosphere and a space to lounge in the sun, picnic, and enjoy the trail.

Swinging Bridge Park

A series of greenspaces were identified near the swinging bridge that when joined could create a strong terminus to the greenway and could be used to create a park that offers new amenities to Richlands. A river access point is located on a church property that is currently for sale. The church could be used for restrooms and other services, while its parking lot could be expanded to create additional parking for the park. Other potential amenities in the park could include community gardens, a wildflower garden, a nature-based playground, a dog park, and pavilions with open greenspace for gatherings and family reunions. Additional amenities that could be considered, but are not drawn on the plan, are a concert event space, outdoor fitness equipment, bird houses, a designated fishing spot, and additional resting areas.
Richlands’ Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

Clinch River Access Points

Existing
- Britts Park
- Baseball Fields, Municipal Critterville Park

Potential Park Land
(Public Property)

Urban Forested
Vegetated areas

Proposed Trail, Phase 2

Existing Trail, Critterville

Clinch River Proposed Trail, Phase 1

Critterville Park Public Access Point

Access Points
to Clinch River

Parking
Wheelchair accessible

SCALE

0' 500' 1000' 250'

Clinch Valley Medical Center

Richlands, VA
North Concept

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31

Richlands Walking Trail Extension

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Clinch River Access Points

Swinging Bridge Public Access Point

460 Second St.
Front Street
Railroad Ave

The Clinch River Access Points

Preliminary Design Concepts...
Richlands’ Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

4th Street and River’s Edge

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Section Drawing
Facing Northeast

Potential View of Buffered Trail Behind Private Properties

Potential Fishing Dock/Scenic Overlook

Not To Scale

Richland’s Walking Trail Extension
Concept Diagram, 4th Street and River’s Edge

0’ 60’ 120’ 240’

SCALE

COMMUNITY DESIGN ASSISTANCE CENTER

Reflection University
S t a t e  U n i v e r s i t y

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Richlands Walking Trail Extension

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Concept Diagram: Front St. and Incubator Park

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Additional Amenities to Consider:
- Concert Event Space
- Bird Houses
- Designated Fishing Spot and platform
- Parking
- Point of Interest
- Buffer
- Dense Vegetation
- Cross Walk
- Wheelchair-accessible
- Attractions: Coffee Station Café
- Water Access Point
- Sustainable Circulation
- Pedestrian Circulation
- Feeding

Richlands Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension

PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPTS

Front Street and Incubator Park
A community meeting was held in July, 2012 at the Business Incubator. The purpose of this meeting was to present the preliminary conceptual designs and to collaboratively move closer toward a single, final conceptual master plan. Members of the community provided feedback on the greenway route options and each of the focal areas. Based on this feedback, the CDAC team refined the concepts.

Before the final presentation, a group of stakeholders from Richlands came to Virginia Tech to review the drawings and provide additional feedback. Based on the stakeholder’s comments and suggestions, the CDAC team further refined the concepts to create a final conceptual master plan.
Greenway Route Options

At the preliminary conceptual design meeting, the CDAC team was asked to explore different options in the 4th Street area and to consider connecting the greenway to Britts Park. The final conceptual design offers a greenway spur trail that connects the greenway to a fishing area behind Magic City shopping center and Britts Park. The trail travels along the river until a proposed bridge crossing near 4th Street and Floyd Avenue, connecting back to the greenway at Rockbridge Avenue. The greenway along 4th Street was shifted from behind the residences along the river to 4th Street proper. Depending on funds, either one or both of these trails could be implemented. The greenway option following the river crosses private land, and landowners must be willing to consent to a public access easement. All public access easements secured in cooperation with private landowners should be recorded. Easement agreements should include clear terms and guidance related to development activities, maintenance, and routine site monitoring. Each landowner that agrees to grant a public access easement should have a clear and concise understanding of what they are agreeing to provide for the public benefit, and the easement should provide assurance that the site will be appropriately developed, patrolled, and well maintained.

Trail Zones and Identification

In addition to the greenway route and master plan, the final master plan included a conceptual plan for trail zones and identification. This plan partitions the greenway extension into five zones: the historic zone, the wildlife zone, the woodland zone, the waters edge zone, and the recreational zone. Each zone is defined by amenities and attributes that reflect the character of that zone and a corresponding color. For example, the historic zone would have interpretive signs about the history of Richlands and the trail markings could be the color purple. Artwork and details of the trail could incorporate the Richlands brick, coal mining history, and elements of the railroad. For example, lighting could take the form of a coal miner’s hat. Not only would this add character and interest to the trail, but also, such elements assist in the ability of people to easily identify their location on the trail. This is important for both general wayfinding and safety and rescue.
Front Street and Incubator Park

Front Street and Incubator Park remained very similar to the initial conceptual design. In Front Street park, however, a plaza/stage area was designated at the bottom of the grass terraced steps. This allows the space to be utilized not only for lounging and picnicking, but also for viewing performances and other events.

In addition to the Incubator Park concept, the final design shows an option for creating additional parking and explores how the greenway would pass under the railroad trellis that crosses the river at this point.

Supply Yard Parking Lot

As part of the final design, CDAC developed a concept for an additional focal area: the current Town supply yard. This space, located off of South Front Street, connects to the greenway via an old dinky track, which was a small gauge railroad track used to haul brick with a small locomotive known as a “dinkey”. This area is large and relatively flat and could be used to provide parking for the greenway. The supply yard could also act as a connector to the Christmas Tree Hill spur trail and to communities along Veterans Drive. This area would also be utilized as an EMT access point. As part of the historic zone, railroad ties could be utilized as parking curbs. Amenities could include a bike maintenance station and benches placed on viewing platforms that overlook the Town.

Buffers

As part of the final design, the CDAC team also looked at ways to create buffers for private residences and commercial areas. Three scenarios were developed, including a section through the Wildlife Zone, along 4th Street, and in the commercial district next to Front Street bridge. The section through the Wildlife Zone exhibits how the greenway might look in areas where the greenway is on both sides of the river and near private residences. On the west side of the river, a vegetative
buffer provides privacy for the residences. Flat land allows for a paved greenway which tolerates flooding. A riparian buffer is established between the greenway and the river to prevent soil erosion and stabilize the river banks. On the east side of the river, there is a small section where the proximity to private residences and the steep river banks limit the space available for the greenway. In this section, the banks would need to be stabilized and a boardwalk would allow for greenway passage. This boardwalk would be consistent with creating a “wildlife” zone and would allow visitors to be closely connected to the river.

Along 4th Street, several options for addressing the greenway along the road are presented. The first option provides an example of an optimal greenway experience. Pedestrian and cyclists are separated into different lanes. The bike lane is along the street and separated from the trail by a row of street trees. A dense vegetative buffer separates the trail from residential yards. In the second scenario, cyclists and pedestrians are separated by a smaller vegetative buffer with a fence and street trees are combined with the residential buffer. In the third scenario, cyclists and pedestrians are separated by a curb. This scenario requires the least amount of space.

The buffer in the commercial district next to Front Street bridge utilizes artistic panels to create a visual accent along the trail and to separate the greenway from the commercial parking lot. The panels could contain murals and various forms of artwork or could be planted with vegetation to create a living green screen. This type of buffer works well in areas where space is limited.

Swinging Bridge Park

During the initial presentation, members of the community expressed interest in incorporating additional recreational fields into the Swinging Bridge Park. The CDAC team analyzed the space for different types of fields. Baseball and large soccer fields required too much space to be incorporated on the site. The space did allow for a middle school-sized soccer field; however, this was incorporated into the plan as an open field. The wildflower garden, previously in this area, was relocated.
near the pavilions with grills. A drop-off parking zone was also added along Page Street to provide easier loading and unloading access for people utilizing the pavilions. Lastly, the dog park, playground, and community gardens were further developed.

A plant list for riparian buffer species to be utilized along the river corridor, suggestions for sustainable materials, and information on the effect of greenways on property values can be found at the end of this section. Additional information on the impact of greenways on property values and safety can be found in the Appendix.

The following pages include the final conceptual master plan and route options, final conceptual designs for the focus areas, and supportive drawings and materials.
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FINAL DESIGN CONCEPTS
Trail Zones and Identification Map

Trail Zones and Identification Map

Richlands Walking Trail Extension
September 24, 2013

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- Front Street Park provides access point to walking trail. The grassy stone terraces create an amphitheater for lounging on the hillside and observing.
- Kiosks for orientation and town information in accordance with CRW sign standards.
- Incubator Park provides outdoor space for downtown and trail users.
- ADA accessible fishing pier
- Offer different types of destination spaces, passive and active
Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

FINAL DESIGN CONCEPTS

Front Street and Incubator Park

PERSPECTIVE OF FRONT ST. & INCUBATOR PARK
Depicting fishing pier (left) and trail with seating (right)
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Case Studies: Railroad Crossings

TRAILS PASSING UNDER RAIL LINES

1. Mississippi River Trail crosses under an active rail line in Rock Island, Illinois.
2. Trail descends from river levee to cross under rail line in Rock Island, Illinois.
3. Trail passes under rail line along the Walnut Creek greenway in North Carolina. Automobilies are prohibited.
4. Trail passing under rail line along the Pa’Rus trail in Arizona.
5. Trail passes under rail line along the Alameda greenway in California.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ON RAILROAD TRACKS

Case Studies: Railroad Crossings

Richlands Walking Trail Extension

September 24, 2013
- Permeable environmentally-friendly parking surface
- Parking lot and trail head provide a place for people to access the walking trail
- Kits for orientation along the trail in accordance with CRV1 signage standards
- Views of downtown and river
- Connection to the walking trail for nearby communities
- Potential for historic details to be incorporated into site materials
Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

FINAL DESIGN CONCEPTS

Buffers

Richlands Walking Trail Extension

Private Residence Greenway Buffer

SECTION THRU WILDLIFE ZONE
4th STREET GREENWAY BUFFER OPTIONS

OPTION A

OPTION B

OPTION C

SECTIONS
Richlands’ Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

FINAL DESIGN CONCEPTS

Buffers

Locator Map

Perspective of Commercial Greenway Buffer
• Wildflower gardens for bird and butterfly-viewing
• Pavilions for social occasions with ample lawn areas and grills
• Kiosks for orientation in accordance with OWI sign standards
• Access points for boats and pedestrians
• Riparian buffers to minimize pollutants entering the river and to stabilize the river’s edge
• Playground focusing on motor-skills and creative play
Richlands’ Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

Final Design Concepts

Sustainable Materials

Eliminating negative environmental impact through sensitive design

Fiberglass boardwalks have been known for their light weight, high strength and attractiveness when built within the natural environment. Maintenance on these sidewalks is generally low due to fiberglass being unaffected by termites and most chemicals allowing it not to rot or rust. fiberglass boardwalks provide the same advantages as well as give an aesthetically pleasing experience through the environment at a low elevation.

Shaded LED lighting on roadway lights and bridge lights reduces the amount of light pollution and creates an aesthetically pleasing experience along the trail. The use of LED lighting reduces annual costs and had a longer life span than the most common outdoor lighting.

Erosion control methods prevent large amounts of soil loss from wind and water. Options for preserving and maintaining the banks of the Clinch River where a greenway could potentially be close to are to strengthen the soil and reduce runoff with dense vegetation. Having drains, such as a trench drain, rain along the edge of the trail collects excess runoff and has the ability to empty out in a less impacted area.

Pervious pavement and similar methods allow for water to infiltrate into the ground and reduce runoff. Such pervious materials like concrete allows for infiltration as well as substantially reduces annual sewer costs. pervious typically needs repairs on pot holes from settling water and overflow. Recycled materials pavements and pervious material is shown to have lower CO2 emissions and carbon footprint.
Trails and green space are important community amenities that help to spur economic development. From home owners choosing to live along a park-like trail to bicycle tourists making their way from small town to small town, trails are important community facilities that attract people and dollars. Trails can be powerful tools for economic development. The New York Times recently noted a National Association of Homebuilders study that found that trails are the number one amenity that potential homeowners cite around the country are building vital, economically stable neighborhoods that are truly sustainable. There are many examples that affirm the positive connection between trails, greenspace and property values. Residential properties will realize a greater gain in value the closer they are located to trails and greenspace. The more people walking and bicycling on trails creates safer environments and connections between local businesses and communities.

Increased Property Value Examples

- A 2003 study found that the amenity value of trails was associated with over $140 million in increased property values in Indianapolis.
- In Austin, Texas, increased property values associated with a single greenway were estimated to result in $13.64 million of new property tax revenue.
- Developers of the Shepherd’s Vineyard housing development in Apex, N.C., added $5,000 to the price of 40 homes adjacent to the regional greenway. Those homes were the first to sell.
- A 1998 study of property values along the Mountain Bay Trail in Brown County, Wisconsin shows that lots adjacent to the trail sold faster and for an average of 9 percent more than similar property not located next to the trail.
- In Salem, Oregon, homes adjacent to a greenway sold for about $1,200 per acre more than homes only 1,000 feet away.

Trail Tourism Examples

- The Mineral Wells to Weatherford Rail–Trail near Dallas, Texas attracts approximately 350,000 people annually and generates local revenues of $1 million.
- Allegheny Passage, PA: The 2008 Trail Town Economic Impact Study found a solid economic contribution from trail users, with respondents estimating that on average, one-quarter of the business they received in 2007 could be attributed to the existence of the area’s biking/hiking trail.
- The Virginia Creeper Trail generates $1.59 million in annual spending; supporting approximately 37 new full-time jobs.
- In the months following the Mineral Belt Trail in Leadville, CO, the city reported a 19 percent increase in sales tax revenues. Owners of restaurants and lodging facilities report that they are serving customers who come into town specifically to ride the trail.

Community Impact Example

- The Outer Banks, NC: Bicycling is estimated to have an annual economic impact of $60 million and 1,497 jobs supported from the 40,000 visitors for whom bicycling was an important reason for choosing to vacation in the area. The annual return on bicycle facility development in the Outer Banks is approximately nine times higher than the initial investment.

Community Impact Example

- Damascus, VA: At the Virginia Creeper Trail, a 54 mile trail in southeastern Virginia, locals and non-locals spend approximately $2.5 million annually related to their recreation visits. Of this amount, non-local visitors spend about $1.2 million directly in the Washington and Grayson County economies.

Marketing Examples: Small businesses and real estate agents understand the benefits of marketing their services along widely used greensways.

Sources

- http://www.americanwalks.org/resources/impactstudy/foxlandstudy.html
Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension offers a great opportunity to connect downtown Richlands with various amenities, such as Critterville Park and the historic swinging bridge, and to provide increased access to the river for the larger community. In addition, the extended greenway provides opportunities for increased health and education and, through the development of new greenspaces, offers new opportunities for outdoor recreation and events. The master plan is a result of a collaborative effort between the Town of Richlands, its residents, and the CDAC team. It is our hope that this document serves as a catalyst for the future development of the Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway.
APPENDIX

Rail-Trails and Safe Communities: The Experience of 372 Trails

Crime, Property Values, Trail Opposition & Liability Issues

Promoting Greenway Safety

Greenway Makes a Good Neighbor

A. Rail-Trails and Safe Communities: The Experience of 372 Trails


B. Crime, Property Values, Trail Opposition & Liability Issues


C. Promoting Greenway Safety


D. Greenway Makes a Good Neighbor

Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

APPENDIX A: RAILS-TRAILS & SAFE COMMUNITIES

Rail-trails and Safe Communities

The experience on 372 trails
RAIL-TRAILS
AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

The Experience on 372 Trails

Written by
Tammy Tracy & Hugh Morris
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

in cooperation with

National Park Service
Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

JANUARY 1998
This report was conducted by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to document the extent of crime on rail-trails and review such crime in a broader perspective.

The purpose of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is to enrich America’s communities and countryside by creating a nationwide network of public trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is grateful to all the trail managers who responded to our survey. The information provided made this study possible.

Thanks to Andy Clarke, Barbara Richey, and Susan Doherty for their invaluable assistance in getting this report through edits, revisions and production.

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Photos — Front cover: Karen-Lee Ryan (Background), Patrick Kraich (trail patrol); Back cover: R. Leidelmeyer
CONTENTS

Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 1
Previous Research ..................................................................................................................... 2
Methodology .............................................................................................................................. 3
Study Findings ........................................................................................................................... 4
    Major Crimes ..................................................................................................................... 4
    Minor Crimes .................................................................................................................... 7
Recommendations
    Trail Design ...................................................................................................................... 10
    Trail Patrols ...................................................................................................................... 11
Trail Patrol Case Studies .......................................................................................................... 12
Rail-Trails as Safe Places ......................................................................................................... 14
Conclusions ............................................................................................................................. 15
Appendix
    (A) Letters from Law Enforcement Officials ................................................................. 16
    (B) Letter from the President of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail ................................. 24

TABLES
Table 1: Comparison of Incidence Rate of Major Crimes on Rail-Trails to U.S. Population, 1995–1996 .......................................................... 5
Table 2: Comparison of Incidence Rate of Minor Crimes on Rail-Trails to U.S. Population, 1995–1996 .......................................................... 8
Table 3: National Crime Statistics by Location ................................................................. 14

FIGURES
Figure 1: Percent of Major Crimes Reported on Trails .................................................. 7
INTRODUCTION

At its peak, the U.S. railroad network extended for almost 300,000 miles. More than half of this remarkable system has since become superfluous and in the latter half of the 20th century more than 2,000 miles of track annually have been abandoned or left unused by the railroad companies.

Since the early 1960’s, efforts to preserve this part of our national industrial heritage have taken hold in community after community and more than 10,000 miles of former rail line have been opened as multi-use trails. In every state except Hawaii, people are bicycling, walking, running, in-line-skating, snow-mobiling and horseback riding on more than 950 rail-trails and there are plans for an additional 1,200 rail-trails stretching a further 18,000 miles.

While rail-trails are hugely popular and successful once they are open, during the development phase trail promoters often have to answer a wide range of concerns that local residents may have about the impact of the proposed trail on their community. Stories of trails attracting drug dealers, murderers and rapists are perpetuated by trail opponents with only a handful of newspaper headlines to back up their assertions rather than empirical research. Despite numerous studies that have concluded rail-trails do not generate crime, concerns persist and fear of the unknown continues to provide fertile ground for trail opponents. The research that has been conducted, along with anecdotal evidence, suggests that converting an abandoned rail corridor to a trail actually tends to reduce crime by cleaning up the landscape and attracting people who use the trail for recreation and transportation.

Recognizing the need to address these concerns, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) conducted a survey of all rail-trail managers in an effort to document the level of crime on trails and identify the mitigation measures used by trail designers and managers. The objectives of this study were threefold: 1) to document the levels of crime on urban, suburban and rural rail-trails with current statistics and comprehensive data, 2) to examine trail management strategies that can mitigate crime and improve trail safety, and 3) to put crime on trails in perspective. A summary of past studies, our methodology, results, recommendations and several case studies follow.
Four separate studies conducted between 1979 and 1997 concluded that rail-trails do not increase crime.¹

A study of the Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle, Washington relied on interviews with local police officers and residents adjacent to the 12-mile urban rail-trail. The study found that incidents of vandalism and burglary did not increase as a result of the trail. To the contrary, the rate of vandalism and break-ins to adjacent property was well below the neighborhood average. Police said that they did not anticipate crime being a problem as long as motor vehicle use on the trail was prohibited, citing that the separation of a criminal from his/her escape vehicle as being a primary deterrent.

In the Minnesota study, the Department of Natural Resources interviewed property owners near the proposed Root River Trail in southeastern Minnesota and the proposed Soo Line Trail in eastern Minnesota. The study also interviewed property owners adjacent to the existing Douglas Trail near Rochester and the Heartland Trail in northern Minnesota. The study concluded that residents adjacent to existing rail-trails experienced much less crime than was anticipated by residents near proposed rail-trail projects.

A National Park Service study of the 26-mile Heritage Trail in rural Iowa, the 16-mile St. Marks Trail through small communities in Florida, and the 8-mile Lafayette/Moraga Trail in suburban San Francisco found that property owners experienced relatively few problems resulting from the existence of a rail-trail. Most adjacent property owners reported that rates of vandalism, burglary and trespassing had remained the same or decreased since the opening of the trail. The majority of property owners interviewed in the National Park Service study reported that living near a trail was better than they expected and also better than living near unused rail corridors.

A recent survey of residents near the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike trail in New York asked respondents to comment on twelve potential problems that could arise from the trail. The respondents ranked each potential problem on a scale of one to five, with one being “not a problem” to five being a “major problem.” The items that were ranked highest as being a major problem were litter (14% of respondents), illegal motor vehicle use (12%), and disruptive noise from the trail (12%). For these three items the percentage of users who indicated that these were not a problem at all was 41%, 44%, and 45%, respectively.

All four studies found that while some residents were apprehensive about rail-trail projects most did not experience problems after the trail’s opening. In fact, many became users of the trail and the majority recognized the trail’s economic and health benefits to the community. The Burke-Gilman and the National Park Service studies both found rail-trails to have a slightly positive effect on property values in adjacent neighborhoods, further testimony to the safety and benefit of rail-trails.
RTC used several methods of data collection for this report.

In January 1997, RTC mailed surveys to the managers of all known open rail-trails (861) in the United States based on contacts maintained in RTC’s database of rail-trails. This survey asked trail managers to report any crimes against persons or property committed on their trails during the years of 1995 and 1996. The survey listed several types of crime in each category for the respondent to consider. The survey also asked questions regarding the use of such safety features as lights, phones and posted warnings. Finally, the survey asked about the existence, mode and frequency of trail patrols. From this effort, RTC received 372 usable responses, a 43% response rate, reflecting a diverse set of trail types, lengths and geographic locations. Trail types included 36 urban, 81 suburban and 255 rural trails. The length of these trails ranged from one-fifth of a mile to 145 miles. Geographic representation was quite broad with 38 of the 49 states that currently have at least one rail-trail responding.

In June 1997, RTC collected supplementary statistical and anecdotal information on the impact of rail-trails upon local crime. Using contact information provided by survey respondents, RTC sent letters to thirty local law enforcement agencies with questions regarding impact of the rail-trail on crime, the presence of trail users as a crime deterrent and comparisons of crime on the trail to the crime in surrounding areas. Twelve of these agencies responded, a 40% return, with letters regarding the safety of rail-trails. Finally, in July 1997, RTC conducted phone interviews with several coordinators of volunteer and professional rail-trail patrols to discuss the operation of their patrols. RTC compiled information on the organization, objectives and success of seven urban, suburban and rural trail patrols.

A local patroler makes his rounds on the Illinois Prairie Path. (Jean Mooring)
STUDY FINDINGS

The summarized results appear in the following four sections, major crimes, minor crimes, design strategies and trail patrols.

Major crimes are defined for the purpose of this report, as those crimes against persons including mugging, assault, rape and murder. Minor crimes are those against property including graffiti, littering, sign damage, motorized trail use, trespassing and break-ins to adjacent property. Quotations from law enforcement letters are included in the text where appropriate. The complete text of the letters appears in Appendix A.

Figures for the actual number of incidents of crimes against persons are reported whereas the incidents of property crimes are expressed by the number of trails reporting any occurrence during the year. This was done because of the difficulty in quantifying some of the types of minor crimes such as litter or graffiti incidents.

Overall, results from the study indicate that rail-trails are safe places for people to be. The study also found that trail managers often employ preventative design strategies and patrols to reduce the possibility of crime and improve the efficient management of the trail.

MAJOR CRIMES

Out of 372 trails included in this study, RTC found only eleven rail-trails in 1995 and ten rail-trails in 1996 which had experienced any type of major crime, 3% of responding trails.

“The trail does not encourage crime, and in fact, probably deters crime since there are many people, tourists and local citizens using the trail for many activities at various hours of the day.”
— Pat Conlin, Sheriff Green County, Wis.

These figures are very low considering the 372 trails surveyed cover nearly 7,000 miles of trail and more than 45 million estimated annual users. Letters from law enforcement agencies support these findings. They consistently report that rail-trails do not encourage crime; rather, several letters cited heavy trail usage as a crime deterrent in areas of former isolation:

“The trail has not caused any increase in the amount of crimes reported and the few reported incidents are minor in nature...We have found that the trail brings in so many people that it has actually led to a decrease in problems we formerly encountered such as underage drinking along the river banks. The increased presence of people on the trail has contributed to this problem being reduced.”
— Charles R. Tennant, Chief of Police, Elizabeth Township, Buena Vista, Pa.

Following is a summary of major crimes on rail-trails by urban, suburban and rural areas as well as a comparison to national crime figures. Although directly comparable statistics were not available, violent crime rates from the FBI’s 1995 Uniform Crime Report provide some comparison by showing the number of crimes per 100,000 inhabitants in urban, suburban and rural areas. When compared to rates of rail-trail crime, these figures provide a sense of how infrequently crimes on rail-trails occur. The results are presented in Table 1 and followed by discussion.
**TABLE 1**

Comparisons of Incidence Rate of Major Crimes on Rail-trails to U.S. Crime Rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRIME</th>
<th>URBAN</th>
<th>SUBURBAN</th>
<th>RURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mugging</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>0.53 (1995)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.30 (1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>0.58 (1995)</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.34 (1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcible Rape</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.04 (1995)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00 (1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.04 (1995)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01 (1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note: Rates per 100,000 population; FBI Uniform Crime Reports for 1995.
2. Note: rates per 100,000 users; RTC survey results.

**MAJOR CRIMES ON RAIL-TRAILS**

**URBAN RAIL-TRAILS**

RTC found the crime rates on urban rail-trails to be very low compared to the national crime rate for urban areas. Note that one urban trail located in South Boston, Massachusetts is where the majority of personal crimes were experienced:

- Each year, an estimated 5 million people use the 36 urban rail-trails surveyed, covering 332 miles.
- The national rate of urban muggings is 335 per 100,000 inhabitants; two urban rail-trails reported muggings (26 incidents) in 1995 and only one trail reported muggings (15 incidents) in 1996.
- The national rate of urban assaults is 531 per 100,000 inhabitants; only three urban rail-trails reported assaults in 1995 (29 incidents) and 1996 (17 incidents).
- The national rate of forcible rape in urban areas is 43 per 100,000; one urban rail-trail reported two rapes in 1995 and no rapes were reported in 1996.
- The national urban murder rate is 11 per 100,000 urban inhabitants; one urban rail-trail reported two murders in 1995. None of the urban rail-trails reported murders for 1996.
SUBURBAN RAIL-TRAILS

RTC found crime rates on suburban trails to be even lower than on urban rail-trails. The rate of crime on rail-trails was also low compared to national statistics of overall suburban crime.

▼ An estimated 14 million people use more than 1,100 miles of trail on the 82 suburban trails surveyed.

▼ The national rate of suburban muggings is 102 per 100,000 inhabitants; none of the suburban rail-trails reported muggings for the year of 1995 and only one mugging was reported in 1996.

▼ The national rate of suburban aggravated assaults is 293 per 100,000 inhabitants; three assaults occurred on three suburban rail-trails in 1995 and only two assaults occurred on suburban rail-trails in 1996.

▼ The national rate of suburban rape is 29 per 100,000 persons; none of the suburban rail-trails reported a rape in 1995 or 1996.

▼ Nationally, four murders per 100,000 inhabitants occur in suburban areas; there were no reports of murder on suburban rail-trails in 1995 or 1996.

RURAL RAIL-TRAILS

Major crimes occurred with even less frequency on rural rail-trails than on urban or suburban ones. These rates are also low compared to overall rural crime rates.

▼ There are an estimated 26 million annual users on the 254 surveyed rural trails covering 5,282 miles.

▼ The national rate of mugging in rural areas is 19 per 100,000 inhabitants; none of the rural rail-trails reported muggings in 1995 and only one reported an incident in 1996.

▼ The national rural rate of aggravated assault is 203 incidents per 100,000 persons; only three rural rail-trails reported three assaults in 1995 and the same number in 1996.

▼ Nationally, there were 26 forcible rapes per 100,000 rural inhabitants; two rural rail-trails reported rapes in 1995 and one trail reported a rape in 1996.

▼ The national murder rate for rural areas is 5 per 100,000; none of the rural rail-trails reported a murder over the two year period.
MINOR CRIMES

According to our survey findings, only one-fourth of the rail-trail managers reported any type of minor crime, such as graffiti or littering and these problems were quickly corrected as part of routine trail management. The data indicates the occurrence of each infraction rather than the actual number of incidents.

Letters from law enforcement officials attest that the actual volume of incidents such as graffiti, littering, sign damage and motorized use were minimal. In fact, one letter noted that litter was virtually nonexistent on a section of converted rail, but was overwhelming on portions which had not been converted to trail, again highlighting the benefits of converting an abandoned rail corridor to a trail:

“My family and I took part in a community clean-up day. ...By the end of the mile and a half, we had found ONE piece of litter almost too small to have noticed. ...once you leave the path and continue where the railway line had been, the trash and graffiti are overwhelming.”
— Ross L. Riggs, Chief of Police, Louisville, Ohio

Moreover, RTC found that the majority of the property crimes committed on rail-trails had only a minor effect on the trail and usually did not harm adjacent private property. The following letter indicates that trails make good neighbors.

“Since the trail was constructed and opened for use we have found that the trail has not caused any inconvenience to property owners along the trail. The residents seem to enjoy having the trail near their homes.”

A breakdown of the property crimes committed on rail-trails in urban, suburban and rural areas in 1996 and some comparisons to national averages follow.7 The results are presented in Table 2 and followed by a discussion.

![Many trails close at dark and patrols help to clear them. (Karen Stewart)](image_url)
APPENDIX: RAILS-TRAILS & SAFE COMMUNITIES

TABLE 2
Comparison of Incidence Rate of Minor Crimes on Rail-trails to U.S. Crime Rates & Percentage of Trails Reporting Types of Crime in 1995.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRIME</th>
<th>URBAN</th>
<th>SUBURBAN</th>
<th>RURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National¹</td>
<td>Rail-Trails²</td>
<td>National¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURGLARY</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRESPASSING</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAFFITI</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITTERING</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGN DAMAGE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTORIZED USE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Note: Rates per 100,000 population, FBI Uniform Crime Reports for 1995 for burglary.
² Note: rates per 100,000 users; BFR survey results for burglary. Results for other crime types reported as percentage of trails experiencing that type of crime.

URBAN RAIL-TRAILS

Very few incidents directly affecting urban property owners occurred.

- The national rate of burglary in urban areas is 1,117 incidents per 100,000 inhabitants; none of the urban rail-trails reported burglary to adjacent homes in 1996.
- Only 5% of urban rail-trails reported trespassing.
- 26% of the urban rail-trails reported graffiti.
- 24% of the urban rail-trails reported littering.
- 22% of the urban rail-trails reported sign damage.
- 18% of urban rail-trails reported unauthorized motorized use.
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<td>Rail-Trail²</td>
<td>National¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURGLARY</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRESPASSING</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>SIGN DAMAGE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTORIZED USE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ National rates per 100,000 population. ² Uniform Crime Reports for 1995 for burglary. ³ National rates per 100,000 users. 4% survey results for burglary. Results for other crime types reported as percentage of trails experiencing that type of crime.

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- Only 5% of urban rail-trails reported trespassing.
- 26% of the urban rail-trails reported graffiti.
- 24% of the urban rail-trails reported littering.
- 22% of the urban rail-trails reported sign damage.
- 18% of urban rail-trails reported unauthorized motorized use.
Suburban Rail-Trails

Incidents of graffiti and unauthorized motorized usage occurred less frequently on suburban rail-trails than on urban ones. The number of suburban trails reporting crimes directly affecting adjacent property owners was significantly lower than the rates of trail vandalism.

- The national rate of suburban burglary is 820 incidents per 100,000 inhabitants; only one suburban trail reported a break-in to adjacent property in 1996.
- 3% of suburban trails reported trespassing.
- 17% of the suburban trails reported graffiti.
- 24% of the trails reported littering.
- 22% of the trails reported sign damage.
- 14% of the suburban trails reported unauthorized motorized usage.

Rural Rail-Trails

Rural rail-trails reported fewer incidents of graffiti than both urban and suburban trails. Other incidents occurred at about the same rate. Again, crimes directly affecting adjacent property were rare.

- The national burglary rate in rural areas is 687 incidents per 100,000 inhabitants; only three of the rural trails reported a break-in to adjacent property in 1995 and three in 1996.
- 4% of rural trails reported trespassing.
- 12% of rural trails reported graffiti.
- 25% of the rural trails reported littering.
- 23% of the rural trails reported sign-damage.
- 23% of the rural trails reported unauthorized motor use.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Although this study shows that rail-trail crime is rare, it is nonetheless a legitimate concern for residents and trail users and should be treated accordingly. There are several methods for addressing such concerns and minimizing the potential for crime.

Encouraging trail use is one way to help ensure trail safety, as the presence of other users helps to minimized undesirable behavior. In addition, trail users should exercise common sense when using trails after dark and remain aware of their surroundings at all times. Several other mitigation strategies help suppress criminal behavior and lessen the impact of incidents that do occur. In particular, trail design features and trail patrols are useful to keep in mind and recommendations for their implementation are included in this section. However since every rail-trail environment is unique, trail managers should assess the need for these strategies on an individual basis.

TRAIL DESIGN

Good trail design is an effective way of promoting trail safety. In most cases, the design of the trail should eliminate overgrown vegetation and tall shrubs in order to minimize hiding places along the trail and maintain long sight lines for users. Trail managers may also choose to place security lighting at trail heads and in parking lots to improve trail safety. Emergency phones or call boxes and emergency vehicle access are also important safety features for some trails. Additionally, keeping all trail corridors clean and well-maintained increases the feeling of community ownership of the trail and reduces the incidents of minor crime such as litter, graffiti and vandalism. Prohibiting motorized use of the trail deters property crime.

RTC found that several trails utilized the above design strategies in order to improve safety. The survey found that at the trail head 18% of the trails installed lights, 12% installed phones, and...
51% posted warnings or rules for trail users. Along the trail, 8% of the trails installed phones, 8% had lights and 45% posted warnings or trail rules. Unfortunately, the data collected in this survey was too limited to explore the correlation between the existence of design features and crime rates.

**TRAIL PATROLS**

Volunteer or professional trail patrols are also beneficial in improving trail safety. These patrols range from informal monthly clean-up and maintenance crews to daily patrols that provide maps, information and emergency assistance. The primary function of these patrols should be to educate trail users and to provide assistance when necessary. They should also be equipped to alert emergency services quickly if needed. Above all, the presence of a patrol deters crime and improves users’ enjoyment of the trail.

According to survey results, the majority of trails have some type of trail patrol. The survey found that 69% of the urban rail-trails, 67% of suburban rail-trails and 63% of rural rail-trails are patrolled in some way. Local, county, and state entities, park rangers and volunteers provide these patrol services either alone or in combination. RTC found that 20% of the trails have local law enforcement patrols, 16% of the trails have county patrols, 4% of the trails have state patrols, 9% of the trails have park ranger patrols and 3% of the trails have volunteer patrols. The dominant modes of trail patrol are bike (26%) and car or truck (33%). The study found that 82% of the trails have access for emergency vehicles.
There are many methods of organizing an effective trail patrol. Depending on a trail’s needs and available resources, a daily, weekly or monthly patrol may be appropriate.

Below are several examples of volunteer and professional patrols and contact information for their coordinators. These examples are only a few ways to promote safety and improve users’ enjoyment of rail-trails. Trail managers should be creative in using “friends of the trail” groups, local community organizations and law enforcement to maintain and monitor local rail-trails.

MINUTEMAN TRAIL
MASSACHUSETTS

Several years ago as part of a public relations effort, the Bedford Police began riding bikes along the Bedford to Lexington portion of the Minuteman Trail. Approximately a year and a half later, they initiated a unique youth patrol, the Bedford Police Explorers to assist them. After completing first aid and CPR certification, the Explorers began conducting daily patrols of the trail wearing police t-shirts and carrying radios and first aid kits. Both the police and Explorer programs have been well received by the community. After seeing an officer and several Explorers clearing debris from the trail, one trail user wrote to the Bedford Police: “I was so taken by this... by clearing the bike path, now even more women, men, children of all ages and people in wheelchairs can enjoy nature in the path.” Contact Officer Jeff Wardwell at the Bedford Public Safety Department for more information on the Explorer program, (617) 275-1212, ext. 125.

NORTH AUGUSTA GREENEWAY
SOUTH CAROLINA

Approximately twenty professionally trained police officers voluntarily patrol the three-mile North Augusta Greeneway in rural South Carolina. The effort began as part of a community policing and physical fitness program of the North Augusta Public Safety Department. Three to four times each week, officers patrol the trail as they perform walking, jogging or biking workouts. Captain Lee Wetherington, coordinator of the patrol effort, explained their objectives, “We try to show a presence, deter illegal activity and provide first aid or other assistance to trail users.” The patrol is a creative way of keeping officers in condition for duty while promoting trail safety at the same time. For additional information about the patrol, contact Capt. Wetherington at (803) 441-4254.

PINELLAS TRAIL
FLORIDA

The 35-mile Pinellas Trail is patrolled daily by one of the most extensive volunteer patrols, the Pinellas Auxiliary Rangers. The Auxiliary Rangers serve as uniformed ambassadors for the Pinellas Trail, providing trail information, directions and bicycle safety tips. More than 25 volunteers, 18 years and older, comprise the patrol and are required to undergo background checks and extensive training on trail history, public relations, trail-riding, first aid and nutrition. The majority of the volunteers patrol by bike and use cell phones to communicate. Because the trail has not encountered many problems, an Auxiliary Ranger’s primary role is one of educator rather than enforcer. For more information, contact Jerry Cumings or Tim Closterman at the Pinellas County Park Department, (813) 393-8909.
YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER TRAIL-NORTH
PENNSYLVANIA

Three local trail councils, headed by the Regional Trail Corporation, coordinate monitoring teams for the 23-mile Youghiogheny River Trail-North in southwestern Pennsylvania. Each of the trail councils oversees a team of approximately twenty monitors patrolling primarily on bikes, but also by foot and by horse. Easily recognizable in their gold and black uniforms, monitors carry first aid kits and, frequently, cellular phones to report trail damage or injuries. Joe Honick, who instituted this model monitoring program, explained their usefulness, “The monitors serve as the eyes and ears of the Regional Trail Corporation. They assist trail users, explain trail rules and relay users’ suggestions and comments.”

Bob McKinley, Trail Manager of the Regional Trail Corporation reported very few incidents of trail damage or graffiti along the trail. “There is so little vandalism, every piece seems like a major item,” he said. The patrol program has been successful in deterring such incidents. McKinley commended the patrol efforts, “The patrols are doing a great job. Their monitoring really does make a difference.” For more information on the trail’s monitoring program, contact Joe Honick of the Mon/Yough Trail Council at (412) 829-0467.

Baltimore and Annapolis Trail Park
MARYLAND

Approximately thirty volunteer Trailblazers, ranging from age eleven to 78, patrol the 13-mile Baltimore and Annapolis Trail. After receiving three weekends of first aid, CPR, patrol technique and park operations training from park rangers, they take to the trail by in-line skates, bike or foot. Trailblazers supplement park rangers’ daily patrols by providing information to trail users, correcting unsafe trail behavior and reporting their findings to the park rangers. Trailblazers are able to quickly identify and repair problem areas of litter or graffiti helping to prevent further incidents from occurring. For more information on the organization or training of the Baltimore and Annapolis Trailblazers, contact David Dionne, Park Superintendent at the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks, (410) 222-6245.

GREAT RIVER TRAIL
ILLINOIS

The Great River Trail Council uses several groups to patrol its 28-mile trail passing through urban, suburban and rural areas. The council coordinates local bicycle and service clubs which have an interest in assisting with trail patrol. Clubs provide trail users with directions and look for maintenance problems. In the summer months, at least one group patrols during daylight hours and police patrol the trail after dusk. For more information, contact Patrick Marsh at the Great River Trail Council, (309) 793-6300.

LAFAYETTE/MORAGA TRAIL
CALIFORNIA

Several entities monitor the 8-mile Lafayette/Moraga Trail in the San Francisco Bay Area, including a maintenance team, the East Bay Regional Park District Public Safety Department and several volunteer patrols. More than 150 equestrians, bicyclists and hikers comprise volunteer groups who patrol the Lafayette/Moraga Trail and other parks in the area. An officer from the Park District provides each group with training and organizes monthly meetings and speakers. In 1996, volunteers provided over 40,000 hours of service to the East Bay parks. For more information on these patrols, contact Steve Fiala at the East Bay Regional Park District, (510) 635-0135.
Rail Trails are not crime-free. No place on earth can make that claim. However, when compared to the communities in which they exist, compared to highways and parking lots, and compared to many other public and private places, rail-trails have an excellent public safety record.

Compared to the abandoned and forgotten corridors they recycle and replace, trails are a positive community development and a crime-prevention strategy of proven value. By generating lawful activities such as walking, running, bicycling and in-line-skating, rail-trails are also bringing communities together and reintroducing neighbors to each other.

Trails are actually one of the safest places to be and the incidence rate of crime on trails is minor in comparison to other locations. Table 3 lists the percentage of rapes, robberies, and assaults that occur in four locations. As these data show, a park is actually one of the safest places to be. Two to three times safer than being in a parking facility or in your own home and many more times safer than walking down the street. These data help to provide some perspective of personal safety in several types of locations in the context of overall crime rates in the U.S. The result being that parks are undeniably one of the safest places to be.

In an attempt to add perspective to crime on trails, John Yoder, President of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. in Indiana has compiled crime and injury statistics for a variety of circumstances to make the point that no human activity is risk free. The entire contents of his list can be found in Appendix B.

### Table 3
National Crime Statistics by Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRIME</th>
<th>PARK/PLAYGROUND</th>
<th>PARKING GARAGE/LOT</th>
<th>INSIDE YOUR HOME</th>
<th>ON STREET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RAPE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBBERY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSAULT</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>30.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because not all location categories are listed.
Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, various years.
Yoder concludes by asking “Does this mean we should outlaw, eliminate, or ban any of these places or activities?” Of course not! But as these statistics demonstrate, every form of human activity has some level of risk associated with it. The question in judging any activity is understanding the level of risk associated with that activity and doing everything possible to minimize those risks. Our society accepts approximately 40,000 highway deaths every year because we believe the convenience of highway travel is worth the risk. Similarly, in 1992 there were 30 murders, 1,000 rapes, and 1,800 robberies on college campuses however, most people believe that the rewards associated with a college education are worth the risks involved.

It is important not to trivialize or deny that bad things can happen on trails, however it is equally important to keep in mind that the amount of crime that occurs on trails as demonstrated by the survey results as well as the data in Table 3 shows that crime on trails is minimal. As with any activity, appropriate safety precautions should be taken to minimize risk.

CONCLUSION

With nearly 27,000 miles of open and project rail-trail, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy recognizes that addressing trail users safety and trail neighbors concerns about crime are critical to the creation of a successful trail. This report has shown that crime on rail-trails is not a common occurrence.

Past studies, our survey results, letters from law enforcement officials, and comparisons to national crime figures all indicate that rail-trails are safe places for local residents and visitors to enjoy. While common sense and preventative measures should be used on rail-trails to ensure the lowest possible levels of crime, rail-trails remain much safer than many other environments. The findings of this report should reassure those with apprehensions about trail projects that converting a former rail corridor into a trail will have a positive rather than negative effect on their community.

As the data in this report show, crime on rail-trails is minimal. This becomes all-the-more apparent when put in perspective with risks associated with other activities. The way to minimize crime on trails is to ensure that users exercise proper safety precautions, keep the trail well maintained, and boost trail use. Crime generally does not occur in places where there are lots of people and few hiding places. Positive-looking places tend to encourage positive behavior.

Crime occurs on roads, parking lots, in shopping malls, office buildings, airports, and at zoos. However, no one would rationally argue that we shouldn’t build any of the above because crime will occur there. The same should be true for trails.
APPENDIX A: LETTERS FROM LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

CITY OF NORTH AUGUSTA

May 7, 1997

Mr. Hugh Martin, Research Coordinator
United States Department of Justice
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Martin,

In response to your letter of March 1, 1997, we would like to provide the following information:

The North Augusta Greenway project has been well-received by the City of North Augusta and has generated interest in the surrounding community. It is anticipated that the project will provide an asset to the community and encourage residents to use public transportation. While we have not seen a decrease in crime in the area, we have seen an increase in the number of residents using the project.

The police department has not seen any significant increase or decrease in the amount of crime in the area. The project has not had a significant impact on the police department's workload.

Thank you for your interest in the North Augusta Greenway project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Chief of Police

ELIZABETH TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT

May 1, 1997

Mr. Hugh Martin, Research Coordinator
United States Department of Justice
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Martin,

In response to your question about the development of the Greenway project, I would like to provide the following information:

The development of the North Augusta Greenway project has had a positive impact on the community. The project has encouraged residents to use public transportation and has helped to decrease crime in the area. While we have not seen a significant decrease in crime, we have seen an increase in the number of residents using the project.

The police department has not seen any significant increase or decrease in the amount of crime in the area. The project has not had a significant impact on the police department's workload.

Thank you for your interest in the North Augusta Greenway project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Chief of Police
Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

APPENDIX: RAILS-TRAILS & SAFE COMMUNITIES

OFFICE OF DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF

STEPHEN G. FITZGERALD
Sheriff

JEROLD L. WITTE
Chief Deputy

May 19, 1997

Mr. Hugh Morris
Research Coordinator
1100 Seventeenth Street, NW
10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Morris:

This letter is in response to your request for information on the impact of the Wild Goose State Trail and the crime/complaint rate. Please be advised the Trail has had virtually no impact on the crime rate in Dodge County.

Sincerely,

Jerry Witts
Chief Deputy

APPENDIX: LOUISVILLE CONSTITUTION FOR

May 13, 1997

Hugh Morris
Rails to Trails Conservancy
200 W. Broadway
Louisville, KY 40202

Dear Mr. Morris,

I came to Louisville in August of 1991 as the Chief of Police. At that time, the City was completing plans for the conversion of an old railway line to a walking path. It was part of the safety of citizens due, in part, to the remote area that was traversed. It also lessened the crime in the area where the placement of emergency call boxes along the walkway. The call boxes were never installed.

I am very pleased to report that crime incidents along the walkway are almost nonexistent. I attribute this to several factors. Primarily, the high volume of use by families along this walking path has caused a community ownership of the path. Police also regularly patrol the area, but it is unlikely that anyone will travel the path for more than a quarter of a mile without coming into contact with other path users.

The incidents of vandalism over five years has been only two small areas of the asphalt that were spray painted. Those were immediately cleaned up by city crews. It should be noted that the path is also along an area that is a frequent littering place for juveniles that have little supervision. Still, the criminal complaints along the path are almost zero.

Two weeks ago my family and I took part in a community clean-up day. My wife, one daughter, and I elected to walk the path to pick up litter. Each of us armed with a large trash bag and work gloves, we started out. By the end of the illness, a half, we had rounded a piece of litter alone, not too much notice. We often stopped walking and a police patrol car. I can only attribute the decrease in the number of calls has taken for this area. I should also note that once you leave the path and continue along the railway line has been, the trash and graffiti are overwhelming.

I hope that you will find this information useful. If I can be of further assistance, please do hesitate to call upon me.

Sincerely,

Roda L. Riggs
Chief of Police
Appendix: Rails-Trails & Safe Communities

Railroad Corridors Continued
May 11, 1997
Page 2

We believe the development of the trail was a good idea. We do not feel that the trail encourages more crime than existed before the trail went in.

I hope I have addressed all your questions. Please don’t hesitate to contact me should you need additional information.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Andre Horn
Captain
Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

May 5, 1997

Hugh Morris
Research Coordinator
Rails to Trails
1100 Seventeenth St. NW
10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Morris,

I am writing in response to your request for crime information on the Jim Mayer Riverwalk.

This is somewhat an unusual situation. Because there was no use for the area before it became a trail, there were no reported incidents of crime. There was no use by the public and/or property to have crimes committed against. Since it has become a trail, there is basically still no property there, except as you noted, ages, etc. And we have had no incidents of crimes being committed against users of the trail. We have had incidents of underage drinking and some drug abuse occur on the trail. But, these incidents are extremely rare and are not creating a problem/concern.

A check of our records does not indicate any reports of crimes against users or property in the vicinity.

Since the trail has been there, the only events that we have heard have been all positive. From our perspective, the trail has been an asset to the community.

If I can be of any further assistance, please contact my office.

Very truly yours,

[Signature]

Robert H. Huntley
Chief of Police

APPENDIX: RAILS-TRAILS & SAFE COMMUNITIES
Richlands’ Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

APPENDIX: RAILS-TRAILS & SAFE COMMUNITIES

July 23, 1991

Herb Dorfee, Staff Planner
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
P. O. Box 108
Essex Junction, VT 05452

Dear Mr. Dorfee:

In preparation for the July 15, 1991 South Burlington City Council meeting, which included a discussion and vote on Phase II of the Recreation Path, I looked at some data and made inquiries of the police in Burlington and Stowe about their experience with their bike paths. A summary of what I found is listed below:

Burlington -
1. According to official records of the Burlington Police Department there were 71 police responses to the Burlington Bike Path during the 12-month period ending June 30, 1991. Adjusting these numbers for winter months (removing the 10 months when there were no complaints) the average for the 12 remaining months is 4.2 responses per month, compared to a citywide norm of over 3,000 per month. The bike path in Burlington, therefore, is the scene of .0013% of all calls over the last two years, making it one of the safest bike paths in Burlington, according to Chief Kevin Scully.

2. The 71 complaints themselves needed further analysis. Some of these appear not to be related to the bike path. I looked at two specific categories:

   First, one title of complaint listed by the computer in Burlington is “Discharging Firearms or Firearms Unlawfully”. One South Burlington Bike Path opponent shortened the category title to

   “Discharge Firearms” for the purposes of a letter to the City Council. In fact, that complaint was a report of a loud noise from a resident near the bike path. The investigation concluded that kids had set off a firecracker at a nearby beach.

Second, there are fourteen responses to reports of inappropriate conduct. These are entitled "Disorderly Conduct", "Drunkenness", "Public Complaints", "Noise", etc., and seem to have alcohol or other drugs as a common theme. A cursory look at these cases reveals a strong likelihood that they are related to special events (concerts, festivals, etc.) held adjacent to the path on beaches and in parks.

3. I reviewed the patrol strategy of the Burlington Police Department and found that most of the patrol is done on bikes by non-police personnel who work in a summer program that existed before the path and is not an expensive proposition. These patrols are primarily a communication link to patrol officers who also occasionally do bike patrol themselves.

The Burlington Police Department is fully supportive of the path and I have attached a letter I received from them attesting to the minor nature of crime problem.

Stowe -

1. The Stowe Path has been in operation for more than 10 years and during that time only 44 complaints, 21 of which were larcenies from vehicles, have been reported. This is an amazingly low number for a path that is often the target of thefts. Stowe’s chief said the number of larcenies caused him to look a little closer. He also reported that the thefts occurred in a couple of fairly remote parking lots just off the path. The police explained that groups of thieves have been victimizing tourists’ cars in parking lots for many years. It happens primarily at ski areas and local
restrooms and motels, but the thefts in the lots near the path are just an extension of that activity. I think that this phenomenon is not important to Chittenden County paths as they will generally be used by residents and not tourists.

3. The Security Department of the town of Stowe has stated that the path has made STOWE safer for pedestrians and cyclists. The street is now becoming more attractive.

People from South Burlington have called me and expressed concerns and many of them have mentioned the potential for the crime of rape to occur on the proposed bike path.

I looked specifically for reports of rape or sexual assault on the path in Stowe and Burlington and was relieved to learn that there have been no reports in either place.

There has been an increase in crime in Burlington or Stowe which is attributable to the bike paths.

My position is that bike paths proposed for Chittenden County communities provide a healthy way of linking neighborhoods and are likely to have a positive effect on the overall safety of the public.

Crime does not flourish in an environment of high energy and healthy interaction among law abiding community members. Thus, the quality of life is enhanced in several ways including an enhancement of individual physical fitness, a safer mode of transportation for cyclists and pedestrians and the potential for less crime overall in the communities.

In terms of public safety a system of bike paths for the county is a great idea.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Searles
Chief of Police

R. Difee
July 23, 1991
May 8, 1997

Mr. Hugh Morris
Research Coordinator
Rails to Trails Conservancy
1100 Seventeenth Street, NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Morris:

I am writing in response to your letter of May 1, 1997 and your questions regarding local law enforcement involvement in vacated rail lines being used for bike, hiking and walking trails.

As you are well aware, Bloomington and its sister city have a well-constructed trail called Constitution Trail. It runs through both business, residential and rural areas. It is highly used by a cross section of the populace of both cities for bike riding, roller blading, running, and walking.

This trail is not visible from city streets for over half of the layout, and much of it cannot be patrolled by an officer using conventional methods. However, we do periodically put our bike patrol officers on Constitution Trail. This is done primarily as a public relations maneuver, because there is very little crime created on or near the trail due to its construction.

Our citizens use this trail twenty-four hours a day and have not with very little crime on this trail. We have seen some of the neighboring residents have improved the development of their properties adjacent to the trail.

When the trail was first constructed, the administration of this department had a concern the trail would invite crime and would add to the crime rate of this city. However, in fact, it has had no impact on the crime rate.

Sincerely,

Timothy L. Liney
Chief of Police

The development of Constitution Trail was an outstanding idea supported by the both the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal. There have been minimal negative remarks regarding the development of this trail. There are plans for future development.

Constitution Trail can be considered a resource which is enjoyed by the populace of both Bloomington and Normal.
APPENDIX: RAILS-TRAILS & SAFE COMMUNITIES

Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

Dear Mr. Martin,

I am responding to your letter of May 1, 1990.

When the Richland's Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Project was first being developed in Richland's County, the concern was that the extension of the Trail, from Richland's to the Clinch River, could be built in a manner which would be detrimental to the residents and the environment. The Richland's Sheriff's Office responded to these concerns by working closely with the residents and the county officials to ensure that the extension of the Trail was built in a manner that would be safe and beneficial to the community.

In June, the Richland's Sheriff's Office responded to a series of calls on the Richland's Trail. None of these calls, however, resulted in any complaints being filed. In fact, the residents of Richland's County were very happy with the extension of the Trail. In July, the Richland's Sheriff's Office received several calls, through the first of August, from residents who had benefited from the extension of the Trail.

I hope to see you soon, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

John S. Reder, Sheriff

OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
MIDLAND COUNTY

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CITY OF BAY CITY

Gary G. Hart, Deputy Chief
Bay City Police Department
Bay City, MI 48708

May 12, 1990

To: Deputy Chief Gary G. Hart

Re: Richland's Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

We have been notified that there have been several calls on the Richland's Trail. The Richland's Sheriff's Office has responded to these calls, and we have been reassured that the extension of the Trail is being built in a manner that is safe and beneficial to the community.

We appreciate the efforts of the Richland's Sheriff's Office in ensuring that the extension of the Trail is built in a manner that is safe and beneficial to the community.

Sincerely,

Raymond L. Hite, Chief
Bay City Police Department

---

community design assistance center

College of Architecture + Urban Studies
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
May 3, 1997

Mr. Hugh Morris
Research Coordinator
1100 Seventh Street, NW
10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Morris,

I received your letter today inquiring about the Sugar River State Park Trail which is in Green County, Wisconsin. I am pleased to say that there is almost no crime associated with our trail and it is a very popular tourist attraction. It is one of our most positive advertised attractions which covers many municipalities.

The trail does not encourage crime, and in fact, probably deters crime since there are many people, tourists and local citizens using the trail for many activities at various hours of the day. The development of the trail was such a good idea, the County has just recently acquired another trail in addition to our existing trail, the Cheese Country Recreational Trail. I have enclosed information for our ordinances concerning the Cheese Country Recreational Trail along with a brochure and other correspondence. Sorry to say, I do not have any information on the State Trail at hand. If you want, I can acquire some and forward. I usually have some, but must have recently run out.

If you need anything, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Patsi Colvin
Sheriff

Richlands' Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

APPENDIX: RAILS-TRAILS & SAFE COMMUNITIES
Many rail-trail opponents claim that these trails are unsafe for the users and the adjacent landowners. As “proof,” they gather anecdotes about crime on trails. Second, they assert that these crimes prove all trails are unsafe. Third, they draw the conclusion that your trail will also be crime ridden and should not be built.

I believe this line of argument employs a double standard of safety and risk. Those who attack the safety of trails would never think of applying the same type of risk analysis to other forms of transportation, recreation or life in general. It’s a neat logical trick: by demanding perfect safety (i.e., no risks) in an imperfect and risky world, they create an artificial and impossibly high standard of safety that trail makers can never meet.

Trail opponents don’t require promises of perfect safety in other areas of life, or they wouldn’t get out of bed in the morning. They ignore all the risks involved in walking, riding in a car or crossing the supermarket parking lot while waving a few anecdotes about crimes on trails.

I’ve gathered some statistics over the years on risks and safety that might help make the point.

Dogs, sometimes called man’s best friend, provide companionship to millions. Yet in 1995, 3.5 million dog bites were reported to American insurance carriers, with the companies spending $1 billion on the claims (South Bend Tribune, Oct. 6, 1996). Should we, therefore, outlaw dogs?

Escalators carry millions of people safely each year. Yet in Boston, 300 people require emergency room treatment every year from injuries received while riding on escalators (NBC Dateline, Nov. 29, 1995). Should we, therefore, eliminate escalators?

A trip to the grocery store is a usually routine. Yet in one recent year, shopping cart accidents resulted in 25,000 trips to the emergency room (68 per day), including two deaths. Two thousand children were hospitalized (NBC Today Show, March 20, 1996; data from a study by Dr. Gary Smith, Children’s Hospital, Columbus, Ohio). Should we, therefore, ban shopping carts?

Regular exercise can significantly reduce the chances of dying prematurely from heart disease and other ailments. Yet in 1992 many forms of recreation resulted the following number of emergency room trips: table tennis—1,455; horseshoes—4,423; billiards—5,883; bowling—24,361; golf—37,556; in-line skates—83,000; volleyball—90,125; swing sets—102,232; football—229,689; baseball—285,593; bicycles—649,536 (Newsweek, June 21, 1994, data from U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission). No question: let’s definitely ban that dangerous table tennis game.

Farmers use the latest equipment to produce our food. Yet in Indiana, 28 people die in an average year in farm accidents. Farmers die at more than four times the average rate of all other workers from work-related accidents, according to the National Safety Council. (AP story in the Goshen News. I did not record the date.) Explain that, Farm Bureau.

Government sources estimate that air bags in motor vehicles have saved 2,700 lives. Yet at the same time they have killed 87 people—48 adults and 39 children (NBC Nightly News, Nov. 17, 1997).

Trains are one of the most efficient ways to move freight. Yet a vehicle-train crash occurs about once every 90 minutes in the U.S. Two motorists are killed daily in these crashes. (Goshen News, July 13, 1994; data from Indiana Operation Lifesaver.)
We send our sons and daughters to college for higher education. Yet colleges are awash in criminal behavior. About 2,400 U.S. colleges reported their statistics on campus crime to the Chronicle of Higher Education in response to the 1990 federal law, the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990. The report states that in the reporting academic year (1991-1992) there were 7,500 incidents of violent crime on their campuses. That includes 30 murders, 1,000 rapes and more than 1,800 robberies.

However, they also reported that these violent crimes, thank goodness, were the exception when compared to property crimes, e.g., there were 32,127 burglaries and 8,981 motor vehicle thefts in the same period. (I know I feel better with that qualification.) (From the Chronicle of Higher Education, Jan. 20, 1993. p. A32.)

And, of course, the most glaring source of risky behavior—the highways. In 1993, 53,717 motor vehicles were involved in 35,747 fatal crashes, resulting in 40,115 deaths (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety). Does this statistic mean we should, therefore, ban motor vehicles or highways or both?

Every form of human activity involves risks. The question is whether the risks are acceptable in light of the rewards. Our society, with some bizarre logic, rationalizes away or accepts 40,000 deaths each year from motor vehicles because it believes the rewards are acceptable. Most people believe the rewards of college are worth the risk of occasional criminal behavior, and most people believe the risk of going up the escalator is worth the risk of getting your foot caught in the mechanism. Once established, trails have proven to be as safe as the surrounding community through which they pass. The rewards of recreation and nonmotorized transportation they provide far outweigh the risks.

While it is important not to trivialize or deny that bad things can happen on trails, it is equally important to examine the logic behind the anecdotes. Are trail opponents willing to apply their let’s-close-the-trails logic to other activities, e.g., close all highways because 40,000 people are killed each year; close all colleges because there were 1,000 rapes? If not, then they are using a double standard to analyze risks—a selective use of statistics to discredit what is a relatively safe activity.

Two final points. First, we need to educate trail users about elementary safety precautions. We should caution people about jogging alone on an isolated trail, just as we would caution against jogging alone on an isolated country road or the mall parking lot for that matter.

Second, if there are safety problems on trails, we need to fix them. That’s what we do with highways. If there’s a dangerous highway curve, we straighten it. If a certain highway intersection has frequent accidents, we redesign it or put up stoplights. But, we don’t close the road when we discover a problem, and we don’t stop building more of them. Instead, we improve them.

Why would it be any different for trails?

John D. Yoder, President
Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc.
ENDNOTES:


2 These numbers reflect condensed data. Some survey respondents indicated two or more trail location types or omitted the answer to this question altogether. Thus the original results fell into seven categories: urban, suburban, rural, urban/suburban, suburban/rural, urban/suburban/rural and blank. To facilitate data analysis, we placed crimes from the latter four categories into urban, suburban and rural categories using weighted distributions.

3 All law enforcement agencies for which contact information was provided in primary survey were contacted.

4 Estimate of annual users based on extrapolation of trails reporting number of users by areatype on a users per mile basis.

5 At the time of the rail-trail crime study, the FBI had only released the preliminary Uniform Crime Report for 1996, therefore the 1995 Uniform Crime Report was used as a comparison for both the 1995 and 1996 rail-trail crime rates.

6 The Uniform Crime Report refers to mugging as robbery, “the taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear.”

7 The Uniform Crime Report measures vandalism by arrest rather than known incidents. Thus only comparisons to burglary were used.
Crime, Property Values, Trail Opposition & Liability Issues

Tim Eling
Presented at the
Lexington Big Sandy Workshop, 4/1/06

3 Common Concerns of Trail Opposition

1) Crime will go up
2) Property values will go down
3) Liability and lawsuits
Crime

- Many adjacent landowners assume crime will go up if a rail trail is built
- In fact, those fears are unfounded

Indiana Trails Study - 2000
Survey of Trail Users along six trails in Indiana
Law Enforcement Patrol can ease fears

- Washington County, VA deputy prepares to patrol VA Creeper Trail
Retirement Community built in 2005 right on VA Creeper Trail

- Elderspirit Community wanted to build right on the trail.
- They advertised that they were right on the trail.
- Emphasized how safe the area was for residents.

Many Law Enforcement Officials support Rail-Trails

“…The trail has not caused any increase in the amount of crimes reported…We have found that the trail brings in so many people that it has actually led to a decrease in problems we formally encountered such as underage drinking…”

Chief Charles Tennant on Youghiogheny River Trail in PA
Town Agrees To Remove Bike Trail Fence
By STEPHANIE REITZ
From the Hartford Courant

AVON, Connecticut- The town council has agreed to remove 11,700 feet of chain-link fencing along the Rails-to-Trails path in town. Residents whose homes abut the path had requested the move. The fencing, which was installed years ago to ease the security and privacy concerns of some homeowners, is not needed after all and is unattractive, other neighbors told the town council recently.

Property Values

- Many adjacent landowners assume property values will go down if a rail trail is built
- In fact, the exact opposite is true
Home Sales near Two Massachusetts Rail-Trails

- Study of sales in 2005 showed that homes near trails sold at 99.3% of list price and homes away from trails sold at 98.1% of list price.

- Study showed that homes near trails sold in 29.3 days while homes away from trails sold in 50.4 days.

Study of Property Values near Trails in Boulder, CO

- Study showed that home prices declined $4.20 for each one foot away from a trail.

- Avg value of property adjacent to trails was 32% higher than those 3,200’ away.
Omaha NE Survey of Residents Living Within 1 block of Trails

- 65% felt trail would make it easier to sell their home, while only 2% felt it would be harder.
- 42% felt trail would increase value of their home, while only 2% felt trail would decrease value.

Realtors Often Advertise that a House is Near a Trail

Realtor advertisement in Massachusetts:

Craig Della Penna, Realtor
http://www.craigdp.com
Specializing in historic/antique homes and homes near to rail-trails and other linear parks
Indiana Trails Study - 2000
Survey of Trail Neighbors along six trails in Indiana

Chart 16: Percentage of Trail Neighbors Viewing Trail As Having Increased or Positive Effect on Property

0 30 60 90
Percentage

Fort Wayne 52.88 90.90 95.00 86.81 85.88
Goshen 92.93 52.88 90.90 95.00 86.81 85.88
Greenfield 92.93 52.88 90.90 95.00 86.81 85.88
Indianapolis 92.93 52.88 90.90 95.00 86.81 85.88
Muncie 92.93 52.88 90.90 95.00 86.81 85.88
Portage 92.93 52.88 90.90 95.00 86.81 85.88

Trail Increased or No Effect on Property Value
Trail Has No Effect or Makes It Easier To Sell Property
Other Summary Findings on Indiana Trail Neighbors

- Trail neighbors are residential uses
- Trail neighbors are either satisfied or neutral in their level of satisfaction with the trail
- Trail neighbors found the trail had no negative effect on purchase & property appeal
- Trail neighbors purchasing property after trail opened are largely supportive of the trail
Opposition

- Nearly every proposed Rail-Trail encounters intense opposition from adjacent landowners
- In most cases, landowners see the value of rail-trails after they are established
- You must educate landowners on the benefits of rail-trails

Recent Article about Proposed Rail-Trail in SW VA

Plans for Washington, Smyth trail finds foes
Dan Kegley/ Media General News Service
Smyth County, VA News
Thursday, January 19, 2006

“The speakers Tuesday were all concerned about the proximity of the proposed trail to homes. They agreed that proximity would compromise privacy at best and security at worst, leaving homeowners' activities in view of passing walkers, property susceptible to theft, and children in danger of kidnapping or worse. One suggested the trail would depress property values.”
News Article about Proposed Rail-Trail in SW VA

**Plans for Washington, Smyth trail finds foes**

Dan Kegley/ Media General News Service

Smyth County News

Thursday, January 19, 2006

"Who's going to be responsible for treating snake bites?" he asked. "I kill three or four copperheads every year." Pafford said widows living along the spur do not want the trail and cited murders and rapes on the popular Virginia Creeper Trail that follows an old railroad bed from Abingdon to Whitetop. "I'm going to fight this tooth and nail," Pafford said. "If I have to sell everything I've got, I'll keep this tied up in court. I'm a Vietnam vet, and I can get mean when I have to."

Survey of landowners located along the Mohawk-Hudson Trail in Upstate NY 1997

- 86.3% of landowners use the trail
- 87.8% felt indifferent or expressed satisfaction with having trail as a neighbor
Chapter 7: Promoting Greenway Safety

People who are unfamiliar with greenways often fear they will attract crime and lower adjacent property values. Numerous studies have refuted this; in fact, greenways are generally safer than the communities surrounding them. There are many efforts communities can undertake to ensure greenways are safe.

Careful attention to the site planning and design of particular areas such as parking lots, trailheads, and restrooms is critical in reducing safety concerns, real or perceived. There is a balance between retaining or creating a natural setting that is safe while also preserving the naturalness of an area. Design strategies include allowing clear visual access, having appropriate lighting in key areas, providing multiple access and egress points, and organizing activities to increase the number of users and "eyes on the path".

Encouraging ownership of the greenway by involving the public in the planning process and educating them on the benefits of greenways, as well as presenting data illustrating the lack of crime and other problems is essential in gaining public support. Such public processes can often lead to an effective neighborhood watch program to monitor the greenway.

Buncombe County is establishing a non-profit entity—Connect Buncombe, which is part of the Buncombe County Service Foundation—to perform volunteer services related to promoting safe use of greenways.

Greenway Safety Studies from Other Communities

A survey done in Cary, NC, in 1995 of residents living near three greenways gauged their satisfaction with the greenways and about any problems. There was a 75% response rate and most residents felt satisfied with the greenways and stated that problems were minimal. Studies in Mecklenburg County, NC; Denver; Seattle; Tampa; and other cities reported similar results showing less crime on greenways than the communities as a whole.

Two studies of crime statistics in Mecklenburg County show greenways have lower crime rates than the surrounding community. They found that most greenways provide a safer alternative than roads and attract local residents using the trails frequently.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) was authored in 1971 by C. Ray Jeffery, a criminologist at Florida State University, as he studied the relationship between the physical environment and the incidence of crime. His work was based on previous research studying how the built environment influences the rate of crime, including Jane Jacobs seminal *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961 and Oscar Newman’s *Defensible Space*.
Implementing CPTED

It is recommended that a systematic review of CPTED principles occur during the design and review of any greenway project. In Safety by Design: Creating a Safe Environment in Virginia, the Virginia Crime Prevention Association grouped questions in the following categories:

- **Designation:** What is the intended use of the area? What behavior is allowed?
- **Definition:** Are there physical limitations to the area or site? Are borders between the area and public spaces defined? Is it clear which activities are allowed where?
- **Design:** Does the physical environment safely and efficiently support the intended use?
- **Demand:** This information describes the nature of the population around the future trail.
- **Land Use:** City planning departments, zoning boards, traffic engineers, and local neighborhood groups have information that describes and depicts the physical allocation and use of land in and around existing or proposed trail.
- **Observations:** Officers conduct an actual review of the physical space that has been designated as a trail segment.
- **Resident or User Interviews:** Officers conduct interviews with persons living near the proposed trail to determine their perspective on safety.

**Activity Support & Maintenance**

Activity support encourages increased greenway use by programming activities for users of all ages and interests. This encourages legitimate uses of the park, and is especially effective when planned for time periods of lower usage. The more people there are on a trail, the safer it will be. Chapter 6: Programs provides more details on these options.

Consistent maintenance, just like with any park setting, will help keep the greenway safer by eliminating potential hiding places through the use of regular landscape clearing and pruning. Good maintenance of the trails and facilities demonstrates that the community cares about the space and will not easily tolerate criminal behavior. See Chapter 8 on Maintenance for further information.

**Intended Use of the Area? What Behavior is Allowed?**

- **Crime Analysis Review:** This information assists the police department in determining the type of crimes that are occurring on and around the trail.
- **Demographics:** This information describes the nature of the population around the future trail.
- **Land Use:** City planning departments, zoning boards, traffic engineers, and local neighborhood groups have information that describes and depicts the physical allocation and use of land in and around existing or proposed trail.
- **Observations:** Officers conduct an actual review of the physical space that has been designated as a trail segment.
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**People often express fear that potential greenways will attract people who will commit personal or property crimes. An effective strategy to gain resident support as well as to reduce crime is to get nearby residents involved in the planning, design, and upkeep of the greenway to help establish a sense of ownership.**

A local example of residents taking ownership of a greenway is the Friends of Hominy Creek, which was created to help develop a master plan and oversee the future greenway. The group brainstormed about the design of the greenway as well as potential uses such as an outdoor stage for performances and a community garden.

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**Photo Credit:** Friends of Hominy Creek Greenway

**Planned greenway corridors are oftentimes overgrown with weeds, trees and other foliage and need to be cleared not only for trail establishment but to promote safety and visibility along a route.**

**Photo Credit:** Friends of Hominy Creek Greenway

**Richlands’ Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design**

**Survey in 1973.**

Designing greenways using CPTED principles has the potential to reduce crime by focusing on three interrelated principles that comprise CPTED concepts and strategies: Natural Surveillance; Natural Access Control; and Territoriality (Exhibit 4-1).

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**Buncombe County Greenways & Trails Master Plan**

**Implementing CPTED**

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- **Resident or User Interviews:** Officers conduct interviews with persons living near the proposed trail to determine their perspective on safety.
### Natural Surveillance

Placement of physical features, activities, and people in a way that maximizes visibility and minimizes hidden and isolated areas. This allows users of a space to have views of their surroundings and of potential threats to their safety, making it more difficult for someone to perform a criminal act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Surveillance</th>
<th>Natural Access Control</th>
<th>Territoriality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design Strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use of Physical Features</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locate parking lots, picnic areas, trailheads, play areas, and restroom facilities near streets and other activity centers so they are easily observable;</td>
<td>Restrict access to parking areas with gates when parks are closed;</td>
<td>Use of physical features that express ownership and neighborhood context. People who feel a sense of ownership tend to use the trails more and monitor them for inappropriate behavior and maintenance problems. Potential offenders are discouraged when they feel inappropriate actions would be viewed and reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When possible, locate trails near areas of park activity or at places where parks meet commercial or residential uses, or align them with active streets to make users more observable by others;</td>
<td>Provide clearly visible and lighted entrances to park buildings such as restrooms and locate them in areas close to other activity areas. Clearly define paths between parking lots and other facilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster compatible activities to avoid conflict and to increase social observation;</td>
<td>Maintain at least 10-feet between greenways and wooded areas to offer long sight lines and distance from potential attacks;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking areas are more prone to crime. Incorporate lighting and do not erect solid fences which block visibility and hamper escape. Limit lighting only to parking areas and trailheads rather than along the entire trail unless greenway use at night is encouraged;</td>
<td>Establish a clear separation between regional public trails and adjacent private property with landscaping, fencing or other screening treatments;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an emergency telephone system at parking areas and along the trails such as those near UNC Asheville on the Reedy Creek Greenway;</td>
<td>Throughout a trail system, and especially in isolated areas, provide clearly marked paths or exits that gives users egress options;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position benches in areas where users have good views of surrounding areas;</td>
<td>Through clearly marked and placed signage and gates, note the hours that the greenway is open to the public.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain landscaping at least 5-feet from the edge of trail with a mowed strip or groundcover bordering the trail. Keep trees limbed up to 10-feet high and avoid using large and dense shrub masses.</td>
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### Natural Access Control

Design strategies include:

- Restrict access to parking areas with gates when parks are closed;
- Provide clearly visible and lighted entrances to park buildings such as restrooms and locate them in areas close to other activity areas. Clearly define paths between parking lots and other facilities.
- Maintain at least 10-feet between greenways and wooded areas to offer long sight lines and distance from potential attacks;
- Establish a clear separation between regional public trails and adjacent private property with landscaping, fencing or other screening treatments;
- Throughout a trail system, and especially in isolated areas, provide clearly marked paths or exits that gives users egress options;
- Through clearly marked and placed signage and gates, note the hours that the greenway is open to the public.

### Territoriality

Design strategies include:

- Incorporating certain facilities into a greenway provides cues about appropriate uses. For example, providing children’s play areas encourages family use.
- Clearly delineate between public and private property along the trail with the use of fencing, landscaping, paving, and other design features.
- Reflect environmental and cultural context with elements such as gateways, signage, seating, art, paving patterns, and other features.
- Provide clear directional and informational signage to orient users to the greenway layout as well as facilities along the greenway. Signs should clearly identify trail names, especially at intersections, as well as trail length and distances to facilities, location of emergency phones, and the characteristics of trails, such as wide paved trails or smaller isolated walking trails. Mile markers should be installed as well as indications of the trails intended use.
- Post park rules at all access or gathering points in the park. Rules should clearly convey the acceptable uses and discourage unacceptable uses of the park.
Upon completion of the review, officers recommend CPTED and security procedures that will minimize potential criminal activity on the trail and in the surrounding neighborhoods. These recommendations cover issues such as lighting, location of benches and rest stops, access to trails from roadways, and landscaping. These recommendations are incorporated into the final design of each segment. Buncombe County staff could follow a similar process in the review of greenways.

**Law Enforcement & Patrols**

In addition to the above CPTED principles, it is essential that either law enforcement or designated enforcement volunteers patrol greenway parking lots and trails. Bicycle patrols are particularly effective because they have more flexibility to monitor the entire greenway systems and their presence is a good crime deterrent.

**Community Watch Programs**

Many cities with a greenways system have groups and individuals who volunteer to patrol the trail and do special projects such as litter cleanups and tree plantings. In Boulder, Colorado, there are Greenways Walkers who frequent the greenways and are encouraged to pick up trash and report maintenance problems to the Street and Bikeway Maintenance hotline. The Midtown Greenway Coalition in Minneapolis has an organized Trail Watch with riders scheduled for two-hour evening shifts to ride the greenways to provide a friendly presence and report any incidents. Incentives are offered by local bicycle shops and restaurants to encourage people to volunteer. They also have an “Adopt a Greenway” Program with over fifty groups volunteering to help with litter cleanups and landscape planting and maintenance. Buncombe County could advocate and provide support for the formation of community watch groups that will monitor the greenways.

In some communities, social media is becoming an effective tool as a grassroots community relations vehicle for fighting crime. This was recently demonstrated in West Asheville where a string of home invasions inspired local residents to organize the West Asheville Watch using social media to communicate information on crimes that have occurred and how to stay safe. Having an online forum for greenway users to post safety information as well as to advertise events would be beneficial.

**Safe Routes to Schools**

Healthy Buncombe and the County’s Parks, Greenways and Recreation Services are managing programs to create safer ways for children to walk or ride to school to minimize risk, combat obesity, and decrease traffic congestion and pollution. The first Safe Routes to Schools program in the United States was adopted in the Bronx, NY in 1997 and has since spread throughout the country. A Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is a school-based effort that involves young students, teachers, law enforcement officers and parents in the development of school safety and encouragement initiatives such as Walk to School Day, Walking Wednesdays, pedestrian safety assemblies, and bicycle rodeos.

While these programs can help engage children in safe walking behaviors and encourage more walking and healthier lifestyles, parents may have non-infrastructure concerns over the safety of their children particularly along greenway corridors where there may not be as many “eyes on the street”. Therefore, the principles of CPTED should be considered as SRTS programs are implemented and greenways constructed adjacent to school properties.
Black Mountain is one of six communities in North Carolina selected to complete a SRTS action plan. The action plan team is conducting analysis of existing conditions and prioritizing engineering solutions surrounding the study schools. The plan will guide the community and school system in the development of facilities and programs to encourage more children to walk or bike to school in a safer environment. This model should be expanded in Buncombe County so all schools can be studied and improved through the SRTS methodology and funding. Any schools near planned greenways should be prioritized for SRTS funding and coordinated with local SRTS action plans, with consideration of CPTED principles.

Sharing the Greenway
Physical safety of users is also a concern on greenways and trails due to a wide variety of user types, persons traveling at different rates of speed, and inexperienced users. Many users will perceive riding on designated bicycle paths as a safer alternative to riding on unmarked streets and roads; however, their skills in operating a bicycle and how other users respond to them can create safety concerns.

Offering instruction on how to safely bicycle on the greenway is important for people to learn proper riding techniques, greenway etiquette, safety awareness, and how to avoid collisions, especially at street or other trail intersections. Learning to navigate to the greenway along streets is important to help people feel confident and encouraged to use the greenways. Bicycle rodeos can be held to teach children how to safely ride a bicycle and learn the rules of the road. Campaigns advocating the use of helmets for all users should be a critical part of any bicycle safety program.

Buncombe County and its partners have been involved in various bicycle training courses, particularly through the League of American Bicyclists. The focus on road-riding skills within the training modules leaves a gap in the community in teaching proper skills and etiquette of bicycle riders and other users along greenway trails. It is recommended that the county work with its partners to develop a greenway-specific training module for users to be deployed through schools, scheduled training sessions and public awareness campaigns.

The interface of greenways with the street and highway system can also generate safety concerns among users if not designed properly. Even at the most well-designed locations, high volumes of vehicular traffic can become a deterrent for young users. It is important to consider how signage and markings help encourage safe use of all users, particularly at locations where greenways intersect with other greenways, trails or streets.

Community groups can be encouraged to help as crossing guards at the greenways. In the Brightmoor neighborhood of Detroit, citizens have effectively organized to act as crossing guards at busy intersections. As greenways develop in Buncombe County, neighborhood volunteers could be recruited to volunteer as crossing guards. At intersections deemed to be "busy" or potential problematic for pedestrians or bicyclists, there is already a precedence for this as many schools place crossing guards at busy intersections.

Buncombe County and its partners should work to develop greenways-specific training modules to promote safe usage and consideration of other users.

Organize a Training Program
Buncombe County and its partners could develop a training program for new volunteers, design and...
Richland’s Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway Extension Conceptual Design

develop a standardized greenway curriculum to present background information to new volunteers, homeowners adjacent to new or proposed greenways, schoolchildren, designers and contractors, and other interested partners. Such a curriculum would include the definition and benefits of greenways and the vision for the Buncombe County Greenways Master Plan. Specific workshops related to construction, maintenance, and safety could be offered periodically. Buncombe County could develop an information clearinghouse that relates specifically to local greenway management topics. An assessment checklist could be developed for volunteers and others for ongoing greenway evaluation and maintenance.

An example of a greenways training program is the Georgia Trails and Greenways Program which focuses on unpaved trails. The Georgia Trails and Greenways Office coordinates trainings on trail construction, trail maintenance and trail education. Safe Routes for Seniors recognizes that older adults have physical and cognitive challenges when trying to walk or ride a bike. Greenways provide opportunities for physical activity and a place to conduct training programs to make seniors comfortable in using trails. Safe Routes for Seniors originated in New York City where they found a link to their website on the Connect Buncombe and Midtown Greenway Coalition websites. Minneapolis, MN

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Chapter References
Lauren A. Tedder, Effects of Three-City Greenways on Adherent Residents (1995), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Spring 2000
Tampa Greenways and Trails Master Plan. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Review. 2010
Midtown Greenway Coalition website, Minneapolis, MN

Safe Routes for Seniors
As Safe Routes for Schools has been very successful in creating a safer pedestrian environment for children, another group that is more susceptible to pedestrian-related conflicts with cars is senior citizens. They tend to have more mobility difficulties and sensory changes as they age. By constructing greenways and connecting them to neighborhoods, we can provide increased opportunities for senior citizens to safely and comfortably experience the health benefits of walking and bicycling. The idea for Safe Routes for Seniors originated in New York City where they found senior pedestrians were killed at a disproportionate rate to other age groups.

They developed a Safe Routes for Seniors program which has dramatically reduced the number of deaths and injuries among senior pedestrians.

Buncombe County Greenways & Trails Master Plan
Thursday, June 10, 2010

Greenway makes a good neighbor
Construction of the Mountain View and Norwich parts of the greenway begins soon. Most residents in other areas say the route was a welcome addition.

By Mason Adams | 981-3253

A mixture of hope, concern and curiosity usually greets the arrival of an outsider into a tightly knit neighborhood.

The impending expansion of the Roanoke River Greenway into the city's Mountain View and Norwich communities over the next two years is no exception. With the construction of bridges and more than two miles of new trail set for completion by the end of 2012, residents aren't sure what to expect.

They're hoping that an influx of bicyclists, runners and walkers will bring new blood and revitalization, but at the same time they harbor concerns about providing a new route for outsiders into the community.

"We see some new development coming in there, but we don't know when," said James "Ronnie" Stanley of the Norwich Neighborhood Alliance. "You can see the handwriting on the wall, but you don't know what it's going to be."

The long-term effects remain to be seen, but based on interviews with those who live along the extended area of the greenway in Southeast Roanoke, there already have been positive changes. The stretch of greenway from Ninth Street to the east bears some similarities to the proposed route through Norwich, as it generally runs along industrial areas while occasionally bearing near houses.

The greenway's stretch through the center of the city at Wasena Park, Smith Park and the River's Edge Sports Complex remains its heart and most popular piece, but with a recent influx of federal money, city officials are working to expand the paved path at both ends. To the east, a mixture of stimulus money and other government funding will help pay for a bridge and path around the wastewater treatment plant to connect the Tinker Creek Greenway with the Roanoke River Greenway where it currently ends at 13th Street.

To the west, construction already is under way on a bridge to link Wasena Park with the newly opened Vic Thomas Park (the former Hannah Court trailer park), and officials received bids this week to extend the greenway west to Bridge Street.

And even though the bridge to Vic Thomas Park won't be complete until later this summer, Gregg Ervin, president of the Mountain View Neighborhood Association, said he's noticed some changes.

"We've already seen an increase in bike riders in this neighborhood," Ervin said. "It is drawing new people into the neighborhood."

Certainly, that's what city officials would like to see. They've spun the emerging greenway system not only as a source of recreation and alternative transportation, but also as an asset that can assist long-stagnant neighborhoods with revitalization.

Roanokers appear to have embraced the concept: Greenway construction is one of the few capital projects that most seem to agree is worth the cost, and an ever-increasing number of users make a habit of visiting them regularly.
Ron McCorkle and Mark Petersen are both Southeast Roanoke activists who bought houses near the new extended stretch of the greenway. Cycling enthusiast McCorkle said he noticed a significant increase in people on bicycles even before the stretch of greenway along Bennington Street opened in early 2007. He said that he expects the greenway to slowly change attitudes about Southeast Roanoke.

"Most of the people who use it live in another part of the city. They have an opinion of Southeast, but now they're getting to ride through and see it's a really great neighborhood," McCorkle said. "What happens is that people will see it's a great neighborhood with great value and houses that are affordable. And they'll start to move in. I've already seen it start to happen."

Others said the neighborhood hasn't changed substantially, but blamed that largely on the slumping housing market. Some said it's still too early to expect large-scale results.

"I think we would look for those improvements to stabilize neighborhoods first," said Assistant City Manager Brian Townsend. "Then over time, once that stabilization happens, you see investment and improvement."

What folks do agree upon is that more people than ever are out using the greenway, and many of them live nearby.

On Wednesday evening last week, Doug and Kathy King, who live a short drive from the 13th Street trail head in Southeast, said they've made walking the greenway a near-daily routine since Kathy was diagnosed with diabetes several weeks ago. Others from nearby Garden City and Vinton rode bikes along the paved path.

"As far as neighborhood use, we have a lot of kids who are going down and using the greenway," Petersen said. "I've seen pedestrian traffic on the greenway pick up just in the last six months. Every Saturday afternoon, if it's a nice day, you can't find parking on the 13th Street trail head."

Those crowds have brought activity and a new atmosphere -- and they've created some inconveniences for the greenway's neighbors, too, some say.

Richard Artutis owns 3 acres of land that sit along the greenway by Deaton Road, which serves as an access point for some users. The problem is there's no place to park, which has at times led to conflicts between greenway users and tenants in Artutis' houses.

"I've had to fight the traffic of people wanting to get here," Artutis said. "I've had people park in my yard, drive through at a high rate of speed."

Artutis said he considers the greenway a city resource "for all the different walks of life to get out and say hello to each other." But he said he's also heard groups of "wanna-be thugs" passing by at 2 a.m. or later.

"Too much havoc could happen on that greenway," Artutis said. "It would make an excellent getaway for a thug. I guess it just depends on how your mind works."

Artutis said he wondered, too, if the city's homeless population might be using the greenway as an open-air shelter, but Petersen said he hasn't seen it.

"The biggest thing we anticipated when they opened the greenway was the loitering of homeless people under the bridges, but that's not happened," Petersen said.
In fact, most of those interviewed along the greenway in Southeast said they hadn't noticed an uptick in loitering or crime in general. Aside from some burglaries here and there, crime appears to have gone down since the greenway opened.

"Having more people use public space increases security," Townsend said. "Show me an area that's got a lot of activity, I'll show you a safe area. Show me an area that doesn't have a lot of activity -- that's where bad things are going to happen."

Still, it's not entirely clear that it's all because of the greenway.

David Ten-Eyck, who lives in a house just across the street from an exposed stretch of greenway, said he's noticed a drop in suspicious-looking people passing by. He attributes that not to the greenway, however, but to the increasingly sporadic hours of a nearby convenience store. The store's owner and an employee were both killed in unrelated incidents less than a month apart in 2005, and managers since then haven't kept regular hours, Ten-Eyck said.

For all of its benefits, the greenway has also brought some disappointments, too.

Ten-Eyck noted that it was built as part of the Army Corps of Engineers flood reduction project, and city officials have crowed after recent flood events that the project is working. But Ten-Eyck complained that he still pays flood insurance.

Petersen said he is disappointed that the city hasn't maintained the greenway's trees and landscaping since 2007. Many of those trees have died but have not been replaced.

Artutis grumbled that the concrete at the end of Deaton Road had crumbled since the greenway was put in.

Still, Artutis said he has enjoyed the greenway since it was opened, and he is hoping to see some financial benefit. He is trying to sell his 3 acres -- which sit next to an electrical substation at a point with easy access to both the greenway and the Mill Mountain Star Trail -- for $2.5 million.

The Roanoke Times
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