

# TRAIL FACTS

## Positive impacts on:

- Transportation
- Economic Activity
- Public Safety
- Fitness



## Overview

**Transportation:** Provide off-street routes and shortcuts within the roadway network.

**Economic:** Property values often improve and local businesses benefit from their proximity to trails.

**Public Safety:** Trail users help provide surveillance of otherwise unmonitored locations.

**Exercise / Recreation:** Venue for walking, biking, running, skating and quiet relaxation.

## Transportation

Transportation options increase through integration of trails and bikeways.

- 43% of cycling trips are made for purposes other than recreation (work, shopping, school and personal errands).
- Off-street trail facilities expand the number of people who feel safe choosing to bicycle.

*Source: "Rail-Trails and Livable Communities," Rails-To-Trails Conservancy, 1998.*

## Economic

The value of homes is often positively impacted.

- In Boulder, Colorado, the value of homes is inversely proportional to the distance from a greenbelt. The average value of property adjacent to a greenbelt is 32% higher than homes 3,200 feet away.
- In Seattle, Washington, property near trails sells for 6% more on average.
- Approximately 60 percent of those interviewed believed that being adjacent to the Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle would either make their home sell for more or have no effect on the selling price.
- In Denver, Colorado, 73% of real estate agents believe that homes adjacent to trails are easier to sell.
- Trails are the most desirable amenity, with 52% of active and other seniors saying that nearby

*Source: National Park Service's "Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors: A Resource Book, 1995.*



trails will seriously influence their buying decision.

Sources: *Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: 1995, and National Association of Homebuilders and National Association of Realtors, April 2002.*

Trails increase access to local businesses and create opportunities for new business development.

- Trail users of three rail-trails generated economic activity of over \$1.2 million for each trail.
- Users spend money (per person) as they visit trails:
  - \$9.21 - Heritage Trail (Iowa)
  - \$11.02 - St. Marks Trail (Florida)
  - \$3.97 - Lafayette-Moraga Trail (California)

Source: *Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trail and Greenway Corridors, National Park Service, 1995.*

## Public Safety

“The trail does not encourage crime, and in fact, probably deters crime since there are many people, tourists and local citizens using the trail.”

- Sheriff, Green County, WI

“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.”

- Chief of Police, Buena Vista, PA  
Source: *Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, “Trail-Trails and Safe Communities,” 1998.*

Source: *Seattle Engineering Department, 1987.*

- In Minnesota, crime along rail-trails was less than anticipated by residents.

Source: *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 1980.*

- Property owners in California, Florida and Iowa reported that rates of crime had remained the same or decreased since the opening of new trails.

Source: *National Park Service, 1992.*

## Exercise & Recreation

Trails offer low cost, attractive, and accessible opportunities to integrate exercise into daily life.

- Trails provide access to places for neighborhood physical activity resulting in a 25% increase in the number of people who exercise at least three times per week.

Source: *Guide to Community Preventative Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention – December 2002.*

- Trails address obesity by giving more people inexpensive access to places for physical activity (especially for groups at high risk for physical inactivity).

Source: *Preventing Obesity and Chronic Diseases through Good Nutrition and Physical Activity, CDC Fact Sheet, 2003.*

- A community trail can promote physically active lifestyles. New exercisers are more dependent on trails as a primary outlet for physical activity than are habitually active exercisers.
- 98% of new exercisers in West Virginia reported that their exercise amounts had increased when asked of a new trail’s impact.

Source: *Use of a Community Trail Among New and Habitual Exercisers: A Preliminary Assessment, Center for Disease Control, October 2004.*

## San José’s Approach

CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) principles for trail design.

- Use a standard trail width to maintain visibility
- Maintain landscaping buffer zones for better visibility
- Define rights-of-way with signage and striping
- Provide call boxes for emergency services
- Use maintenance patrols to prevent deterioration
- New housing and businesses face trails for more “eyes” on the trails
- Milestone signage identifies trail locations for rapid emergency response (under development)
- Adopt-A-Trail program supports maintenance

National Rate	Trail Rate
Urban Areas: 1,117 incidents per 100,000 inhabitants	None of the 36 trails in a national study reported burglary to adjacent homes.
Reported muggings: 335 per 100,000 inhabitants	Of the 36 urban rail-trails (332 total miles); two trails reported muggings in 1995 and one in 1996.