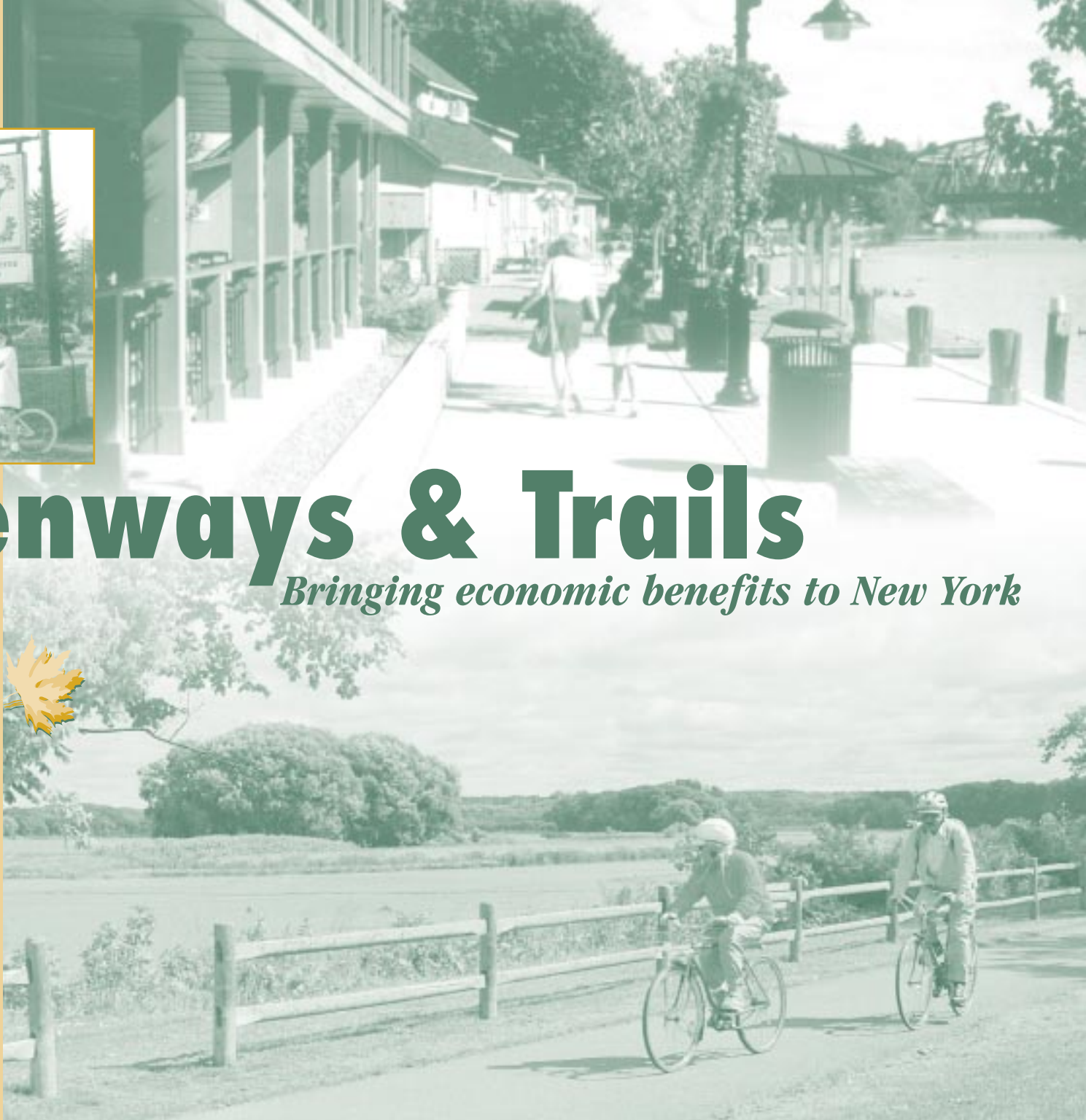




# Greenways & Trails

*Bringing economic benefits to New York*



**NEW YORK**  
**PARKS & CONSERVATION**  
Association

 **The**  
**Business Council**  
of New York State, Inc.

“Tourism is currently the second largest industry in New York State and the largest industry worldwide. Studies have shown that a growing number of Americans view outdoor activities as a way to enjoy *safe, scenic recreation for the entire family*. That is why communities looking to attract additional tourists may want to consider greenways and trails as part of their mix of attractions.”

**Assemblyman Paul Tokasz**  
Chair, NYS Assembly Tourism, Arts and Sports Development Committee



The Empire State is blessed with beauty, rich in history, and proud of the range and diversity of its cultural attractions. Its quality of life is second to none, and it's a natural draw for tourists.

But that doesn't mean that those of us in the business community can take these assets for granted. It's up to us to ensure that the quality of experience people have in New York is the best it can be — good enough to keep them coming back for more.

Greenways and community trails can help ensure that a week or a weekend in New York State is even greater than the sum of its parts. They tie destinations together, and they are destinations in their own right. They're a key part of what we need to develop in New York, to ensure the vitality of our communities and our economy.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Daniel B. Walsh".

Daniel B. Walsh, President



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*Grateful acknowledgement to **Eastman Kodak Company**, the **New York State Assembly**, and the **Rural New York Grant Program**, administered by the Open Space Institute, with the support of The J.M. Kaplan Fund, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, and Phillip Morris Companies Inc., for support of this publication and NYPCA's efforts to promote the connection between greenways and trails and economic development.*

## **Greenways and trails boost local economies**

Greenways and community trails can bring new economic vitality to New York's cities, towns, and villages. They attract tourists, encourage new trail-related business development, and help revitalize downtown business districts. They enhance the quality of life, a critical factor in attracting and retaining business. Greenways and trails can also inspire renewed civic pride and provide a fresh focus for community activities.

## **A growing movement**

Many New York communities are already enjoying the economic and other benefits of greenways and community trails. More than 65 such community trails, totaling 700 miles statewide, currently exist. These trails have been so successful that dozens more communities are planning another 1200 miles of trail.



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### **What exactly are greenways and community trails?**

*Greenways and community trails come in many shapes and sizes. They can be urban or rural, busy or quiet, paved or grassy. They connect neighborhoods, businesses, schools, libraries, parks, and other local attractions. Many greenways and community trails use transportation corridors, such as abandoned rail lines and historic canals. Others follow natural features, such as rivers and lakeshores.*

*Community trails are often local projects, created by neighborhood and civic associations, chambers of commerce, and local trail user groups. The most successful ones are supported by a broad partnership of community interests.*

### **Who uses greenways and community trails?**

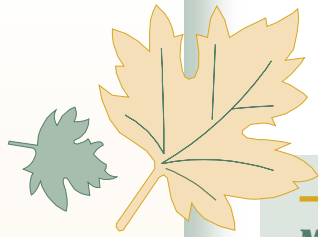
*Walkers, bicyclists, joggers, in-line skaters, cross-country skiers, equestrians, dog walkers, bird watchers, parents with baby strollers, people in wheelchairs. In some places, snowmobilers enjoy the trails. In communities along rivers or lakes, anglers and boaters use the trails. Decisions about trail use are usually local and tailored to individual communities.*

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“Greenways and trails are recognized as **vital contributors to the tourist economy** of New York State. We invite residents and visitors alike to enjoy these pathways that enrich the journey to the great destinations of New York.”

**Brian Akley**  
Deputy Commissioner  
New York State Division of  
Marketing, Advertising and Tourism





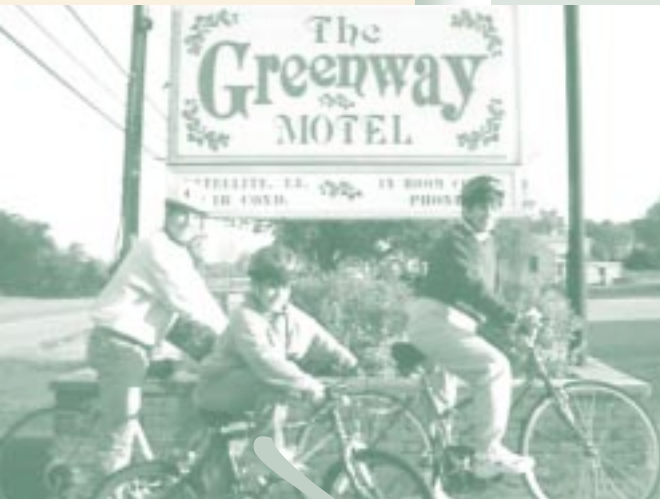
Benefits for Business  
**REAL**

**Motel owners use greenway to promote business**

*When motel owners Jay and Laurie Sharman purchased a motel in Mount Morris, N.Y. several years ago, the first thing they did was to change its name to The Greenway Motel to take advantage of visitors' interest in the nearby Genesee Valley Greenway. About half of the 90-mile Greenway, which stretches from Rochester south to the Pennsylvania border, is complete and open to the public.*

*"Businesses around here are looking forward to the completion of the Greenway trail," says Jay Sharman.*

*"Already, it's a great community asset and a real shot in the arm for the local economy."*



***A boon to tourism***

Numerous studies show that trails boost tourism by attracting visitors, extending their length of stay, and adding to the constellation of attractions in an area. This directly benefits area restaurants, motels, and service stations and spurs the growth of businesses selling recreational gear and other goods. Rail-trails, especially, can breathe new life into small towns left to wither after the trains stopped running.

More than 100 million Americans walk for pleasure, 100 million bicycle, 17 million ride horses, 12 million in-line skate, and 6 million cross country ski. Localities with safe, pleasant trails are becoming highly desirable vacation destinations for these educated and affluent travelers. Trail users need food, lodging, and fuel. They need special clothes, shoes, and equipment. They buy souvenirs, crafts, film, and other items. They also combine visiting a trail with other money-spending activities.

***Rail-trails worth a million to local communities***

A major National Park Service study of three rail-trails — an urban trail in California, a suburban trail in Florida, and a rural trail in Iowa — found that trail use pumped between \$1.2 and \$1.9 million annually into the economies of nearby communities.



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## Studies and success stories from around the country

- Findings of a study of owners of businesses adjacent to the **Cape Cod Rail Trail** in Massachusetts:
  - 60% said the trail was a prominent factor in their expansion
  - 53% said revenue from trail users made up more than 10% of their business
  - 24% said the trail played a part in their decision to open their business
- The downtown of Dunedin, Florida suffered a 35 percent storefront vacancy rate in 1992. Then, an abandoned CSX railroad track became the **Pinellas Trail**. Now, storefront occupancy is 100 percent and there's a waiting list for available space.
- For peak-season, hotel rooms along Wisconsin's 32-mile **Elroy-Sparta State Park Trail** are booked up to a full year in advance. A state study revealed that the average visitor travels 228 miles to get to the trail, bringing substantial "new" money into Wisconsin.
- Marthasville, a small, quiet town in Missouri, has taken on new life since the **Katy Hiking and Biking Trail** was completed. More than a dozen new businesses have opened and renewed civic pride has led to numerous beautification

projects. A user survey of the western half of the Katy Trail showed it generated an estimated \$3 million annually in local revenue.

- Connellsville, Pennsylvania used to be a town with many vacant buildings. According to the Greater Connellsville Chamber of Commerce, vacant buildings are scarce since the opening of the **Yough River Trail**. Many professionals are moving into downtown and a newly formed Connellsville Festival Committee is busy organizing events.
- Instead of burying a river that ran through downtown San Antonio in Texas, as one plan suggested, the City made it into a park. Today, the **San Antonio Riverwalk** trail system is lined with successful shops, restaurants, hotels, and a mall, and is now the second largest tourist attraction in San Antonio.
- In Vermont, statistics show that tourists stay an average of one day longer in Stowe than in other resort areas in the state; this extra day and revenue are attributed to the **Stowe Recreation Path**, a 5.5 mile multi-use trail.



“ We’re extremely fortunate to have the 75-mile Erie Canal Heritage Trail\* go through our region. As the site of the Trail’s westernmost trailhead, the City of Lockport, especially, is enjoying a surge of new visitors. And the future is brighter still, when a trail link is developed to the City of Buffalo’s Riverwalk and inner harbor project, providing access to a million people. We haven’t even begun to tap the *real economic potential* of the Heritage Trail. ”

**David Kinyon**  
President, Eastern Niagara  
Chamber of Commerce

\* The Erie Canal Heritage Trail is part of the New York State Canalway Trail which, when complete, will be a 524-mile cross-state network of multi-use trails paralleling the NYS Canal System. Today, 220 miles of the Canalway Trail are open to the public.

## Benefits for Business REAL

### **Business leaders in Olean know the importance of quality of life**

*Business leaders in Olean, N.Y. know that quality of life is a crucial factor in recruiting and keeping good employees. That's why three leading area corporations — Dexter, Cutco Cutlery, and Dresser-Rand — contributed \$10,000 apiece to complete the Allegheny River Valley Trail in southwestern New York. The Trail, which connects Olean, St. Bonaventure University, and the Town of Allegany, is so successful that Olean is now looking to extend it.*

*"Good recreational facilities are a critical part of the mix when recruiting employees." says James Stitt, President and Chief Operating Officer of Cutco Cutlery Corporation, which employees upwards of 850 people.*

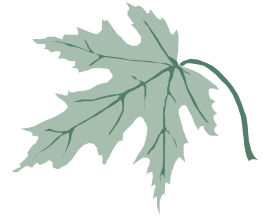
*"This is the kind of lasting and popular project Cutco likes to support," Stitt continues. "It's very rewarding to see how heavily the trail is used. I'm looking forward to seeing it expand and get closer to our plant so our employees can easily use it at lunchtime."*



photo courtesy of the Olean Times Herald.

### **A wise business investment**

Many business leaders say quality of life issues are highly important when deciding where to locate a new factory or office. Trails and greenways can help attract desirable employees by enriching overall quality of life and making an area a more attractive place to live and work. They provide employees with relaxation and exercise at lunchtime, commuting alternatives, and safe, nearby places to take the family on weekends.



Quality of life is just as important to current and potential residents, who favorably view trails and greenways. A survey of 4,000 residents of the greater Syracuse area, conducted by FOCUS Greater Syracuse, revealed that bicycling and walking paths were the top priority for making Syracuse a better place to live.

### **A good community investment**

Across the nation, community trails have proven to be a cost-effective use of public funds. A study of Maryland's Northern Central Rail-Trail found that trail-related tax income to the state totaled \$303,000, while the trail's management and maintenance costs were \$192,000. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources estimates the total annual user spending related to the Cannon Valley Trail to be somewhere around \$1 million, with the state receiving \$66,000 from related sales tax revenue.

Greenways and trails use only narrow ribbons of land. Yet they greatly increase the value of existing parks and open space by linking them to neighborhoods and each other. Community volunteers often participate in trail maintenance and management, helping to reduce public expenditure. As an added bonus, underground utilities may provide revenue to help pay for trail improvements and maintenance. The Town of Lloyd in the Hudson Valley received \$400,000 to allow fibre optic cable to be laid under its five-mile rail-trail, which was spearheaded by the local Rotary Club. Nationwide, 40 percent of rail-trails do double duty as corridors for utilities.

## **Trails a desirable commodity to homeowners**

An overwhelming majority of home buyers are looking for communities with "walking and bicycling paths" and "lots of open space" according to a nationwide study undertaken for the real estate industry. And they're willing to pay higher prices for these features. The study, conducted by American Lives, Inc., reported that walking and bicycling paths ranked third among the 42 features buyers said were most important, well ahead of traditional favorites such as tennis courts, golf courses, and swimming pools.

Studies of the impact of trails on adjacent property owners consistently show that trails increase or have little impact on the value of adjacent property. A 1998 study on the impact of the Capital Region's 35-mile Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail on adjoining residential properties determined that 86 percent of landowners feel that the trail increased or has no effect on their ability to sell their houses.

### **Local rotary spearheads trail**

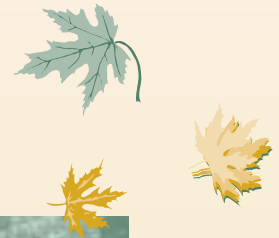
*In 1996, the Highland Rotary Club in Ulster County was searching for a community project when they hit on the idea of converting an abandoned railbed in town into a rail-trail.*

*"We thought this was a perfect community project — good for business, good for the kids, good for the local quality of life. The town is poised to reap big benefits from the rail-trail. People will come here to use the trail, have lunch, shop, perhaps stay overnight," says Rotary Club member Raymond Constantino, who was Chair of the Club's Community Service Committee at the time the rail-trail project was initiated.*



### **Trails make good neighbors**

*Well-planned and designed trails make good neighbors. Most residents living along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, between Albany and Schenectady, report being satisfied with the trail as a neighbor. In a survey of 215 adjacent homeowners, more than 85 percent say they use the trail.*



“New trails and greenways are a central ingredient in Rochester's revitalization effort. They enhance our waterways, parks and other natural assets. In addition, trails create a greater sense of community by connecting neighborhoods to one another and to our community's common spaces.”

**William A. Johnson, Jr.**  
Mayor of Rochester



### Trail makes good business sense to Troy businessman

*Thousands of downtown Troy office workers will be able to enjoy a convenient lunch hour walk along the Hudson River thanks to John Hedley, a prominent Troy businessman. Hedley, understanding that trails can be business assets, granted a permanent 1.3 mile trail easement along his two riverfront office complexes.*



*"When done right, projects such as this are very positive for the community," says Hedley. "It's to the advantage of business owners to develop a good relationship with the community and participate in projects that are beneficial to the places where they do business."*

### More benefits to businesses

Involvement in community trail projects offers business owners a visible way to demonstrate a commitment to their communities and the environment. Businesses can sponsor employee volunteer trail work days, adopt a section of trail, donate equipment, services and money, allow trails to cross their properties, and donate property.

### Many uses, many benefits

Greenways and trails provide a wide range of benefits and appeal to many segments of a community.

### A better way to get around

Growing numbers of people are walking and bicycling to work and play. And more would do so if there were safe trails and paths to travel on, according to a nationwide opinion poll conducted by the Louis Harris polling firm. The poll found that more than half of all Americans would be willing to ride a bicycle to work, at least occasionally, if they could bike on a separate, safe path. This trend has the potential to generate savings in road repair, plus reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. In addition to providing alternative means of transportation today, greenways and rail-trails preserve valuable corridors for possible future transportation uses.

### Good for health

Greenways and rail-trails make it easier for people to keep fit and have fun by providing close-to-home recre-



ational opportunities. Fitness not only improves people's lives, it reduces health care costs. A recent report, *Physical Inactivity in NYS, an Economic Cost Analysis*, estimates that physical inactivity costs New York State \$3 billion a year.

### Good for the environment

Greenways protect open space and provide corridors for wildlife. They can help control flooding and protect water quality and fragile stream and river ecosystems. Greenways and trails also provide opportunities for adults and children to experience and understand the natural world.

### Preserving our historic heritage

Railroads and canals played an important role in the development of New York State, facilitating increased trade and westward expansion. Preserving abandoned rail corridors and canal towpaths as public trails offers future generations the chance to experience and learn about the history of the Empire State.

### Catalyst for community revitalization

Greenways and trails can be a catalyst for community revitalization. They can transform an eyesore, such as an abandoned rail corridor or neglected waterfront, into the centerpiece of a community. Community trails often become a focus of community pride and a means of preserving and celebrating what is special about a community.

## Benefits for Business REAL

### Hudson Valley developer uses trail to marketing advantage

*As a professional Hudson Valley developer, Jay Theise is aware of home buyers' growing interest in nearby trails for exercise and family "quality time." That's why he named his latest Rockland County residential development, which is adjacent to the Joseph B. Clarke Rail-Trail, Trailside Estates. The upscale development will eventually include 34 homes.*

*"New buyers love the presence of the trail. They can walk out their front doors and bicycle, walk, or run for several miles without having to get into their cars or dodge traffic. They also appreciate that the trail is much safer for children," says Theise. "The trail is a real marketing plus for Trailside Estates."*



“Greenways and trails are one area where the *quality of life and economy of a community* can be enhanced through the cooperative efforts of business, state and local government, and concerned citizens.”

**William E. Davis**  
Chairman and CEO  
Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation

### **Regional chamber sponsors rail-trail linking two villages**



*A litter-strewn 2.8-mile stretch of abandoned rail corridor between Johnstown and Gloversville in Fulton County — reborn as the*

*Johnstown-Gloversville Rail Trail — is now the pride of two communities and a very pleasant place to spend an afternoon. The Fulton County Regional Chamber of Commerce, which sponsored the rail-trail project, is so pleased with the trail that it hopes to expand it another 14 miles and market it as a tourist destination. The current plan calls for a tourist information center to be built at both ends of the trail.*

*"Pick any nice day and you'll find wall-to-wall people along the trail. There's a special feeling among the people, too. People who wouldn't ordinarily speak to each other are chatting away," says Lisa McCoy, president of the 775-member Chamber. "We've gotten tremendous buy-in from the community. People have volunteered to clear the trail, police it, make benches for it."*

### **If you build it they will come**

*No formal studies have been conducted in New York on the relationship between trails and tourism, but the growing number of greenway and trail users demonstrates the increasing popularity of these amenities.*

- *The New York State Trails Council, a trail advisory council comprised of user groups representing a dozen trail activities, estimates that trail-related activities account for more than 180 million user days per year.*
- *Opened in 1979, the 11-mile Warren County Bikeway near Glens Falls was New York State's first rail-trail. The Bikeway continues to grow in popularity with residents and tourists alike; use tripled between 1980 and 1995 to an estimated 104,000 user trips per year.*
- *The Onondaga Lake Bike Path near Syracuse enjoys more than 800,000 visits per year.*
- *Use has increased significantly on the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in the Capital Region; a recent user survey puts total trail use at 90,000 user trips per year*

***Nationally, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy estimates Americans use rail-trails close to 100 million times a year for recreation, transportation, and health.***

## Creating a greenway or trail for your community

There's no single formula for creating greenways or trails because every community and every situation is different. But there *are* some tried and true steps to follow.

**Form a vision.** Start with a vision that will spark people's imagination. Think big. Build on what is already special about your community.

**Share the vision.** Reach out to others and form a greenway and trail group.

**Build support.** Get all elements of the community to work together on the project - local businesses, public officials, schools, hospitals, community groups, landowners. Work in ways that involve and benefit everyone. Publicize the project. Allow for plenty of public input.

**Develop a strategic plan.** Decide on a mission statement. Set goals and establish tasks. Consider funding options. Think long-term; greenways and trails are not created overnight.

**Conduct a feasibility study.** Consider feasibility factors, potential issues, solutions, benefits, costs.

**Create a master plan.** An invaluable tool for presentations and grant proposals.

**Establish the legacy.** Acquire and develop.

**GET HELP.** New York Parks and Conservation Association can provide information and assistance to help you create a greenway or trail in your community. Call 518-434-1583, e-mail [nypca@nypca.org](mailto:nypca@nypca.org) or visit NYPCA's website [www.nypca.org](http://www.nypca.org).

## About New York Parks and Conservation Association

*New York Parks and Conservation Association (NYPCA) is a statewide, non-profit, citizens' organization working to protect and advocate for New York's parks and promote the creation of new kinds of parks such as greenways and rail and canal trails.*

*Through its Greenways and Rail-Trails New York program, NYPCA provides technical assistance, education and advocacy to assist communities in planning and developing greenways and rail-trails. In addition to assisting many local groups, NYPCA has been the incubator for three major greenway & trail projects, each of which eventually became an independent organization. As a partner in the Canalway Trail Partnership, NYPCA is working with communities to create a continuous 524-mile trail along New York State's historic canal system. NYPCA recently published a poster, **Building Community Trails Across New York**, which presents a vision for a network of greenways and multi-use trails throughout the state.*

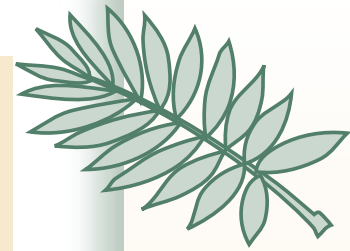
- More information on any of the studies cited in this brochure is available from NYPCA.



29 ELK STREET • ALBANY, NEW YORK 12207

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[www.nypca.org](http://www.nypca.org)



“ Every area of New York State has unique characteristics — scenic, cultural or historic — that provide quality of life for residents and appeal to tourists. Trails are **powerful economic development tools** for urban and rural communities because they provide a new way of experiencing existing assets which appeals to a growing number of tourists who are looking to get out from behind the wheels of their cars. ”

**Senator John A. DeFrancisco**  
Chair, NYS Senate Tourism,  
Recreation and Sports  
Development Committee



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“ Kodak is proud to support community  
greenway projects. Helping families  
experience *natural beauty in  
their own backyards* is one of  
the most important things we can do for  
our children and for generations to come.”

**Dr. R. Hays Bell**  
Vice President  
Health, Safety and Environment  
Eastman Kodak Company

*Eastman Kodak Company, a leader in photography for more than 100 years, and today, the world's imaging leader, has demonstrated its belief in the importance of greenways and trails through its support of the Kodak American Greenway Awards Program, administered by the Conservation Fund. Kodak was also an early supporter of NYPCA's initiative to establish the Genesee Valley Greenway, a 90-mile greenway beginning in Rochester, the company's corporate headquarters.*

**INSIDE...**

***Discover how greenways and trails are bringing new economic vitality to New York's communities***

