

TRAIL TOWN ASSESSMENT I THE TRAIL

Aims to maximize the economic potential of trail-based tourism



There is a new interstate in your town, and its travelers are on boats, bicycles, horseback, foot or recreational ATV/OHVs. This recreation and tourism corridor can be a lightning rod to attract new opportunities and revenues to your town. More and more people are using these trail systems every year. They are hungry, in need of supplies and possibly looking for a place to stay the night. They want to enjoy new and beautiful scenery and explore nature's treasures. What they need is a **"Trail Town."**

To create a Trail Town, you need a dedicated core group of residents that can envision a healthy downtown, both physically and economically, and organize fellow residents and merchants to join. The Trail Town concept is patterned on the Main Street principles, so communities who have participated in the Main Street program will recognize the format. Communities who wish to learn more about the program can visit www.heritage.ky.gov.

The success of the Trail Town also relies on communities becoming boat, bicycle, pedestrian, horseback riding and/or ATV/OHV-friendly. There is technical assistance available through the following associations:

- Local Department of Transportation
- Your Engineering District and Area Development District
- The Kentucky Recreational Trails Authority (KRTA)
- The Kentucky Horse Council (KHC)
- Kentucky Mountain Bike Association (KYMBA)
- Kentucky Bike and Bikeway Commission (KBBC)
- Kentucky Rails to Trails Commission (KRTC)
- The Kentucky Trails Association (KTA)
- Adventure Paddling Association of Kentucky (APAK)
- Kentucky Office for Adventure Tourism
- Local Tourism Office
- Kentucky Department of Local Government (DLG)

Becoming a Trail Town happens step by step. The first step is to build connecting trails into your community and/or increase water access via docks and ramps. Many grant programs are available and can be found on KRTA's website, www.krta.ky.gov. The above mentioned organizations can also help you work through the process. You can also check the aforementioned site for step-by-step processes for working with landowners and managers for trail access to your town.

Once locations for trailheads, harbors or ramps are determined and trail systems are established, it's then up to the community to entice visitors off the trail and into the heart of your downtown area. Help visitors have a satisfying experience by increasing opportunities to spend leisure time and tourist dollars in your community. Encourage them to tell their friends about the great time they had in your Trail Town.

TIPS ON SELF ASSESSMENT STEP I – YOUR TRAIL

1. Set a meeting date to organize interested residents, merchants, local elected officials, landowners, state and federal landowners, tourism officials, chamber members, Main Street Associations, the extension office and someone from the local/state trail organizations. Invite any of the organizations or groups mentioned in paragraph three to attend.

“Hard work spotlights the character of people: some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don’t turn up at all.” Sam Ewing

For the Meeting:

- Prior to the meeting, request land managers and trail user groups to complete the Trail Usage and Trail Physical Elements Worksheets A & B to give the committee an idea of current trail usage and challenges. Have ready for the meeting.
- Request your PVA office to provide a map of all public properties including parks, WMAs, Corps of Engineers, state and national forests and schools.
- From the ADD, KBBC, KRTA, KHC and KYMB, ask for any bike route maps and horse trail maps in the area.
- Include any other landowners who might be open to allowing their land for connectivity purposes for a trail system.
- Introduce a concept, such as: (Your town name here) “A Gateway to Experience Life ...Naturally! Building a future where we want to live and are proud to have others visit.”
- Discuss existing trail systems and possible connecting systems. Determine what type you want – nonmotorized, motorized (ATV) or specific activities such as hike/bike trails.
- Discuss and explore with state and federal entities how connections from their trails to your town might be achieved. Ask for written process and permits information necessary to complete the project.
- Discuss creating trails within the community and county. You need at least 30 miles of bike and 25 miles of horse trails to keep people in the area more than one day.
- Determine possible trailhead locations (including entering and exiting your town).

2. Set a date (and back-up date) to explore the existing trails and trail systems within and near your community, as well as proposed routes from the first meeting. Meet at a convenient location and divide into teams of three or four people. Send teams out to explore the current situation, determine a time and place to regroup, then record your findings. Encourage the use of digital cameras to capture existing amenities and items that need attention. In fact, assigning participant photographers is recommended. Participation could come from a local photography club or school club.

Checklist: Use Worksheet C – Assets Inventory Instructions & Form

- Have a list of all trails that are near your town – state bike routes/tours, pedestrian walkways, horse trails, public areas, possible private lands, etc., and a map showing them for all teams.
- What trails come near the town? Show distance/type of all trails.
- Highlight on a city map proposed routes from the town to water access or trailheads. Note where signage may be needed to direct people into the center district.
- Note horse trails from the state or federal areas that you may want to connect to for mountain biking, running/ hiking and horseback riding (nonmotorized). Determine if you want motorized at this point.
- Note locations where partnerships or land acquisitions are needed.
- Note services that will be needed, such as electric and water signage and amenities (benches, lighting, trash cans, parking) at the trailheads.
- Trailheads can be located at the beginning of the town centers, area districts or other locations.
Designate where on your map you think they would be feasible.
- Determine where trails can be constructed, with connectivity to larger systems in mind.
Make note of possible routes.
- Are there riverwalk areas with boardwalks, a dock, boatramps or boat slips? If not, can some be constructed?
- Is there signage that leads boaters to your docks and town for gas, food and entertainment?
- Do ordinances need to be established or revised? Do you need state land-use agreements?

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

3. After a predetermined amount of time (two to three hours), depending on how much ground needs to be covered, reassemble all self-assessment teams to discuss general observations. What great assets, including trails and harbor connections, exist? Make notes and suggestions on the Assets Inventory Worksheet C.

4. Reconvene at the meeting place and compile notes. Discuss and try agreeing on suggested connecting routes/projects to pursue.

- Each group will highlight on a large area map their suggestions and findings (routes). Use different colored markers.
- On an easel, list all potential landowners, public or private, that might be affected by the trail.
- Complete the **trail route advisory meeting one tasks**. Record findings.

5. Continue through the trail route advisory meeting steps to identify and meet with landowners and discuss the project. See if they are interested in being part of it. Then discuss ways and means and complete Worksheet D.

- Office for Adventure Tourism/DLG can assist with easements, land-use agreements, MOAs and other legal documents in conjunction with your city/county attorney.
- Complete acquiring routes with permissions and land-use agreements.
- Ask the AD District to GPS the trails and key amenity locations. They can later assist with grant applications for trail construction.

6. Move forward.

- Raise money for matches needed for grant applications to construct trails, boardwalks, slips, trail heads, signage, bike racks and hitching posts. (Visit KRTA.ky.gov for funding resources.)
- Apply for grants to assist with the construction of trails. A list of grants is available at www.krta.ky.gov under documents.

Note: After completing your Trail Development Plan with anticipated completion dates, begin construction and move to Assessment II.

TRAIL ROUTE ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE (TRAC)

Form the Trail Route Advisory Subcommittee (TRAC) to address logistics of connecting routes from town to trail systems. Members could be landowners, economic development officials, the local chamber of commerce, trail riders, magistrates or city council members, property valuation administrators, University of Kentucky extension agents, county or city planners, state and federal land managers, and anyone else who may be familiar with local property owners and managers. Have **Worksheets A, B, & C** completed to proceed.

1st Meeting – TRAC

Purpose: Lay out a proposed trail route connecting the town to the trail system.

Agenda:

- Determine the type of trails that already exist. Utilize results from Worksheets A,B & C throughout the process.
- Determine the type of trails you want to construct (multi-use trails or single track). Feedback from trail groups is critical.
- Determine type of trail construction materials required for the project. Feedback from trail users is critical.
- Attain topographic or plat maps to discuss and review possible trail routes.
- Identify the best trail route and all landowners affected.
- Request input from state and federal personnel about wildlife habitats and environmental best practices along the proposed route.
- Ask the PVA office to work with the committee on identifying the landowners.
- Plot their land on the map identifying the owner, telephone number and address.
- Identify the proposed trail (-----) on the map.
- Discuss options for trail name.

Between the first and second meetings:

- 1.) Identify landowners who need to be contacted using **Worksheet D**.
- 2.) Designate someone to do a map identifying the potential trail routes and make copies for the packet needed in next meeting.
- 3.) Compile a list of community citizens who know the landowners and would be willing to talk with them about the trail project.

*Note: If the trail exists or is planned on public lands into town, where permission for a trail has already been secured in writing from the local, state or federal government or agency, go to the **4th Meeting** step.*

2nd Meeting – TRAC

Purpose: Explain the Trail Town vision and project to landowners and how they can participate. Invite all public or private landowners and managers.

Agenda:

- Request permission to include public roadways or lands to be part of the trail. Must get written permission from landowners that identifies the property, construction if needed, maintenance agreement and reference to signage for trail activity.
- Packets will be provided to the committee that explain options for public access for private landowners.
- Assign committee members to each landowner for initial approach.

Between the second and third meetings:

Continue discussions with landowners. Work to get a verbal agreement for access through their property for the trail. Acquire possible dates from the landowners for a meeting to get the agreement written and signed.

To achieve this, you must:

- Have a copy of the plat and deed of the landowner's property.
- Highlight trail route on copy of plat or GPS and map it.
- Have Kentucky Office for Adventure Tourism meet with a committee member and the landowner to get the document signed.

3rd Meeting – TRAC

Purpose: Review findings and finalize trail route using agreed-to public and private lands.

Agenda:

- Determine which landowners will participate.
- Identify areas that lack a connection to the trail and devise an alternative route.
- Proceed, where able, with developing land-use agreements.
- Prepare a file of all land-use agreements and permissions from public lands on all parcels.

4th Meeting – TRAC

Purpose: Develop a written plan that will be used to complete trail construction and connections to larger systems. Your town must have this document for certification. It will also serve as a point of reference during completion of the project. Each step should include a time line with completion date.

Requirements:

- Notes of all requirements made by landowners and managers, incorporating them into your plan.
- A written plan addressing:
 - o Mapped trail including GPS coordinates showing trailhead, rest stops, points of interest, mileage, bike racks, hitching posts, trash receptacles, etc.
 - o Written permissions (from local/state/federal government and/or private landowners)
 - o Determine what signage is needed, construction type and the provider, as well as design and photo of installation
 - o Trail amenities and photos of them
 - o Inventory of community physical/cultural/historical assets (planned interpretive signage)
 - o Long-term maintenance plan (volunteer groups, city or county help, etc.)
 - o Construction specifics, such as who and how

Next Step: Begin trail construction with amenities. And proceed to Assessment II.

WORKSHEET A

Usage of Trail by Month and User Worksheet

Different user types will use the trail at different times. This table will help you track who is on the trail, what events to have and when, and what special seasonal offerings your community may want to provide. See Section 4, A.1 and A.2 for more information on trail user types and trail seasons.

| | JAN. | FEB. | MAR. | APR. | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUG. | SEPT. | OCT. | NOV. | DEC. | ESTIMATED # OF YEARLY USERS |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|-----------------------------|
| Cyclist | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hiker | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Equestrian | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wildlife Viewing | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ATV | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Water | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Local Traffic | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Traveler Traffic | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

X=No users of this type on trail

1=Low months for users of this type on trail

2=Moderate/average months for users of this type on trail

3=Heavy months for users of this type on trail

4=Peak month for users of this type on trail

WORKSHEET B

Trail Physical Elements

Physical Elements of Towns along Your Corridor Worksheet (copy for multiple trails)

Trail System Name _____

Length of the trail _____ miles

The adjacent counties the trail serves _____

| | Community Name (eg: North to South) | Approximate Distance From Previous Town | Geography 1 | Topography 2 |
|---|--|--|-------------|--------------|
| A | | | | |
| B | | | | |
| C | | | | |
| D | | | | |
| E | | | | |
| F | | | | |
| G | | | | |
| H | | | | |
| I | | | | |
| J | | | | |
| K | | | | |

1. **I** is Internal; **A** is Adjacent; **R** is Removed. See The Kentucky Trail Towns How-to-Guide Section 4 for definitions. If R (Removed), note distance.

2. **L** is Level; **M** is Moderate; **S** is Steep.

This worksheet should help you understand your physical challenges and those of neighboring Trail Towns. It may show how you can collaborate to solve similar problems. For instance, if your town and several others are not located close to the trail, you may want to explore sharing a shuttle service, or perhaps hiring a transportation consultant to help improve access.

WORKSHEET C

Natural, Cultural & Historical Assets Inventory

Solicit information from local user groups, city/county officials, state and federal land managers, parks and recreation, citizens, health officials, school officials, Main Street Association, development, arts community, etc.

Purpose: Inventory all assets:

- Asset types:
 - o Known trails, include all trail types:
 - Horseback riding
 - Hiking
 - Mountain biking
 - Road cycling
 - Water trails
 - ATV
 - o Natural features:
 - Falls
 - Creeks, rivers, lakes
 - Geologic formations, arches
 - State or federal parks or forest
 - o Points of interest:
 - Historical sites
 - Vistas
 - o Cultural:
 - People – famous, storytellers
 - Artists – crafters, people who should have opportunity to sell to visitors
 - Musicians – front porch or trailhead performers for evenings or other venues
 - Theaters
 - Other entertainment venues for trail users in evenings
- Assign a local photographer to photograph your assets
- Make note of potential routes while inventorying your assets
- Develop written inventory of assets

Findings: This inventory may drive the trail routes for good interpretive content and opportunity to tell your town's story.

WORKSHEET E

Planned Trail Experiences Inventory

Use this section to summarize the experience trail users may expect when they visit your town. Briefly describe how typical users may spend a day exploring everything your community has to offer. Note how they will get to the trail head and back to town and highlight some of the things they will experience along the way. Be sure to include the mileage of the connector between the trail system and the town, the type of directional signage/markers they will see on the trail and a brief description of the trail head and its signage. Once they return, offer some examples of where they will go to seek needed services and amenities.

Sample:

Trail Type: Mountain Bike Trail

Mileage: 22m

Rent a bike in town from the XYZ Bike Shop. Shuttle leaves hourly to take biker to trail head at the ABC Trail System. Biker rides back to town following the red trail markers. Each mile is marked. There are numerous stops at various points of interest. Biker returns to XYZ bike Shop in town. Difficulty: (see Difficulty ratings in resource material)

1) Trail Type:

Mileage:

Summary paragraph (including difficulty):

2) Trail Type:

Mileage:

Summary paragraph (including difficulty):





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