KENTUCKY TRAIL TOWNS

A How-to-Guide for Communities

Capturing Trail-Based Tourism

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Note: This guide utilizes information from the Trail Town Manual © – a publication of the Allegheny Trail Alliance – geo-tourism (a project of National Geographic*) and other trail town/Sense of Place project materials across the country and is adapted for use in Kentucky.*

Recreational trails and rivers can really help boost a community's tourism traffic. This guide is designed to help leaders of these Trail Towns take advantage of the economic opportunity brought by the attraction of trails and rivers. It will help you transform your town into a more inviting and memorable tourist destination as well as a better place for residents to live, work and play. The elements in this guide are only suggestions. Feel free to modify or adapt these ideas in Assessments I & II to best suit your town. After all, your approach should be as unique as your community.

SECTION 1: WHAT IS A TRAIL TOWN?

A Trail Town is a destination along a long-distance trail or adjacent to an extensive trail system. Whether the trail is a hiking trail, water trail or rail trail, users can venture from the path to explore the unique scenery, commerce and heritage that each trail town has to offer. It is a safe place where both residents of the town and trail users can walk or drive to find the goods and services they need.

A Trail Town is a vibrant hub where people come together. It may have a bike shop, ice cream parlor, casual restaurants, a grocery store and quaint local shops. It should also have wide sidewalks, clean streets, bike racks, hitching posts, watering facilities and restrooms, benches and places to rest for the night. It should generously meet the needs of both trail users and town residents. A Trail Town is a friendly place that encourages trail users to visit and welcomes them with warm hospitality.

Trail Towns are not stand-alone communities. They are linked through the series of trails. Trail users may be passing through a town on a day trip or a long-distance trek or may drive to a community or park to access a river or trail.

Trail users want to explore interesting places in their travels and will need services that your town can provide. Basic elements of a Trail Town strategy include:

- Enticing trail users to take detours off the trail and into your town via a connector trail.
- Welcoming trail users to your town by providing information about the community readily available on the trail.
- Making a substantial path between your town and the main trail.
- Educating local businesses on the economic benefits of meeting trail tourists' needs.
- Recruiting new businesses or expanding existing ones to fill gaps in the goods or services that trail users need.
- Promoting the trail-friendly character of the town.
- Working with neighboring communities to promote the entire trail corridor as a tourist destination.

Any trail, long or short, is a valuable asset to a community. A trail can provide recreation for people of all ages and fitness levels and offers the chance to study nature or local history. This guide is tailored to towns that serve as gateways to large trail systems that attract travelers from outside the local community. Studies have shown that the longer/larger the trail system, the further people will travel to visit it and the more likely they are to stay longer and spend more money. A day-tripper will spend four times as much as a local user, and an overnight visitor will spend twice as much as a day-tripper.

SECTION 2: TRAIL TOWN AND MAIN STREET

How do you begin to build a trail town? It is important to understand that the initiative to do so comes from within the community. Becoming a Trail Town is as much about a unified mentality and spirit as it is physical improvements. Consider these points as you start creating a Trail Town atmosphere in your community:

- Your town can grow and thrive because of nearby recreational trails.
- Trail Towns are gateways into national, state or other large trail systems.
- The more Trail Towns there are along a trail corridor that offer hospitality and services, the more attractive the region will be for tourism; your neighboring town's success is just as important as your own.
- Leadership and initiative from within the community will be necessary to turn your town into a Trail Town.
- A safe and well-maintained trail is the centerpiece, so it's important to cooperate with and support the local trail building and maintenance groups.
- A core bicycle, horseback riding, pedestrian and/or motorized vehicle (ATV) friendly philosophy should be adopted by your town.
- Trail users should be accommodated both physically and socially within the town to feel completely welcomed.
- A plan of action should be developed and revised as time goes on and information is gained through trial-and-error on what works best for your community.
- Goods and services for trail users will be appealing to other types of tourists and residents.
- Local law enforcement agents can be important ambassadors in your town and along the trail.

The first step is to have the members of the local community organize themselves to take advantage of the tremendous community and economic benefits of being a Trail Town. A great way to achieve this is to start with one of the most well-known and successful revitalization programs: The National Main Street Center's "Four Point" or "Main Street" approach. These approaches offer a complete outline for downtown revitalization that has been successful in more than 1,700 towns and cities throughout the United States. The following four points are the cornerstones of the Main Street approach:

ORGANIZING gets everyone working toward the same goal. Building consensus and cooperation among the groups that have an important stake in the downtown area can be hard work, but eased by using the basic formula of a hands-on, volunteer-driven program. An organizational structure consisting of a board and committees can also be key to getting everyone on board with the revitalization.

DESIGN gets a Trail Town into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets, such as historic buildings and traditional downtown layout is only a part of the story. An inviting atmosphere created through attractive window displays, professional signage, well-maintained sidewalks, accessible parking areas, appropriate street-lighting, well-placed bike racks, hitching posts, benches and inviting landscaping can convey a visual message about what a Trail Town is all about and what it has to offer.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING finds a new purpose for the town's enterprises. By helping existing downtown businesses expand and by recruiting new ones to respond to today's market, Main Street programs help convert unused space into productive property and increase the competitiveness of business enterprises.

PROMOTION sells the image and promise of a Trail Town to all prospects. Marketing the downtown's unique characteristics to local customers, investors, new businesses and visitors requires an effective promotion strategy. It forges a positive town image through advertising, retail promotions, special events and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers.

SECTION 3: GETTING ORGANIZED TO CREATE YOUR TRAIL TOWN KEY COMPONENTS

Some fundamental information should be gathered as you start organizing your Trail Town effort. To be successful, it's important to have the right team assembled from your community to plan and implement this initiative. The office for Adventure Tourism will provide two services: (1) Assistance with recommendations on Trail Town Task force membership. (2) A kick-off presentation to task force members on the process and meaning of becoming a Kentucky Trail Town.

Now, take a few moments to write your answers in the spaces provided.

A. Define the Trail Corridor

1. Is there a large trail system in close proximity to your town? YES NO. If yes, how close?___
2. What kind of trail is it? _____
3. What is the trail's name? _____
4. How long is it?_____
5. Who manages the trail?_____
6. Who is the key contact or liaison for the trail?_____

Trail liaison _____
Trail liaison phone number_____
Trail liaison e-mail _____

B. Assess Local Capacity

A vibrant Trail Town program could be part of your business district revitalization plan. You need to understand your local community's ability to plan and implement new programs or ideas.

1. Does a downtown or business district revitalization organization currently exist in your town? (If you are uncertain about this question, contact your local municipal office. They will be able to provide you with this information.)
YES NO

If YES, list the name of the organization, the downtown contact person and his or her phone number.
Organization: _____
Downtown contact: _____
Downtown contact phone: _____
Downtown contact e-mail: _____

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."
-Thomas Edison

2. What kind of organization is revitalizing the downtown area?
"Main Street" Organization ☐
Chamber of Commerce ☐
Merchants Association ☐

Other: Specify _____

3. Is the organization regional (operates within the whole municipality or a larger area) or local (operates only in your downtown area)?
LOCAL REGIONAL

4. Does the organization implement its activities using the National Main Street Center's "Four Point" or "Main Street" approach?
YES NO

5. Is the organization an IRS-recognized 501(c) 3 nonprofit corporation?
YES NO

If you answered NO to question B.1, you may want to contact the Kentucky Main Street Program to obtain a copy of their workbook, "*Getting Ready for Downtown Revitalization*" (http://heritage.ky.gov/mainstreet/). This is a handbook specifically designed for communities that do not have a central business district revitalization organization in place and would like to learn more about the process. It is also an excellent resource for communities that have had less-than-satisfactory results with earlier downtown revitalization efforts. Another resource is the Kentucky Cultural Arts District (http://artscouncil.ky.gov/opportunities/newaboutculturalids.htm). Both programs provide guidelines to assist your community in providing needs to visitors and residents.

The catalyst for a successful Trail Town is a community member who organizes the Trail Town program. If a downtown/business district revitalization organization already exists in your town, your mayor may appoint it as the catalyst to organize the Trail Town task force or he/she may appoint a Trail Town task force separately.

6. Are you willing to serve as the catalyst to start a Trail Town effort in your community? YES NO

7. If you are not, do you know someone that may be willing to perform this duty?
Potential catalyst A: _____
Potential catalyst B: _____
Phone number A: _____
Phone number B: _____

Note: Complete the application process.

If a downtown/business district revitalization organization already exists, the catalyst should call the downtown contact person to set up a meeting to discuss the Trail Town concept and how it can be integrated into the ongoing efforts. Trail users should also be at this meeting.

Should a downtown/business district revitalization organization not exist, the catalyst should work with the local business community and the local municipal government. The discussion at the meeting will help determine the level of local interest in moving forward with the idea of becoming a Trail Town and putting together a steering committee to begin working on the idea locally.

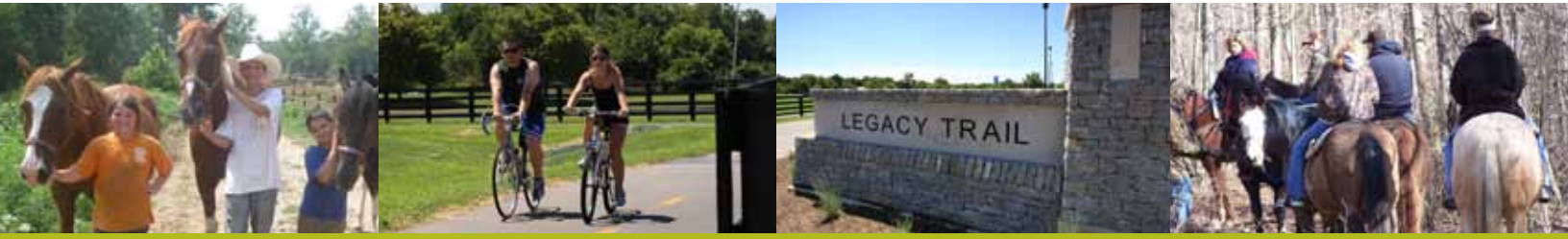
A sample agenda for a kickoff meeting can be found in this folder. Although the primary job of the catalyst is to start the process to gauge interest in making Trail Town changes in your community, he or she should be prepared to take a lead role in the planning and implementation process. This is particularly true if no revitalization group currently exists in the community. If one does exist, the catalyst should be prepared to play an active role with the organization.

The catalyst and the trail users should work in close concert. It is important that the community understands the plans and needs of the trail organization. This will make it easier to provide a high-quality experience for visitors and the community itself.

C. Create or Enhance Your Local Organization:

Everyone in your community has a stake in the town's future. Residents, businesses, property owners, government officials and nonprofit organizations are part of your town's universe. Some you may know very well; you may not know others at all. However, in order to be successful, the local downtown revitalization program must involve as many interested groups and individuals as possible from throughout the community. Trail Town development requires the cooperation and commitment of a proactive, broad-based coalition of public and private groups, including:

- Local Government Officials and Representatives
- Local Trail Organizations
- Businesses
- Civic Groups



- Historical Societies
- Arts Boards
- Extension Office
- Local Department of Transportation
- Tourism Commission
- Chamber of Commerce
- Economic Development
- AD Districts
- Financial Institutions
- Local Media
- Consumers/Customers/Visitors
- Many Others

For some communities, the Trail Town concept will be the primary vision upon which the desired revitalization of the business district will be built. For others, it will be an important part of a larger vision. In either case, the Trail Town goals must be integrated into the strategies and activities of the various committees.

D. Develop the Local Volunteer Base:

Becoming a Trail Town also involves mobilizing volunteers to carry out activities.

1. Try to make your volunteer base as broad as possible. Involving all concerned groups will increase the range of ideas
2. Ensure an adequate source of future volunteers.

E. Get the Message Out Locally:

Local tourism commissions, Kentucky Department of Travel, and the office for Adventure Tourism will assist in promoting Trail Town activities. Your task force should also.

1. Develop a relationship with your local media.
2. Keep a scrapbook of clippings of your Trail Town activities to record your progress.
3. Subscribe to newsletters put out by your local organizations to keep track of their interests.
4. Submit articles to the paper, especially stories that can provide a good photo opportunity.
5. Offer to speak at community events and meetings on behalf of your organization.

F. Build Partnerships:

Bring people together at the very beginning to see what ideas your community has for this transformation. This process of developing broad-based local interest and "buy-in" is as important as your final plan. Decide who in your community has something to gain. They are your stakeholders, and you need to get them involved. Find out if your stakeholders will offer help on different projects and keep them well-informed. Spend time taking an inventory of existing community groups (including church, school and youth groups). Identify key people in these groups and figure out who gets results within the community. It is helpful to meet with those whose goals match yours and brainstorm ways to unite the community around this effort.

G. Find the Resources to Implement Your Trail Town Concept

Ideas:
Community and economic development are high priorities for county, state and federal governments, and there may be public funding available to assist you. The key is articulating a clear and compelling request that demonstrates value and long-term return to the community. Your regional Area Developement (AD) Districts should be involved as they are great resources for funding and other services. Inform and involve your state and federal House and Senate members and ask them for guidance. Funding opportunities and programs change over time, and legislative staff can help you understand current initiatives.

H. Take One Step at a Time:
Your Trail Town development will progress and evolve over time. Spend some time evaluating your town's strengths and weaknesses and try to create a new vision for your town. Generating ideas is an exciting and energizing process, but not all ideas will, or should, be implemented. The activities that your town takes on should be evaluated by their outcomes, not outputs. Sustained increased business activity in your town is an outcome; a kick-off parade is an output. You may want to start your implementation with a small project with good potential, one that might have good "bang for the buck." Use your resources prudently on projects that are well-thought-out and their potential impact thoroughly evaluated.

SECTION 4. TRAIL TOWN DESIGN ISSUES

A. Assess the Physical Character of Your Trail (Assessment I):
The next step in preparing a plan for your Trail Town is to assess the physical characteristics of your central business district and how they relate to your trail. This will help you understand your trail and the challenges a visitor might encounter. You can use the Physical Assessment Worksheet found in Assessment I to help determine the characteristics of the relationship between your trail and your town.

Trail Towns can thrive along long-distance trails, which link communities through one or more counties or states. These trails tend to be used by those seeking a daylong excursion at the very least, but some may be on the trail for multiple days. Most users will require some degree of goods and services. Long distance/large trail systems attract tourists, especially when the Trail Town has interesting structures, is surrounded by natural beauty, or is near places of historic interest. As stated previously, the longer the trail, the farther visitors will travel to use it; and the farther they come, the longer they'll stay and the more they will spend.

1. Identify Your Town's Trail
The first item to evaluate in assessing the physical aspects of your Trail Town is to determine the type of trail that is running through or close to your central business district. The general categories are as follows:

- Cycling
- Hiking and walking
- Observing nature
- Horseback riding
- Commuting
- River/water use (canoeing, kayaking, rafting)
- ATV

It is very likely that the trail in your community is not exclusively one type of trail; it may be used by different users at different times of the year. Use worksheet A in Assessment I to indicate the various types of users who are likely to be on your trail during the course of a year. It is also useful to determine the approximate number of people who will use the trail and visit your town during the course of the year. This analysis will be important information to share with business leaders so they understand the trail clientele. It will also be important in achieving the desired attendance for special community events.

Note: Meet with state/national park or forest trail managers and user groups to complete Worksheet A.

"Some men see things as they are and say, 'Why?' I dream of things that never were and say, 'Why not?'"
– George Bernard Shaw, famously re-quoted by Robert F. Kennedy.

2. Know The Seasons

The next item you will want to determine is when visitors are coming into your town. What time of the year is your trail being used? Knowing who is using your trail and when they are using it can provide helpful information for targeting these specific audiences for marketing campaigns or in planning local festivals. For instance, some trails may be used by hikers year-round and by cyclists mostly in the late spring, summer and fall. You may want to identify the usage cycle of your trail for each type of user by utilizing Worksheet B in Assessment I.

Note: Meet with state/national park or forest trail managers and user groups to complete Worksheet B.

3. Trail Geography

An important element you will need to assess is your physical trail-to-town relationship. You will need to understand both the linear distance and elevation challenges that exist between the trail and your town's business district. The linear distance can be described in one of the following three ways:

- Internal Trail
- Adjacent Trail
- Removed Trail

Internal Trails are those where the trail actually goes directly through the central business district of a community. There might be an obvious "gateway moment" on the trail when you know you have reached a town. It is important to guide visitors to the services that might not be right along the trail.

Adjacent Trails are those that have a trail located immediately adjacent to a downtown area, usually within 1/2 mile from the edge of the business district. The town can be seen from the trail, but perhaps not the central business district. The trail user must be able to get to town. In such communities, it is important to create a gateway, an access trail or connector trail and supplement it with good navigational signage, brochures or other means to encourage and direct the trail users to visit your downtown.

Removed Trails are those where the trail is located a few miles away from the central business district. The town may not be visible from the trail, making it more challenging to entice trail users to the town and, therefore, an access/connector trail will need to be constructed. Town maps placed at the trailhead can indicate the goods and services that are offered.

It is also important to understand the change in elevation between the town and the trail – known as the vertical distance. A good learning exercise for your Trail Town committee would be to start at the trail, walk or cycle to your central business district, then walk or cycle back to the trail. Topography is easily overcome in a motorized vehicle. You need to understand firsthand what your nonmotorized visitors experience.

Another aspect of geography that should be analyzed is range, which refers to distance from other nearby trailheads as well as distance from other sites or attractions that bring in tourists. As the range between trailheads increases, the more likely goods and services will be welcomed by trail users. It is important that merchants, law enforcement and the local post office be familiar with the total length of the trail and the distance to the next towns and access points on the trail. This will ease concerns for trail users and will prepare the post office for trail users who wish to send or receive packages.

By looking at your town on a map, you can determine what other activities may occur near or along the trail that is in relatively close proximity to your business district. For example, if a state wildlife management area is located near your town, you may have hunters who will use your town as a starting point. Subsequently, the range of goods and services you offer in your town may be expanded to meet the unique needs of these hunters, as well as year-round trail users.

4. Identifying Key Connecting Elements

Now that you have identified the physical attributes between the trailhead and the business district, the next step is to identify and map the key connecting elements between the trail and your business district. These key elements are identified and mapped.

-Trailhead: The areas where users can access the trail leading from town to a trail system. This area is accessible by road and usually provides parking and some amenities for trail users (toilets, information, and rules).

- Access Trail: Connector route between town and the major trail system or trail.

- Gateway: The point at which trail users enter the business district of a community. You could have more than one gateway.

- Center: The central business district of the community that may serve as a hub of goods and services for the trail user.

- Nodes: Specific points of interest along or near the gateway or in the center district that will be visited or utilized by the users of the trail.

In examining each of these elements, it is important to understand the function and the inter-relationship between each. A brief discussion of these elements follows:

The Trailhead: The trailhead is an area of activity, with parking, water and an information point to disseminate people onto trails. It is the point to book trips and shuttles and acquire maps. As a result, it is important for your organization to work closely with the local trail group to ensure that the necessary amenities are in place to make the trailhead a high-quality facility. Together, your organization and the local trail organization should develop clear, appropriate information for visitors and make it available at the trailhead. You may also wish to work together to provide certain amenities such as water and toilet facilities. It is also a great place to station a volunteer greeter, who can answer questions about the trail and town.

The Access Trail: This is the connecting trail from town that meets up with the major trail system. It is also the point where trail users on the other end decide to take the access trail into your community. It is at this location signage and information should be provided indicating feet or miles into town and amenities they can expect.

The Gateway: This is the point at which the trail user enters your town. It will ideally be located at the edge of your business district closest to the trailhead. The gateway should welcome the trail-user into your central business district. It should also be the point where directional signage to individual tourist attractions and business goods and services within the district should begin. The gateway could be the access trail, where road cyclist, motorist or water trail users enter your town. Regardless, it is the point where trail users realize they are about to enter your town.

The Center: The center is your business district. It is a collection of business and amenities that may be of interest to the trail user. The center should be assessed for its cleanliness, safety, lighting levels and physical condition. In particular, the center should also be assessed on the availability of amenities that will help trail users enjoy their experience. For example, are there bike racks at the restaurants for bicycle users, or hitching posts for equestrian trail users? Is there outdoor seating at restaurants? Other issues that should be addressed in the center include the availability of items such as ATMs, pay phones that accept credit cards and public restrooms. A checklist of center amenities for your Trail Town is included in Assessment II, which provides worksheets that will help develop and organize your new Trail Town plan.

Nodes: These are specific points either in town or along the way that are of particular interest to the trail visitor. They may include businesses that cater to the specific user (a bicycle repair shop), lifestyle interests of the trail user (a hobby shop or antique shop), the duration of time the user will spend on the trail (a public shower room or local lodging) or items of general interest to all trail users (medical supplies, water, restaurant, snack food, etc.). Before it is possible to identify all of the nodes you wish to promote in your community, it is important for you to understand the socio-economic characteristics of your trail user (see Section 5).

Once you have identified the previous connecting trail elements, use a map or sketch of your town and trail to identify the locations of these five components. This can help you to get a better idea of how they relate to each other. You can also try to plan the flow of trail-related traffic through your town on this map or sketch. In completing this assessment of the physical characteristics of the relationship between your trail and your town, you will probably identify several areas where your community can make improvements to become more trail-friendly. These items should be clearly defined and planned for as part of your Trail Town plan of action.

B. Evaluate Public Amenities (Assessment II):

The next step in the Trail Town assessment process is to make a more in-depth evaluation of the amenities that trail users will encounter in your community. Such amenities may include:

- Well-marked crosswalks
- Pedestrian-friendly sidewalks
- Clearly identified bike paths that are well-maintained
- Highly visible directional signage (including portal and gateway)
- Public restrooms
- Local maps
- Marketing materials
- Local medical services
- Camping

This list represents only a small portion of the public amenities that your community or your Trail Town organization might provide to trail users. This listing is also dependent on the nature of your trail users. A more complete listing of the types of public amenities that should be assessed in your community is in the Business Checklist section of Assessment II.

It should also be noted here that not only physical amenities, but local laws and regulations will also impact the development of public amenities and may affect your town's visitor readiness. In particular, zoning laws regulating outdoor vending, sidewalk encumbrances and off-premises signage may impact the ability of your community to develop trail-friendly amenities. When conducting your public amenity assessment, talk with your planning and zoning director. All of the items detailed in this section normally fall under the responsibility of the local or county government.

"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

Given budgetary limitations, not all local governments will be able to undertake all of the steps necessary to ensure that all of the public amenities are adequately dealt with. In this arena, your Trail Town organization can be an invaluable partner working with local government in completing such projects by providing financial resources and encouragement.

C. Assess Business Amenities:

After looking at public amenities, the next area of evaluation is visitor amenities that the local business community provides. The businesses that will be of interest to the trail user will largely depend on the characteristics of the individual trail and its primary visitors. In this regard, your organization can help the businesses to gain an understanding of the needs of the trail user. Goods and services will be addressed in Section 5.

From a design standpoint, you may wish to conduct an assessment of visitor-friendly amenities that are available within the community. Such an assessment may include items such as:

- Bike racks or hitching posts located outside businesses
- The extent to which restrooms are available to the public, not just for "customers only"
- Overall hours of operation and weekend hours
- The availability of outdoor vending machines

Types of businesses likely to be used by trail visitors are included in Assessment II. Enhancement of existing businesses and the generation of new business opportunities should be a part of your Trail Town plan. Businesses providing such amenities or trail friendly hours of operation are voluntary and hopefully many will realize the value from a self-interest perspective. Education, encouragement and financial incentives may be needed, especially to encourage participation by small or marginal businesses.

"We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face... we must do that which we think we cannot." *– Eleanor Roosevelt*

SECTION 5. ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING FOR A TRAIL TOWN

Economic restructuring is a "Main Street" term that refers to the functions of business expansion, business retention and new business recruitment. It also deals with the key issue of market demographics. A "Main Street" mindset can play a critical function.

A. Understand Your Trail User-Customer:
In any downtown revitalization effort, understanding your customer is one of the most important and most basic activities that a business cluster can undertake. A business cluster comprises those businesses that provide goods or services to a common customer base. It is important to consider two basic elements in order to understand your customer base. The first of these elements is the socio-economic characteristics of the individual customer base. Many trail tourists are affluent and well-educated.

The second element is the lifestyle preferences of the customer base. These items relate to the choices that the customer base makes as a group in terms of items such as:

- Average dollars spent annually on the activity
- Number of times the activity was undertaken in the past year
- Dining and shopping preferences of the group

By understanding both the socio-economic and lifestyle preferences of the trail customer base, the local Trail Town organization can begin to make decisions about how best to attract these customers into the community's central business district. You may want to work with neighboring Trail Towns, tourism commissions and your tourism marketing region to clearly define your potential markets.

In determining how the local business community might respond to the needs of the trail user group, it is important to distinguish between basic needs and longer-term needs. Basic needs are the items that most trail-users will require on an average day trip.

Longer-term needs are the goods and services required by multiple-day users of the trail, who, for instance, may need to wash clothes or make repairs to their bicycles. Even if they choose not to stay the night, they will still need water, restrooms and places to eat. If your town is the starting point for a trip, a safe place to park a vehicle is needed. There are related business opportunities for those goods and services that trail users may find of interest due to their broader lifestyle preferences. All of these elements present business growth opportunities for local Trail Towns.

B. Assess Basic Trail User Needs:
There are basic items that trail users will want access to on a regular basis. A trail-user list of specific goods and services that this committee should look for in its town is included in Assessment II.

C: Assess Longer-Term Needs:
In addition to the certain needs of daily trail users, your community may benefit from visitors who are on the trail for a multiday journey or who travel from out of the region to use the trail. These users will have more specific needs, such as overnight lodging, e-mail access, laundry needs, etc. Assessing the capacity of the community to provide these more advanced goods and services requires the Trail Town task force to work with agencies such as economic development, chamber of commerce and city/county planning for economic restructuring goals. Assessment II also provides a checklist of longer-term needs for the multiday trail user. Overnight lodging is a key component to a community's success in taking advantage of the economic impact of the trail.

D. Encourage Related Business Opportunities:
The final grouping of potential business opportunities relates to those nontrail interests of the basic trail customer base. For instance, trail users generally seek authentic outdoor experiences and unique locations with great points of interest, enjoy local culinary foods and seek the feel of small-community camaraderie. They seek immersion into your local culture and look for authentic crafts, arts, performing arts and souvenirs.

E. Assist the Local Business Community:
You can assist the business community in a variety of ways with the economic restructuring function. Businesses should consider providing Kentucky products that use Kentucky Proud and Kentucky Crafted products.
Contact:
- Department of Agriculture for Kentucky Proud Products:
  http://www.kyproud.com/ or call 502-564-4983
- Kentucky Crafted: The Market for Kentucky-made arts and crafts:
  http://artscouncil.ky.gov/KentuckyArt/Event_Market.htm or call 502-564-8110

Another effective way to advance economic restructuring is to develop an "economic gardening" approach to the business development issues related to the trail. Using this approach, one or more members of the committee would develop an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of the trail user customer base and the trends in the activity itself. Then, through informational bulletins and educational sessions, the Trail Town concept is nurtured and grown in the community. Businesses that cater to this customer base will also flourish. The committee may wish to provide funding to ensure that magazines, books and publications that provide current information about the trail activity are available in the business section of the local library.

A third way to assist businesses is to develop local financial incentives and identify specific financial resources that will enable local businesses to take advantage of the potential offered by the trail. Such incentives may include façade grants that help to physically promote the image of a Trail Town or small business loans to expand a product line or service that is needed by the trail user, but is not currently available in the community.

SECTION 6. PROMOTING YOUR TRAIL TOWN

The "Main Street Approach" suggests that there are three components to any good business district marketing strategy. The first requires working with your local tourist commission to promote the trail town "getaway image." The second is to hold special events that encourage and invite existing and potential customers to come into your business district and explore its shops, restaurants and services. The final component is a retail promotion calendar that actually entices people to come into your downtown and purchase goods and services. All three of these are necessary to create an effective promotional campaign for your Trail Town.

A. Promote a Trail Town Image:

The first element of your Trail Town promotional effort is to convince people that you have an active and welcoming Trail Town environment in your community. This "top-of-mind" awareness or "branding," of your town is a critical part of your strategy in which your local, regional and state tourism agencies can assist. By its nature, a Trail Town concept is based on drawing in tourists that extend beyond your local market. It is doubtful that your community will realize the full potential of the Trail Town concept unless the larger regional population base is aware of it and what it has to offer. Creating general marketing materials that brand your business district as a Trail Town should be the function of your organization's promotions committee. Including the Trail Town logo on brochures, trail guides and all ads by your businesses will strengthen your recognition as a Trail Town and improve your visitation.

"Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people."

– Eleanor Roosevelt

B. Hold Trail Town Events:

Once this brand identification has been established, the next step is to get people, particularly existing and potential users of the local trail, into your town to explore. An effective way to do this is by holding special events. Events that tie to your town's history, culture or heritage can be beneficial and fun for residents and visitors alike. Such events might include a "kick-off" event or a grand opening of your Trail Town. Annual familiarization events held just before trail season that feature sessions such as trail safety classes, bicycle safety inspections and tours of local trail-user assets are examples of the kind of special events that will attract potential trail-users into your community. Work with your local historical society or arts council to develop an annual event that celebrates the corridor's past, be it railroad, canal or river transportation. Folklorists, historians or re-enactors can help bring your history alive.

C. Conduct Trail Town Retail Promotions:

Once people are coming to your business district, you want them to purchase goods and services in the businesses in your community. Pre- and post-season sales, special weekend sidewalk sales, holiday sales and joint advertising by the local trail-related business cluster are all examples of retail promotions that the local Trail Town organization might organize in cooperation with local merchants and/or the local chamber of commerce.

It should be noted here that promotion and marketing of the Trail Town concept can be very effective, but also expensive. It is important that your Trail Town organization forms partnerships with local businesses, local merchants associations, local chambers of commerce, local tourist promotion agencies and, perhaps most importantly, the trail system to effectively market the Trail Town concept. Positive referrals and word-of-mouth advertising are very important. Customers or visitors who have pleasant and rewarding experiences will return and recommend the business to their friends. Hospitality training is important and may be available through your tourist promotion agencies.

"The person who is waiting for something to turn up might start with their shirt sleeves."
- Garth Henrichs

SECTION 7. PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER - THE TRAIL TOWN PLAN OF ACTION

Once you have evaluated your town and identified its needs, the next step is to begin planning your town's future and get started on projects. It is important to show people that your organization is ready and willing to improve your town. This commitment can be shown by attending local government meetings, placing small amenities (benches, planters, etc.) around town that carry your group's name, and having meetings that are open to the public. This will lead the community to take an interest in what you are doing and will help support the master plan. Your organization can brainstorm and draft your Trail Town Master Plan. Developing a plan for your town is essential because it becomes a blueprint for action, but it does require time, thoughtful consideration and debate, as well as prioritization.

A dilemma arises between spending too much time on developing a plan and impulsively running out and implementing the first ideas that come to mind. If you want to implement a project ahead of adopting a plan, you can form a short list of key goals for your Trail Town and tackle an easy project that meets one of your goals.

While goals will vary from town to town, Trail Town organizations can include the following on their goal lists as components of community development:

- Provide a Gateway Moment
- Create a Sense of Place
- Develop a Welcoming Atmosphere
- Establish the Right Mix of Services
- Promote Trail-Oriented Events

A. Provide a Gateway Moment:

The "Gateway Moment" is a physical feature that indicates to trail users that they have entered your town. As they move through the gateway, the space signifies the entrance to your central business district. In order to provide an effective gateway moment, you must consider ways to attract people's attention to your community and your town. Provide your visitors with a sense of excitement, and they will want to stop and visit. To do this, consider the signage that exists between the trail and your town. Consider the aesthetic quality of your town from the angle of the trail corridor. Does the town appear inviting? Be aware that the gateway to the town should physically greet your visitors with its landscape and immediate amenities.

B. Create a Sense of Place:

Emphasize the assets that are unique to your town and beautify your central business district. Start small, perhaps by adding planters or placing town banners on lampposts. It is very important before you begin this project to ask your townspeople what they would like to see happen to make their town more attractive or interesting. It is also important to consider maintenance. Engaging the help of gardeners in your community can give their talents a public showcase. The design should consider your town's history and the things that make it stand out from other towns.

Brick sidewalks or accents add color and design to your streetscape. They can also be engraved to add history or to honor people who have contributed to your revitalization project. Planters add a natural feel to your downtown, and, when placed in the roadway such as in a middle left turn lane, can aid in traffic calming. Tree planting can create a warm and inviting atmosphere in your town and should be done with guidance from a professional landscape architect.

Cleanliness should be kept in mind. Make sure there are plenty of trash receptacles and choose a grate design that will allow trash to fall through the grate, not trap it. When choosing planters for your sidewalks, pick ones that are taller than four feet or shorter than two feet. Sidewalk planters around waist level will be used as benches, trash cans and ash trays. Heavy concrete planters are best to prevent theft.

Next, take a look at your street-level infrastructure. Parking meters, overhead lines and telephone poles all add clutter to your main street, preventing it from having a relaxed atmosphere. Running telephone lines underground or along alleyways will enhance the appearance of your main street. Reduce the number of parking meters on your street by placing two on one pole, or if there is a lamppost next to a space, place a meter on it. Replace any basic utilitarian lampposts on Main Street with something more decorative and historical.

Improving the look of your downtown's buildings is a long-term project, but a painted mural on a building's walls will tell your visitors your town has begun work. Façade work is a top priority in the "Main Street Program." Handsome buildings might be altered over time, hiding the original storefront, covering the second story, and bricking up windows. Restoring a building's façade can be costly; fortunately, if your town chooses to join the "Main Street Program," funding may be available to assist you.

C. Develop a Welcoming Atmosphere:

Begin by creating a community that is safe for walking, cycling and/or horseback riders. Visitors should feel safe while doing these activities, crossing your streets and exploring your town. This can be accomplished by calming automobile traffic and providing amenities that trail users might appreciate and need. Some examples are:

- Paint or repaint crosswalks at all intersections in town
- Limit the use of Right-Turn-on-Red, which often presents a hazard to pedestrians
- Direct walkers, bicyclists and horseback riders using signage, brochures and painted footprints or icons that lead them to special attractions
- Add traffic signs warning motorists of pedestrian/bike/horseback traffic
- Add pedestrian signals that give people of all ages enough time to cross the street
- Create bike lanes on the street (contact KYTC for details)
- Place benches in your downtown
- Make sure your streets are well-lit at night, especially to and from popular destinations
- Build shared-use paths for bicyclists and pedestrians to avoid dangerous intersections
- Provide street parking that will narrow the street, calming traffic, and act as a barrier between street and sidewalk traffic
- Extend curbs and sidewalks at pedestrian crossings to improve their visibility and decrease crossing distances
- Build concrete medians in the road that provide pedestrians refuge when crossing

Remember to keep in mind emergency vehicle access when redesigning your streets. A fire truck will have a very difficult time navigating a street that is too narrow, costing it valuable time. It will also make wide turns, so be certain that curbs leading to single-lane, one-way streets are wide enough for it to get through.

It is important to make cyclists as safe as possible. Contact your Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) bicycle/pedestrian coordinator for assistance in planning. When KYTC begins a new project, they will get input from the county judge executive and AD District. Ask your county judge and AD District to consider your needs, whether it is bike lanes, striping, curbing, etc. Their process considers community input; however, bicycle and pedestrian issues are only considerations. Without enough emphasis and support on the importance of sidewalks or paved shoulders, they might not be included in the project.

A cyclist's speed on a paved road can be 10 to 20 miles per hour while the vehicular speed limit in downtown areas is usually 25 mph. Make drivers aware of bicyclists through traffic signs that reinforce a "share the road" mentality.

D. Establish the Right Mix of Services:

Once the trail tourist has entered your town, it is important to provide the right businesses and services that will accommodate the needs of your visitor. Easily accessible grocers, ice cream stands and restaurants are important. You may want to make certain that there is a full-service bicycle shop near the trail, and any business with bicycle racks near entrances would be appreciated. Camping areas near the trail or historic homes that have been turned into bed and breakfasts in the central area of town may also be options.

E. Promote Trail-Oriented Events:

You can organize events in your town that trail users and your community will enjoy and want to be part of. For example, you might have a weekend festival with street performers playing music, or you might organize a community bike ride along the trail. Whatever means you can find of promoting the trail will ultimately promote your community. The trail can become the vehicle and tool used to help you further develop your own town as a place where people enjoy visiting and living. Refer again to Section 6 for more ideas.

Remember that a plan for your town should not be a static document, but rather should be reviewed every year. Budgets, people and trends are constantly changing, and your town's plan may need to be revised to accommodate these changes. Reviewing your plan allows you to see what has been accomplished, what was done that might not have fulfilled its potential and what has exceeded expectations.

Accomplishments should be celebrated, and new ideas should be integrated into the plan. This is also the time to wrap up projects that have come to their planned conclusion and to cut projects that are not working. Make sure you keep your elected officials at the local, state and federal level apprised of your progress and your challenges.

Finally, consider how you will maintain the improvements you have made. Funding and community support to take on new projects may be diminished if completed projects are not properly cared for. Stay focused and remember to take small steps instead of attempting to tackle everything all at once. It may not be a quick process, but it can be a steady process. Your new Trail Town will be an inspiration to new tourists and visitors. But, more importantly, it will help renew your own community's sense of pride and unique identity.

Note: Now that you have an understanding of the key components and process, please proceed to Assessment I.

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

KENTUCKY RESOURCES

KY Tourism Arts & Heritage Cabinet
http://commerce.ky.gov/cabinet/agencies.htm

Office for Adventure Tourism & Trail Town Development
www.kentuckyunbridledadventure.com

Kentucky Department of Travel and Tourism
www.kentuckytourism.com

Kentucky Department of Parks
www.parks.ky.gov

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife
www.fwlky.gov

Kentucky Main Street Program
http://heritage.ky.gov/mainstreet/

Kentucky Cultural Districts
http://artscouncil.ky.gov/Opportunities/NEWaboutCulturalDs.htm

Kentucky Cooperative Extension
http://ces.ca.uky.edu/ces/

Kentucky Department of Economic Development
http://www.thinkkentucky.com/

Kentucky Environment and Energy Cabinet
http://eec.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Kentucky Legislative Resources
http://www.lrc.ky.gov/

Daniel Boone National Forest Districts
http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/boone/

Big South Fork National Recreation Area
http://www.nps.gov/biso/index.htm

Mammoth Cave National Park
http://www.nps.gov/maca/index.htm

Land between the Lakes National Recreation Area
http://www.lbl.org/

Kentucky Bike/Pedestrian Coordinator
http://transportation.ky.gov/bike-walk/Pages/default.aspx

Kentucky Area Development Districts
http://www.kcadd.org/District_Contacts.html

Kentucky Recreational Trails Association
www.krta.ky.gov

Kentucky Horse Council
www.Kentuckyhorse.org
(859) 367-0509

Kentucky Back Country Horseman
www.kybch.com
(859) 744-0397

Kentucky Bike and Bikeway Commission
www.bicycleky.org
(502) 564-7183

Adventure Paddlers Association of Kentucky
www.canoeky.com
(800) 226-6359

Kentucky Trails Association
www.kentuckytrails.org
(502) 454-5601

Kentucky Mountain Bike Association
www.kymba.org
(502) 370-6066

Kentucky Parks and Recreation Society
www.kyrec.org
(502) 696-9834

Kentucky Marina Association
www.kentucky-marinas.com
(270) 388-2532

Pine Mountain Trail Conference
www.pinemountaintrail.com
(606) 633-2362

Sheltowee Trace Association
www.sheltoweetrace.org
(606) 584-7744

Jenny Wiley Trail Conference
(606) 584-7744

Red River Gorge Climbers Coalition
www.rrgcc.org
(859) 422-3085

Eastern Kentucky Recreational
Trails System
888-857-5263

Kentucky Division of Forestry
www.forestry.ky.gov
(502) 564-4496

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Office for Adventure Tourism
Kentucky Trail Town Program
500 Mero Street, 24th Floor
Frankfort, KY 40601
502.564.4270

getoutky.com

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