

# How Landowners and Abutters Benefit

Adapted from [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org), website of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

## Impacts on Local Economy

The body of research regarding the economic benefits of trails and greenways is quite substantial. The methodology of such studies, just as the trails themselves vary, so it is difficult to generalize from one or two. However, the evidence supporting the conclusion that trails and greenways improve local economies grows greater by the day. Across the United States, trails and greenways are stimulating tourism and recreation-related spending. Trails and greenway systems have become the central focus of tourist activities in some communities and the impetus for kick-starting stagnating economies in others.

- ❑ According to a 1998 study, the direct economic impact of the Great Allegheny Passage exceeded \$14 million a year—even though the trail was only half-finished at the time. In Confluence, Pennsylvania, one of the first trailhead towns, the trail has encouraged development of several new businesses and a rise in real estate values.
- ❑ In the months following the opening of the Mineral Belt Trail in Leadville Colorado, the city reported a 19 percent increase in sales tax revenues. Owners of restaurants and lodging facilities report that they are serving customers who have come into town specifically to ride the trail. The trail has helped Leadville to recover from the economic blow of a mine closure.
- ❑ Visitors to Little Miami Scenic Trail in Ohio spend an average of \$13.54 per visit just on food, beverage and transportation to the trail. In addition, they spend \$277 per person each year on clothing, equipment and accessories to use during trail trips.

## Impacts on Property Values

Trails and greenways increase the natural beauty of communities. They have also been shown to bolster property values and make adjacent properties easier to sell.

- ❑ A 1998 study of property values along the Mountain Bay Trail in Brown County, Wisconsin shows that lots adjacent to the trail sold faster and for an average of nine percent more than similar property not located next to the trail.
- ❑ In a 2002 survey of recent home buyers sponsored by the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders, trails ranked as the second most important community amenity out of a list of 18 choices.
- ❑ Realizing the selling power of greenways, developers of the Shepherd's Vineyard housing development in Apex, North Carolina added \$5,000 to the price of 40 homes adjacent to the regional greenway. Those homes were still the first to sell.

## Combining Environmental and Economic Benefits

Trails and greenways can play an important role in improving water quality and mitigating flood damage. Greenways preserve open space that provides natural buffer zones to protect rivers and ponds from pollution caused by fertilizers and pesticides on yards and farms. They can also serve as flood plains that absorb excess water and mitigate damage caused by floods.

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