



## IS YOUR TOWN A FLORIDA TRAIL TOWN?

This self-assessment will assist your community in understanding the basic characteristics of a successful trail town, and to help you complete the questionnaire to become a recognized Florida Trail Town through the Office of Greenways and Trails. Visit other links on the Florida Trail Town page for additional information.

### TRAIL

#### **Multi-use, non-motorized long-distance trail or a connecting trail into the larger system:**

- ❖ Define what kind of trail(s) are in proximity (within two miles) of your town. This is important because you can effectively cater to the specific needs of your trail users.
  - What types of trails are in proximity – hiking, biking, paddling, equestrian and shared use non-motorized? How long are they? Are they a part of a regional or state trail system? Do trails in proximity to your town provide connections into a larger system?
  - Is there more than one trail that traverses your town?
  - Are the trail users likely to be day travelers? Are the trail users likely to be long-distance travelers? Will the trail users need bike shops? Will the trail users need paddling equipment? Will they need lodging or to resupply before they continue?

#### **Neighboring trails:**

- ❖ Identify what other trails are near your trail (within five miles).
  - What types of trails and what are the distances to the central downtown area?

#### **Excellent and well-maintained trail conditions:**

- ❖ The trail(s) should be easy to use, safe and well-maintained. Maintenance is important if you want trail users to return to your town and if you want to attract more visitors. A trail user's visit should be enjoyable, safe and scenic.
  - Is the trail in good condition? Who manages the trail(s)? Do you have a good working relationship with the trail manager(s)?

### ACCESSIBILITY

A successful Trail Town has a trail near enough to the central downtown to be readily accessible by trail users. If the trail does not run directly through downtown, there should be a clearly identified path with distance information that leads trail users into town. Businesses and residents should welcome trail users and provide trail friendly services.

**Trail traverses the central downtown or is in proximity (within two miles):**

- ❖ Depending on the type, a trail can be further removed from your downtown and still be accessible. With a biking trail, for example, a two-mile side trip to your town is not out-of-the-way. However, a hiking or paddling trail which is two miles away can be taxing.
  - How far away from downtown is each trail type? If your town is a larger urban area, how far are essential services from the trail?

**Clearly mark the paths and distances from the trail to the central downtown area:**

- ❖ Trail users should be able to clearly identify that your town is located nearby. The farther removed the trail is, the more important directional signage will be. Signs should describe the distance and provide clear directions.
  - Is there a path connecting the trail to your downtown? What distance is the trail from your town? Do you need more wayfinding signage on the trail leading into town?

**Facilities and amenities are convenient to trail users:**

- ❖ Visible businesses benefit economically from trail users. Ideally, goods and services are located at or near the trail's entrance into the town. Trail users desire goods and services which are readily available.
  - Where and what kind of trail-friendly goods and services are in town? What distance are each service provider from the trail?

**Business owners and citizens are friendly and welcoming to trail users:**

- ❖ Trail users may stay longer, make a return trip, and contribute to tourism and the town's economy when they feel welcomed and well informed. It is beneficial when both business owners and citizens are well informed about the trail, the town, and the various businesses offerings and amenities.
  - Can business owners and citizens answer questions about the town and the trail?

## TOWN PARTICIPATION

A common denominator of a successful trail town is a champion. The champion could be a town citizen, group of citizens, local government or non-profit organization, or some combination. The champion(s) may assist in completing the trail town application. Once designated, the champion(s) can coordinate Trail Town information, business and citizen support, networking with neighboring towns, and trail events and marketing.

**Trail-oriented Community Support Organization or local trail advocacy groups:**

- ❖ The champion(s) serves to assess the town's potential to become a Florida Trail Town and complete the designation application with the Office of Greenways and Trails.
  - Does your town have a champion(s) to coordinate and organize a Trail Town application and perhaps create a Trail Town strategy?

#### **Annual trail festivals or events:**

- ❖ Events which take place on or near the trail (a race, a fundraiser, etc.), draws attention to the trail and draws people to the trail who may not normally be trail users. Events boost the overall Trail Town economy via purchases from trail users and new visitors.
  - What events are held on or near the trail? What is the estimated attendance? How many events and how often do events occur?

#### **Trail Town plan or local development plan which includes trails:**

- ❖ A written plan with attainable goals is recommended for a Trail Town. A specific "Trail Town Plan" is not a requirement to be designated a Florida Trail Town, although it is encouraged as a best practice.
  - Are trails included in some type of a local development plan for the town? What type of plan involving trails is currently available and includes your town? Do you have a specific "Trail Town Plan" or strategy?

#### **Coordinate with neighboring communities:**

- ❖ To be a Trail Town, proximity to a long-distance trail or connecting your town into a larger system is important. Coordinating with your neighboring communities can bring greater economic benefits by bringing in more trail tourism. Your neighbors can help organize and promote events (Many hands make light work).
  - How are you working with your neighbors to promote the trail(s)? Are you working with others in your region to promote trails and trail events?

## **BUSINESSES**

Trails have the potential to provide a significant economic boost to local businesses. Some towns economically thrive because of trails, such as [trail towns along the Appalachian Trail](#) or the [Great Allegheny Passage](#)). Becoming a Trail Town provides a unique opportunity to take full advantage of the economic opportunities offered to your town through trails. After evaluating the types of trail users coming into your town, determine if your town offers the necessary goods and services they need.

#### **Provide necessary and specific goods and services to trail users:**

- ❖ Partner with your local chamber of commerce, economic development council, county/city commissioner's office or other relevant entities to discuss how to provide goods and services to trail users.

- What are the current businesses in your town which serve trail users? Are there gaps in the goods and services offered? How will those gaps be filled? Is the chamber of commerce or another group involved in developing a Trail Town economic strategy?

### **Coalition of local businesses that continue to grow and support the trail:**

- ❖ Include businesses in the group championing the trail or create a central organization of businesses to assist developing the Trail Town economy. This group can formulate a plan for economic growth and expansion, agree on incentives and discounts to offer trail users, organize business participation in events, and coordinate with trail advocates, neighboring towns and other businesses.
  - Does your trail town have a central business organization? Can you identify existing business partnerships with the potential to participate in developing the Trail Town?

### **Marketing to and discount for trail users as an incentive to come into town:**

- ❖ Give trail users a reason to come to your town by offering them special deals at local businesses. Kiosks on the trail can include advertisements for local businesses, special deals for trail users, or coupons for businesses in town. A small discount (10%-20%) can motivate trail users to visit or stay in your town.
  - What incentives do businesses offer to trail users for goods and services?

## **AMENITIES**

A Trail Town is a friendly place which encourages trail users to visit and welcomes them with warm hospitality. Trail users want to explore interesting and vibrant places in their travels, and while they travel trail users need certain services. The longer they stay, the more money they will spend and the more likely they are to return.

### **Bike racks, boat docks and launches, hitching posts, etc.:**

- ❖ Trail Towns often provide areas for storage of trail user's equipment while they are in town. This makes their stay much easier and enjoyable.
  - What trail amenities are in your town? Are there bike racks? Day-use parking? Kayak launches and ways to secure kayaks, canoes and paddleboards?

### **Reasonably priced food with local influences:**

- ❖ Give trail users an affordable taste of your town. Reasonably priced food is necessary and having local influences makes it all the better. Make sure that these restaurants are family friendly.
  - Are your restaurants trail-friendly? Family-friendly? Affordable? Feature local influences?

### **Overnight accommodations (hotels, bed & breakfasts, cabins, and campgrounds):**

- ❖ Provide overnight accommodations for trail users. It is not necessary to have all types of lodging available, though diversity is desirable (camping, B&B's, hotel chains etc.).

- Is lodging information readily available for trail users? Where?
- Are there special rates or travel packages offered to trail users?
- Have you surveyed trail users to evaluate their stay?

**Easily accessible drinking fountains or potable water sources:**

- ❖ This is crucial to trail user’s health and safety. Water should be available near or on the trail. If there are not water fountains near the trail, consider having water jugs or free bottles of water within businesses for trail users. This is a friendly way to invite trail users into the town and into businesses.
  - Are public potable water sources readily available? Do businesses offer free water in bottles?

**Food that can be purchased and easily packaged for trail use:**

- ❖ Long-distance trail users require stopping points to refuel.
  - Are there trail-friendly stores where trail users can restock? How far away from the trail?

**INFORMATION**

Once your trail users are in town, signage, maps or flyers can direct them to businesses. This is a great way to inform trail users about the attractions and events your town has that they may not have previously known about. Make navigation of your town easy for trail users - provide them as much information as possible about your town as quickly as you can.

**Informational pamphlets within the central business district:**

- ❖ Produce pamphlets about what your town offers within the central business district. This is a great way to encourage trail users to enjoy all your town’s offerings and to promote return trips.
  - Do businesses keep free informational pamphlets and event flyers in their stores?

**SAFETY**

Trail users want to feel safe and protected both on the trail and within your town.

**Safe and navigable downtown business district and amenities:**

The town is well-lit, has wide sidewalks, protected bike lanes and crosswalks.

- Does your downtown area feel safe and is it easy to navigate? Is it family-friendly and welcoming? Has your town reviewed or adopted the Florida [Complete Streets](#) guidelines?
- Is safety addressed in your current local development or “Trail Town Plan”?

**Law enforcement is familiar with the trail terrain, length, and town:**

- ❖ If an emergency occurs on the trail, first responders should be familiar with the trail and be able to reach trail users quickly.
  - Do first responders and law enforcement know where trail users are coming from, if there are connecting trails, and what types of trails are around town?

**Medical services for trail users:**

- ❖ Depending on what type of trail is near your town, trail users might need specific types of medical services. If you have a mountain bike trail you might need emergency medical services with off-road vehicles. If you have a paddling trail, you might need a rescue boat. If you have a hiking trail, you might need a golf cart or universal terrain vehicle to pick up injured or stranded hikers.
  - What type of medical services and equipment for trail users are available?