



WHAT IS A FLORIDA TRAIL TOWN?

A "Trail Town" in Florida is a community located along or in proximity to a priority non-motorized recreational trail or a recognized trail system. Whether on a rail trail, paddling trail, equestrian trail or hiking trail, trail users can venture off the trail to enjoy the services and unique heritage of the nearby community. The town is a safe place where both town residents and trail users can walk, bike, jog etc., find the goods and services they need, and easily access both the trail and the town. In such a town, the trail is an integral and important part of the community.

A Trail Town is a vibrant destination where people come together. A Trail Town is a friendly place which encourages trail users to visit and welcomes them with warm hospitality. It may have outdoor equipment shops, restaurants, a grocery store, quaint local shops, and lodging. It has wide sidewalks, clean streets, bike racks, and benches at convenient locations. The trail meets the needs of both the trail users and the town's residents. Residents use the trail to access work, schools, parks and shops.

Trail Towns are not stand-alone communities; they are linked by the long-distance trail corridor. Trail users may be passing through a town on a day trip or longer trek, or may park and access other trails, such as a paddling trail. Trail users want to explore interesting and vibrant places in their travels and need services that the town provides. Basic characteristics of a successful Trail Town include:

- Enticements to get trail users off the trail to explore the town
- Making clear and safe connections between the town and trail
- Welcoming trail users by making town information readily available
- Educating businesses on the economic benefits of meeting the needs of trail tourists
- Promoting a "trail-friendly" town character
- Integrating the trail into the town's culture with annual festivals and events that draw people to the trail who may not normally be trail users
- Connecting residents safely to work, schools, parks and shopping
- Working with neighboring communities to promote the entire long-distance trail as a tourist destination

Any trail, long or short, is an economic asset to a community. It provides free recreation for people of all ages and fitness levels, and offers opportunities to study nature or local history.

The Office of Greenways and Trails' Florida Trail Town program is oriented towards towns which connect to long-distance trails or trail systems, ones that attract travelers from outside the local community and are not used solely by nearby residents. Studies show that the longer a trail is, the farther people will travel to visit it, the longer they will stay, and the more money they will spend. A day-user will spend four times the amount of a local user, and is likely to make a return trip to the Trail Town. An overnight visitor will spend twice the amount of a day-user. For information on recognizing your town as a Florida Trail Town, call 850-245-2061 or contact Doug.Alderson@dep.state.fl.us at the Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails.