

CHAPTER 8 - TRAIL CONCERNS

The development of trails often raises concerns and fears by adjacent landowners about the impact of the proposed trails in their neighborhoods. These concerns typically focus on three primary areas including:

1. Potential for increased crime;
2. Liability concerns; and
3. Property values.

SAFETY AND CRIME

Recognizing the concerns that some residents of the township have relative to the potential for increased crime in their neighborhoods stemming from the development of trails and bicycle facilities, Northampton Township officials requested that this plan specifically address this issue. To address this issue, this plan addresses safety and crime concerns in three separate ways:

- Analysis of the relationship between trails and crime in the Philadelphia region;
- A review of previous studies from across the country addressing the relationship between trails and property values; and
- Recommended safety measures the township should consider in the design, development and ongoing operation of their trails and bicycle facilities network.

Analysis of the relationship between trails and crime in the Philadelphia region

To determine the extent of crime in areas adjacent to existing trails within the Philadelphia area, and how crime in that area compares to the surrounding area, two approaches were used.

1. Where detailed crime statistics were available by street, we analyzed crime rates for residential streets abutting existing trails, and compared that to crime reports in other residential areas of the geographic area, most often the township, where the trail is located. This analysis was able to be completed for the following trails and geographic areas.
 - Radnor Trail - Radnor Township, Delaware County
 - Pennsy Trail - Haverford Township, Delaware County

For these trails, crimes in non-residential areas such as commercial districts, schools, colleges, apartment complexes, and office parks were removed so as not provide an equal comparison of residential areas abutting trails, versus other residential areas. This also closely replicates the residential areas in Northampton Township where trails are being proposed.

2. For some trails, this level of detailed crime reporting was not available. In those cases, we contacted local law enforcement officials to understand the extent of criminal activity in areas with trails. This was the case for the Pennypack Trail located in Lower Moreland Township and Lorimer Park in Abington Township.

It should be noted that any criminal activity that is reported in residential neighborhoods abutting trails cannot automatically be attributed to the presence of the trail, just as the presence of a sidewalk in areas without trails can be linked to crime.

Key Learnings:

Pennypack Trail - Lorimer Park/Abington Township, Montgomery County

According to Scott Morgan, Region III Manager, Montgomery County Parks, Trails & Historic Sites, crime along the Pennypack Trail is almost non-existent. More specifically, he indicated that the most common complaint he receives is relative to dogs being off leashes within the park. Although he was aware of other incidents along the trail such as a suicide in the woods off the trail, a drug overdose, a snowmobile, and a few cars getting broken into in the trailhead parking lots, he was not aware of any homes being burglarized, any assaults, or any homeless issues.

He also indicated that there was more trouble associated with the vacant rail line prior to the establishment of the trail in the form of beer parties, drug use, graffiti and vandalism.

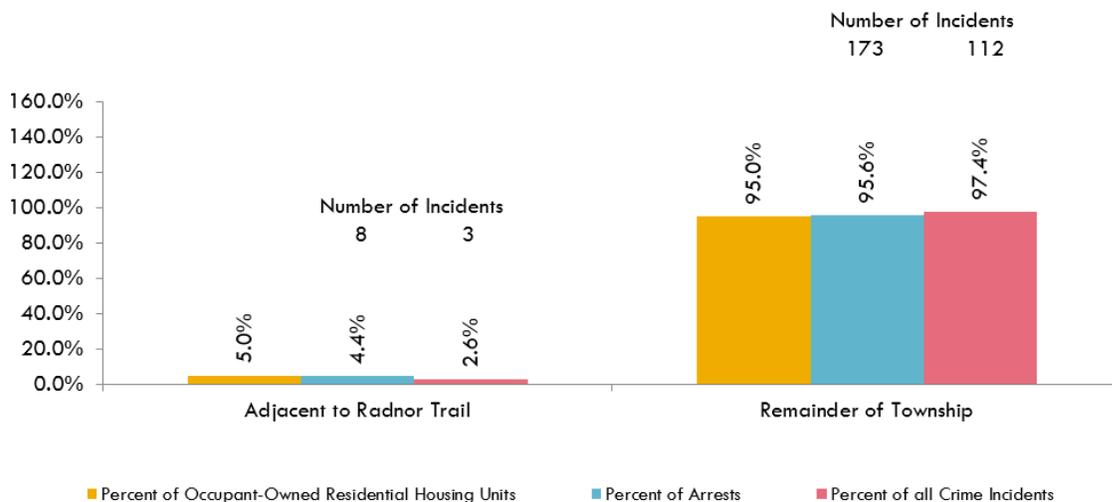
Pennypack Trail - Lower Moreland Township, Montgomery County

Rich Worthington, Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator, Lower Moreland Township indicated that from February 1, 2015 through December 31, 2016, the Lower Moreland Police Department responded to 21, 476 calls. Among these calls, only 59 / 0.27 percent occurred with ¼ mile of the Pennypack Trail.

Radnor Trail - Radnor Township, Delaware County (October 1, 2015 - September 30, 2019)

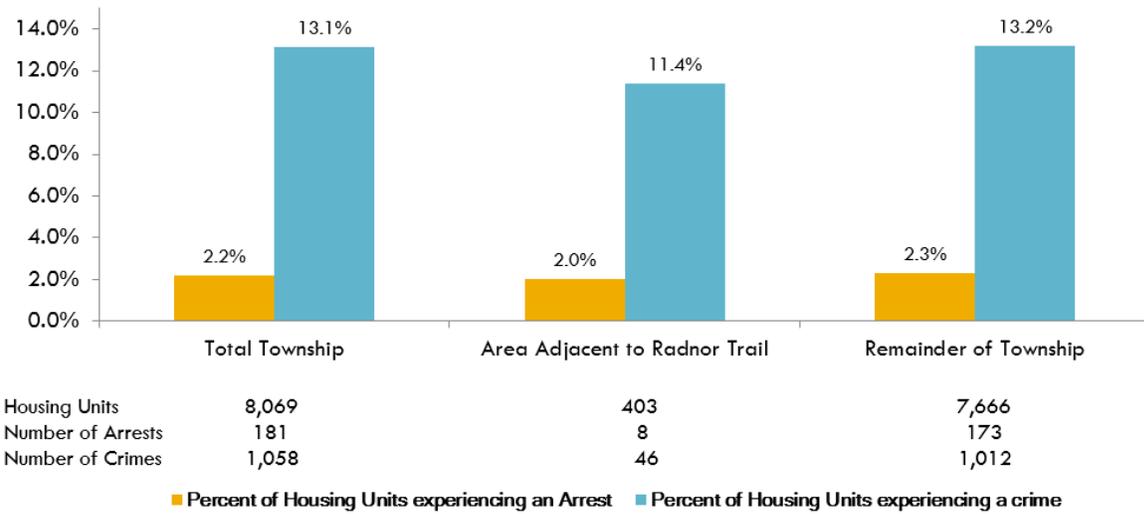
Based on an analysis of arrests and crimes over a four year period, the frequency of crime and arrests in areas abutting the Radnor Trail is no greater than the percent of residential units in that area. In other words, residential units abutting the Radnor Trail account for 5.0 percent of housing units in the township while accounting for only 4.4 percent of arrests and 2.6 percent of crime incidents.

FIGURE 23 – RADNOR TRAIL VERSUS RADNOR TOWNSHIP INCIDENTS (OCTOBER 1, 2015–SEPTEMBER 2019)



The ratio of arrests and crimes to the number of housing units is lower in areas adjacent to the Radnor Trail as compared to the remainder of the township. In other words, the 46 crime incidents that occurred in the area adjacent to the Radnor Trail represents 11.4 percent of the 403 housing units adjacent to the Radnor Trail which is lower than the 13.2 percent represented by the 1,012 crime incidents as a percentage of the 7,666 housing units in the remainder of the township.

FIGURE 24 – RADNOR TOWNSHIP PERCENTAGES OF HOUSING UNITS EXPERIENCING A CRIME VERSUS AN ARREST

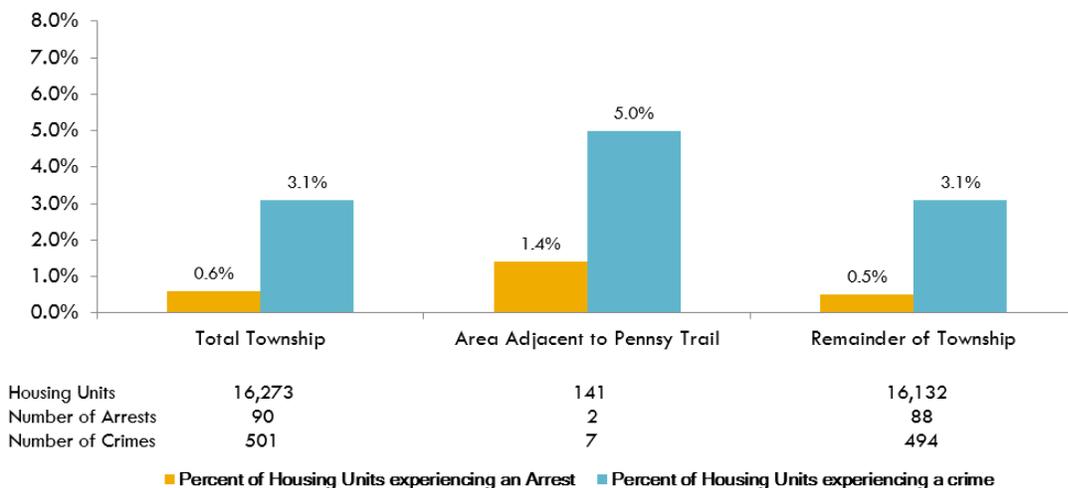


Pennsy Trail - Haverford Township, Delaware County (December 1, 2018 - October 31, 2019)

Based on an analysis of arrests and crimes over an eleven month period, it would appear that the rates of arrest and crime are slightly higher in areas adjacent to the Pennsy Trail versus the remainder of the township. However, two things should be noted relative to this:

- The number of arrests and crime incidents in areas that are adjacent to the trail, are very low with limited sample sizes. Less than one crime or arrest per month occurred during the time period for which detailed data was available.
- Of the 7 criminal incidents that occurred, 6 of these were for fraud, forgery or identity theft.

FIGURE 25 – PENNSY TRAIL – HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP, PERCENTAGES OF HOUSING UNITS EXPERIENCING A CRIME VERSUS AN ARREST



Review of Previous Studies addressing the relationship between trails and crime

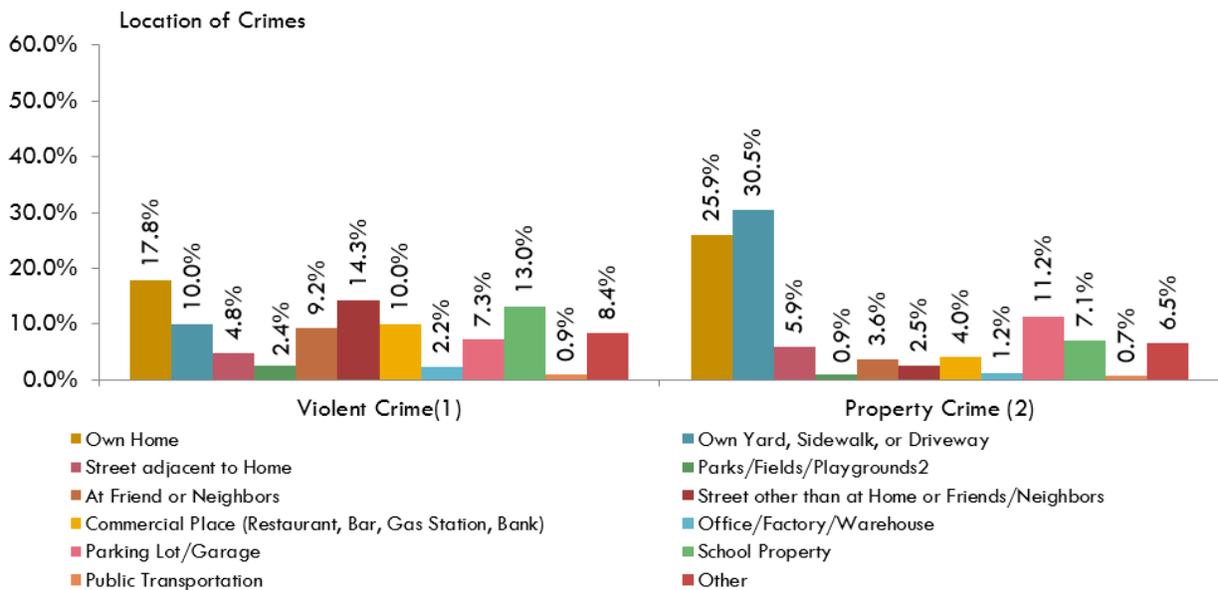
Although trails are not immune from crime, numerous studies indicate that trails themselves do not result in an increase in crime and that often crime rates are lower on trails than in other environments. Although several of these studies may be perceived as outdated, there has been a lack of ongoing research into this topic given the conclusions of these prior studies that crime is no more prevalent on trails than in the surrounding communities.

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) - Bureau of Justice Statistics (2004-2008)

<https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=44>

From 2004 - 2008, the latest years for which statistics were available, only 2.4 percent of violent crimes, and less than 1.0 percent of property crimes occurred on parks, fields and playgrounds. Please note that trails are not broken out separately. In comparison, 4.8 percent of violent crimes and 5.9 percent of property crimes occur on the street immediately adjacent to the home. Crimes away from home accounted for 67.4 percent of violent crimes and 37.7 percent of property crimes.

FIGURE 26 – NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMIZATION STATISTICS



(1) Violent crimes exclude murder and include rape, sexual assault, robbery and aggravated or simple assault

(2) Property crimes include household burglary, motor vehicle theft, and property theft

Preliminary Assessment of Crime Risk along Greenways in Charlotte, North Carolina (1994-2004) <http://www.buncombecounty.org/common/parks/MasterPlan/7-Safety.pdf>

- “Two studies of crime statistics in Mecklenburg County show greenways have lower crime rates than the surrounding community. They found that most green-ways provide a safer alternative than roads and attract local residents using the trails frequently. The first study was done in 1997 along the Mallard Creek Greenway comparing the incidence of crime with the surrounding police district and the city as a whole. The incidence of crime along the Mallard Creek Greenway and adjacent properties was nearly half that of the surrounding police district and only 12.7 percent of the countywide crime rate. Later, an extended study explored recent crime rates along all 14 green-ways within Mecklenburg County between 2001 and 2003. The data suggest that greenway-adjacent properties do not incur greater risk of crime than other properties within the same neighborhood statistical area.”

Pinellas Trail Community Impact Study (2001)

Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization
http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Pinellas_exec.pdf

- “Crime data from the Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office and the St. Petersburg Police Department for 1993, 1995 and 1999 indicate that crime rates along the trail are no different than elsewhere in the county or city. In 1993 and 1995, crime rates along the trail were lower than county-wide rates, and in 1999 the rates were still lower, but closer to the countywide average.”

Omaha Recreational Trails: Their Effect on Property Values and Public Safety (2000)

Donald L. Greer, Ph.D., Project Director, University of Nebraska at Omaha
 Recreation and Leisure Studies Program - School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
<http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/omahastudy.pdf>

- “Experiences with trail-related theft (4.0 percent) and property damage (4.7 percent) were reported infrequently by respondent and most of these incidents were of relatively minor nature.”
- “Property owners do not appear to have a widespread concern for their safety. Trespassing, theft and vandalism by trail users were relatively infrequent events.”

Rail-Trails and Safe Communities - The Experience on 372 Trails (1998)

Rails to Trails Conservancy
http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource_docs/tgc_safecomm.pdf

A massive survey of crime of 372 rail trails in urban, suburban, and rural settings was undertaken in the late 1990s, covering 7,000 miles of trail with 45 million users (the urban component was 5 million users on 332 miles; 14 million people on 1,100 miles of suburban trails; and 26 million users on 5,282 miles of rural trails). (Tracy, 1998):

- “Only 3 percent of these trails reported any crimes against persons (assaults, muggings, rape, and murder); of the 3 percent of trails that reported a crime against a person, urban trails had a higher rate of crime than suburban ones.”
- “Burglary near trails was extremely rare, more so than other crimes. Only four burglaries were reported in homes adjacent to 7,000 miles of rail trails in 1996 and 3 of these 4 were reported in rural areas. There’s no evidence that these four crimes were a result of the nearby trail.”

Specific to suburban rail trails and crimes, the survey revealed the following:

- “In 1996, the national rate of muggings in urban areas was 335 for each 100,000 inhabitants. Only one of 36 urban trails reported muggings, giving trails a rate of 15 muggings per 5 million users. In the suburbs, muggings occurred at a rate of 102 per 100,000 people. Only one mugging was reported among the 14 million people who used suburban trails in 1996.”
- “The national rate of suburban aggravated assaults is 293 per 100,000 inhabitants; three assaults occurred on three suburban rail trails in 1995 and only two assaults occurred on suburban rail trails in 1996.”
- “The national rate of suburban rape of 29 per 100,000 persons; none of the suburban rail trails reported a rape in 1995 or 1996.”
- “Nationally, four murders per 100,000 inhabitants occur in suburban areas; there were no reports of murder on suburban rail trails in 1995 or 1996.”

Social Justice as it Pertains to Safety on the American Tobacco Trail (2015)

North Carolina Rail-Trails / NC State University
[http://www.triangletrails.org/pdfs/ATT_report_finaldraft_6_5_15\(2\).pdf](http://www.triangletrails.org/pdfs/ATT_report_finaldraft_6_5_15(2).pdf)

This study was undertaken to examine an area along the American Tobacco Trail (ATT) in Durham, North Carolina that experienced an increase in crime in 2011. The study analyzed the relationship between crime data, built environment characteristics in adjacent neighborhoods, and the perception of crime along the

ATT. The study was initiated in response to the impact a 2011 crime increase on the ATT had on the overall perception of the trail and adjacent neighborhoods.

- “Between 2012 and 2014, over 3550 violent crimes in 14 categories were committed within a 10 minute walk of the trail. However, only 14 crimes occurred on the trail. Less than a ½ percent of all area crimes occurred on the trail. The ATT is not crime free, but it is safe and much safer than the surrounding community.”
- “Over 86 percent of survey respondents perceive the ATT as safe. The trail has few reported crimes (14 crimes committed between 2012 and 2014) and is safer than the adjacent community.”

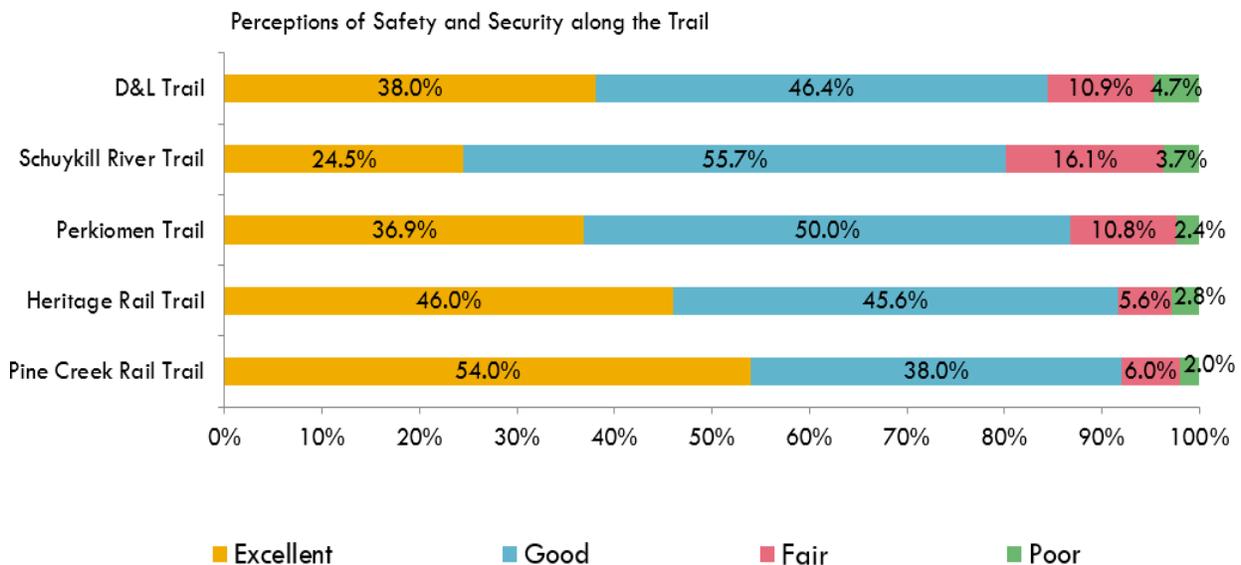
Trail User Surveys

In addition to these studies, as mentioned earlier, 5 User Surveys were conducted for a variety of trails in the Philadelphia area and across Pennsylvania. These user surveys included:

- Pine Creek Rail Trail - 2006 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (62.6 miles)
- Heritage Rail Trail County Park - 2007 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (21.0 miles)
- Perkiomen Trail - 2008 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (19.0 miles)
- Schuylkill River Trail - 2009 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (56.0 miles)
- D & L Trail - 2012 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (165.0 miles)

These studies revealed that the majority of trail users, on average 85 percent plus, felt that safety and security along the trails was either Good or Excellent. The one exception to this being the Schuylkill River Trail which is a more urbanized trail versus the other trails analyzed. However, even 80 percent of users of this trail felt that security was Good to Excellent.

FIGURE 27 – TRAIL USER SURVEY RESULTS – PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND SECURITY ALONG THE TRAIL



Recommendations for improving trail safety and reducing the potential for crime

Although crimes on trails rarely occur, Northampton Township should work in cooperation with its police department, the Northampton Volunteer Fire Department, and Tri-Hampton Rescue Squad to develop and implement a safety and security plan for the proposed trail network. This plan should consist of well-defined safety and security policies; the identification of trail management, law enforcement, emergency, and fire protection policies; and a system that offers timely response to issues or problems related to safety and security. Important components of the safety and security plan should include:

- Institution of user rules and regulations
- Preparation of a trail and bicycle safety manual
- Development of trail emergency procedures
- Preparation of a safety checklist for the trails
- Preparation of a trail user response form
- Development of a system for accident reporting and analysis
- Regular maintenance and inspection programs
- Site and facility development and review
- Public education and information programs educating users on safety tips for on-road bicycling
- Employee training programs for safety and emergency response

In addition to the design of a safety and security plan, the township should proactively address trail safety in the design phase of the trails. Although there are many safety regulations required by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation specific to on-road trail and bicycle facilities, as well as the types, placement, and required signage for the crossing of roads, the township should also consider utilizing Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles during the trail design process.

CPTED principles are designed to encourage desired behavior, and discourage undesired behavior on the trail system. CPTED is defined as “the proper design and effective use of the built environment that can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life.” As applied to trails, CPTED principles focus on access control, maximizing visibility of the trail from the surrounding community, clearly defining public and private properties and intended uses, facilitating emergency response, and long-term maintenance of the trail.

In addition to following PennDOT safety requirements and CPTED principles during the design process, the township should ensure that design and construction documents for the trails are reviewed by appropriate agencies to ensure that they meet all current safety regulations.

Finally, during the construction phase, the township should discourage the general public from using any segment of the trails that are under construction. Trail segments should not be considered open for public use until a formal dedication ceremony has been staged and authorized agents of the township have declared the pathway open.

LIABILITY¹

Trail projects often generate concerns about liability. These concerns may come from individual property owners, organizations, and municipal, county and state governments. The Rails to Trails Conservancy has published a primer on liability related to rail trails that provides useful information on this topic. It can be downloaded at the following website: <http://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=3501>.

There are three legal precepts, either alone or in combination that define, and in many cases, limit liability for injury resulting from trail use. The first is the concept of duty of care that speaks to the responsibility that a landowner (private or public) has to anyone on their land. Second is the Recreational Use Statute (RUS) which is available in all 50 states and provides protection to private landowners and some public landowners who allow public free access to land for recreational purposes. Third, for all private and public parties, liability insurance provides the final line of defense.

¹ Morris, High (2000), A Primer on Trail-Related Liability Issues & Risk Management Techniques. Washington D.C.: Rails to Trails Conservancy. P 6-9.

Duty of Care

Tort law, with regard to finding fault for an incident that occurs in a particular location, is concerned with the “class” of person who sustained the injury and the legal duty of care owed to a person in that class. The legal duty of care that a landowner owes a member of the general public varies from state to state but is generally divided into four categories. In most states, a landowner’s responsibility for injuries depends on the status of the injured person. A landowner owes increasingly greater duties of care (i.e.; is more at risk) if the injured person is a “trespasser,” a “licensee,” an “invitee,” or a “child.”

Trespasser – a person on land without the landowner’s permission, whether intentionally or by mistaken belief that they are on public land. Trespassers are due the least duty of care and therefore pose the lowest level of liability risk. The landowner is generally not responsible for unsafe conditions. The landowner can only be held liable for deliberate or reckless misconduct, such as putting up a trip wire. Adjacent landowners are unlikely to be held liable for injuries sustained by trespassers on their property.

Licensee – a person on land with the owner’s permission but only for the visitor’s benefit. This situation creates a slightly higher liability for the landowner. For example, a person who is permitted to hunt on a farm without paying a fee, if there were no RUS, would be classified as a licensee. If the landowner charged a fee, the hunter would probably be classified as an invitee. Again, the landowner is not responsible for discovering unsafe conditions; however the landowner must provide warning of known unsafe conditions.

Invitee – a person on the owner’s land with the owner’s permission, expressly or implied, for the owner’s benefit, such as a paying customer. This is the highest level of responsibility and therefore carries the highest level of liability. The owner is responsible for unknown dangers that should have been discovered. Put a different way, the landowner has a duty to:

1. Inspect the property and facilities to discover hidden dangers;
2. Remove the hidden dangers or warn the user of their presence;
3. Keep the property and facilities in reasonably safe repair; and
4. Anticipate foreseeable activities by users and take precautions to protect users from foreseeable dangers.

The landowner does not ensure the invitee’s safety, but must exercise reasonable care to prevent injury. Generally, the landowner is not liable for injuries caused by known, open, or obvious dangers where there has been an appropriate warning. For example, customers using an ice rink open to the public for a fee would be invitees.

Child – even if trespassing, some states accord children a higher level of protection. The concept of “attractive nuisance” is particularly relevant to children. Land forms such as ponds can be attractive to children who, unaware of potential danger, may be injured if they explore such items.

Recreational Use Statutes

Recreational use statutes are now on the books in all fifty states. These state laws provide protection to landowners who allow the public to use their land for recreational purposes. The theory behind these statutes is that if landowners are protected from liability they would be more likely to open up their land for public recreational use and that, in turn, would reduce state expenditures to provide such areas. To recover damages, an injured person must prove “willful and wanton misconduct” on the part of the landowner essentially the same duty of care owed to a trespasser. However, if the landowner is charging a fee for access to the property, the protection offered by the recreational use statute is lost in most states.

Pennsylvania’s Recreational Use of Land and Water Act (RULWA) limits landowners liability for personal injury or property damage if they make their land available to the public for recreation for no charge. The purpose of the law is to encourage landowners to allow hikers, fishermen, and other recreational users onto their properties by limiting the traditional duty of care that landowners owe to entrants upon their land. So long as no entrance or use fee is charged, the Act provides that landowners do not have to keep their land

safe for recreational users and have no duty to warn of dangerous conditions. This immunity from liability does not protect landowners who willfully or maliciously fail to warn of dangerous conditions.

Landowners who permit or invite members of the general public onto their properties for recreational purposes, free of charge, can raise this statute as a defense if they are sued for personal injury or property damage. RULWA does not prevent landowners from being sued; it provides them with an immunity defense to claims that their negligence caused the plaintiff's injury. Negligence is the failure to exercise ordinary care such as a reasonably prudent and careful person under similar circumstances would exercise.

As noted above, although RULWA immunizes landowners from negligence claims, landowners remain liable for willful or malicious failure to guard or warn recreational users of a dangerous condition of the land. To determine whether a landowner's behavior was willful, courts will look at whether the owner had actual knowledge of the threat and whether the danger would be obvious to entrants. Actual knowledge might be presumed if the owner were aware of prior accidents at the same spot. But if the land contained a dangerous feature that should have been obvious to recreational users, they may be considered to be put "on notice," which generally would preclude landowner liability. For more information, visit <http://conservationtools.org/guides/show/81-Recreational-Use-of-Land-and-Water-Act - ixzz3CAm0sug0>.

Liability Insurance

Insurance is the last line of defense. While the precepts of Duty of Care and the Recreational Use Statute may mean a lawsuit does not ultimately prevail in the courts, they cannot prevent a suit from being filed. Insurance is necessary for both trail owners/managers and adjacent landowners.

Specific to trail owners/managers such as Bucks County and Northampton Township, liability associated with trails, are most often covered by an umbrella insurance policy that protects all municipal activities and facilities, the same as other park and recreation facilities.

Adjacent landowners, often have concerns over whether they will need to need to increase the amount of liability insurance under their existing homeowner's insurance policy or if their insurance premiums will increase as a function of the trail being developed. Throughout the development of the County's trails, and in assisting other municipalities in the development of trails and bicycle plans, the Bucks County Planning Commission staff has researched the issue and has spoken with numerous insurance brokers and industry professionals such as the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the Pennsylvania Insurance Department; Bureaus of Consumer Services as well as numerous local insurance agents with the following learnings:

- Insurance carriers look at each home (and its individual perils) and policy on its own merits. The only instances of an adjacent property/use being considered as having a negative premium effect on a residential property, is when the adjacent use is of a commercial / hazardous nature. This is most common where multiple homes are attached or a multiuse property situation exists such as a restaurant adjacent to a home. This is most likely to occur in densely populated locations.
- All industry experts we have spoken with said exactly the same thing: they had never heard of any example of a public space like a trail, park or recreation field ever being a factor in the pricing of an individual homeowner's policy. Furthermore in the case of the rail trail, there is no additional peril caused by the trail as the land is separate. One industry contact even suggested that the peril is substantially reduced since the tracks are removed and the railroad has ceased operations.

While the County cannot speak to each property's unique situation or insurance coverage, we remain confident that homeowners adjacent to the trail should not be subject to increased premiums, nor do they automatically take on additional peril as it relates to liability due to the proximity of a trail to their property.

PROPERTY VALUES

The last remaining concern that people often have regarding the development of trails and bicycle facilities is the impact on property values. Similar to Safety and Crime concerns, this study addresses these concerns in three ways:

- Analysis of the relationship between trails and property values in the Philadelphia region;
- A review of previous studies from across the country addressing the relationship between trails and property values; and
- Marketing of trails as a community amenity.

Analysis of the Relationship Between Trails and Property Values in the Philadelphia Region

The Bucks County Planning Commission undertook an analysis of the impact of trails on property values across the Philadelphia region. More specifically, the analysis looked at 6 trails across the region. The trails, locations and opening dates are identified below:

- Radnor Trail - Radnor Township (Delaware County) - April 2006
- Pennsy Trail - Haverford Township (Delaware County) - January 2016
- Cynwyd Heritage Trail - Lower Merion Township (Montgomery County) - October 2011
- Pennypack Trail - Lower Moreland and Upper Moreland townships and Bryn Athyn Borough (Montgomery County) - September 2015
- Horsham Powerline Trail - Horsham Township (Montgomery County) - 1998 & 2010
- Skippack Powerline Trail - Skippack Township (Montgomery County) - 2007

The analysis was approached in three separate ways:

1. **Price per Square Foot Analysis** - The price per square foot for houses sold between February 1, 2018 and January 31, 2019 based on proximity to the trail
2. **Rate of real estate appreciation** following the opening of the trail* for houses:
 - Backing onto the trail
 - The Zip Code that the trail is located in
 - The township that the trail is located in
 - For those same time periods, the rate of appreciation for properties located in Village Shires, Zip Code 18966, and Northampton Township

*This second analysis was limited to the Cynwyd Heritage Trail and the Pennsy Trail as historical sales data was not available going back for the other trails.

3. **Rate of Property Turnover** - Although not directly looking at property values, the analysis also looked at the number of homes sold in the year following the opening of the trail as a potential indicator of whether the introduction of the trail resulted in a pronounced exodus from the neighborhood.

Price per Square Foot Analysis

The objective of this analysis was to determine if proximity to the trail impacted the sales price per square foot, either positively or negatively. It should be noted that this is not a statistical model and therefore does not control for other variables such as condition of the property, lot size, etc. which may also influence the sales price of a particular home.

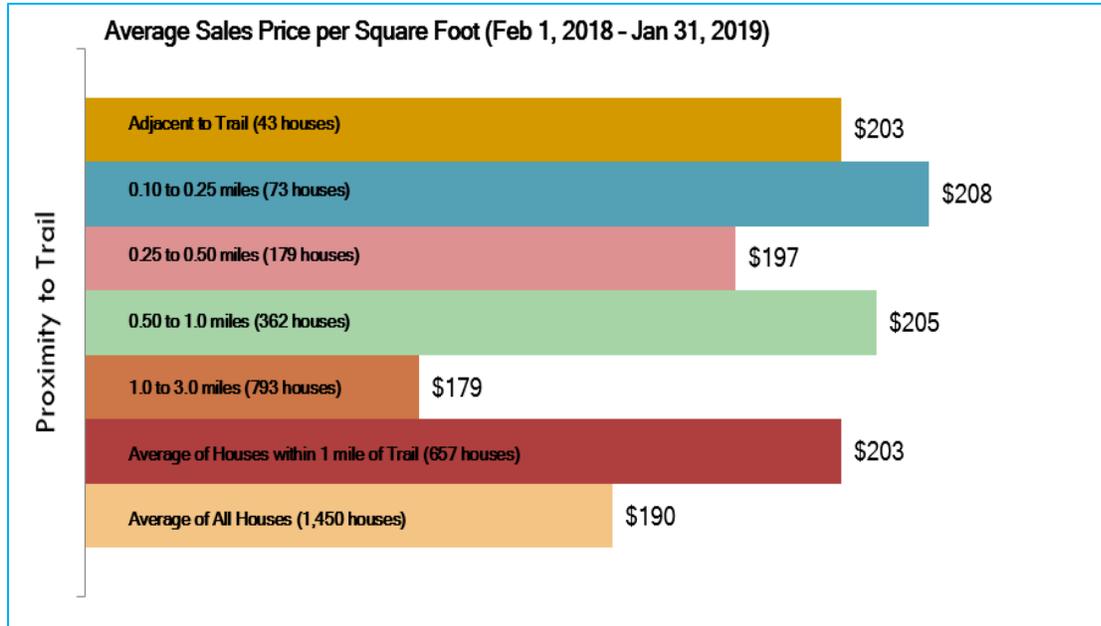
Key Learnings:

When looking at the 6 trails in aggregate, houses located immediately adjacent to/across the street from

trails sold for \$203 per square foot which was:

- Equal to the average for all houses sold within 1 mile of the trail (\$203);
- Higher than the average of all houses sold (\$203 versus \$190 or +6.8 percent higher)
- Slightly below (-2.4 percent) houses located within 0.10 to 0.25 miles of the trails which sold for \$208 per square foot;
- Higher (+3.0 percent) than homes located 0.25 to 0.50 miles away which sold for \$197 per square foot; and
- Comparable to houses located 0.5 to 1.0 mile away from the trail which sold for \$205 per square foot (-0.9 percent)

FIGURE 28– SALES PRICE PER SQUARE FOOT BASED ON PROXIMITY TO TRAIL



Rate of Real Estate Appreciation following the opening of the Trail

The objective of this analysis was to determine if proximity to the trail impacted the rate of real estate appreciation following the opening of the trail. Data for this analysis was obtained by looking at Zillow Zestimate of Historical Home Values. This analysis only included the Cynwyd Heritage Trail and Pennsy Trail as the other trails opened earlier, resulting in a lack of historical sales.

Key Learnings:

- The rate of real estate appreciation for homes backing to the Cynwyd Heritage Trail (+17 percent) seven years after the opening of the trail in October 2011, was similar to Lower Merion Township (+18 percent), although lower than the Zip Code in which the trail is located (+25 percent).
- Real estate appreciation rates for homes backing onto the Cynwyd Heritage Trail were slightly higher than those for Village Shires and Northampton Township as a whole.
- The rate of real estate appreciation for homes backing to the Pennsy Trail (+18 percent) three years after the opening of the trail in January 2016, was similar to both Havertown (+18 percent) and Zip Code 19083 in which the trail is located (+19 percent).
- Real estate appreciation rates for homes backing onto the Pennsy Trail were higher than those for Village Shires, Zip Code 18966, and Northampton Township as a whole, which averaged 10 percent - 11 percent during that same time period.

FIGURE 29 – ZILLOW HISTORICAL HOME VALUES -CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

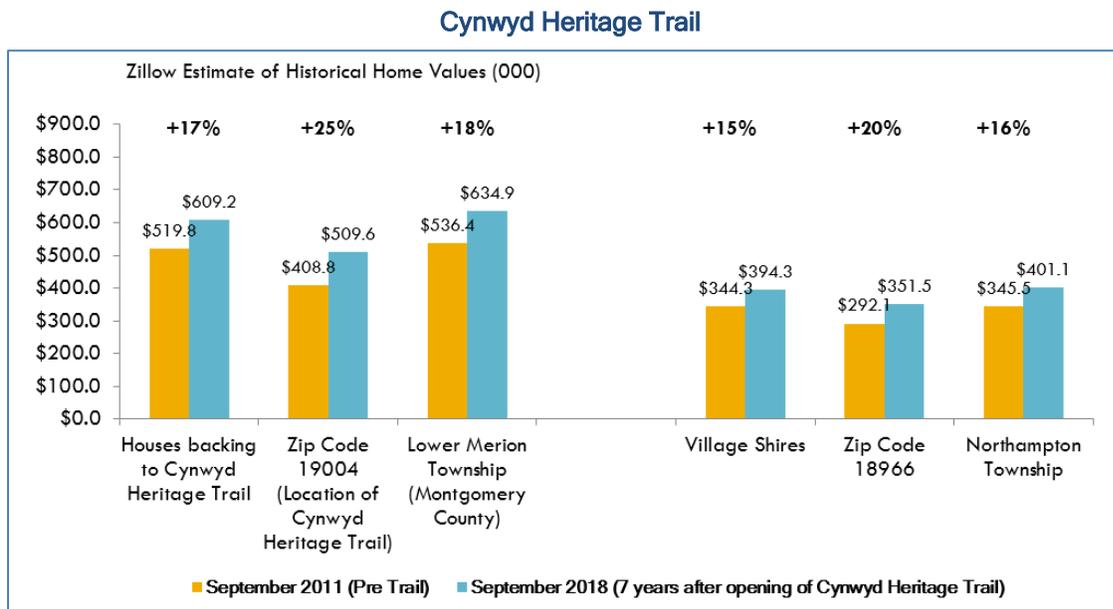
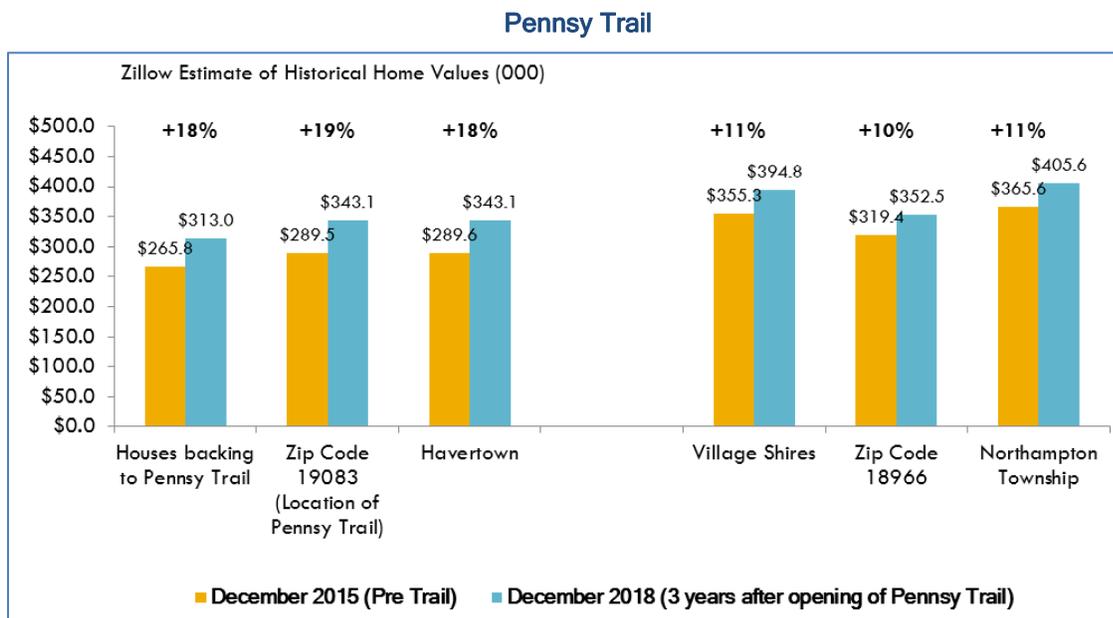


FIGURE 30 – ZILLOW HISTORICAL HOME VALUES - PENNSY TRAIL



Turnover of Houses within a year following the opening of the trail

The objective of this analysis was to look at the extent to which the introduction of the trail might have prompted property owners adjacent to the trail to sell following the opening of the trail.

Key Learnings:

Penny Trail

- In the year prior to the opening of the Penny Trail, 5.7 percent or 8 houses, which are immediately adjacent to the trail sold. In comparison, the turnover or number of houses declined in the year

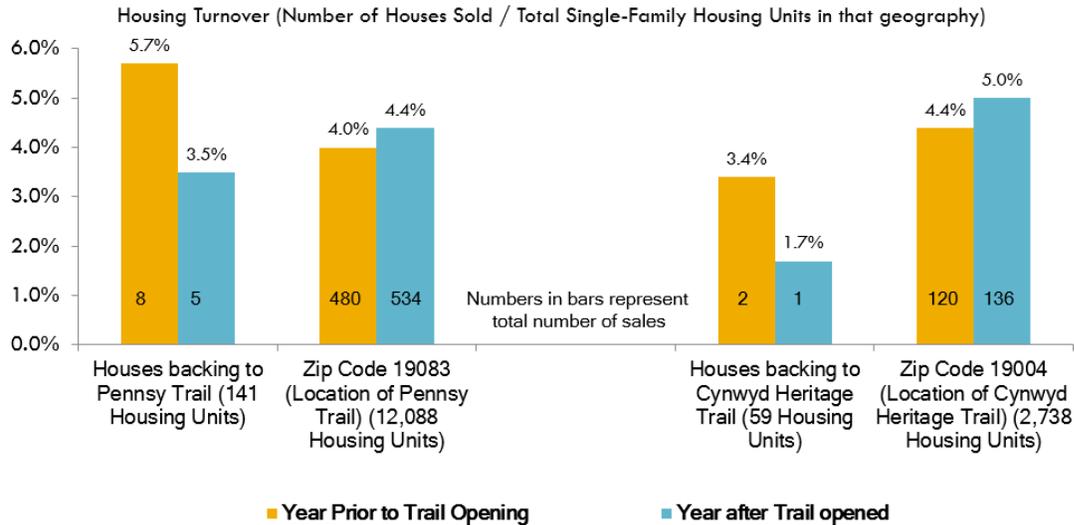
following the opening of the trail to 5 houses, representing 3.5 percent of the 141 houses immediately adjacent to the trail.

- In comparison to the 19083 zip code, the rate of turnover for houses immediately adjacent to the trail in the year following the opening of the trail (3.5 percent) was less than that of the zip code (4.4 percent). This lower rate of turnover indicates that there was not a higher rate of sales for properties adjacent to the trail based on the opening of the trail.

Cynwyd Heritage Trail

- In the year prior to the opening of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, 3.4 percent or 2 houses, which are immediately adjacent to the trail sold. In comparison, the turnover or number of houses declined in the year following the opening of the trail to only 1 house (1.7 percent) of the 59 houses immediately adjacent to the trail.
- In comparison to the 19004 zip code, the rate of turnover for houses immediately adjacent to the trail in the year following the opening of the trail (1.7 percent) was less than that of the zip code (5.0 percent). As with the Pennsy Trail, this indicates that property owners immediately adjacent to the Cynwyd Heritage Trail did not result in a higher turnover of properties relative to the area as a whole, and in fact, was approximately 1/3rd the turnover of the zip code.

FIGURE 31– HOUSING TURNOVER PENNSY TRAIL AND CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL



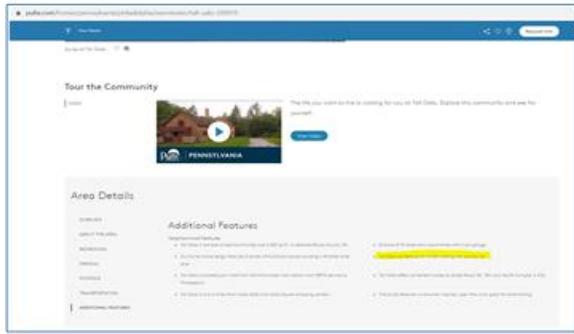
Prior Research Addressing the Relationship Between Trails and Property Values

Several studies have addressed the relationship between trails and open space and their impact on property values. These studies have shown that the construction of a trail within walking distance typically has either no impact, or a positive correlation with property values.

Key Findings:

- There are numerous studies, including hedonic regression analyses performed by Econsult Solutions, which demonstrate the beneficial impact that greenways and open space have on residential property values, after controlling for variables such as home quality, distance to downtowns, and seasonality. Based on research and previous analysis, a premium of 5 percent was calculated for homes within a quarter mile of a trail.
- No relationships between property values and proximity to trails were observed. While some studies in other cities in the United States have found positive associations, others have not. This outcome therefore is consistent with other findings in the literature.

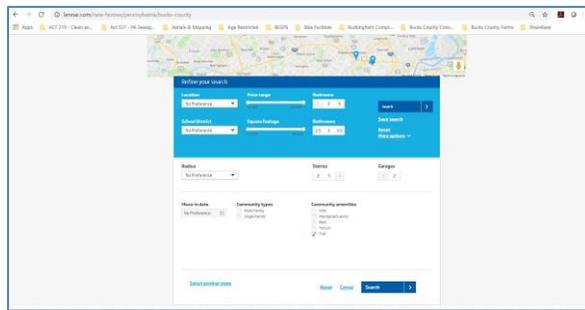
Pulte Homes - Tall Oaks (Warminster)



Toll Brothers - Fenton's Corner Trail Plan (Buckingham)



Lennar Homes Website - Filter tool to find communities with trails

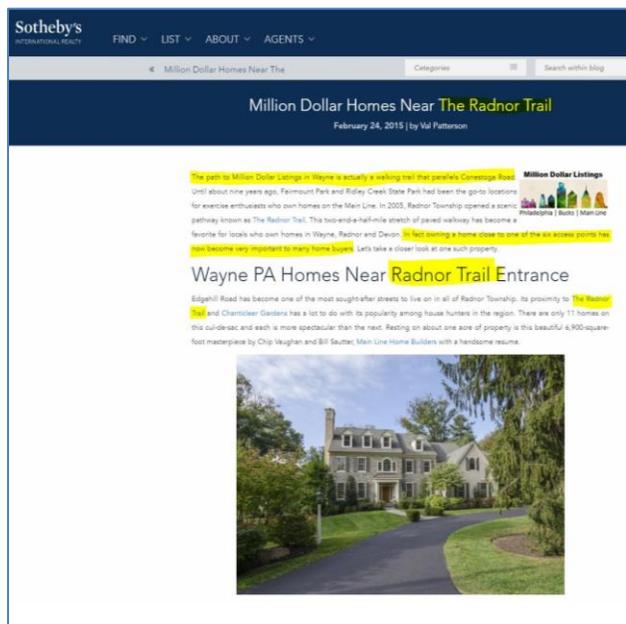


Toll Brothers - Estates at Mill Creek Ridge (Buckingham)



Real Estate Listings highlighting the Proximity to Trails

The demand for trails and access to trails is not unique to just new home communities. Real estate agents across the Philadelphia region increasingly recognize that proximity to trails and bicycle facilities is another amenity to highlight when listing homes for sale. This extends to all price points and housing types including both single-family detached homes, twins, and townhouses. In fact, one local realtor posted an entry on their website highlighting \$1,000,000 homes near the Radnor Trail.

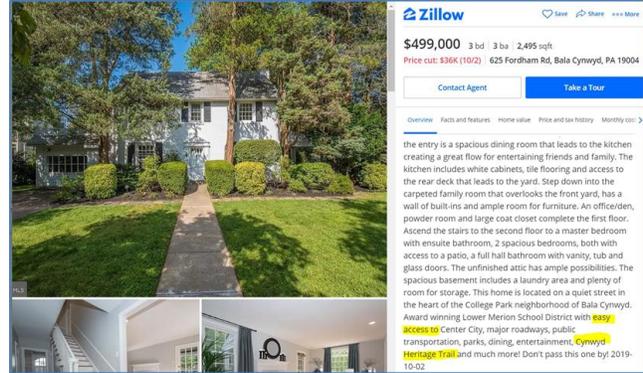




110 Pheasant Hill Dr., Philadelphia, PA 19115
3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2,136 square feet, \$338,000

This contemporary rancher in the secluded Pine Valley section of Northeast Philadelphia is close to Pennypack Park and the head of the Pennypack Creek trail. The main living area upstairs has been redesigned with an open floor plan that's great for entertaining and relaxing, and there's a beautiful Trex deck in back off the living room. The main floor bathroom has also been renovated with travertine tile. Downstairs, there's a large family room with sliding doors to the backyard, a third bedroom, an office nook and a bonus man cave. The fenced rear yard also has a play set and shed. [Becky Krevitz | BHHS Fox & Roach]

Master Trail and Bicycle Plan

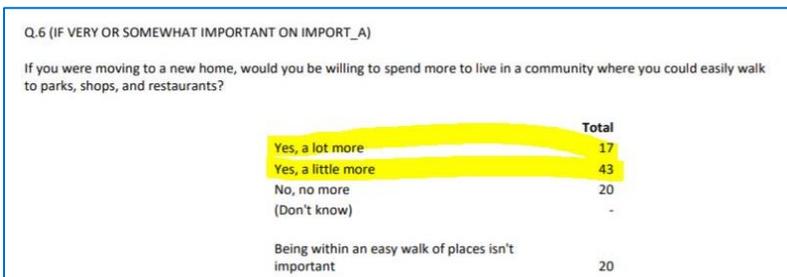


Real Estate Industry Research

Community and Transportation Preferences Survey (2017) - National Association of Realtors
<https://www.nar.realtor/reports/nar-2017-community-preference-survey>

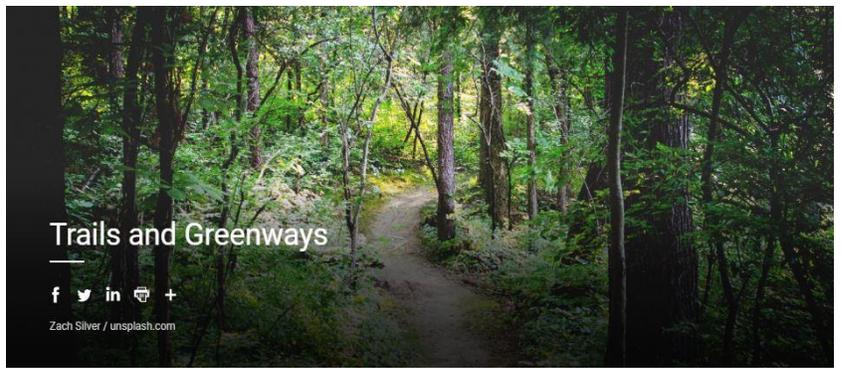
American Strategies conducted an internet survey of the top 50 metropolitan statistical areas in the United States on behalf of the National Association of Realtors. The survey explores Americans' wants regarding neighborhood characteristics such as proximity to parks and shopping, walkability, and commuting time, and the trade-offs in home type and size that people may be willing to accept in order to obtain those neighborhood preferences. Key findings from this survey included:

One question the survey asked is whether respondents would be willing to spend more to live in a community where you could easily walk to parks, shops and restaurants. 60 percent of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay more for a walkable community.



National Association of Realtors
<https://www.nar.realtor/trails-and-greenways#section-166076>

The increased interest in Trails and Greenways prompted the National Association of Realtors, America's largest trade association, representing 1.3 million members, to develop a page on its website for providing information to realtors and home buyers on trails and greenways. The webpage currently features almost 40 studies relative to trails, greenways, and bicycle facilities.



Real Estate Topics > Land Use & Property Rights

OVERVIEW REFERENCES

NAR Library & Archives has already done the research for you. References (formerly Field Guides) offer links to articles, eBooks, websites, statistics, and more to provide a comprehensive overview of perspectives. EBSCO articles (E) are available only to NAR members and require a password.

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