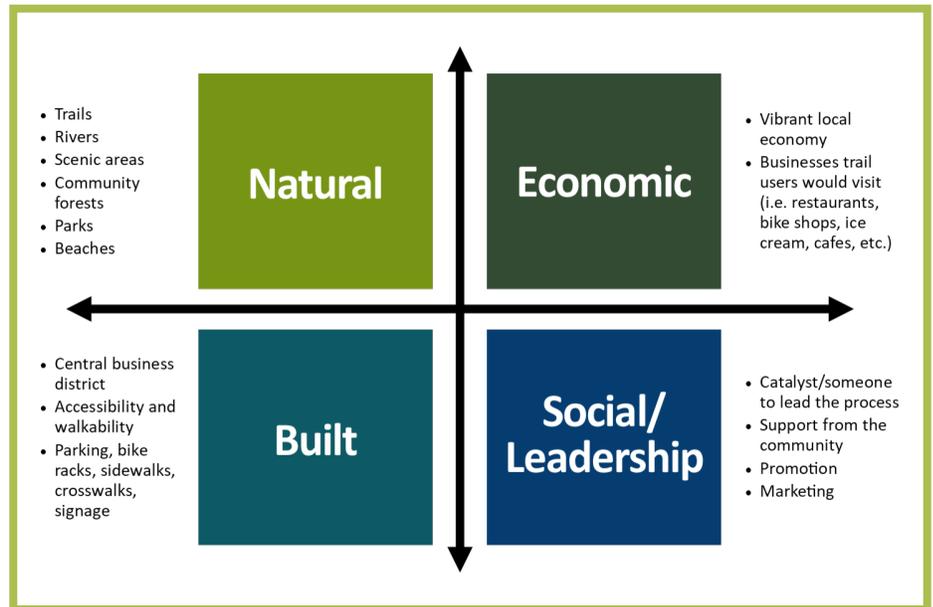


Using Data and Engagement to Capitalize on Multi-Use Trails: Examples from New Hampshire

Trails impact communities in many ways and can serve as an essential asset to drive spending in and diversify economic development. While many communities already have trails or other natural resources to draw visitors, an assessment process can help decision-makers understand the variety of assets that might work together to contribute to a more vibrant nature-based economy. These include four main elements: natural resources, economic assets, the built environment, and social or leadership resources. Examples of these are highlighted in the graphic below.

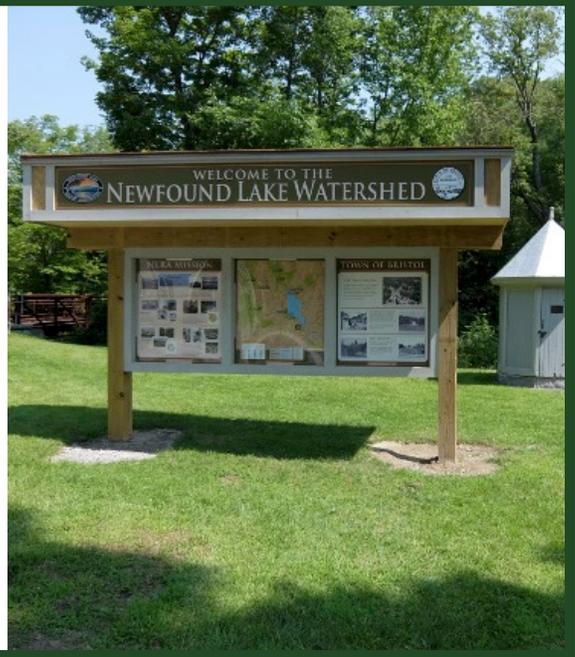


Based on learning from a variety of “trail towns” across the country, the University of New Hampshire created a Downtowns and Trails Program that includes resources and tools that allow communities to assess resources, prioritize next steps, and make improvements. The focus is to enhance opportunities for linking downtowns and “in-town trails,” those located within the vicinity of downtowns or business district. The Downtowns and Trails Program takes place over six months to one year in close collaboration with community and economic development partners. It begins with an assessment of the downtown area, linkage area, and trails using the ArcGIS Collector mobile application. Volunteers, such as librarians, business owners, trail and natural resource advocates, and economic development partners are trained to conduct interviews with businesses, residents, and community leaders and administer an intercept survey of trail users. The next step involves engaging the larger community to communicate survey results, gather information, engage community support and begin action planning. This can include social media outreach or a community forum.

Continued on reverse

Case Study: Bristol, New Hampshire

Bristol, New Hampshire is a community of about 3,000 people in central New Hampshire with a two mile bike path located less than a half-mile from downtown that includes a river bridge and hosts a local farmers market. A local group works on downtown vibrancy, and the community has a local library with public restrooms that is close to the path. As part of the assessment process, community volunteers collected over 100 surveys from year round residents, seasonal residents and visitors. They found that most visitors are not staying overnight but there are a variety of regional and internal visitors to the community. As a result of the process, the community coordinated with the state's 10-year transportation plan, developed a wayfinding plan, opened another trail that connected to the downtown and updated trailhead signage and coordination with the Newfound Lakes Watershed group.



Continued

The Vermont and New Hampshire Trail Finder website was launched in 2015 to create a modern website, and a centralized trail database, to help people find trails. At that time, many residents were not able to find local trails because maps and information about local trails were not widely accessible or in a uniform format. This project has succeeded largely as a result of well established relationships with community partners and trail managers and being clear about the time and effort involved in creating a reputable, trail manager approved map site. Trail Finder now hosts information for about 675 trails, including information about local businesses and services of interest to visitors.



This infosheet is part of a series based on webinar presentations for the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development small grant project

Best Practices in Bike/Pedestrian Trail Data and Monitoring. More information can be found at <https://cttrailcensus.uconn.edu/nercrd/>

By: Laura Brown, Khadija Shaikh, Shannon Rogers, & Emma Tutein - Based on a webinar presented on August 5, 2020, 1:30pm by Dr. Shannon Rogers and Emma Tutein, University of New Hampshire.



Resources

[University of New Hampshire Downtowns and Trails Program](#)

[Connecting Downtowns and Trails Info Brief](#)

[Destination Bristol Blog Post](#)

[New Hampshire Vermont Trail Finder](#)

[Impacts of Trails Publication Series](#)

[NERCRD Best Practices in Bike/Ped/Trail Data & Monitoring](#)

Graphics and photos courtesy Shannon Rogers, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension