

Trails and Quality of Life

Studies indicate that although quality of life concerns such as noise, trash, and privacy can occur along trails, trails most often prove to be an asset to the community and negative experiences are limited.

Kent County Adjacent Businesses and Residential Landowners' Attitudes Towards and Use of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park in Michigan (September 2006)

Michigan State University, Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies
<http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/WhitePineAdjacent.pdf>

- “For businesses, 79% felt the rail-trail has a positive influence on their community and 77% of Kent County as a whole. Only 2% of businesses felt the trail had a negative influence. Residents rated the positive influence of the trail even greater as 82% felt the trail was positive for their community and 82% for Kent County as a whole. Residents and businesses also thought the rail-trail was a positive influence on neighborhood (69% and 81% respectively).”
- “Considering their individual and household situation, 66% of residents rated the trail as a positive influence in their own life and 66% for their household. Only 7% rated the trail as a negative influence on their life or their household.”
- “Overall, the majority of businesses (68%) and residents (77%) were moderately to very satisfied with having the White Pine Trail next to their facility of neighborhood. Conversely, few were dissatisfied with 11% of businesses and 7% of residents reporting any level of dissatisfaction.”
- “The major negatives noted by a quarter or more of the respondents were a decrease in privacy and increases in noise, trespassing, illegal motorized use on the trail and discourteous or rude trail users.”

Planning Advisory Service Memo (January 2003)

American Planning Association

- “... studies have shown that, once a trail is completed, more than 97 percent of its abutting landowners choose to continue living next to it. In fact, after a trail is completed, studies show that almost two-thirds of those abutting landowners who initially opposed the trail find that it has actually improved their quality of life.”

Summary Report Indiana Trails Study (November 2001)

Indiana University, Eppley Institute for Parks & Public Lands
<http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/INtrailsstudy01.pdf>

- “...responding trail neighbors indicated that on average 61% of trail neighbors in all 6 cities felt the trail was a better neighbor than expected. Trail neighbors reporting this perception ranged from 53% to 63%.”
- “Trail neighbors are heavy users of the trail itself, reporting, on average, 2-3 days of trail use per week.”
- “The percentage of neighbors who felt the trail improved the neighborhood ranged from 60% to 88% with an average of 69% of all trail neighbors across all 6-trail sites.”
- “Those trail numbers responding to the survey indicated illegal vehicle use and unleashed pets roaming along the trail are the most common problems.”

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Pinellas Trail Community Impact Study (2001)

Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization

http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Pinellas_exec.pdf

- “The study concludes that the perceptions of higher crime rates, lower property values and neighborhood privacy problems are unfounded. Those who live along the trail are much more likely to perceive its benefits than negative impacts...”

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>

- “Residents expressed the opinion that trails had improved life in their neighborhoods. There was little indication of a harmful impact except for three respondents, all located on the Keystone Trail, who reported a decline in the neighborhood due to the trails. Their resentment appeared to be associated with the development of a controversial skateboard facility in a park adjacent to the trail.”
- “Residents living along the trails appear to perceive there to be a positive relationship between the trails and neighborhood quality of life (75%).”

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

Rails to Trails Conservancy

[http://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/rail-trails-and-safe-communities-the-experience-on-372-trails/?q=The Experience on 372 Trails &a=All&t=All&s=All&g=All](http://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/rail-trails-and-safe-communities-the-experience-on-372-trails/?q=The+Experience+on+372+Trails+%26a%3DAll%26t%3DAll%26s%3DAll%26g%3DAll)

The number of suburban rail trails reporting quality of life incidents was relatively low:

- “3% of the suburban trails reported trespassing.”
- “17% of the suburban trails reported graffiti.”
- “24% of the trails reported littering.”
- “22% of the trails reported sign damage.”
- “14% of the suburban trails reported unauthorized motorized usage.”

The Impact of the Brush Creek Trail on Property Values and Crime (1992)

Michelle Miller Murphy, Sonoma State University

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/adjacent/sumadjacent.html>

- “64% of residents felt that the trail increased the quality of life in the neighborhood, with another 13% saying no effect.”

A Feasibility Study for Proposed Linear Park, (May 1988)

Oregon Department of Transportation, Parks and Recreation Division

<http://www.carolinathreadtrail.org/assets/files/Greenway%20%20Public%20Safety%20Study.pdf>

- “A 1988 survey of greenways in several states has found that such parks typically have not experienced serious problems regarding vandalism, crime, trespass, or invasion of privacy. Prior to developing park facilities, these concerns were strongly voiced in opposition to proposed trails. After park development, however, it was found that fears did not materialize, and concerns originally expressed by opposing neighbors have not proven to be post-development problems in any of the parks surveyed.”