

Stephentown Recreational Trail

Recreational trails can be great assets to communities.

- Bring tourists and associated economic activity;
- Enhance local businesses by bringing more and new customers;
- Spur local business development (businesses develop to support trail users)(e.g. bike shops, restaurants, general stores, camping areas); and
- Provide recreational and exercise opportunities for residents.
- Provide a variety of close-to-home recreational opportunities for you, your family and your community;
- Preserve community character and offer people a new way to discover the special places where they live;

Information for Landowners.

This flyer provides information on some common concerns for landowners who may be interested in the Stepentown Recreational Trail. A small committee of local residents has met several times to discuss the trail concept and has engaged representatives from the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, the Rensselaer Land Trust and the Hudson River Valley Greenway for technical assistance. A possible route for the recreational trail or parts of it is the bed of the old Rutland Rail Line that runs from New Lebanon, through Stepentown, Berlin and Petersburg. It will be entirely up to landowners to allow the trail to cross their property.



Landowner Rights

First and foremost; this committee and its partner organizations respect the rights of landowners. We will never force or pressure a landowner to participate in anything they don't want to. If you are not interested we will simply thank you for your time and try to find an alternate route. We hope that all of the landowners in the area will learn as much as they can about the project to make an informed decision.

Landowners who do wish to consider the trail on their property can take a gradual approach using either a simple handshake agreement or a slightly more formal temporary or revocable agreement. Once you are comfortable with the trail you may wish to consider more permanent trail access options that might offer tax advantages or other incentives.

Landowner Liability

New York's General Obligations Law subsection 9-103 has very strong protections for landowners who grant permission for recreational activity on their land as long as they don't charge a fee or maliciously fail to guard against a known hazard. Under these circumstances the liability of landowners who allow access is no greater than landowners who post their property against trespass. A number of these options are described in detail in the book *Getting Involved – A Community Trail Handbook for Landowners* which can be found at <http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/greenways/publications/LandownersGuide.pdf>

Safety & Crime

Studies have shown that trails are among the safest places in communities and that landowners adjacent to trails experience negligible crime as a result of trails. A well-used trail may even reduce the chances of vandalism or burglary because of the increased recreational traffic.

Litter & Vandalism

Most trail users are respectful and considerate of private property. Many will even pick up litter along trails. The Trail Committee will take an active role in assuring the trail is well kept.

Privacy & Trespassing

Trail use is a very directed, "through" activity, meaning trail users tend to stay on a trail and not loiter or enter adjacent property. Users are usually respectful of private property and privacy. The Trail Committee will work with you to maximize your privacy.

For More Information

Much of this information is summarized from the publication, *Getting Involved – A Community Trail Handbook for Landowners* - a joint publication of the Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley and Parks & Trails New York. If you would like a copy of this publication please let us know. This book can be found at <http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/greenways/publications/LandownersGuide.pdf>

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