Trail Town Program®
Creating Opportunities along the Nation’s Trails

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President & CEO
The Progress Fund
The Progress Fund

• Non-Profit Established 1997
• CDFI with Rural Focus
• Provides Capital & Business Coaching
• Tourism & Local Foods/Agriculture
• OH, PA, WV, and western MD
• Over $64 Million in Loans supporting over 3,700 jobs
Trail Town Program® History

• Concept developed in 2001
• Trail Town Manual published in 2005
• Funds raised by The Progress Fund
• Program staffed in 2007 on Great Allegheny Passage
• Expanded to Maryland in 2009
• Expanded to new corridors in 2014
• Moving to Information Sharing in 2017
Great Allegheny Passage Trail Towns

- SouthSide Pittsburgh
- Homestead
- McKeesport & Boston
- West Newton
- Connellsville
- Ohiopyle
- Confluence
- Rockwood
- Meyersdale
- Frostburg
- Cumberland
Great Allegheny Passage

• P&LE and WM Railroads
• 150 miles of non-motorized biking & hiking trail
• First Section started in 1986
• Completed Summer 2013
• Connects with C&O – 335 miles
• Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
• Highly recognized and honored – CNN Travel, Washington Post, NY Times, USA Today, National Geographic.....
First Step: *Trail Town Assessment*

- Developed by Allegheny Trail Alliance
- Self look at your community
- Traffic & Access
- Businesses
- Design

*Creates a priority for each town and the region*
• Can visitors tell they’ve entered a town?
• Are there bike racks (in easy to find places?)
• Is the central business district easily identified? Do businesses offer information about town/region?
• Are business hours posted on front door/window?
• As a whole, are you enjoying your walk?
• Are there enough benches (and well placed)?
• Are there family friendly restaurants (with outdoor seating)?
• Are there special events in town? On the trail?
• Are sidewalks or buildings in good condition?
**Top 5 Short-Term Goals:**
- Add bike racks – at trailhead, at businesses

  - *Improve wayfinding signage*

- Coordinate visitor information between MYTC and Historical Society...Dead Man’s Hollow
- Develop Gateway moment, landscaping, art, build on existing sites
- Develop Trail Town brochure between McKeesport and Boston

**Top 5 Long-Term Goals:**
- Improve/Add parking – include green infrastructure
- Attract additional lodging, recreation, and dining
- Address Vacant Properties
- Repair Sidewalk and Improve Crosswalks
- 5 way intersection – address sign clutter
TTP’s Six Services

1. Business Assistance & Development
2. Marketing
3. Economic Research
4. Community Connection Projects
5. Real Estate Development
6. Small Business Loans
1. Business Assistance & Development

• Assess Existing Business Services
• Identify Opportunities
• Provide Market Information
• Regional Summits/Networking Events
• Trail Town Certified Network
Trail Town Certified

- Recycle & reuse
- Local foods, products, jobs
- Reduce waste
- Historic buildings
- Energy efficiency
- Natural lighting
- Add greenspace

- Familiarize with trail (name, mileage, features, etc)
- Bike racks & storage
- Provide information
- Bike tools
- Free/discount incentives (bathroom, wifi, air, ice-cream)

Over 100 members – Look for these stickers:
2. Marketing

Collaborative

• Website
  www.trailtowns.org

• Brochures

• Newsletter & Blog

• Social Media
3. Economic Research

• Trail Counts
  • Electronic, Manual, Synchronized
• Research Studies
• Monitor Business Opening/Closings
• **Over half** of the trail users survey responded that this was their first trip on the trail.

• Roughly **62%** were planning an overnight stay

• The overnight spending average was **$124** (Up $26 since the 2008 Trail User Survey)

• The average day user spends **$18** per day

• Businesses have reported an overall increase in trail user traffic from **34%** in 2013 to **41%** in 2014

• Business reported on average **6%** of their trail traffic were international visitors

• **27%** of businesses surveyed plan to expand their businesses due to the trail
Estimated **$50 Million** in Direct Economic Impact from the Great Allegheny Passage

Nearly **1 Million** Visits to the trail per year
4. Community Connection Projects

- Bike Racks & Fix It Stations
- Town Bike Loops
- Trailhead & Park Improvements
- Landscaping
- Viewsheds
- Public Art
- Signage
  - Directional
  - Interpretive
  - Business
5. Real Estate Development

- Available Properties
  - Highlight in Newsletter
- Renovate Key Buildings/Properties
6. Small Business Loans

• The Progress Fund Loan Program
• Bike shops, Restaurants, B&Bs, Hostels, Outfitters, Farm to Table...
• Over two dozen businesses along the GAP
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