

# Trails as Community Connections

## Engagement Beyond the Path

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Michael Tully

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2015

Massachusetts Trails Conference



*Weston & Sampson*

November 14, 2015

# Introductions

- Daniel Biggs, RLA
  - Sr. Landscape Architect – Weston & Sampson
- Michael Tully
  - Sr. Project Manager – City of Springfield Parks & Recreation Department
- Ryan Mann
  - Executive Director – Westport Land Conservation Trust

# Agenda

- Three Case Studies
  - Westport Land Trust Trails – Westport, MA
  - McKnight Community Path – Springfield, MA
  - Rutland Creek Path – Rutland, VT
- Lesson's Learned
- Q&A

# What makes a great trail?

- Sense of Place
- Promotes Social Interaction
- Accommodates Multigenerational Users
- Leverages Community Investment
- Operations and Maintenance

# Where to start - Planning!

- Allows for internal/external brainstorming and analysis
- Identifies target audiences and how to reach them
- Helps prioritize tasks that need to be done, by whom, creating a reasonable work plan and timeline
- Justifies financial investment needed to implement the plan
- Creates organization-wide focus and internal buy-in.



# Audience Identification

- Established Trail Groups
- Running Clubs
- Kids Groups/  
Schools
- Home Schoolers
- Senior Groups
- Sportsmen
- Cycling Clubs
- Fitness “Boot Campers”
- New residents
- Dog Walkers
- Artists/  
Photographers
- Colleges
- Geocachers
- Swimmers/  
Paddlers
- Foodies
- Realtors



# Connecting through your Properties

## Is the property “Visitor Ready”?

- Signage
- Website description- directions, GPS and Road address?
- Downloadable or available trail maps?
- Property Guidebook?
- Trails well defined and marked
- Condition of trails?
- Parking?
- Accessible?
- Seniors/strollers?



# Connecting Through Trails

- **Destination Properties-**  
Creating visitor-ready places for people to not only walk in the woods, but to have certain expectations, including experiences, with a reason to visit.
- **Value Added Experiences-**  
Enhancements of either natural features or installations that draw visitors special places.



# Supporting the Trail Experience

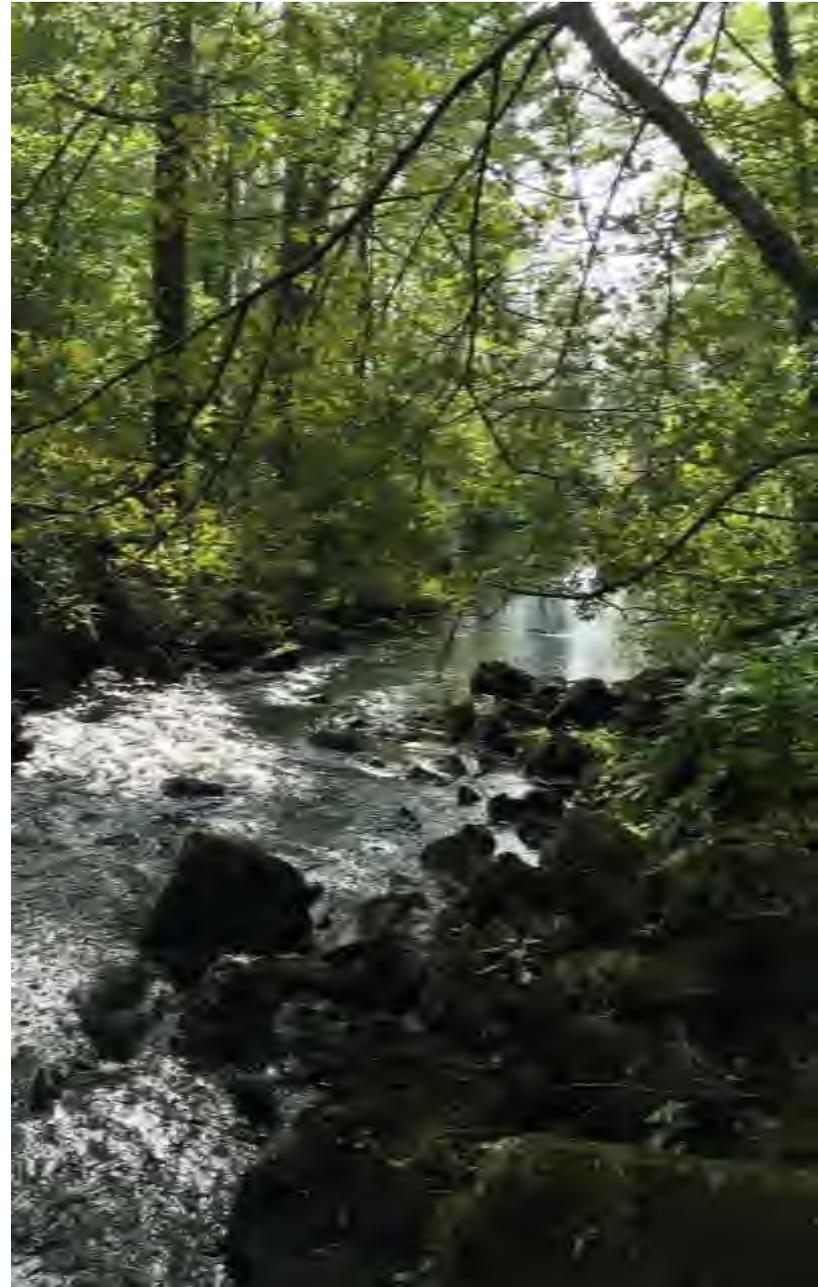
- Website
- Facebook
- Map my Trail
- Google
- Others?



# Promotion of the Trails/ Organization

## Right in their backyard

- Signage
- Project Site Visits
- Link site to animal/plant species of interest
- Tell the story! print media, magazines, blog sites
- Partner to promote!
- Allow sites to be used by partner-related activities.



# Promotion of the Trails/ Organization

## Engaging the community

- Property Walks
- Themed Activities
  - Wild Edibles
  - Tracking
  - Birding
  - Family Friendly
  - Dog Friendly
  - Photography



# Promotion of the Trails/ Organization

## Special Events

- Signature Event(s)
  - Fundraisers
  - Friend-raisers
- Host site for partner event
- Progressive event
  - Multiple sites



# Promotion of the Trails/ Organization



## **Opportunities for long-term community commitment**

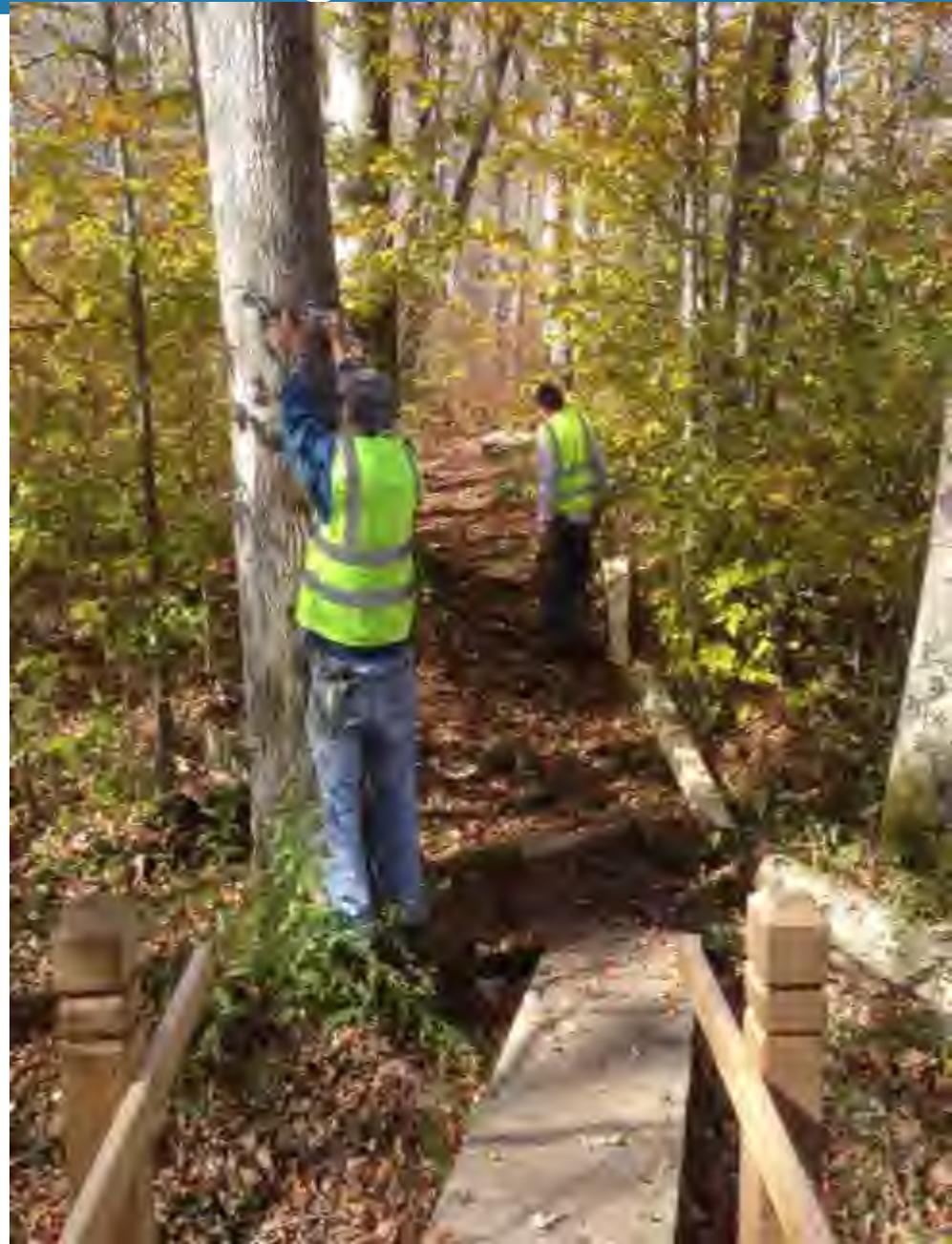
- Community Gardens
- Pollinator Programs
- Tenants that draw users
- Commercial Ventures
- Farmer's Market



# Promotion of the Trails/ Organization

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

- Trail Days
- Trail Stewards
- Invasive Species Control
- Wildlife Monitors
- Volunteer Walk Leaders



# Promotion of the Trails/ Organization

## Wildlife

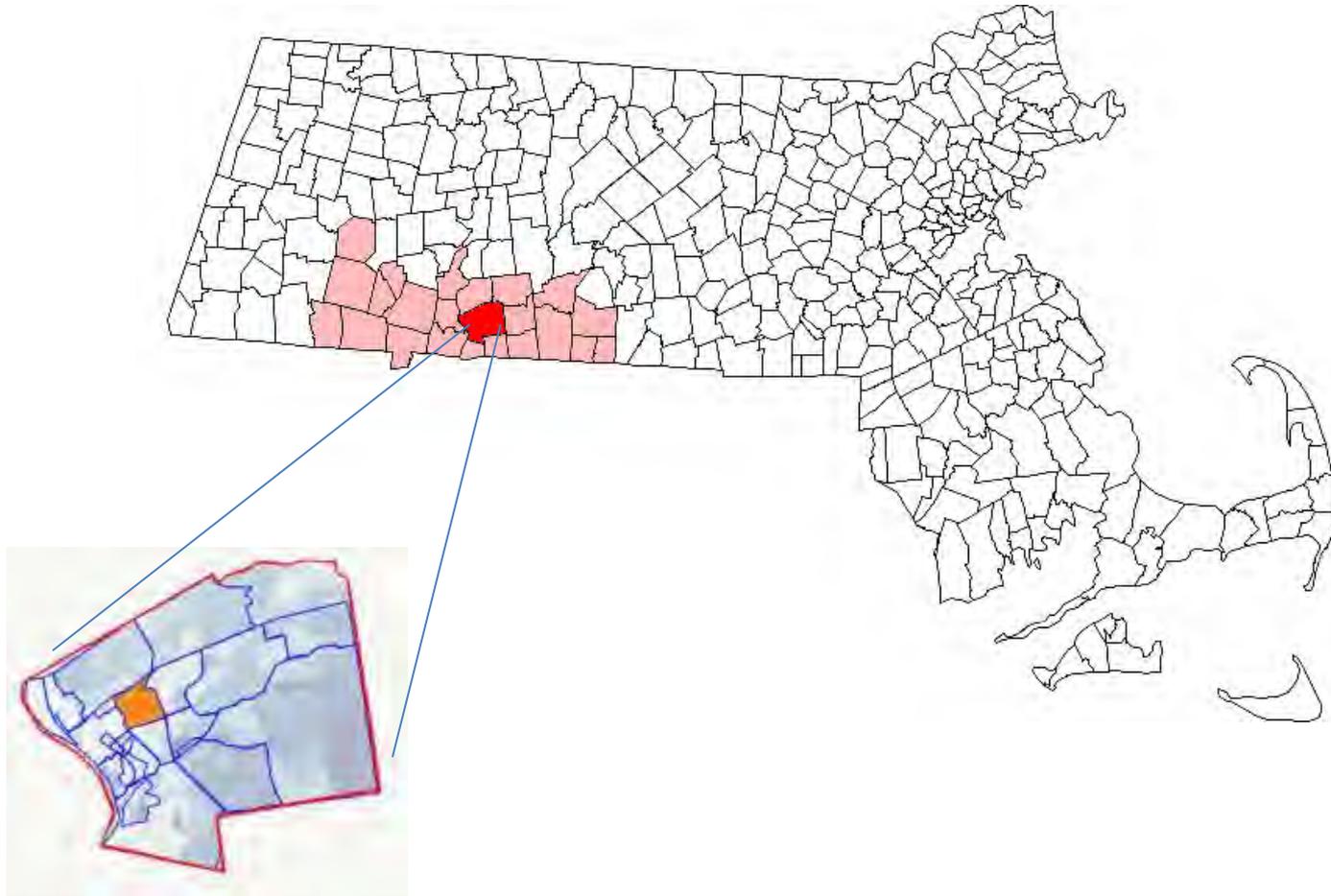
- Popular Draw
- Requires balanced approach
- Observation stations
- Interpretive Kiosks
- Nest boxes
- Critter Cams/ Live feeds





# McKnight Community Path

## LOCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS



# McKnight Community Path

## HISTORICAL ENTREPRENEURIAL NEIGHBORHOOD



The Mason Square District of Springfield is a collection of 4 separate different neighborhoods convening into one central district. One of those neighborhoods is the McKnight Neighborhood and at the turn of the century it was a “hot bed” for entrepreneurial inventions that went on to influence American history. Some of the inventions include where the first game of basketball was invented, the Indian Motorcycle and Absorbine Junior. Also the Springfield Armory which is 1/3 mile away was critical to our country’s success in the American Revolution.



The Springfield Armory manufactured many of our countries weapons for war purposes. It closed in 1968



The Indian Motorcycle was invented and produced motorcycles in the neighborhood from 1901 and ceased operations in 1953.



In 1891 on the corner of State St. and Sherman St. Dr. James Naismith challenged his students to come up with a winter sport to stay in shape during the winter months for athletes at the school and basketball was born

# McKnight Community Path

## HISTORICAL HOMES

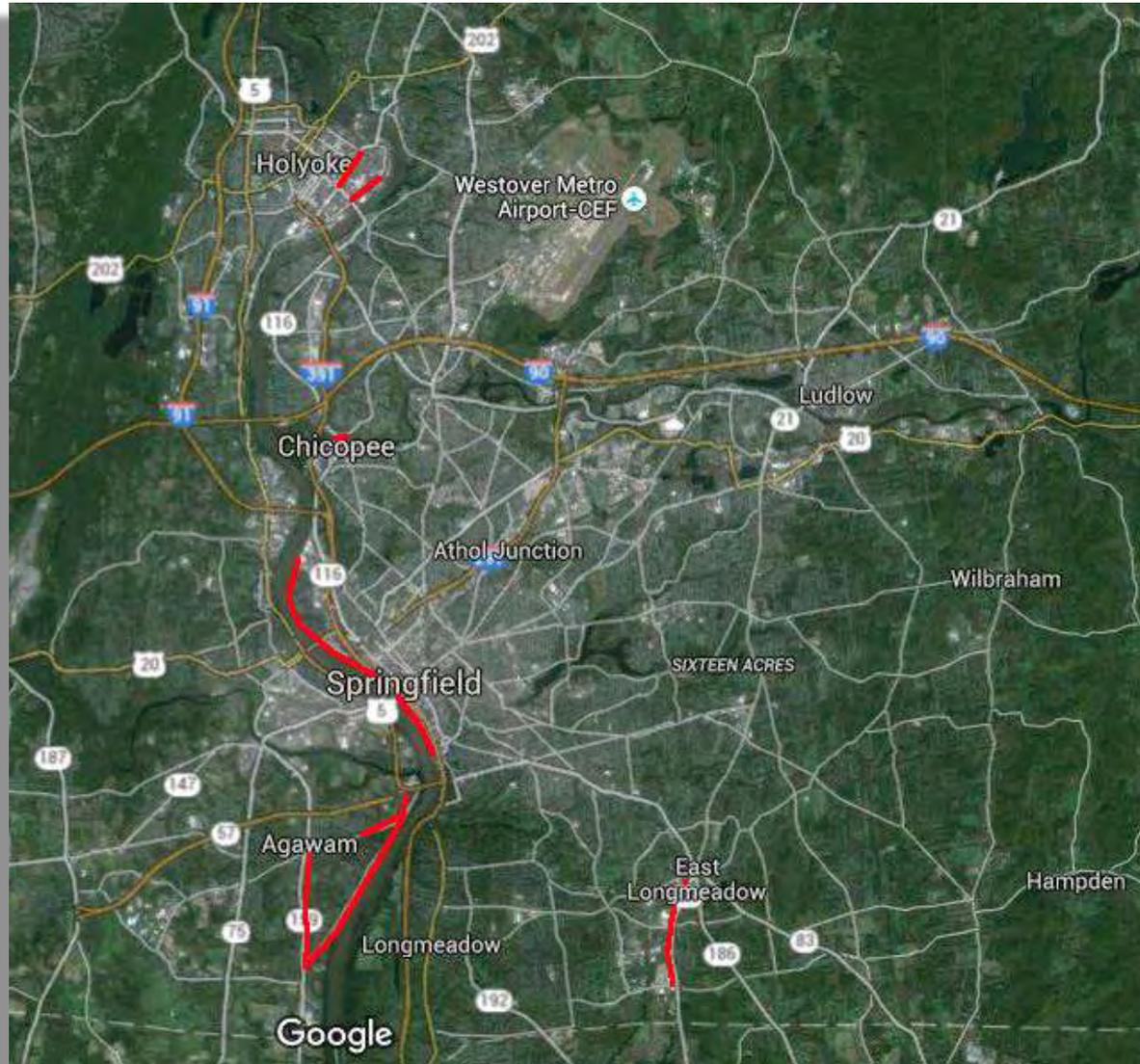


In addition to being an entrepreneurial “hot bed” the McKnight Neighborhood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it contains the states largest array of Victorian Houses outside of Greater Boston. The entire neighborhood is a well preserved historical site with many homes restored with passionate sweat equity by it’s residents.



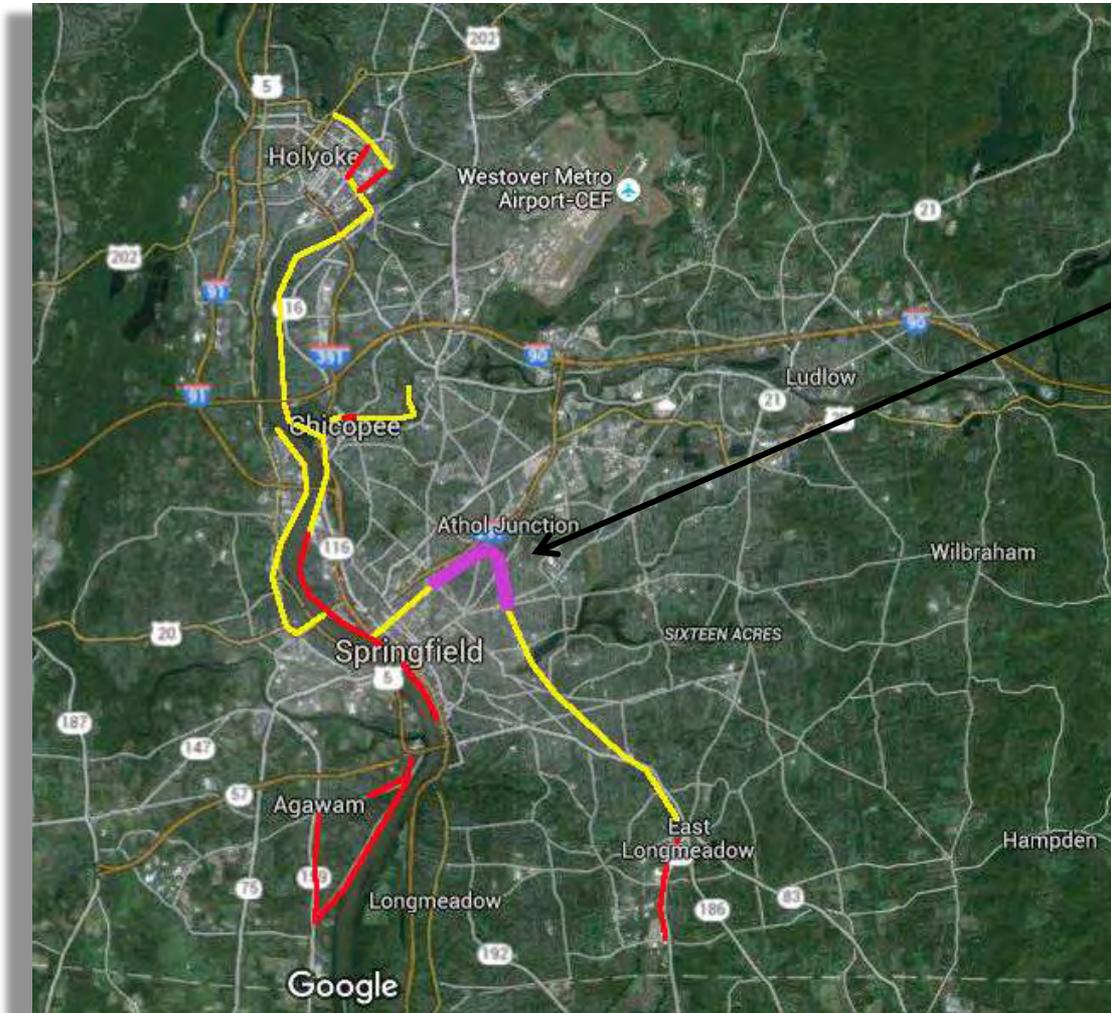
# McKnight Community Path

## EXISTING BIKEWAY AND WALKWAY TRAILS IN LOWER PIONEER VALLEY



# McKnight Community Path

## POTENTIAL OR UNDER DESIGN BIKEWAY AND WALKWAY TRAILS

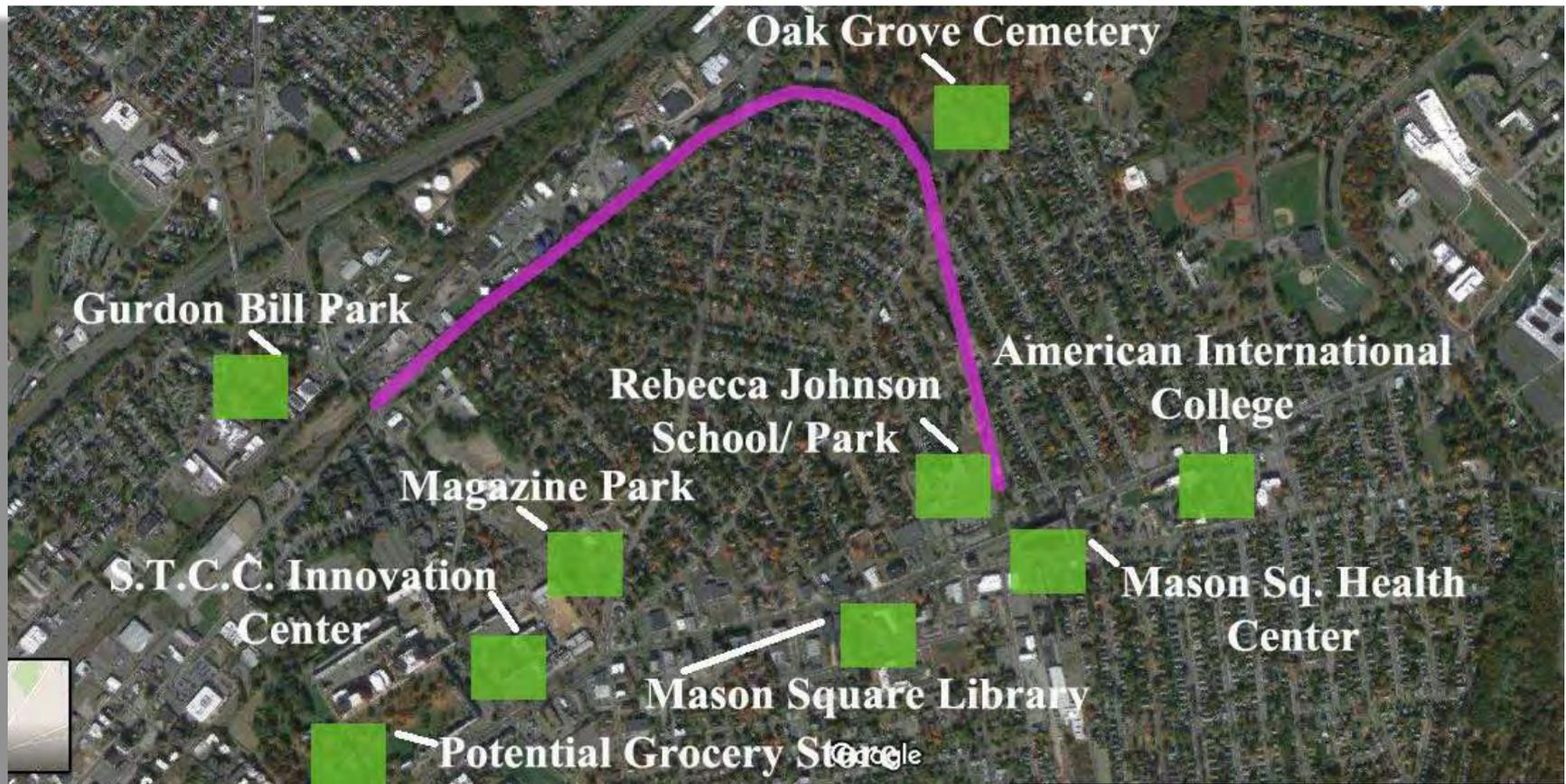


McKnight Community Trail

- McKnight Community Trail
- Proposed or Designed Trails
- Existing Trails

# McKnight Community Path

## THE TRAIL AND ITS CONNECTION TO RESOURCES



# McKnight Community Path

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES



Mason Square Library with Public Computers and Wifi



American International College residents are allowed to take advantage of some of the campus amenities



Efforts are moving forward to get a full line grocery store here.



Innovation Park run by S.T.C.C., residents can pay next to nothing to have office space to start or run a business out of here



Mason Square Health Center run by Baystate Medical Center with a focus on preventative health.

# McKnight Community Path

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES/OPEN SPACES



Oak Grove Cemetery which abuts the McKnight Trail with 81.3 acres of Open Space



Rebecca Johnson School/Park this new park came on line in 2010 and is one of the trail head entrances



Gurdon Bill Park is 6.7 acres for passive recreation



Magazine Park is 3.2 acres for active recreation use park

# McKnight Community Path

## CENSUS DATA FOR McKnight and Bay Neighborhoods (2012)\*

### Neighborhood

McKnight Neighborhood

### Median Household Income (2012)\*

\$25,991.00

Springfield.....\$31,356  
Pioneer Valley.....\$51,381  
Massachusetts.....\$65,339

### Poverty Rates (2012)\*

35.70%

*Based on Massachusetts Median Household Family Income*

Springfield.....33.30%  
Pioneer Valley.....17.87%  
Massachusetts.....11.90%

### Food Deserts (2012)\*

0.00%

*Based on 3-mile radius*

Springfield.....8.24%  
Pioneer Valley.....19.68%  
Massachusetts.....19.35%



Corbis

• \* Source: Live Well Springfield Data Analysis 2012

# McKnight Community Path

## CENSUS DATA FOR McKnight and Bay Neighborhoods (2012)\*

### Neighborhood

Bay Neighborhood

### Median Household Income (2012)\*

\$26,600.00

Springfield.....\$31,356  
Pioneer Valley.....\$51,381  
Massachusetts.....\$65,339



### Poverty Rates (2012)\*

36.30%

*Based on Massachusetts Median Household Family Income*

Springfield.....33.30%  
Pioneer Valley.....17.87%  
Massachusetts.....11.90%

### Food Deserts (2012)\*

6.13%

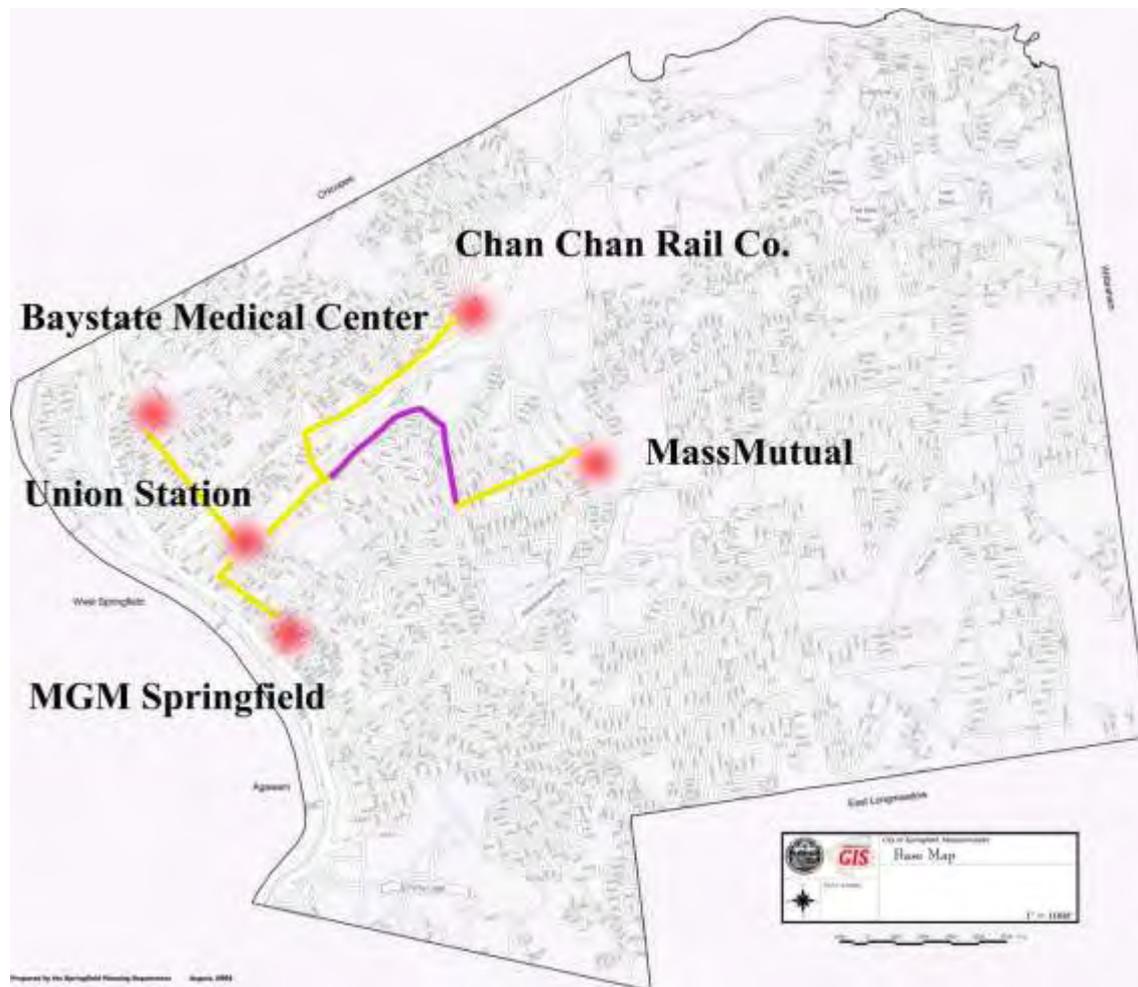
*Based on 3-mile radius*

Springfield.....8.24%  
Pioneer Valley.....19.68%  
Massachusetts.....19.35%

\* Source: Live Well Springfield Data Analysis 2012

# McKnight Community Path

## TRANSPORTATION HUB AND MAJOR EMPLOYERS



# McKnight Community Path

## CHILDHOOD OBESITY RATES State vs. Springfield's rates

### Massachusetts

- Public school-based screenings for BMI (2011).\*
- 16.7% Overweight
- 15.7% Obese



### Springfield

- District-level statistics (2011).\*\*\*
- 17.6% Overweight
- 24.2% Obese



- \*and \*\*\* Source: Status of Childhood Weight in Massachusetts, 2011 MA Dep't Public Health
- \*\*Source: The State of Obesity, 2015 Trust for America's Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Slide information provided from Center Health Law and Policy Innovation at Harvard Law School: Sarah Downer, JD and Jamine Fields, JD

# McKnight Community Path

## CHILDHOOD OBESITY RATES State vs. Springfield's rates

### GRADE LEVEL OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE (2011).\*\*\*

<u>Grade level</u>	<u>Massachusetts</u>	<u>Springfield</u>
1 <sup>st</sup>	28.3%	37.1%
4 <sup>th</sup>	34.9%	44.3%
7 <sup>th</sup>	34.1%	44.2%
10 <sup>th</sup>	32.0%	42.4%

- \*and \*\*\* Source: Status of Childhood Weight in Massachusetts, 2011 MA Dep't Public Health
- \*\*Source: The State of Obesity, 2015 Trust for America's Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Slide information provided from Center Health Law and Policy Innovation at Harvard Law School: Sarah Downer, JD and Jamine Fields, JD

# McKnight Community Path

## ADULT OBESITY RATES State vs. Springfield's rates

### ADULT OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY RATES (2010)\*\*\*\*

#### Massachusetts

23.3% Adults are either overweight or obese.

#### Springfield

66% Adults are either overweight or obese, highest in the State.

- \*and \*\*\* Source: Status of Childhood Weight in Massachusetts, 2011 MA Dep't Public Health
- \*\*Source: The State of Obesity, 2015 Trust for America's Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- \*\*\*\* Massachusetts Department of Public Health 2010 Report on Regional Health Indicators
- Slide information provided from Center Health Law and Policy Innovation at Harvard Law School: Sarah Downer, JD and Jamille Fields, JD

# McKnight Community Path

## ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO CURRENTLY WALK, BIKE OR TAKE THE BUS TO WORK

McKnight Neighborhood

19.60%

Bay Neighborhood

23.10%



We hope to see less of this



AND MORE OF THIS IN SPRINGFIELD!!!

# Overall Map of the Trail



# Rebecca Johnson Trailhead



# Bay Street Intersection



# St. James Avenue Connection



# Glen Road Bridge Area



# Glen Road Bridge Area



# Glen Road Trailhead



# Armory Street Trailhead



# Amenities



Trailhead



Fountains



Bike Racks



Benches



Trash/Recycling

# McKnight Community Path

CONNECTIONS ARE ALREADY BEING MADE



Feasibility Study making connections to information and funding necessary for the trail

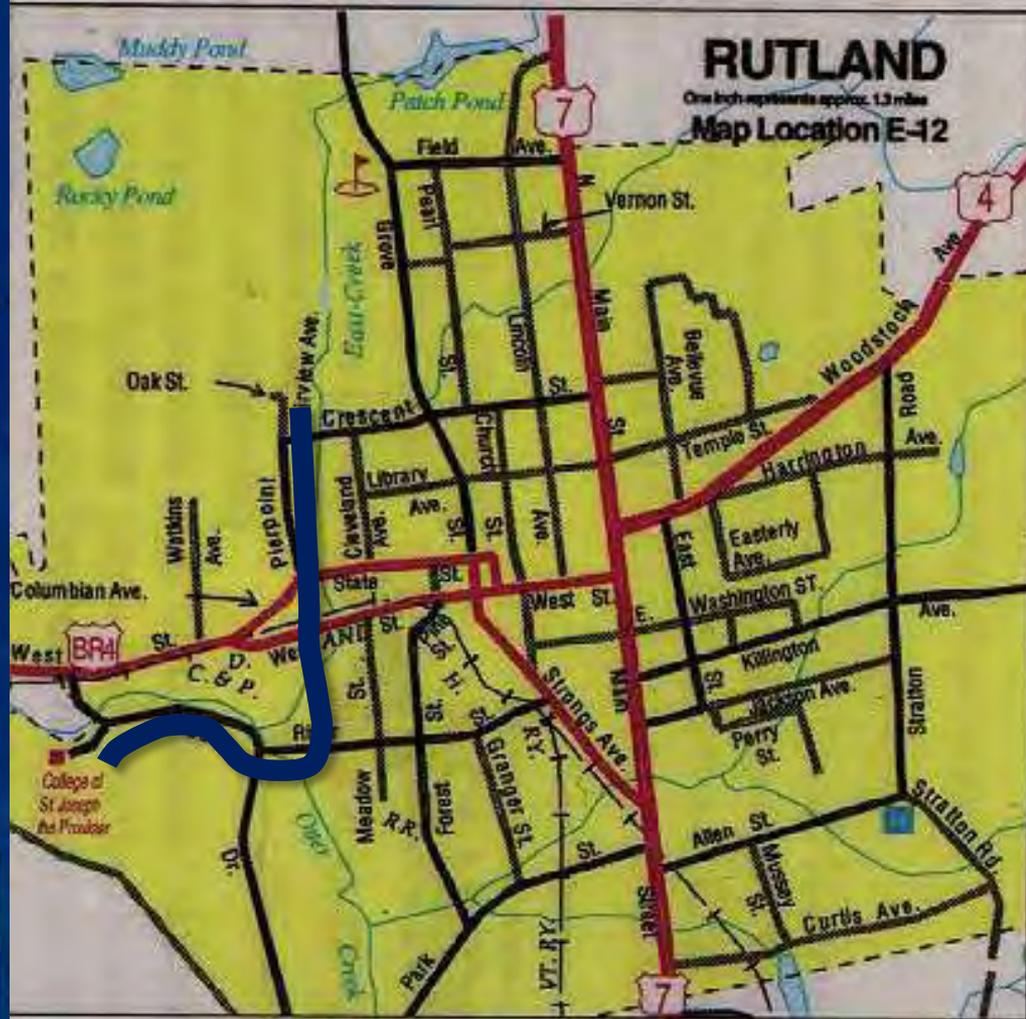


Clean Up Day Events on Trail



Community Outreach Events about the Trail

# Rutland Creek Path



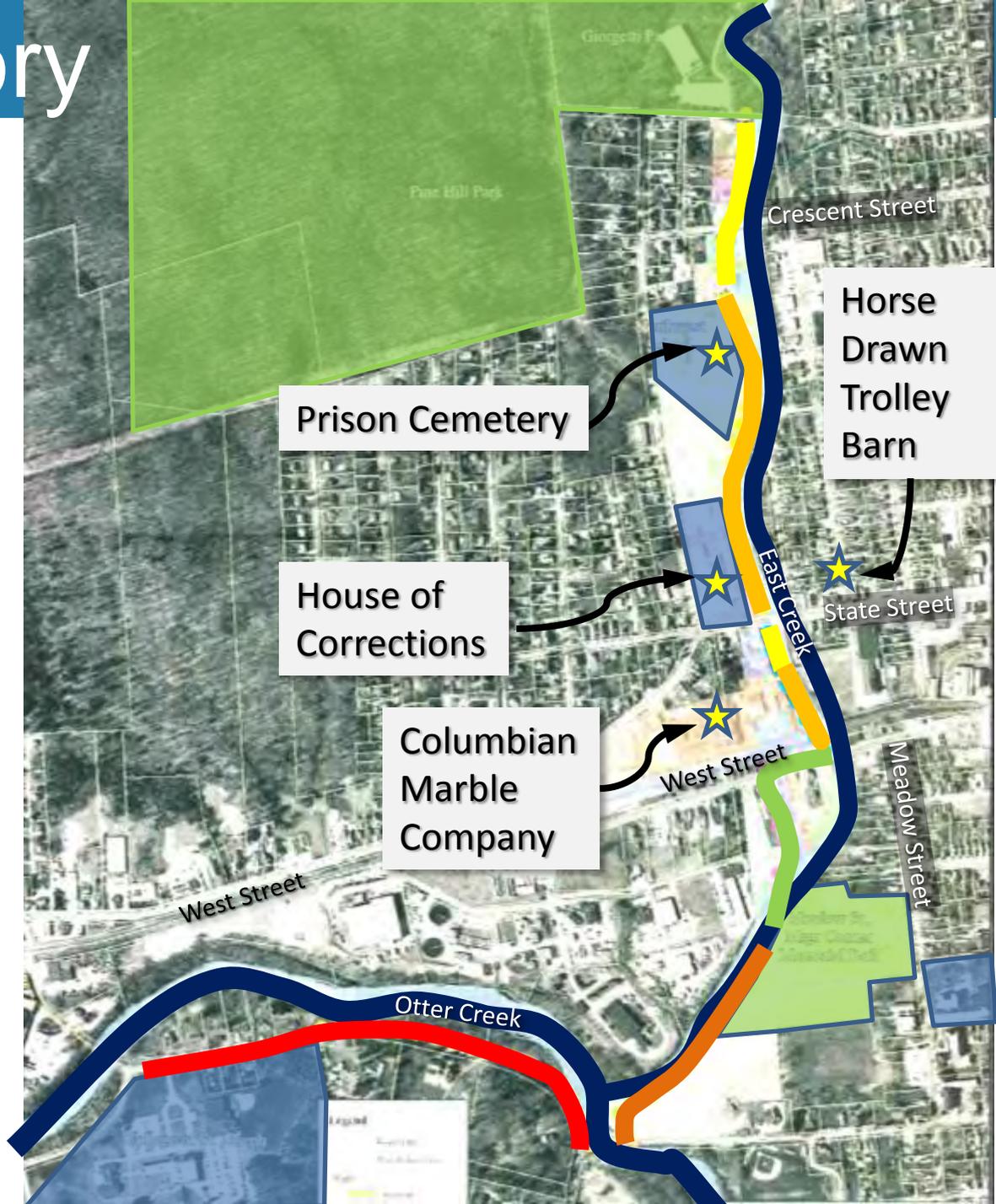
# Rutland Creek Path

- In 2006, Idea of the Creek Path was developed by Creative Economy Initiative.
- 2 mile multi-use path through Rutland's most densely populated and economically challenged neighborhoods.
- Connects:
  - Three Parks
  - Three Schools
  - Two Creeks



# Telling the Story

Trail has inspired greater interest in historical resources



# Telling the Story



# Telling the Story

## Prison Cemetery

- Used from the late 1800's through the early 1900's
- Contains at least a dozen graves - though only 11 stone markers remain.
- Most stones are numbered for common men, except for Rufus.



# Telling the Story



- Before the path, the cemetery was hidden, overgrown, and forgotten.
- Students built and installed interpretative sign for Cemetery.
- Greater interest in history of the area.

# Community Investment

- City Contribution: \$50,000
- State/ Federal Funds: over \$1.2M
- Local Fundraising/ In-kind Donations: over \$200,000



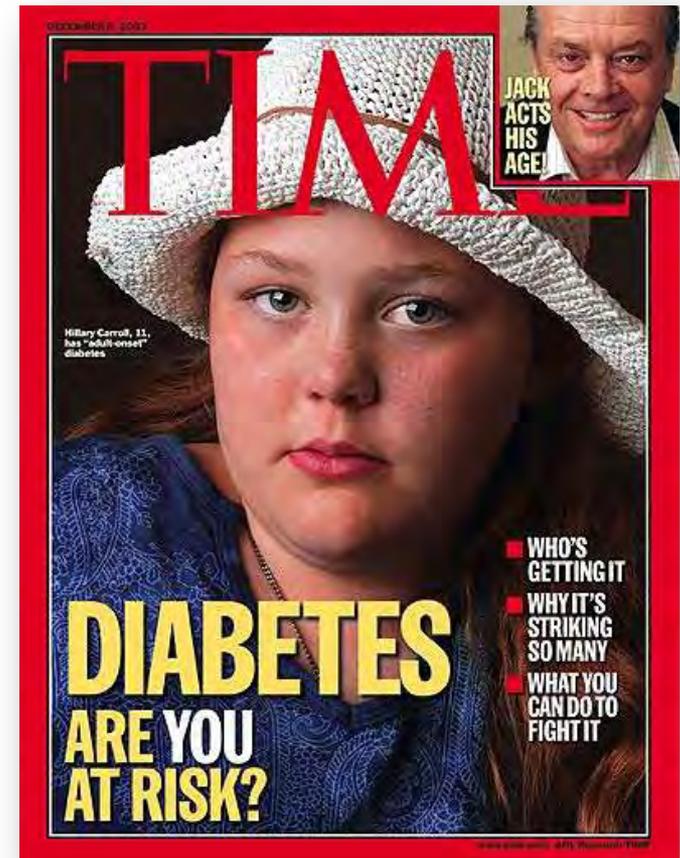
# Why is this important?

1. A third of the population don't drive cars.
2. 40% of U.S. adults say they would commute by bike if safe facilities available.
3. Walking is the most popular physical activity in the U.S.
4. 43 million Americans ride bikes (more than participate in basketball, golf, running, soccer).

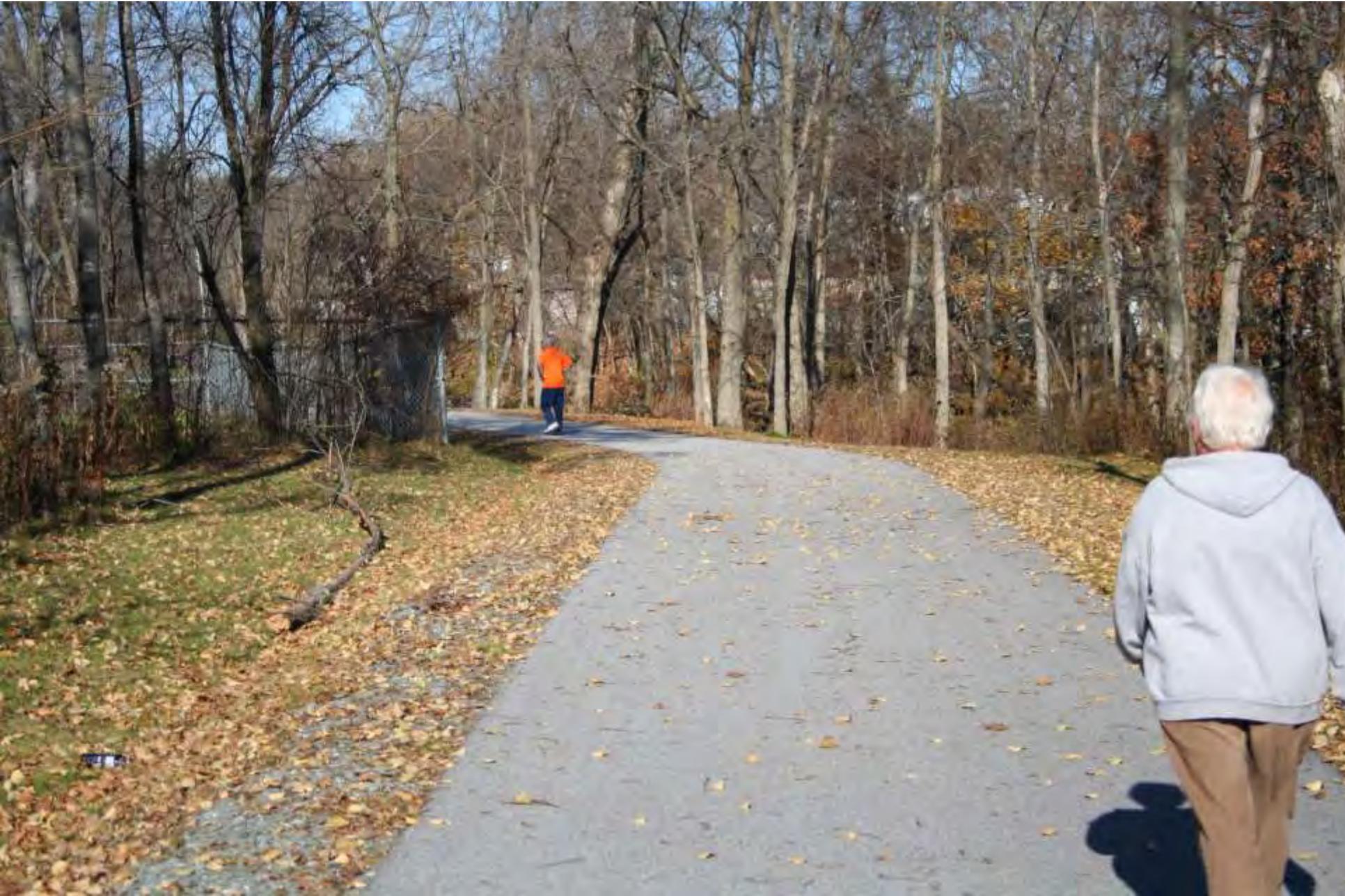


# But why is it REALLY important?

- Since 1990, obesity in Vermont has been steadily increased.
- Across the US, annually 300,000 deaths associated with being overweight or obese.
- Walking or bicycling for 30 minutes a day produces measurable results.



# Create Opportunities

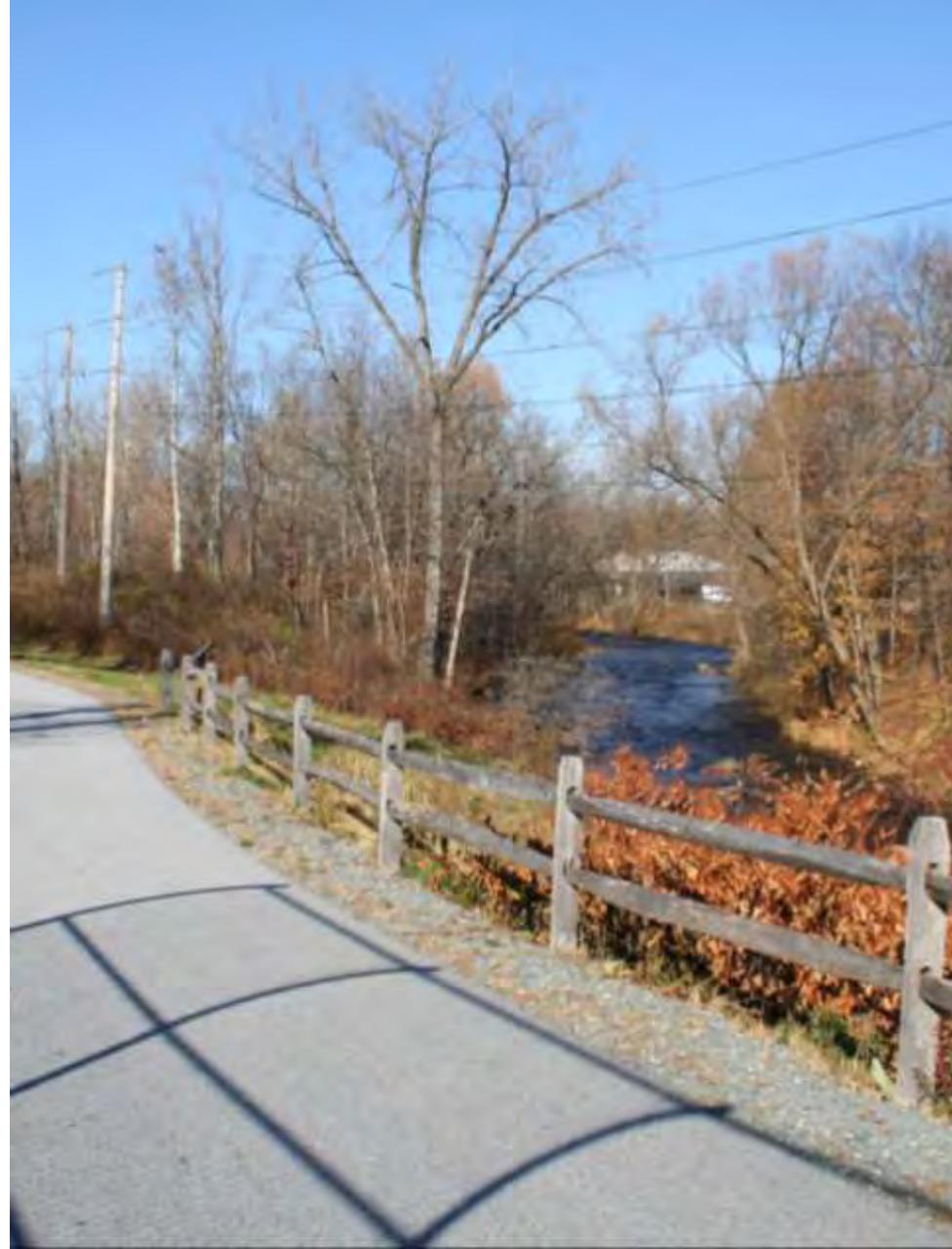


# Create Opportunities



# Connecting People with Nature

- Otter Creek:  
Vermont's Longest  
River (112 miles)
- Environmental  
Awareness &  
Stewardship
- Creek Cleanups
- Tree Plantings



# Connecting People with Nature



# Connecting People with Nature



# Connecting People with Nature



# Connecting People with Nature



# Connecting People with Nature



# Connecting People with Nature



# Lesson's Learned

- Trails span economic leverage opportunities & safe connections
- Think beyond the trail.. How to attract users with various interests (environment, history, health, etc.)
- Although the trail is long, communities have a priceless amenity in their backyard.

*All of these help create great trails!*

# Thank you!

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