Heart, Healing, & Hospitality:

HOW TRAILS CONTRIBUTE TO FOUR-SEASON ECONOMIES AND MORE VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Community Case Studies from the Midwest & Appalachia

Marquette, MI by Aaron Peterson Studio

Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition

Pennsylvania Environmental Council
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Introduction

BACKGROUND

The Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC), as part of its role in coordinating the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (IHTC), has sought research on communities beyond the IHTC region that exemplify places that have either organically benefited from trails or intentionally adapted to leverage the outdoor economy.

With this understanding, PEC hired Cycle Forward to conduct the research and produce this document. A number of communities were considered, and four were ultimately selected for their ability to both inspire and convey relevance. All of the communities are within an 800-mile radius of Pittsburgh. The populations are intentionally varied, ranging from fewer than 1,000 to greater than 10,000.

All are post-industrial communities which accommodate either a river or a lake. Two are from the Midwest region, including one Great Lakes city. Two are located in Appalachia, as is the entire IHTC region. And one is a university town, as are some of the communities within the IHTC footprint.

Community Comparison Basic Information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Distance from Pittsburgh</th>
<th>U.S. Region</th>
<th>Largest-drawing Trail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marquette, Michigan</td>
<td>20,629</td>
<td>723 miles</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Noquemanon Trail Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milford, Ohio</td>
<td>6,887</td>
<td>283 miles</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Little Miami Scenic Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchanan, Virginia</td>
<td>1,169</td>
<td>337 miles</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Upper James River Water Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus, Virginia</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>366 miles</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Virginia Creeper Trail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FINDINGS

All of the featured communities benefit from being located at the crossroads of multiple trails. In the cases of Milford and Damascus in particular, each community has several trails and routes passing through, some existing on shared alignments. Iconic routes that pass through or near these communities include the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, North Country National Scenic Trail, American Discovery Trail, TransAmerica Trail, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Even so, the regional rail-trails appear to be the workhorses among them. These corridors that were once used to haul goods in and out of communities now host trail users instead.
How are the rail-trails “workhorses?”

• In Marquette, while the snow trails have extended cycling to four seasons and now keep bike shops open year-round, it’s the area rail-trail (Iron Ore Heritage) that serves as the “spine” joining multiple communities and connecting trails.

• In Milford, despite having over 20,000 miles of trails and routes intersecting, the Little Miami Scenic Trail is the one cited first by the local outfitter in terms of customer foot traffic.

• In Damascus, even in the presence of the legendary Appalachian Trail, the 34-mile Virginia Creeper Trail supports seven bike shops and outfitters in the tiny town.

None of these rail-trails exceed 80 miles in length; two are fewer than 50 miles. The same goes for the Upper James River Water Trail in Buchanan, which is 46 miles long and brings paddlers and tubers into the community for services. Can it be said that short to medium-distance regional trails reach the widest audiences? In Damascus, a Virginia Tech study found that the largest age group of trail users surveyed was 36-45, typically riding with their families. This eschews younger than national rail-trail averages and indicates an opportunity for shorter distance trails, when paired with the right services, to reach younger and more casual cyclists.

Nonetheless, it is the iconic trails that inspire big dreams, confidence, and pride of place. It is something to know that your community is located along the Appalachian Trail or the TransAmerica Trail. All of the communities discussed here are indeed located along such a trail and have appeared to respond by fostering both a culture of trails and a culture of hospitality. Three of the four are designated trail communities, and the fourth is considering designation (a reminder that even with good intentions, limited local capacity can sometimes impede progress). Although subjectively measured, Damascus (“Trail Town, USA”) and Milford seem to have made the most strides in terms of culture shift and municipal investment in trails. This is demonstrated in the following table.

Demonstrated Qualities among Studied Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demonstrated Qualities</th>
<th>Marquette, MI</th>
<th>Milford, OH</th>
<th>Buchanan, VA</th>
<th>Damascus, VA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple trails</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated trail community</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Pursuing</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal investment evident</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail culture exists</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to hospitality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-season appeal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Finally, there were a couple of surprises in researching these communities. For example, perhaps the most notable economically successful trail presented here, the Creeper Trail, still is not “enough” to sustain a vibrant community. While trails are rarely promised as the silver bullet for alleviating a community’s woes, a town with seven bike shops might lean heavily on its trail tourism. Yet Damascus is working to develop four-season assets to complement its trail economy.

Another surprise within the research (although it shouldn’t be) is that trails, given their nourishing assets, can contribute to the healing process following natural disasters and in other times of emergency. Read on to learn more about how trails heal, embody heart, and function as spines that both support and connect our places.

HERE AT HOME: COMMUNITIES OF THE INDUSTRIAL HEARTLAND TRAILS COALITION

While we are bringing you these stories of communities benefiting from trails (and making efforts to maximize the benefits), we do have great examples right here at home. Throughout the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition footprint, there are many communities that are doing great work and are worth a day trip to learn more and get inspired. Talk with your trail friends and fellow community change-makers about what examples intrigue you. Hop into your car or onto your bikes and get to visiting!

About IHTC

The Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (IHTC) consists of more than 100 organizations and stakeholders collaborating to complete and connect a system of 1,500+ miles of shared use trails in a four-state area of Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, and West Virginia. This coalition of trail supporters includes government, nonprofit and private foundation entities, as well as land managers and railroad interests, working to position trail development as a regional priority. Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) lead and staff the regional effort. The National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) provides additional staff and technical support.
Population: 20,629

Trail(s):
Noquemanon Trail Network
Iron Ore Heritage Trail
North Country Trail

Early Industry:
Iron ore mining
Logging
Shipping

Additional Resources:
Cold Rolled film
Noquemanon Trail Network
A city that is accustomed to nearly 13 feet of annual snowfall isn’t a candidate to become a four-season cycling destination, is it? Yet in Marquette, Michigan this is exactly what has happened in recent years. The Lake Superior port city has transitioned from one that revolves around iron ore to one that is centered on the revolutions of a bike’s wheels. The tire of choice for those wheels? The fat tire.

As area iron mines began closing, both the tourism community and a local cycling organization set their sights on building out and promoting an extensive system of singletrack, non-motorized trails. Among the trails are two specific snow bike routes, both groomed throughout the winter months.

The nonprofit Noquemanon Trail Network completed the first snow bike trail in 2012, and manages more than 65 miles of singletrack trail in general. Thanks to a concerted effort to create quality trails and services, Marquette was designated a bronze level IMBA (International Mountain Biking Association) Ride Center™ in 2014. It’s one of just 40 Ride Centers internationally that have earned such acclaim based on the quality and variety of trails, services available to trail users, and level of community involvement. Marquette is also a designated North Country National Scenic Trail Town and is located along the 47-mile Iron Ore Heritage Trail.

The path to a cycling economy

When Candy Kozeluh, the former recreation director for the Marquette County Convention and Visitors Bureau, observed the decline in snowmobiling, hunting, and fishing, she saw an opening for cycling. This was around 2010-11. At the time, three out of four local bike shops closed shop in the winter, and the one that remained open sold skis. She advocated for trail development and, through her position with the visitors bureau, was able to market the new trails. Now, all four businesses are open year-round and are able to keep the staff on the payroll. “And they’re just as busy in the winter as in the summer,” Kozeluh shares.

Kozeluh describes how building the Iron Ore Heritage Trail has enabled connectivity well beyond Marquette. The rail-trail goes through nine municipalities, “acting as the backbone to the communities,” she says. It also functions as a spine for area trails, with several of the single track trails throughout the county connecting to...
“Just by putting in a rail-trail, you now have all of these other trails built off of that. That’s when we noticed the communities coming together,” Kozeluh notes. “The camaraderie was amazing. People of different trail types normally don’t cross paths, but in this case they did.”

Placing a value on the trails

In a case study on the Noquemanon Trail Network, the Michigan Municipal League reports that the development of downtown trail access in Marquette has “created stimulus for more than $40 million in private investment and provided the impetus for more than $12 million in other public projects.”

The study outlines investments including two new brew pubs, seven new restaurants, multiple business expansions, and increased downtown property values. Investments have come in many forms. The Ore to Shore Mountain Bike Epic draws up to 2,500 riders, bringing the visiting cyclists directly through downtown Marquette. And a snow bike race is now included in Noquemanon Trail Network’s annual ski marathon event. The visitors bureau has consulted local hotels on how to best accommodate cyclists (think bike valets, bike wash stations, and custom menus). Even Northern Michigan University and the regional healthcare system, UP Health Systems, now use the area’s outdoor recreation options as a selling point. The University’s Outdoor Recreation Leadership and Management has grown 30 percent in the last five years, becoming the university’s fastest growing program.

Social capital attributed to Marquette’s success

Northern Michigan University professor Scott Jordan, Ph.D., attributes Marquette’s shift to a sustainable ecotourism economy to the existence of social capital (the social relationships and networks that aid a community in achieving common goals). In his 2015 report, Assessment of the effects of Mountain Biking: Marquette Michigan’s Ecotourism, Jordan asserts that the factors needed in order to sustain a successful ecotourism economy include:

1. A natural resource that will attract visitors
2. Interest in sustaining the natural environment, both by visitors and the local community
3. Social capital

He credits the Noquemanon Trail Network in particular for developing the social capital necessary to develop and maintain quality trails. Ultimately, the combination of quality trails receiving international recognition, the trail organization’s commitment to maintenance, the visitor bureau’s marketing, and strong relationships with land owners and managers contributed to a sustainable ecotourism economy.

Marquette’s successful transformation in fewer than 10 years demonstrates the importance of social capital and developing and maintaining quality trails – and then promoting them. In a geographically remote, post-industrial community, Marquette’s trails have helped diversify the local economy, improve quality of life, and position the area’s leading employers to recruit and retain students and employees.
Milford, Ohio

Ohio Trail Crossing Pampers Its Visitors

Population: 6,887

Trail(s): Little Miami Scenic Trail & several others
Early Industry:
Mills, tanneries, and distilleries supported by hydropower

Additional Resources:
Little Miami Scenic Trail, City of Milford, Roads Rivers and Trails video
Walk down Milford’s Main Street and you are likely to spot a pedicab parked on the corner and vintage bikes propped up in storefronts. There’s something about the visual presence of cycles and bike décor that tells you this community values trails and cycling.

And why wouldn’t Milford embrace its trails? The city is at the intersection of multiple trail and cycling routes that collectively total over 20,000 miles. While some of these trail miles share the same alignments, the city’s location at this crossing is fortuitous nonetheless. A community that once derived benefit from the cascading waters of the Little Miami River—imagine grist mills, a tannery, distilleries and warehouses along its river banks—is now enjoying its location at the junction of long-distance trails.

Trails and routes that pass through Milford include:

• Little Miami Scenic Trail (78 paved miles and part of the 326-mile Ohio to Erie Trail)
• Buckeye Trail (over 1,400 miles and part of the 4,600-mile North Country National Scenic Trail)
• Underground Railroad Cycling Route (a 2,000-mile route stretching from Alabama to Ontario)
• American Discovery Trail (a 6,800 coast-to-coast trail route)
• Sea to Sea Route (a proposed 7,700 route, also coast-to-coast, this one further north)

“We like to pamper our visitors.”

Emily White, one of the owners of the local outfitter, Roads Rivers and Trails, would tell you that most of the visitors they see come off of the Little Miami Scenic Trail and from the river itself. The Underground Railroad Cycling Route, a bike route designed by the Adventure Cycling Association, is another source of frequent visitors. The outfitter takes every opportunity to accommodate these visitors.

“What really makes a town is the kind of services it offers,” White says. “We like to pamper our visitors.” Inspired by the hospitality often extended in Appalachian Trail communities, Roads Rivers and Trails has set up a lounge, complete with a couch and WiFi. The business even offers free showers in the store, going as far as supplying soap and fresh towels. “We drive people to the laundromat. We sometimes buy them dinner or a beer.” White adds that other businesses make similar efforts to accommodate nature enthusiasts, offering outdoor seating, bike racks, and “to go” cups.
A community that recognizes its amenities

When Roads Rivers and Trails opened in 2010, the business district had a different look and feel to it. White recalls a number of empty storefronts and limited food and lodging options. She notes that the city has since embraced the “trail town vibe” (Milford is a designated Buckeye Trail Town). Assistant City Manager Pam Holbrook concurs that the city enjoys its location at the junction of so many trails. Holbrook mentions the downtown area, the river, and trails all in the same breath when speaking of the community’s amenities. “These are resources that many other communities don’t have,” she says. “We highlight them in talking to businesses that are thinking about moving into the city—even those not specifically moving into downtown—as something that they can offer to their employees.”

Partnerships key in overcoming limited capacity

Despite benefiting from its lovely downtown area, its trails, and the Little Miami River (a designated National Wild & Scenic River), Milford is a small city that faces capacity challenges. While commercial vacancy rates appear to have improved over the last decade, the city has not tracked this growth. The same goes for trail use and its economic benefit. “Has trail traffic increased in the past 10 years? I would say that it probably has, but I don’t have the numbers to back that up,” Holbrook shares. “From the city’s viewpoint, we look at the activity downtown. There’s been very good positive benefit and renewed interest in locating downtown.”

Milford’s lack of data points to the capacity challenges that many communities often face. In Milford’s case, capacity challenges are overcome by fostering partnerships within the community. Holbrook emphasizes the relationship between the city and the Historic Milford Association, which operates www.downtownmilford.com and hosts special events in the business district, noting that the city often supplies non-cash support toward events and improvement efforts. “A partnership between the city and merchants is really important, as is listening to the merchants. It’s a win-win when we work together.”

Helping visitors to wander into town

As a business owner, White is well aware of the importance of trail-to-town connectivity, noting, “We want travelers to feel that they’re wandering and not lost.” With several of the trail routes located across the river from the downtown area, the community has worked to improve ease of access. Both White and Holbrook hope to improve wayfinding. Other ideas include constructing a designated pedestrian bridge across the river and creating a bike hub, where people can drop their bikes and walk throughout town. The city has purchased the trailhead property and maintains a building, picnic tables, and restrooms there. The city has also cleared brush to open up views of the town, and has done the same at one of the river access areas. The bridge into town is accented with flower boxes, enhancing the walk or ride into town.

From bikes in storefronts to flowers along the route to town, Milford is living up to its trail town title. Its commitment to bringing visitors into the community (and getting residents out to the trail) certainly creates a trail-town vibe.
Buchanan, Virginia

Outdoor Recreation Aids in a Community’s Healing Process

Population: 1,169

Trail(s):
- Upper James River Water Trail
- Appalachian Trail
- Blue Ridge Parkway

Early Industry:
- Water transportation
- Agricultural processing

Additional Resources:
- A.T. Community Program
- Twin Rivers Outfitters
- Town Video: “Buchanan By the James”
The commercial vacancy rate in Buchanan, Virginia, is 12 percent. That’s down from a whopping 80 percent in 1995 when “People were still reeling from the Flood of 1985,” as the town’s Revitalization and Events Coordinator, Harry Gleason, explains.

The flood devastated the community. The flood stage for the Upper James River is 17 feet, but the river rose to 38.84 feet on Election Day in 1985. It remains the highest river stage on record in Buchanan.

In subsequent years, as Gleason describes it, people relocated to the suburbs, and a number of commercial properties were owned by just a few individuals. The business district suffered. The town began a revitalization effort in the mid-1990s and managed to fill all of its storefronts. Although some businesses were lost again during the 2008 recession, the streetscape is far from what it was when 8 out of 10 commercial properties sat empty. While outdoor recreation cannot be credited to Buchanan’s bounce back—that seems to be more a result of community planning—it certainly has been a contributing factor to the town’s vibrancy in recent years.

**A gateway community in Virginia’s Blue Ridge**

Buchanan first emerged as a community due to its location along the Upper James River. Early industries included canal and river transportation and agricultural processing. The town’s location along the Upper James continues to influence the local economy. The river is a state-designated water trail, and an outdoor recreation economy is taking hold. Added to this, the town is a 10-minute drive from the Blue Ridge Parkway and the nearest Appalachian Trail (A.T.) trailhead.

While the town can claim as assets an iconic river, an even more iconic scenic drive (the Blue Ridge Parkway), and a national scenic trail (the A.T.), Buchanan still has its challenges. Outdoor recreation is seasonal, and some of the specialty retail shops in town appear to be treated as hobby businesses rather than profitable enterprises. Moreover, capacity appears to be an issue. The Appalachian Trail Community™ program has existed since 2010, and Buchanan has yet to seek designation. While city leaders have expressed interest at different times, they have not initiated the application process. (The A.T. Community designation was scheduled to be on a recent town council agenda.)

Kathryn Herndon-Powell, Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy hopes that Buchanan will seek the designation. She imagines that section hikers and weekenders would enjoy Buchanan’s charming, walkable downtown and enjoy packaged experiences (“hike the Trail, float the James, drive the Parkway” was one idea mentioned).
About the town, Herndon-Powell says, “They’ve done a great job with the Upper James River Water Trail and events like the Buchanan Tri (run/bike/paddle). I think they’re starting to see some real benefits from those efforts, so hopefully that makes the A.T. Community designation seem worthwhile to keep a good thing going.”

When a water trail makes a big splash

John Mayes, who owns and operates Twin River Outfitters along with his brother, Dan, says that foot traffic is increased tenfold in this rural small town as a result of river recreation. “Our town has 1,200 people in it, and our business alone brings in 11,000 a year,” he shares.

Mayes, who located the business here in 2004, considers the outdoor economy’s impact in realistic terms. He acknowledges that seasonal uptick is not enough to carry the town 12 months a year. “Outdoor recreation is a great strategy, but it shouldn’t be the only strategy for a community.”

Nonetheless, Harry Gleason has observed a spinoff benefit – things like people stopping to eat, returning to shop, or staying in a guest house (opened by the Mayes brothers). Some of Twin River Outfitter’s customers who are on multi-day float trips stop in Buchanan for lunch and a drink before paddling on to their primitive camping spots for the night. This customer demographic turns out to be an important one for the outfitter. Roughly a third of the company’s revenues are attributed to just 10 percent of the customer base. (While a 1-2 hour tubing trip costs $20, a five-day wilderness-style excursion costs $169, so this niche market of multi-day paddlers spends significantly more with the outfitter, and they also seek out town lunches and, likely, other services.)

Spinoff benefit beyond the economic

Harry Gleason sees people coming into town for outdoor recreation and says that the community has responded well to this influx. The town website, for instance, now includes a list of area trails. And new residents are choosing to make Buchanan home. These newcomers didn’t experience the Flood of 1985, and don’t carry its psychological weight. Gleason notes that outdoor recreation has helped in the community’s healing process. A town that was once devastated by the Upper James River now has come to view the river and area trails as assets. “We now have people saying, ‘Yes, we need to do more work on the riverfront park,’” Gleason shares.
Trails Contribute to Vitality in “Trail Town, USA”

Population: 790

Trail(s):
- Appalachian Trail (A.T.)
- Virginia Creeper Trail
- and others*

Early Industry:
- Iron ore mining
- Logging

Additional Resources:
- Town website
- A.T. Community page
- Damascus: My A.T. Story Video
- Building Connectivity through Recreation Trails Study

*The Crooked Road: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail, U.S. Bike Route 76 (TransAmerica Trail), The TransVirginia Bike Route, Iron Mountain Trail, and the Mid Atlantic Backcountry Discovery Route
Imagine a 34-mile trail supporting seven bike shops and outfitters in a town of fewer than 800 residents. This might sound like a dream, but it’s very much the reality in Damascus, Virginia. Not only this, but the iconic Appalachian Trail passes right through town, as do other trails and routes. The community that once subsisted by extracting resources from the Blue Ridge Mountains now attributes some of its vitality to trails. Perhaps this is why town manager Gavin Blevins uses one of our vital organs as a metaphor: “Damascus is the heart, and each of the trails is like an artery.” Of the Virginia Creeper and Appalachian trails, he says, “One brings economic prosperity, and the other brings the cultural aspect to our community.” Blevins is referring to the Creeper Trail when he speaks of economic benefit. One popular way to enjoy the Creeper Trail is by taking a shuttle to White Top – the trail’s high point – and cruising 17 miles to Damascus, or 34 miles to nearby Abingdon. The thrill of the “cruise” lends itself to an outdoor economy that caters to cyclists with rentals and shuttle rides up the mountain.

“There is not a business in the community that is not impacted by the trail”

The United States Forest Service, which owns a portion of the trail and issues shuttling permits, tracks related data. They report between 175,000 and 200,000 bike rentals and shuttle trips a year. A large percent of these users are thought to be from out of state, including those visiting from nearby North Carolina and Tennessee.

A 2011 study produced by Virginia Tech used both trail user and small business owner surveys to measure the impact of the Creeper Trail. According to this study, one business owner aptly stated, “There is not a business in the community that is not impacted by the trail users.” Among Virginia Tech’s key findings were:

• 16 out of 19 business owner respondents said their choice of store location was strongly (3) or very strongly (13) influenced by the Creeper Trail.

• Over half of the businesses surveyed said more than 61 percent of their income is from trail use.

• On a fall Saturday, when the trail user surveys were taking place, 2,500-3,000 tourists were thought to be biking the trail.

• The largest age group of trail users surveyed was 36-45, typically riding with their families. This varies substantially from aggregate survey data compiled by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy that suggests that the most represented age groups on rail-trails are 56-65 (29%) and 46-55 (25%).

The town’s “Meal” and “Lodging” taxes are indicators of the Creeper Trail’s economic impact. Based on business owner survey responses, extrapolations indicate that nearly $100,000 in taxes were generated through trail use. This is significant in a town with a budget of roughly a million dollars annually.
Local meal and lodging tax revenues attributed to the Creeper Trail in 2010

- Meal Tax Revenues: $79,356
- Lodging Tax Revenues: $17,858

$97,214 in tax revenues attributed to Creeper Trail use

Appalachian Trail brings culture and sense of place into community

While businesses may tailor their services to accommodate those pedaling the Creeper Trail, they also welcome Appalachian Trail users. In fact, much of the community does. Each May, the “Friendliest town on the Trail” hosts the Appalachian Trail Days festival (a hiker reunion of sorts, with attendance in the 20,000 range). While Blevins’ metaphor treats the community as the heart, many would argue that the A.T. is the heart of the community. And Blevins shares that it’s the A.T. that has enabled Damascus to connect with a global community, with “people coming from all over the world, bringing stories and cultures in with them.” The sense of place that comes along with being a community along the A.T. was cemented when Damascus was designated an Appalachian Trail Community™ by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. When asked what it means on a deeper level to claim the title “Trail Town, USA” (which Damascus has for many years), Gavins says that trails have become “a central identifier of what we are, where we’re going, and who we want to be. Most of that comes from our location along the A.T.”

Planning beyond trails

While there is little doubt that trails are central to the community’s identity and that they have helped to stabilize Damascus, the community won’t rest on its laurels. Even the most robust trail economies tend to be seasonal in nature. Accordingly, the town began a strategic planning process in 2013, and has included in its planning efforts a commitment to relying less on tourism. One strategy has been to revamp the downtown to make it an asset of its own—one that people will visit year-round. Community infrastructure improvements have become a priority as well, with hopes that a well-maintained, easy-to-navigate community will attract and retain residents. Improvement projects such as new sidewalks, connector trails, and a new trail center located in town are some examples. With this commitment to community infrastructure and downtown improvements, “Trail Town, USA” demonstrates that local investment helps to leverage the benefits of trails.
Special Thanks

We would like to thank the following for contributing to this report through interviews and imagery:

Gavin Blevins, Town Manager, Town of Damascus
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