



**TRUST** FOR  
**PUBLIC**  
**LAND**®

# Open Space as a Catalyst for Community Impact

April 23, 2026

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

# Welcome!

Please introduce yourself in the chat with:

- Your name
- Your city, county, or town
- Your organization

Why do parks and open space matter to you? What benefits do you feel when you're outside?



# Agenda

1. **Program Overview & Goals:** *Advancing Recreation-Oriented Conservation in PA*
2. **Making the Case:** Open Space for Community Benefits
3. **Maximizing Impact:** Partnerships & Funding
4. **Case Study:** York County Economic Alliance
5. **Q&A**
6. **Small Group Discussions:** Aligning Local Goals
7. **Next Steps**



Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit, working to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

**We believe in  
OUTSIDE FOR ALL**



# Community is at the center of all we do.

Communities that place a high value on outdoor access for all are



**HEALTHIER**



**MORE RESILIENT**



**MORE EQUITABLE**

# Advancing Recreation-Oriented Conservation in PA

**5-session, quarterly, virtual workshop series** designed to provide municipalities, land managers, and advocates with the **strategies, skills, and resources** needed to support outdoor access for all across the Commonwealth.

## Session Dates:

- Jan. 22: Tools for Evaluating Park Equity & Access in PA
- Apr. 23: Open Space as a Catalyst for Community Impact
- Jul. 23: Strategies for Community-Led Conservation
- Oct. 22: Outdoor Recreation as a Pathway to Economic Vitality
- Jan. 21: Funding Recreation-Oriented Conservation in PA



# Our Goals

By the end of this series, participants will...

1. Understand the **strategies, funding opportunities, and practices** that ensure all communities have equal access to open space and outdoor recreation.
2. Make the case for outdoor recreation as a tool to **boost economic vitality, improve quality of life, support public health, and protect community resilience.**
3. Recognize the **role of community and other stakeholders** in bringing this vision to life.
4. Identify **actionable next steps, tools, and technical support** to leverage open space to advance local goals.



Access to the outdoors is a **fundamental human need and essential to our health and well-being.**

# PEOPLE NEED PARKS AND GREEN SPACES



Communities that value and invest in  
**OUTDOOR ACCESS**  
**FOR ALL ARE...**



**HEALTHIER**



**MORE RESILIENT**



**MORE INCLUSIVE**

# Physical & Mental Health

**Making green spaces accessible is a powerful public health strategy that improves people's physical, mental, and social well-being.**

It can combat our society's collective nature deprivation that, together with other environmental and social disadvantages, is often associated with lower quality of life, worse health outcomes, and constrained life opportunities.



When people live near a park, they are more **physically active**, which increases **lifespan** and can reduce the risk of chronic conditions such as **obesity**, **hypertension**, **heart disease**, **cancer**, and **diabetes**.



Parks and green spaces **reduce stress**; relieve symptoms of **anxiety** and **depression**; and improve **cognition**, **attention**, and **sleep quality**.



# Social Connection

When we build shared and inclusive open spaces, we create a future defined by connection—to the land and to each other—and a feeling of deep communal belonging.

These places are living reminders of where history unfolded—where cultures and people met, clashed, blended, and existed beside one another to become America. When we preserve and celebrate these places, we not only keep our history alive, but we also become more unified by seeing a little bit of ourselves in each other.



People who live near parks are more likely to be **satisfied** with their **local government**, including their parks & recreation departments (29%), police (14%), and mayor (13%), compared with people not living near parks.



Residents of the highest ranking ParkScore® cities are **more socially connected**, more likely to **volunteer**, and experience more social **connections**



**between high- and low-income** individuals than residents in lower-ranking park systems.



# Environmental Resilience

**Nature-based climate solutions increase communities' capacity to adapt to and recover from flooding, severe heat, and wildfires.**

Every community in this country is experiencing climate change. But those with fewer green spaces and lower investment in land conservation are more vulnerable to catastrophic events.



Green infrastructure can **filter 95% of stormwater** pollution and **reduce runoff by 99%**, preventing flooding in risk-prone areas.



Green spaces **cool communities** by creating shade and promoting evapotranspiration and can reduce temperatures by up to **17°F**.



Natural landscapes in the U.S. already absorb more than **14% of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions**.



# Economic Vitality

Nearby green space and outdoor recreation access reduces healthcare costs, improves quality of life, and supports business and employment opportunities.

Leaders are seeking opportunities to grow their tax base and retain and attract more businesses and residents. In the post-pandemic era when employers offer geographic mobility, it is more important than ever that communities invest in place, specifically parks and open spaces, to attract and retain a diverse workforce.



Recreation in NYC parks enabled residents to avoid **\$1.1B** in healthcare costs in 2022.



Across 13 study locations, mountain biking trail networks generated up to **1,626 jobs** and **\$54.1 million** in labor income each year.



U.S. cities with **growing economies**, regardless of size or location, are **investing more** in parks and open spaces.





## PROBLEM

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\$100 Billion: The price of poor public health

National loneliness epidemic, record levels of chronic disease

Kids today spend seven minutes at play; seven hours on screens.

## SOLUTION

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Make close-to-home, inclusive, high-quality green space a key pillar of every public health strategy



# STRENGTHEN SOCIAL COHESION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

## PROBLEM

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Two-thirds of adults report little to no confidence in our political system.

Most major cities are more racially segregated now than 30 years ago.

Isolation and polarization erode our trust in one another and in our institutions.

## SOLUTION

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Support citizen-led design to create green spaces that reflect communities' unique identities, desires, and needs.

Activate them with locally relevant, inclusive programming that prioritizes personal connections and belonging.



# INCREASE CLIMATE RESILIENCE

## PROBLEM

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Every community is experiencing climate change, but the most vulnerable are often the least prepared.

Heat is now the number one cause of weather-related deaths in the U.S.

## SOLUTION

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Advocate for investments in nature-based climate solutions where they're needed most.

Increase communities' capacity to adapt to extreme weather events by creating green spaces that reduce temperatures, absorb stormwater, and capture greenhouse gases.



# GROW HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

## PROBLEM

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Sites of historical and cultural significance—especially to underrepresented Black and Indigenous communities—are at risk of disinvestment, ecological mismanagement, or erasure.

Generational farmers and ranchers and the economies built by and around those working lands face increasing pressure from developers.

## SOLUTION

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Partner with Black leaders, Tribes, policymakers, conservation organizations, NGOs, and communities to preserve significant sites before it's too late.

Support Indigenous-led conservation practices that deliver proven biodiversity and climate benefits.

Assist individual landowners and rural communities in developing land-use and management plans that help them thrive.

# Partnerships for Impact



## Health

Hospital Partnerships  
ParksRx

## Housing

Public Housing  
Affordable Housing  
Land Use Planning

## Economic Development

Workforce Development &  
Attraction  
Outdoor Recreation  
Economy

## Schools

Community Schoolyards  
Community Forests  
University Partnerships

## Civic Institutions

Historic & Cultural Sites  
Community Partners  
Decision-Makers

# Funding Shared Priorities



## Health

- Community Health Needs Assessments & Investment Priorities
- Hospital Planning & Design
- State & Local Public Health Funds
- Nutrition & Food Security Funds
- Co-Fundraising Opportunities
- Co-Programming Opportunities

## Housing

- Public Housing Authority Planning & Design
- Affordable Housing Developer Partnerships
- Parkland Dedication Ordinances
- Impact Fees
- Developer Incentives
- Open Space & Connectivity Ordinances

## Economic Development

- Business Improvement Districts
- Tourism Funds
- Hotel & Motel Occupancy Taxes
- Short-Term Car Rental Taxes
- Concessions & Earned Revenue
- Timber & Responsible Extraction
- DCNR C2P2
- Keystone Fund

## Schools

- School District Partnerships
- Community Forest & Open Space Program
- University Partnerships
- Environmental Education Funds
- Co-Programming Opportunities
- Co-Fundraising Opportunities
- People, Parks & Community Foundation

## Civic Institutions

- Historic Preservation Funds
- State & Local Elected Officials
- Neighborhood Associations
- Library Partnerships
- Cultural Institution Partnerships
- Keystone Fund
- PA Council on the Arts Grants
- PA Humanities Council Grants

# Pause & Reflect

What are your community's particular needs?  
How can open spaces and parks help address those needs?





**York County  
Economic Alliance**

# Activating York County's Outdoor Recreation Economy

**Silas Chamberlin, PhD**  
Chief Strategy Officer  
York County Economic Alliance  
[schamberlin@yceapa.org](mailto:schamberlin@yceapa.org)



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# York County Economic Alliance



## York County Economic Alliance

Economic Development  
Corporation

Chamber of Commerce

Downtown Inc  
(Main Street York)

### AFFILIATES

General Authority

Industrial  
Development Authority

BLOOM Business  
Empowerment Center

Redevelopment  
Authority

York Business  
Improvement District  
Authority

York County  
Land Bank Authority

Firefly Outdoor &  
Economics Consultancy



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# York County Economic Alliance



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# PA's Outdoor Economy

- **Economic Impact.** \$20.4 billion or 2.0% of GDP
- **Business Creation.** 9,000+ businesses sustaining the outdoor economy
- **Employment.** 177,000 jobs generating \$9.5 billion in salary and wages
- **Driven by the private sector.** 98% of employment and 97% of all value-added comes from private industry.



# PA's Outdoor Businesses



## Producers

Those that design, manufacture, distribute, sell, and repair outdoor clothing, gear, equipment, and vehicles.



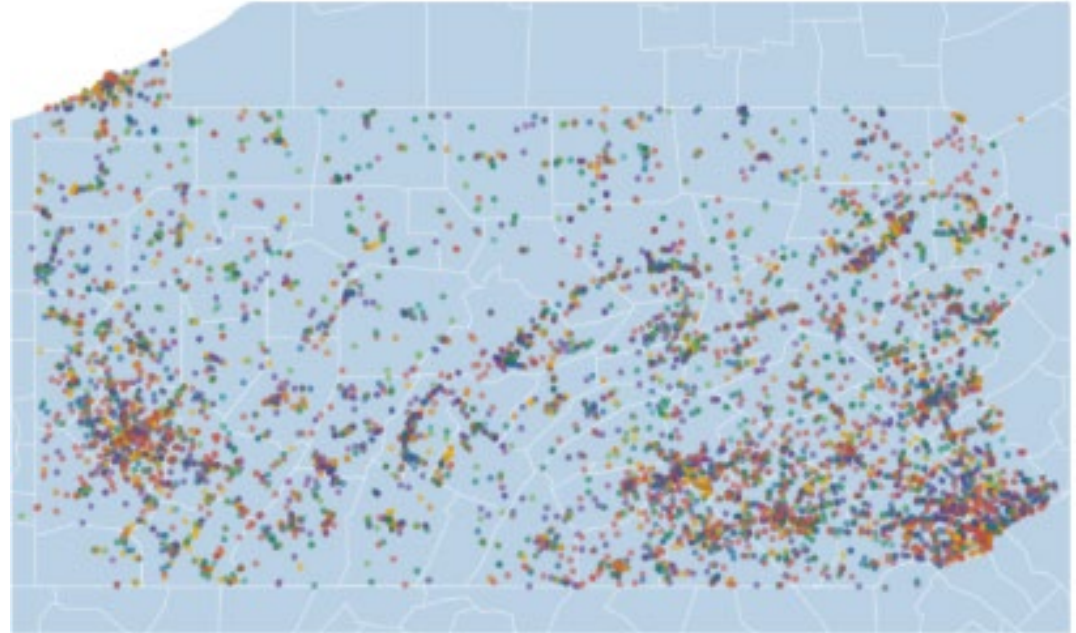
## Providers

Those that provide outdoor experiences, such as guides and outfitters, ski areas, campgrounds, adventure centers, event organizers, educators, and trainers.



## Professionals

Those that support outdoor recreation businesses and infrastructure, such as planners and designers, marketing and communication professionals, organizers and conveners, content creators, consultants, and other professional service providers.



## PA Outdoor Recreation Businesses

- Retail Trade
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Real Estate Rental and Leasing
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- Manufacturing
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Construction
- Information
- Other Services (except Public Administration)
- Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
- Wholesale Trade
- Educational Services
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Public Administration
- Administrative and Support and Waste... Services
- Utilities
- Public Space

# York County's Outdoor Economy

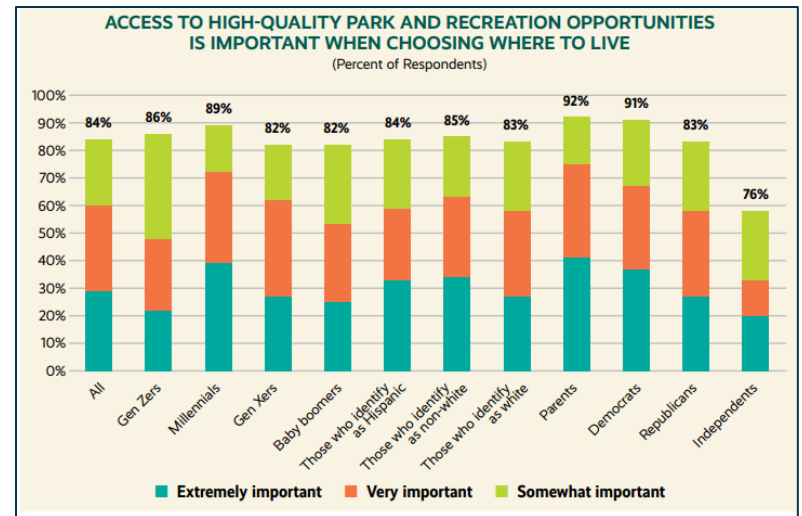
- 5,240 York County residents are employed in the outdoor economy—a 14% increase since 2010. More than real estate, insurance, and financial services—combined.
- \$135 million in wages each year.
- York County's four state park units host 2 million visits every year, generate \$44 million in consumer spending, and sustain 420 jobs.



# Outdoor Economy Paradigm Shift

## Talent and Business Attraction.

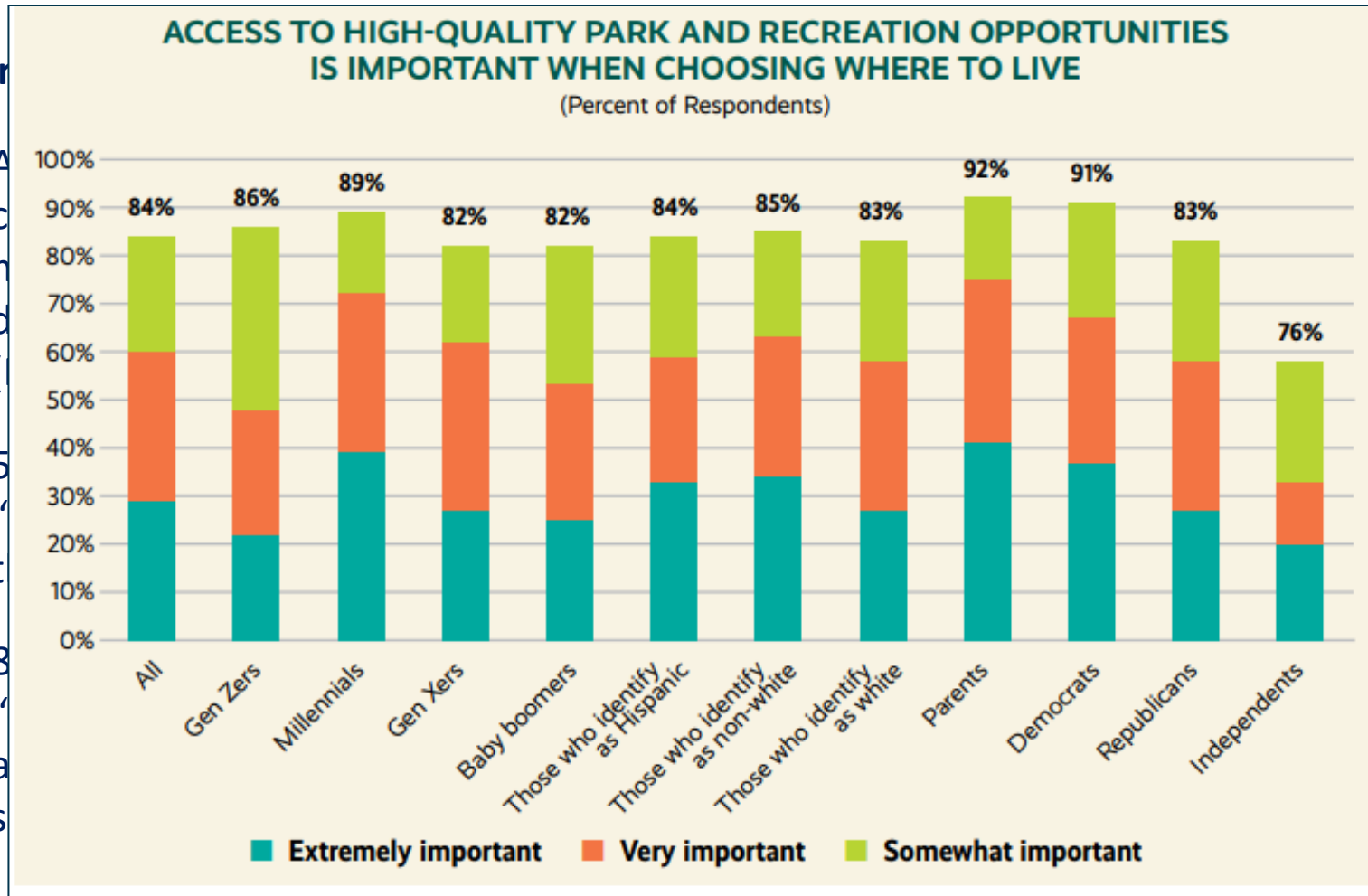
- Access to bike/walking paths is consistently a top 3 consideration for home buyers (National Realtors) across demographics and political persuasion (NRPA)
- 50% of recent college graduates say “place” is more important than job in their career search (HBJ)



# Outdoor Economy Paradigm Shift

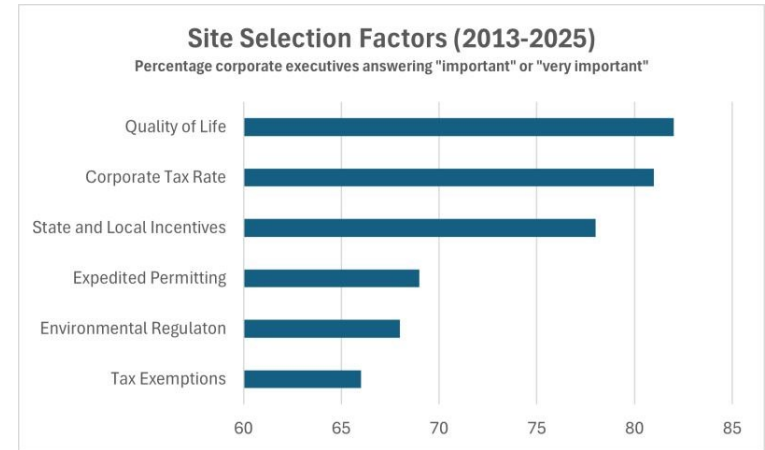
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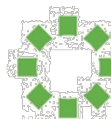


# Outdoor Economy Paradigm Shift

- Between 2013 and 2025, the highest ranked site selection factor by corporate executives has been quality of life.
- 82% say quality of life outranks corporate income taxes and financial incentives, when deciding on their next business location.
- Quality of life outpaced lax environmental regulations by 13 points and expedited permitting by 12 points.



# Outdoor Economy Paradigm Shift

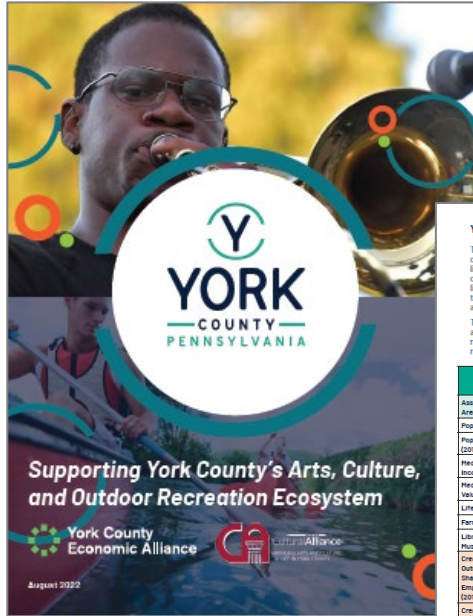


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# Outdoor Economy Ecosystem



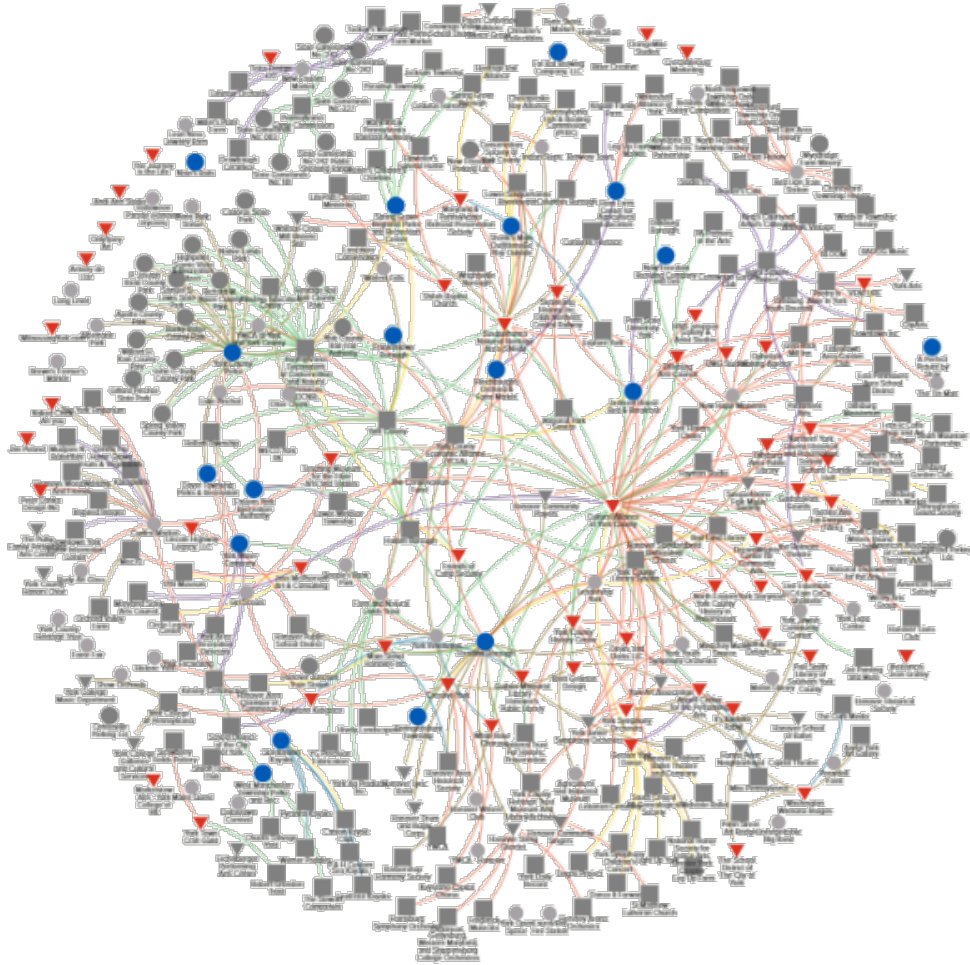
## YORK COUNTY'S DATA PROFILE

The following chart explores economic and demographic data for York County and six comparable communities, chosen for their relative similarities to York. In characteristics like population size, growth, median household income, and/or median home value. Each of the profiled communities has a dedicated public funding source for supporting quality of life amenities throughout their counties. In the sections that follow, the linkages between the presence of these funding mechanisms and economic growth is explored, in particular as it relates to employment within the creative and outdoor sectors.

These sectors are composed of diverse industries, including performing arts, museums and heritage sites, arts education, design and architecture, film and television, sounds and radio, publishers and software design, golf and skiing facilities, marinas, campgrounds, recreational goods retail, and more (full list included in the appendix).

	York County, PA	Allegheny County, PA	Davidson County, TN	Washington County, MD	St. Bernard Parish, LA	Santa Barbara County, CA	San Jose County, ND
Associated Metro Area	York City	Pittsburgh	Nashville	Hagerstown	New Orleans	Santa Barbara	Flint
Population (2019)	443,058	1,276,040	654,744	161,043	47,244	440,439	405,811
Pop Change (2010-19)	5.0%	10.6%	18.6%	2.3%	28.5%	9.2%	+4.9%
Median HI Income	\$68,340	\$62,320	\$82,215	\$61,130	\$47,873	\$78,325	\$50,269
Median Home Value	\$163,300	\$101,600	\$217,400	\$221,700	\$162,600	\$93,300	\$110,500
Life Expectancy	78	77	77	78	75	81	75
Farmers Markets	3	23	14	4	1	13	0
Libraries/Museums	10	101	33	14	3	44	30
Creative/Outdoor Sector Share of Total Employment (2019)	4%	6%	5%	4%	13%	6%	4%
Creative/Outdoor Sector Share of Total Employment (2020)	5%	8%	7%	4%	5%	8%	4%
Creative/Outdoor Sector Employment (2020)	8,358	50,221	32,033	2,370	511	16,000	4,917
Sector Employment Change (2010-2020)	33.80%	19.50%	48.00%	13.30%	-18.50%	36.00%	+4.50%

IMPACT / CASE STUDIES



**FOURTH ECONOMY**



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# York County Economic Action Plan

Our 10-year EAP pivots our county's economic development strategy to emphasize people-focused and place-based initiatives, including:

- Promoting investment in arts, cultural and outdoor infrastructure, including parks, trails, and open space
- Building the capacity for placemaking countywide
- Rededicating resources to the county's 36 historic boroughs
- Documenting the economic impact of the outdoor and cultural economies

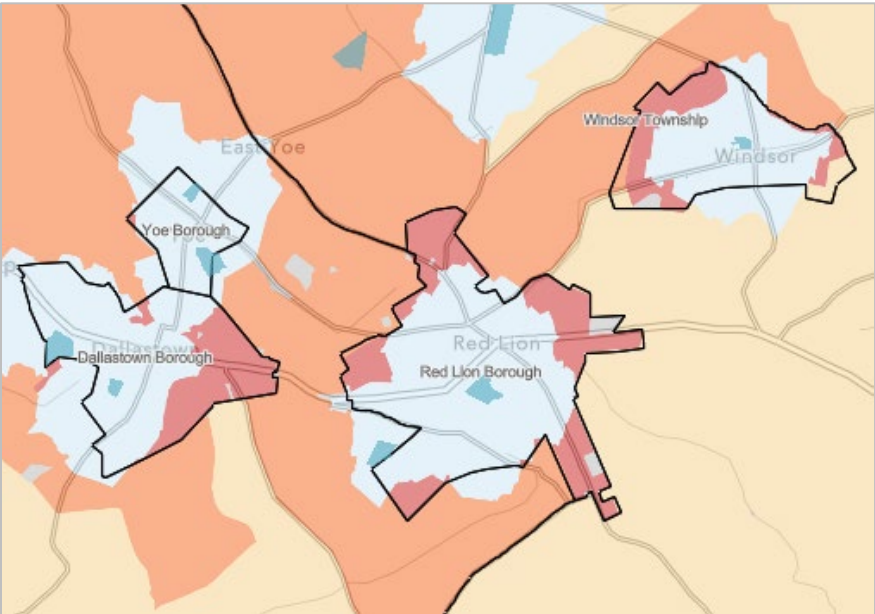


# York County Trail Towns



# York County Trail Towns

Outdoor Asset Rich



Economic Inequity



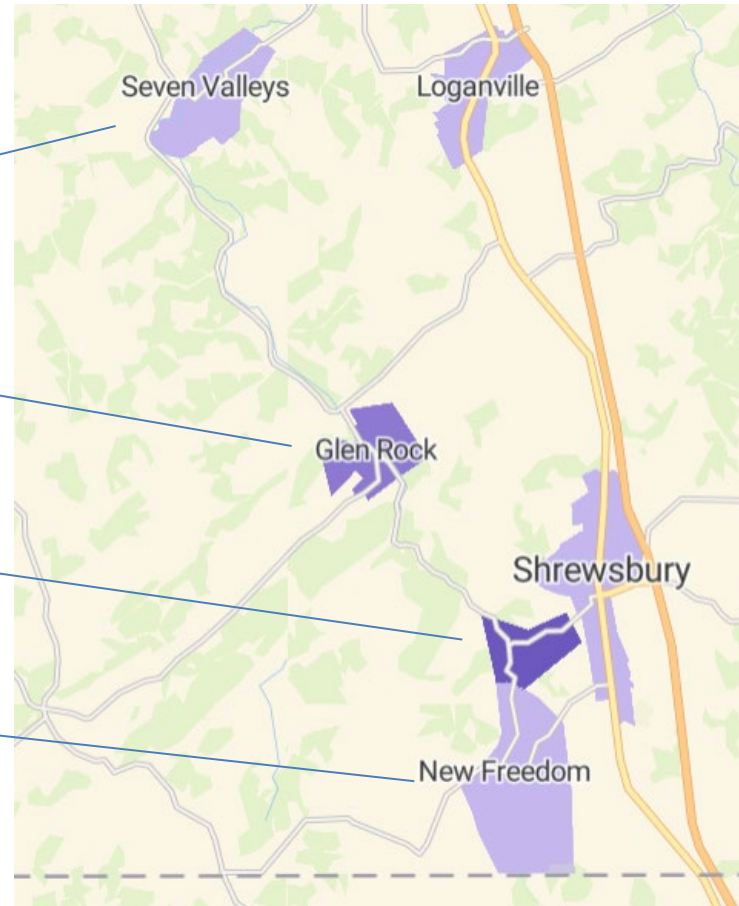
# York County Trail Towns

Seven Valleys: 8% poverty

Glen Rock: 14% poverty

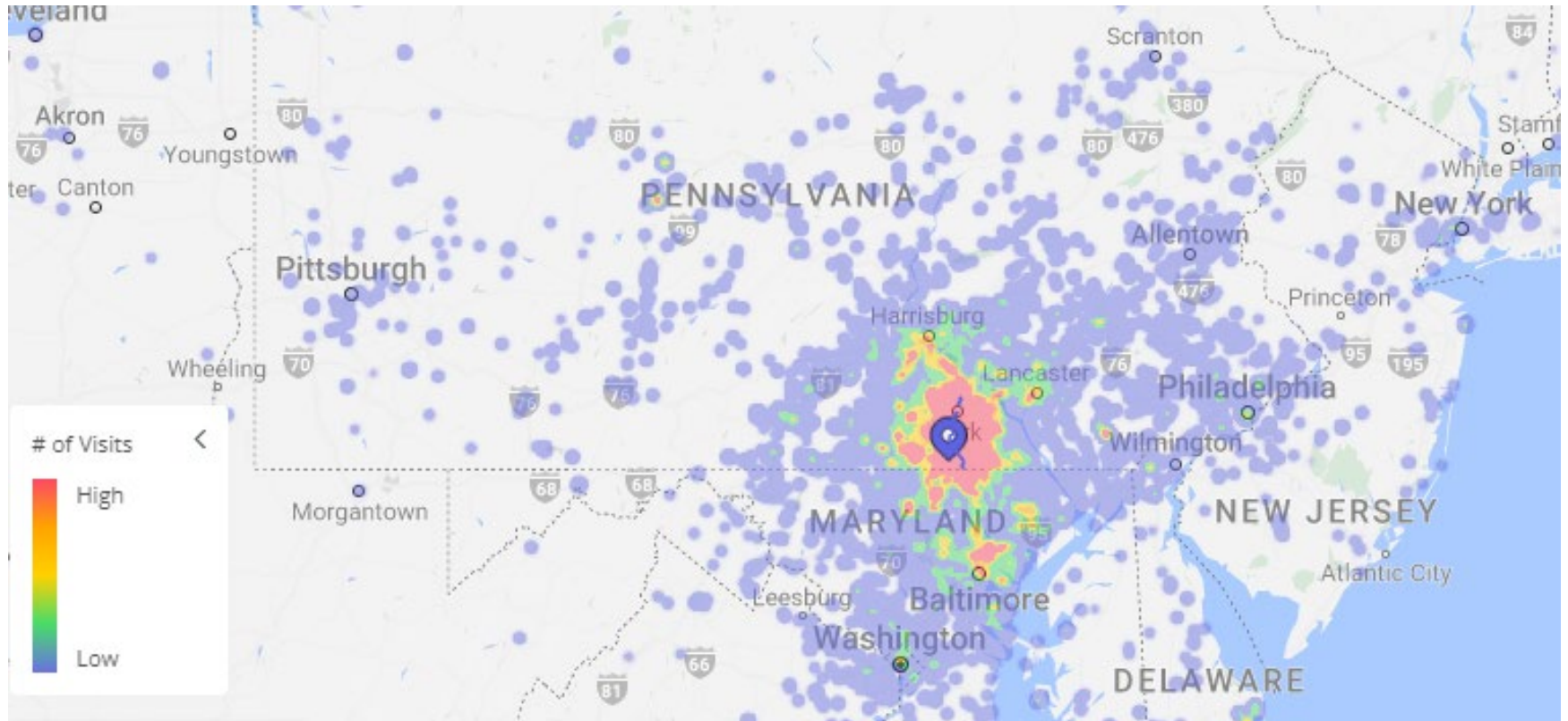
Railroad: 17% poverty

New Freedom: 5% poverty

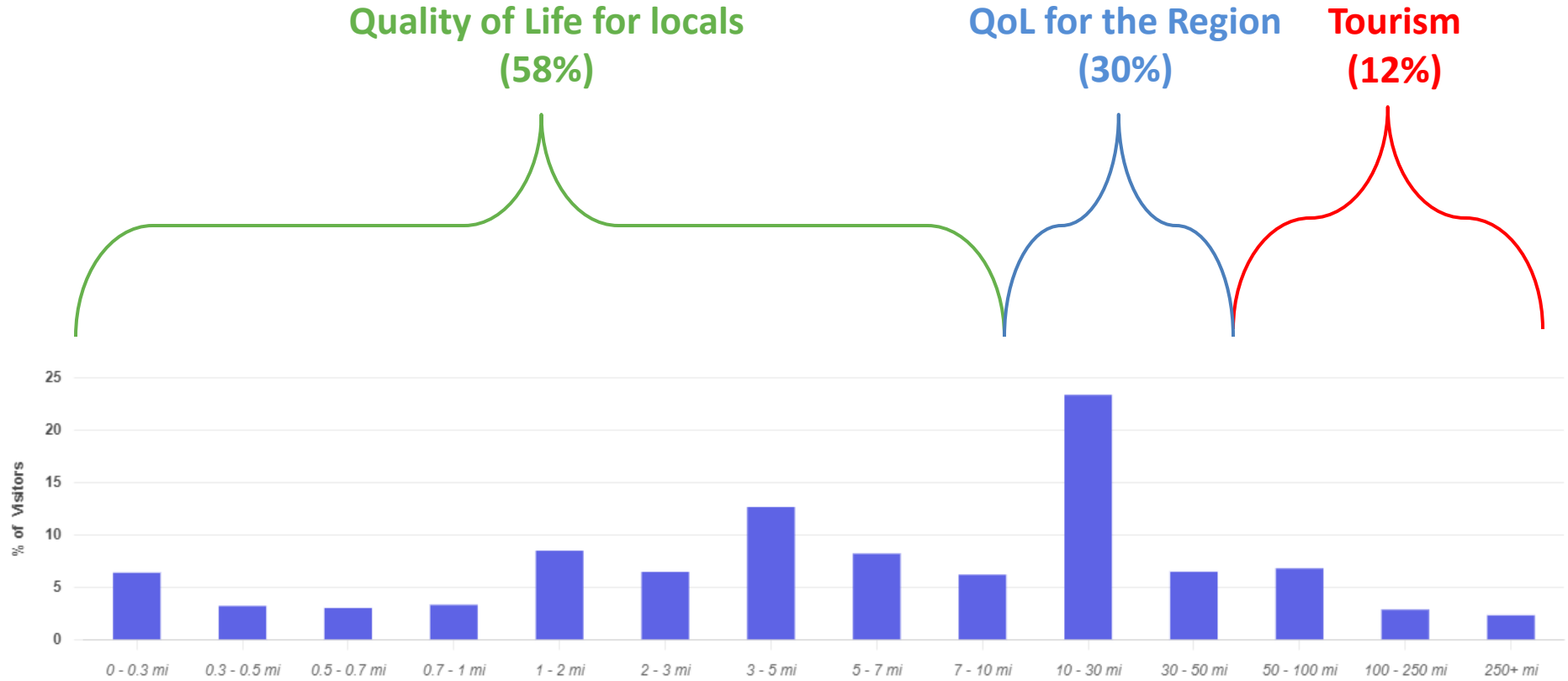


Census tract average: 5% poverty

# Heritage Rail Trail Visitation



# Heritage Rail Trail Distance from Home



# Heritage Rail Trail Tourism Spending

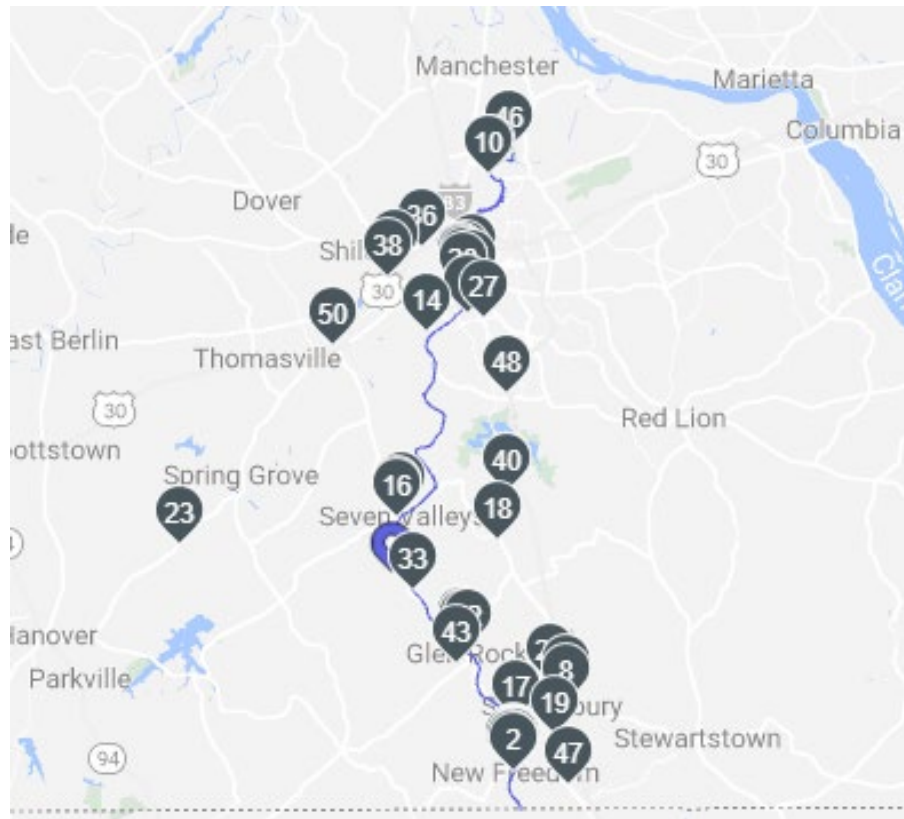
$$20,657 \text{ visits} \times \$419 \text{ per visit} = \$8,655,283$$

Each year, the Heritage Rail Trail generates an estimated **\$8,655,283** in consumer spending from tourists alone, injecting revenue into local businesses.

(Even when 88% of all trail use is by those living in the region.)

# Heritage Rail Trail Visitor Journey

A visual representation of the top 50 destinations reveals remarkable concentration of visits along the trail's corridor, indicating that trail users tend to visit local destination even when coming to the region as tourists.



June 1, 2017 – June 1, 2024  
All visitors > 10 minutes

# Heritage Rail Trail Visitor Journey

Individual businesses benefited from trail-related patronage. For example, in 2024:

- Rutters Convenience Store (New Freedom) captured 2,175 customer visits.
- Seven Sports Bar (New Freedom) captured 2,241 customer visits.
- Glen Rock Mill Inn captured 3,272 customer visits.
- CS Convenience Store (Glen Rock) captured 3,800 customer visits.
- Valley Tavern (Seven Valleys) captured 1,904 customer visits.
- Paesano's Pizza (New Freedom) captured 2,348 customer visits.
- Main Street Market, a fresh food grocer (Glen Rock) captured 2,138 customer visits.

Most of these businesses, and others in the top 50 destinations, are located in York County Trail Towns and participate in the Trail Friendly Business program, which encourages trail user patronage.

2023 total visitation  
All visitors > 10 minutes



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# Business Impact

Seven Sports Bar (New Freedom) captured 2,241 customer visits in 2024.



## IRISH BRUSSELS

Fresh Brussel sprouts flash fried and tossed with raisins and pecans in an Irish whiskey glaze.

\$13

## MARGARITAS

Our house margaritas served on the rocks or frozen

\$6

\$19/customer X 2,241 customers =

**\$42,579 in revenue from trail users in 2024.**



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# Trail Town Business Resources

- \$139,000 grants made to 81 Trail Town businesses
- \$80,000 in façade grants within Trail Towns
- \$3 million in construction capital invested in Trail Towns projects
- 60+ Trail Friendly Business who commit to welcoming trail users
- \$6.7 million in financing now available via BLOOM CDFI with priority given to Trail Town businesses, women-owned businesses and businesses owned by people of color.



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# Trail Town Business Growth

**AleCraft Brewery  
(Railroad)**



**23** New Businesses Created  
**4** Businesses Retained

Breweries • Coffee Shops • Book Stores  
Event Venues • Restaurants • Retail Stores  
Fresh Food Markets / Micro Grocers

**Riverside Subs  
(Wrightsville)**



**Main Street Market  
(Glen Rock)**

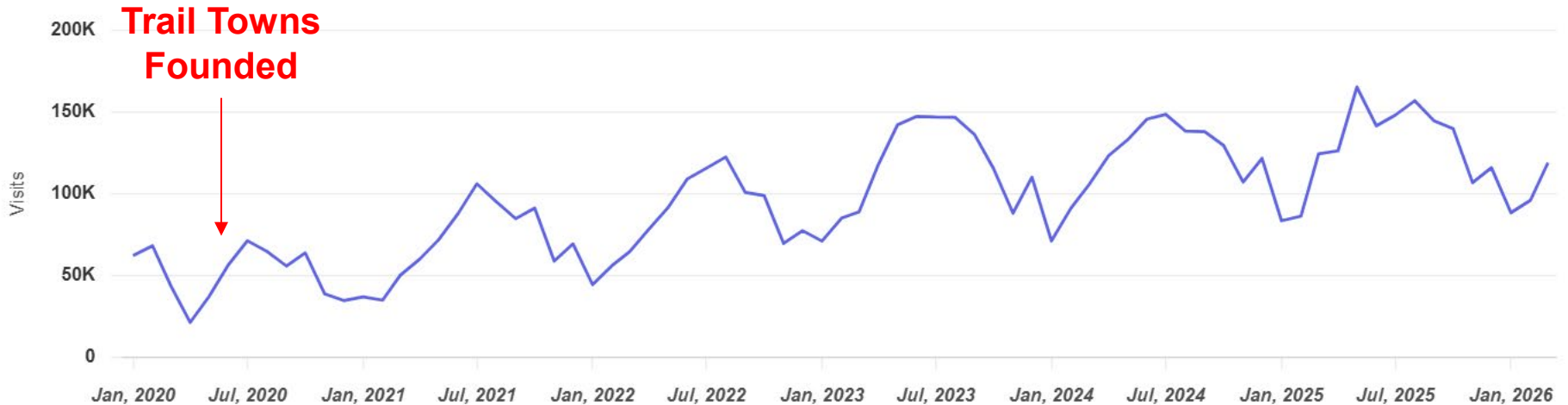


**New Freedom Roasting Co.  
(New Freedom)**



# Trail Town Business Growth

Since our founding, Trail Town businesses have experienced a **37.7% increase in annual patronage** or an **additional 232,000 customer visits**



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# Layering of Community Investments

Outdoor economy strategies are more powerful when they consider and reinforce solutions to urgent community needs, such as:

- Deploying \$21M in **broadband** capital into Trail Towns including middle mile buried under the York Heritage Rail Trail
- Sharing a municipal “playbook” of model ordinances on housing, transportation equity and childcare expansion to Trail Town communities (and others)
- Trail Towns designated Creative Communities by PA Creative Industries
- Investing conventional economic development capital in creative ways



Municipal Development Proposal (MDP)  
Early Childhood Education (Center Based & Home Based)

**MODEL ZONING ORDINANCE – COMMERCIAL CHILD CARE FACILITIES**

**Section 1. Authority and Purpose**

This ordinance is enacted pursuant to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 217 of 1968, as amended). The purpose of this section is to regulate the development of commercial child care facilities, to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses, to promote overall greater access to commercial child care facilities, and to support sustainable growth across urban, suburban, and rural communities.

**Section 2. Definitions**

The following recommendations include several options for defining types of commercial child care facilities:

- **Child Care** – An establishment that provides care, protection, and supervision for children on a regular basis away from their primary residences for less than 24 hours per day. The term does not include the following: public or private elementary or secondary schools or facilities operated in conjunction with employment, shopping center or other principal activity, where children are cared for while parents or customers are occupied on the premises or in the immediate vicinity.
- **Child Care (General)** – A child care center that provides care, protection and supervision for seven (7) or more children, at any one time, including those under the supervision or custody of the child care provider and those under the supervision or custody of employees.
- **Child Care Center** – A facility licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that provides a wide range of formal day-care services for remuneration to seven (7) or more children, who are supervised by a qualified staff. The child care center shall not be used as a family residence.
- **Day Care Center** – Child – A facility, licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, located within a building which is not used as a dwelling unit, for the care of children under the age of sixteen (16) for a portion of a 24-hour day. This land use classification includes nursery schools which provide daytime care and/or instruction for two (2) or more children of preschool age.

**Section 3. Applicability and Permitted Locations**

This ordinance applies to commercial child care facilities located in residential, mixed-use, commercial, and/or industrial zoning districts:

- **Urban:** Residential, central business districts, mixed use, commercial, and industrial zones.
- **Suburban:** Residential, mixed-use, commercial corridor, office park, and industrial zones.
- **Rural:** Residential, mixed-use, village commercial, or industrial zones with existing infrastructure.

**Section 4. Floor Area Requirements**

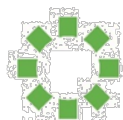
This ordinance provides for the following gross floor area requirements:

- The gross floor area of a commercial child care facility in any structure other than an office, residential or industrial structure shall total no less than one thousand two hundred sixty (1,260) square feet or 0.75 percent of the gross floor area of the structure exclusive of parking, loading, and other exceptions listed in the municipal zoning ordinance.





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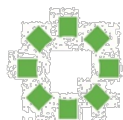


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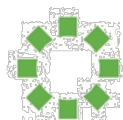


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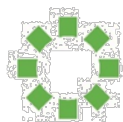


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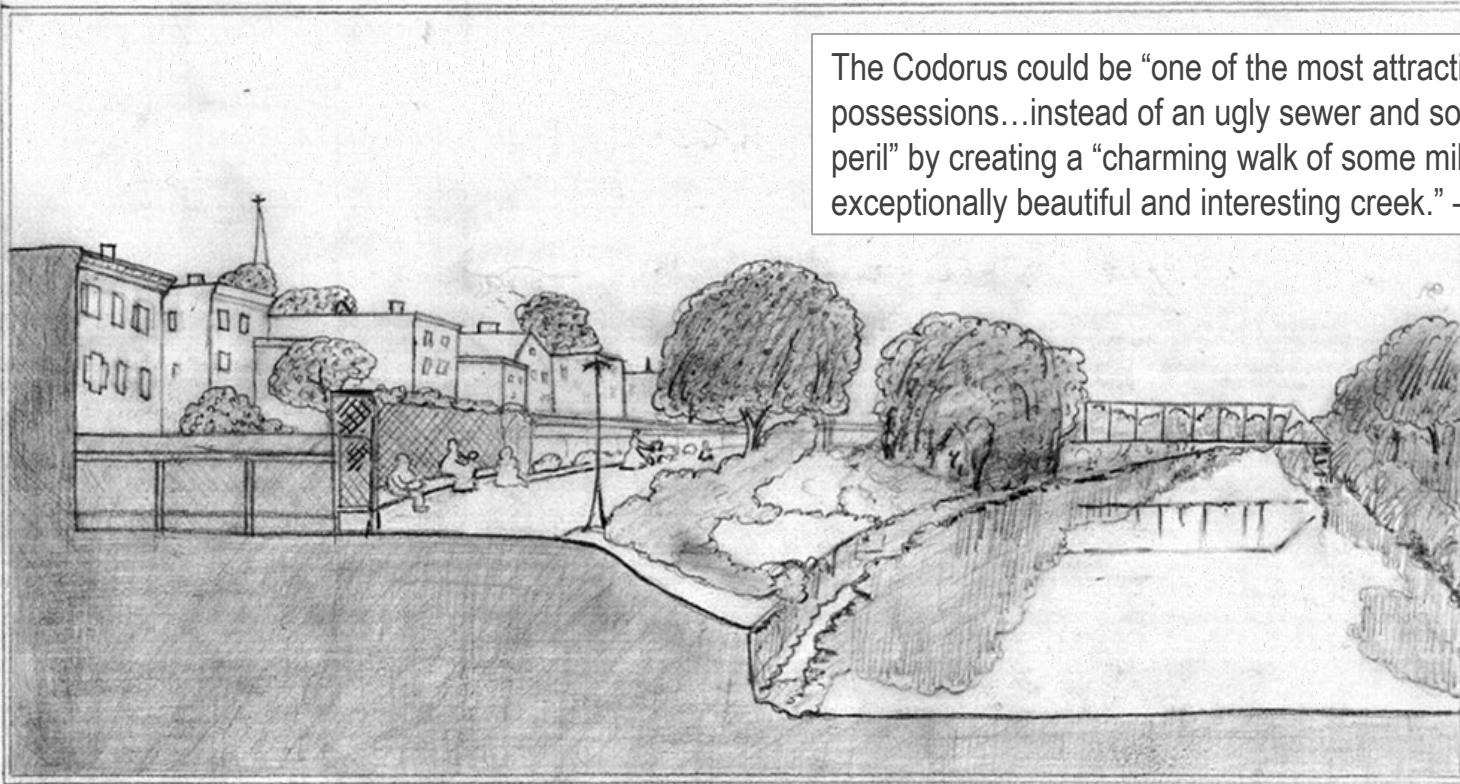
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# The Olmsted Plan (1907)

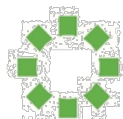
The Codorus could be “one of the most attractive of our possessions...instead of an ugly sewer and sometimes a peril” by creating a “charming walk of some miles beside an exceptionally beautiful and interesting creek.” – A.B. Farquhar



CODORUS CREEK PROMENADE

YORK, PA.

SKETCH TO ACCOMPANY REPORT OF OLNSTED BROTHERS, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
COPY OF PRINT NO. 6.

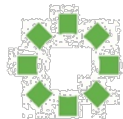


York County  
Economic  
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# The Codorus Greenway

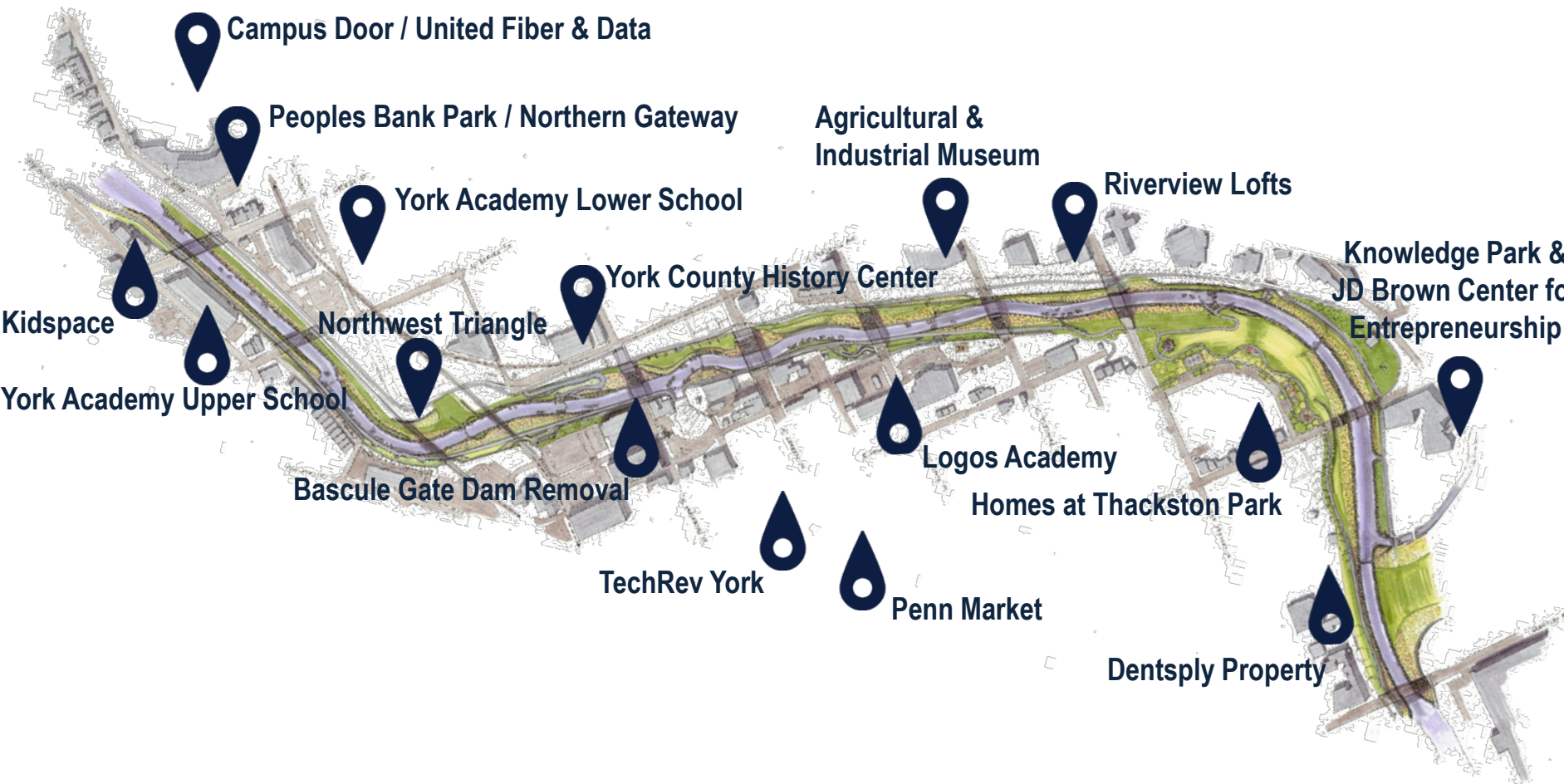


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Economic  
Alliance



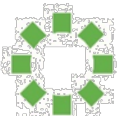
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# The Codorus Innovation Corridor



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# The Codorus Greenway



York County  
Economic  
Alliance



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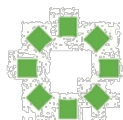








# Phase 1 – Grantley Rd. to College Ave.

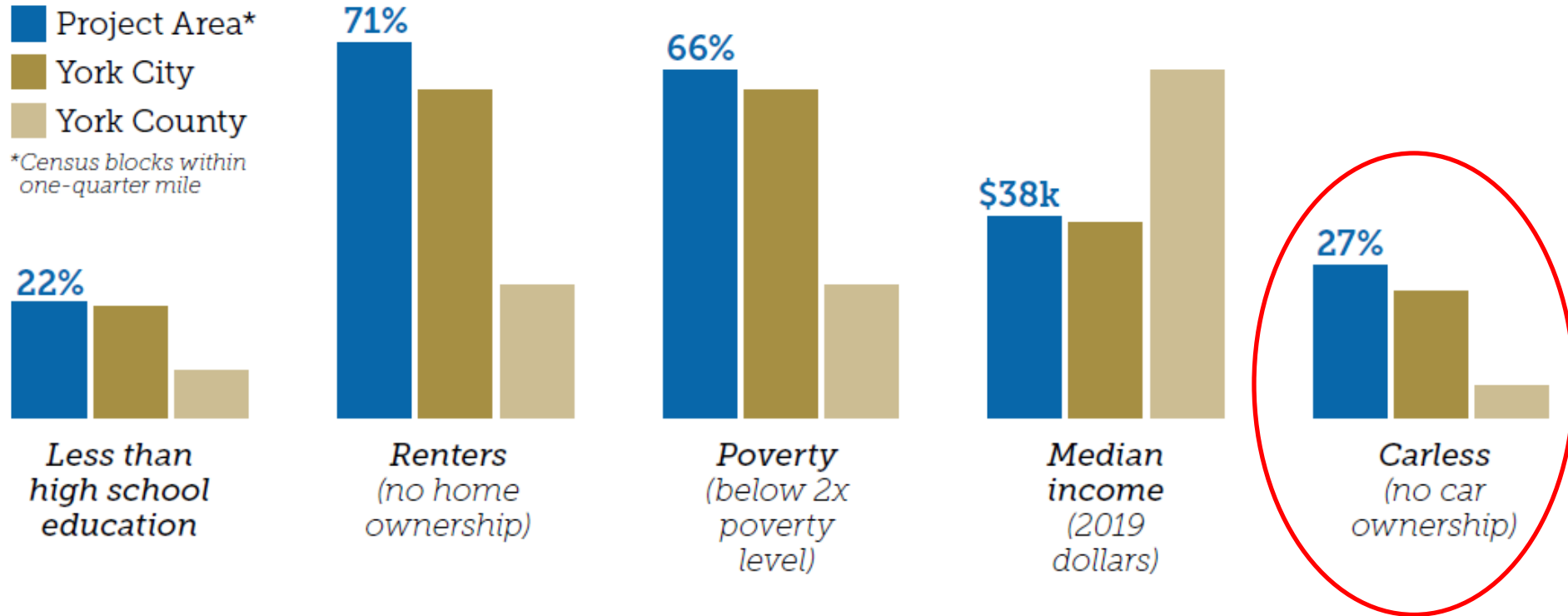


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# Phase 1 – Grantley Rd. to College Ave.



# Community Benefit

Estimated \$190 million in benefit over 20 years

\* not including construction jobs, stormwater benefits, increased real estate values

- Estimated annual pollutant reductions for overall project:
  - Sediment Reduction: 646,000 lbs./year (16% of York County's overall sediment reduction goal)
  - Phosphorous Reduction: 1,776 lbs./year
  - Nitrogen Reduction: 13,323 lbs./year

Table 1. Total Undiscounted Benefits over 20 years of Operation

CATEGORY	MONETARY VALUE (in 2020 dollars)
Safety Benefits	\$73,200,000
Environmental Sustainability	\$69,000
Quality of Life	\$11,740,000
Economic Competitiveness	\$688,200
State of Good Repair	\$89,700
Maintenance Costs	\$(2,600,000)
Residual Value	\$10,000,000
<b>TOTAL BENEFITS (UNDISCOUNTED)</b>	<b>\$93,240,000</b>

# Phase 1 Funding

- **Funding Contributors to Date**
  - US Army Corps of Engineers
  - PA Governor's Office / Office of Budget
  - County of York
  - USFHA Federal Lands Access Program
  - PA DEP
  - PA DCNR
  - PA DCED
  - PENNDOT
  - Powder Mill Foundation
  - York County Community Foundation
  - City of York
  - US DOT RAISE
- **Potential Sources of Additional Funding**
  - PENNVEST



# Bascule Gate Demolition



# Bascule Gate Demolition



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**York County  
Economic Alliance**

# Activating York County's Outdoor Recreation Economy

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# Q&A

*Please share your questions in the chat!*



# Small Group Discussions: Aligning Local Goals

20 minutes

## Instructions

- Using the poll, select the topic or community goal you are most interested in discussing *today*.
- In small groups, discuss:
  - In your own community, how are you already leveraging parks and open spaces to support this goal?
  - What opportunities do you see to better align local open space goals with this goals?
  - What barriers have you faced to aligning open space goals with the goals of other stakeholders or potential partners?



# Exit Ticket

Please complete a brief, 2-minute exit ticket to help inform future sessions!

Scan the QR code or click here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/drYR4Wg9YH>

Open Space as a Catalyst for  
Community Impact: Exit Ticket





Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,364 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places; raised \$100 billion in public funding for parks and public lands; and connected nearly 9.4 million people to the outdoors.

To learn more, visit [tpl.org](https://www.tpl.org).

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

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# Next Steps

- Complete the Exit  
Ticket: <https://forms.office.com/r/drYR4Wg9YH>
- Report-Out Slides & Recording
- **Session 3: July 23, 2026**  
Strategies for Community-Led Conservation

# Thank You!