

Saranac River Trail Community Benefits

Periodically we are re asked to identify some of the community benefits of Saranac River Trail. Many of the benefits are obvious, but here is a list that we quickly put together to identify both the readily apparent and less-identifiable reasons to promote and expand the trail. Feel free to add other benefits to this list (and pass them along!).

Obvious benefits

Saranac River Trail and other multi-modal trails provide recreation and exercise. They also provide an important resource for transportation. (Much of the Saranac River Trail has been built to conform to federal Department of Transportation standards).

The trail helps reduce traffic and increase safety by allowing non-motorized travel by creating inviting routes for walking and biking. Those modes of transportation, in turn, increase public health through enabling safe spaces for exercise as well as reduction in car trips and the resultant air pollution.

The Saranac River Trail is also an easily accessible space to relax, providing ample opportunities for trail users to sit by the river, enjoy nature, go fishing, play with their dogs, and take a mental health break.

These sorts of spaces, particularly easily accessible trails in urban environments, create well-documented economic benefits, improving property values (Plattsburgh has seen a strong uptick in home prices since the opening of the Saranac River Trail, and the trail is often featured in real-estate advertising), attracting outside businesses to relocate, and luring talented employees and entrepreneurs.

Other benefits

For the past several years, Friends of Saranac River Trail has put on events of all kinds on the trail, particularly nature and teaching treks. These are the kinds of events and amenities that will only expand as the Saranac River Trail continues to grow:

Nature and Art

- Bird watching
- Photography (Wabi-sabi walks)
- Art
- Identifying edible and medicinal plants along the Trail
- Learn about riverine behavior (such as The Great Washout from a tropical storm)

History

- Understand how the Water Resource Recovery Facility keeps the lake clean. (Our annual tour of the facility is our most-asked-for event)
- Joining with other organizations to promote history, tourism, and other features of the area. (We are very thankful for the ongoing support from Lake Champlain Basin Program which has supported events and brochures for us.)
- Indigenous peoples: See the *Who Discovered Lake Champlain?* panels at <https://saranacrivertail.org/content/champlain-monument-panels>.
- Industrial history: Our Downtown Trek traced the path of the Flume that powered the mills using river power.
- Downtown walks to explore Plattsburgh businesses, including the Jane's Walks in 2018 and 2019, which covered, among other stops:
 - * Plattsburgh Shoe Hospital
 - * Plattsburgh City Hall
 - * Food Co-op
 - * Consignment Shop Sculpture Studio
 - * Campus Corner

Community Events

- Friends of Saranac River Trail has sponsored events along the Trail for groups such as Sunrise Rotary, Noon Rotary, Lions Club, Kiwanis, and others.
- Fundraising walks
- Crime reduction and public safety — Saranac River Trail has call boxes linked to the SUNY police department in case of emergency.
- Community Well-being: The Trail and its amenities including benches for people to rest and relax on contributes to community well-being that is particularly important in times of crisis that affects the community and all its members from students at SUNY to long-time residents, the very young and very old. We have noticed increased use during times such as the pandemic lockdown. The Trail has not been closed but social distancing is encouraged and seems to be achieved.

- Destinations and Links

See *Saranac River Trail Greenway* at https://saranacrivertail.org/sites/default/files/BrochureSRTG_Email_.pdf

