

Parks, Recreation and Pathways

Brief Histories

Since the establishment of the Town of Lansing Parks and Recreation program approximately 26 years ago the recreational facilities of the Town have seen both steady growth and improvement. For example, Myers Park has greatly improved its marina and campsites and now includes businesses that rent kayaks and paddle boards and that provide bait for the many boaters who fish. Just recently the land at Salt Point (leased by the Town from the State of New York) has limited vehicle traffic to provide nature trails and bird watching, wading and sunning. The DEC boat launch in this area is available for launching non-motorized “rooftop” craft. The Town of Lansing has 15 miles of shoreline on Cayuga Lake and will be included in the Cayuga Lake **Blueway Trail**. The town will be adding a kayak launch at Myers Park, allowing for much easier entry into Salmon Creek.

The Recreational Fields near the Town Hall have been enlarged and improved. The land purchased by the town across from the Town Recreational Fields now houses 3 miles of perimeter footpaths that cross fields, hedgerows, streams, wetlands, and woods.

In concert with the development of facilities, the town’s recreational programs have grown consistently over the past 26 years. (Refer to the attached **inventory** that lists recreational sites and activities and amenities offered at each site.) Consider the programs available in summer 2013. There were 31 different types of activities offered, including preschool camps, day camps, instruction in sports from archery to windsurfing, art classes, horse riding and handling, cooking, and Spanish. Recreational offerings continue during the year, including Tai Chi for seniors. These programs, coordinated by the Town Parks and Recreation Office, rely on dedicated volunteers, without whom the range of offerings would not be possible. These activities use the range of facilities available in the town, and additional locations such as the Cayuga Lake Seido Karate and Flying High Farm.

Interested groups such as the Cayuga Bird Club, Eagle Scouts, Girl Scouts and private landowners offering easements for trails across their lands, have contributed to the development of both nature trails and opportunities for recreation in the Town.

The Town of Lansing has capitalized on its natural beauty, its location on Cayuga Lake and its attention to its residents recreational needs in the development of its Park and Recreational programs and facilities. These are most noticeable at Myers Park, Salt Point, Ludlowville and the Lansing Center area. Given the strong support for current and potential programs, facilities, and recreational areas, it is ironic that existing key locations are not connected by multi-use paths or trails.

Further, the Town is not connected to other communities by multi-use pathways of any kind. People wishing to watch birds in Lansing must now drive to Myers Park or Salt Point, and then drive over to the Town Center Trail, unless they want to walk along very busy roadways.

The need for the establishment of bicycle and pedestrian paths is not just a local Lansing concern: the need is noted by surveys of the national, regional and local populations. Such paths serve a number of purposes and can be designed to accommodate the need and interests of all age groups and those who are mobility impaired. Besides being alternative modes of transportation, they serve as recreational walking and jogging paths. These paths provide important linkages to destinations in a neighborhood and town. They provide an easy and safe way to get to a school, a field, a park, a friend's house, a store, a church. It is recognized in the Town of Lansing that recent population growth has mostly occurred in the southern area of the town adjacent to the Village of Lansing. This is verified by the developer applications being submitted to the Planning Board. It is expected that this trend will continue, making the need for established pathways increasingly important.

The Town of Lansing is composed of both a rural agricultural segment and suburban neighborhoods. The Town is bordered by Cayuga Lake on the east and State Highways. It is intersected by numerous County and Town roads. Although a few of those roads may have wide shoulders for bicycling they are not meant for the average pedestrian or bicyclist. High traffic, heavy trucks and high speed limits reduce the safety and attractiveness for the bicyclist and pedestrian.

In 2010 the Town of Lansing endorsed the work of a volunteer trail advocacy group known as the Lansing Pathways Committee. The Lansing Pathways Committee known as LPC is the first formally recognized committee acknowledged by the Town of Lansing to promote, plan, develop, and coordinate a system of trails both for recreation and transportation. The Lansing Center Trail was developed by the Lansing Pathways Committee, a trail now well used by runners, walkers, dog walkers, and birders. A spur of this trail was developed through an Eagle Scout project, following the abandoned Short Line rail bed. Both the main Lansing Center Trail and the Short Line Spur are gentle mostly level trails. The LPC just negotiated a seasonal and challenging trail into a unique natural area, the Jonas Falls Trail.

Goal:

The Town of Lansing will continue to provide a wide range of accessible recreational opportunities for Lansing residents of all ages to contribute to

the health and wellness of community members. Recreational activities can be active, such as hiking, playing soccer, or biking, or more passive, such as sitting at a park bench in an open public area to watch the sunset. In order to ensure all residents have opportunities it will be important for the Town to:

1. Support existing programs supervised by Lansing Parks and Recreation, ensuring adequate budgets, facilities, staff and volunteers to maintain the programs.
 - a. Attendance at existing activities provides data about uses and needs. These data can be supplemented by polling residents to determine if there are needs for more facilities or activities.
 - b. Data kept by the Parks and Recreation Department will be used to identify any needs for budget or staff allocations.
 - c. Data from the existing programs will be used to determine if there are any consistent demands for improvements or additions.
2. Review existing recreational sites/opportunities using current census data and community survey results to determine areas and neighborhoods where more facilities and parks are, or will be, needed. Criteria such as those established by the National Recreation and Parks Association should be used for planning to ensure equal access to all citizens and all areas in the Town.
3. Identify lands that can become available for new recreation locations and determine how to acquire access to the lands for Town use.
 - a. Work with developers to ensure new higher density areas provide for parks, open space, and recreational areas. Require new developments in the Town to either include lands for recreation/parks/ trails OR provide funding to support existing programs/parks/trails in lieu of land.
 - b. Work with interested civic groups to contribute to planning for parks and recreation locations.

Goal:

The Town of Lansing will maximize non-motorized transportation routes (e.g. for walking, running, biking, skiing) through pathways and trails that connect parks and recreation hubs with each other and with key Town destinations, and with destinations in neighboring communities, especially the Village of Lansing.

Many of the negotiations can be carried out by the Lansing Pathways Committee, with advice, consent, and support from the Town Planning Board and the Town Board.

1. The Lansing Pathways Committee has developed a **concept map** (see reference) outlining the territory that it proposes for trail development in the Town of Lansing. The **concept map** links destinations in the Town from the north to the west towards the schools and Myers Park to the east toward the Triphammer and Peruville Rd. intersection and to the south towards the Village of Lansing and Ithaca Mall. Making this concept map a reality will be the work of many years. Aspects of realization will require a formal commitment to the adoption of a long-range plan for Town trails. Such a commitment would include:
 - a. A formalized process to contact landowners of property with the potential for trail development to link with existing trails or with unique natural areas and seek agreement for property easements. The contact work could be done by volunteers, perhaps from the Lansing Pathways Committee, with oversight from the Town Board. The Town Board, with legal advice, would also oversee easements.
 - b. Coordination with neighboring communities to link to their trail systems, such as those in the Village of Lansing, the Town of Dryden and the Town of Ithaca.
 - c. A Town policy for working with all developers to incorporate trails and open spaces in their plans that link to exiting trails or planned trails.
 - d. Clear communications with specific volunteer and community groups to coordinate work with the Town Parks and Recreation. Groups would include the Cayuga Bird Club, Boy and Girl Scout Troops, Lansing Pathways Committee.
 - e. A plan for costs and maintenance of trails through a capital improvements budget, use of volunteer groups, grants from public and private funds.

2. Lansing also has many scenic areas and areas of historic and/or ecological significant. The Town should identify potential land areas for open space and make a policy to preserve significant open spaces. An example of this would be the current discussions on a proposed State Forest on the east side of Cayuga Lake adjacent to the power plant, on land currently owned and managed by NYSEG and referred to as Bell Station. To take advantages of these areas the town should:
 - a. Designate a conservation advisory council to prepare an inventory of open spaces to be followed by a conservation board.
 - b. Encourage private landowner easements by providing information about the process of providing an easement on the Town web site with references for assistance.

- c. Designate potential trails on railroad beds that have been abandoned or have the potential to be abandoned, to ensure the Town of Lansing could have the right of first refusal.
- d. Engage with the Tompkins County and the Ithaca Tompkins Transportation Council on inclusion of the Town of Lansing in the extension of trails to Lansing.

Rationales for Parks, Recreation and Pathways

Given the existing success of the programs of the Lansing Parks and Recreation Department, there is no need to provide a detailed rationale for the benefits and advantages of a well-organized Recreation program. However, extending recreational opportunities through the provision of pathways, trails, and open spaces, does seem to require more explicit rationale.

Local Support: There is local support for development of trails and pathways in the Town. A trail system has been proposed in both recent Comprehensive Plans prepared for the Town of Lansing.

In 2010 the Holt report on the town center plan clearly indicated residents' support of trail development. Then the **Residents' Survey** that was conducted in the summer of **2013** as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update process indicates that **"residents are supportive of using tax dollars for biking, walking and hiking facilities. 69.7 % of those surveyed supported the addition of bike paths or bike lanes on roads, 63.9 % supported the development of biking, hiking or walking trails, and 73.6 % supported requiring parks or paths in new developments approved by the Planning Board."** Planning for trails and pathways is in accordance with the Town of Lansing subdivision law (Section 801: Sec C and Section 801: Sec H) and the Town of Lansing Land Use ordinance Section: 701.4.11. The recent 2006 Comprehensive Plan identifies in section 3, topic #10 the goals that include the above and Section 5, on Traffic and circulation that identifies planning for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

State and National Support for Trails, Pathways, and Open Space planning: New York State law allows the Town to acquire dedication of land for Public Park and open space purposes from private sector developers as part of any new residential development project or funding for such facilities in lieu of land. Section 277 of NYS Town Law grants town planning boards the authority to require that residential subdivision plats show "a park or parks suitably located for playground or other recreational purposes." Section 274 (a) grants planning boards' authority to require similar dedication in cases where they review site plans for residential development such as apartment complexes. In recent years there have been at

least two developments in Lansing where these rules have been applied i.e. the Lansing Commons and the Village Circle Apartments/ Village Solar. In addition both Section 277 and 274 (a) further grant a town planning board the authority to require payment in lieu of land, should the planning board make a finding that a park or recreation way is warranted and determine that no suitable site on the property exists on which the development is proposed. The amount of money that the planning board could require in lieu of dedication is established by the town board. The funds collected through this mechanism can be deposited into a trust fund dedicated for parkland acquisition or the development of a park playground or other recreational facility. **New York State General Liability law** covers concerns on liability regarding trails.

At the **federal level** the Transportation Alternatives Program and the Safe Routes to Schools programs guide and support communities in their efforts to develop bicycle and pedestrian paths. These programs provide assistance and grants that are administered at the state level through the state transportation department both on a regional and local level. In our area that agency is the through the Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council.

Costs: It is strongly recommended that some provision for trails be included in the Town's budgetary planning, even though most of trail development is not directly from tax dollars. As mentioned previously working with fund raising, grants, private landowners, and volunteers is part of the budgeting process. It is important to mention that local businesses and foundations have been supporting trail development in the Town of Lansing. Donations from Cargill Deicing Technology, United Way and private citizens have made the current trail successes possible.

Lansing residents and community associations have a long-standing tradition of fund raising and park construction.

Economic impact: The benefits of trails and pathways for walking, biking, and other non-motorized recreation extend beyond health, transportation and enjoyment. Tourism and real estate development are enhanced by the existence of trails, pathways, and open spaces. Lansing is in a strategic position to develop its trails and promote itself and foster economic growth.

Additional documents:

1. Inventory color coded to differentiate the public and private facilities
2. Resolution 10-39 and 10-134

3. Recommended Guidelines for developers (draft) with Lansing Pathways fact sheet
4. Map with approximate locations of existing trails and facilities in the Town of Lansing depicted by a legend
5. Concept map showing east/ west/ north /south trails connecting destinations in the town of Lansing, and showing a dotted line for potential use of railroad beds.
6. Sample of a trail easement
7. References to Town web page for additional details on Lansing Pathways Committee