



Trail Town assessment

Delve into your community— through the eyes of a visitor.



 The Progress Fund

OVERVIEW

Access & Safety

1. Trail-to-town connection
2. Safety
3. Parking
4. Bike parking

Signage

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6. Signage in town
7. Signage into town

Business & Promotions

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10. Promotions & events

Design & Amenities

11. General impressions
12. Streetscape
13. Storefronts
14. Amenities
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Getting started

TRAIL TOWN ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A Trail Town assessment is a community-wide effort of key trail supporters and the public. It takes about a half-day to complete.

A core group of volunteers will help with sign-ins, and an experienced facilitator will lead the discussion (ideally a 3rd party.)

You'll split into groups, with 1 volunteer leading each team, and head through different parts of town, or to the trailhead. (The walks may take about 2 hours.) Each person should fill out the assessment and take notes along the way.

Don't know an answer? It's okay to leave it blank. **Is it complicated?** (These hefty questions often are!) Write in any explanations, clarifications or notes in the margins.

Return to the meeting space to discuss your

assessment questions: What are your town's strengths? Are you visitor-friendly? Cyclist-friendly? What opportunities do you have to improve, and create a welcoming atmosphere?

This assessment will help you take stock of your town's assets, but you also need to research your potential visitors. Your trail market may vary greatly from another area's. Not every town needs the same amenities, so don't rush to fill in every gap you find. This is a guide, not a blueprint.

But you can still use it to outline a plan: Start to identify some easy, visible projects you can start with. Early wins will keep the momentum going. Set some long-term goals, too.

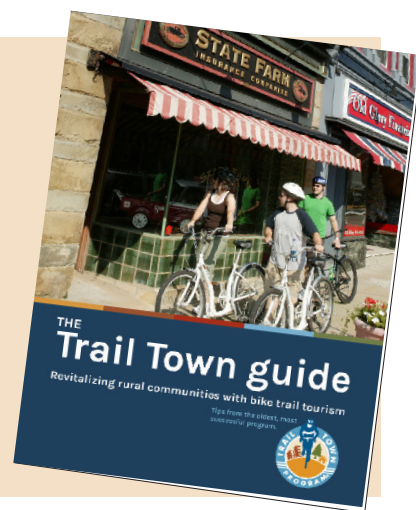
After the event, the organizer will compile a final report for the community.

Get the complete Trail Town guide

This workbook is an accompanying tool for our Trail Town guide, which goes over more in-depth details about the assessment process, plus other key steps to building a thriving trail town.

The Trail Town Program is the longest-running, most successful trail town revitalization project—so follow our lead. All our tools and tips are free for fellow trail supporters.

TrailTowns.org/guide

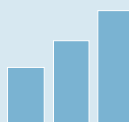


LOCAL SUPPORT
& FUNDING



ProgressFund.org

RESEARCH &
TRAIL DATA



TrailTowns.org/Research

NATIONAL
NETWORK



TrailTowns.org/Network

Access & safety

1. TRAIL-TO-TOWN CONNECTION

What's the distance from the business district to the closest trailhead? (Select most appropriate)

- ☐ Immediate
- ☐ 1-2 blocks
- ☐ 3-4 blocks
- ☐ .5 miles
- ☐ 1 mile or more

What is the location of the trail, compared to the business district? (Select most appropriate)

- ☐ Right through town
- ☐ On the edge of town
- ☐ Across a bridge(s)
- ☐ Up or down a hill

Is it easy for visitors to find and access downtown from the trail? Explain:

Are the following in or near (within about 1 mile) your community:

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | Public riverfront |
| ☐ | ☐ | Boat launch/water access |
| ☐ | ☐ | Lake or other waterway |
| ☐ | ☐ | State or National Parks |
| ☐ | ☐ | State or National Game Lands |
| ☐ | ☐ | State or National Forest |

Are there gateways to town?

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | Public riverfront |
| ☐ | ☐ | Boat launch/water access |
| ☐ | ☐ | Lake or other waterway |

WHAT'S A GATEWAY?

A gateway is any welcoming element that helps guide visitors. That can include things like signage, landmarks and public art.

2. SAFETY

Bike lanes

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Not counting the trail, are there bike lanes in any part of town?
- ☐ ☐ Are bike lanes and road shoulders free of potholes?
- ☐ ☐ Are bike lanes and road shoulders kept clean and free of debris?
- ☐ ☐ Is there an opportunity to incorporate new bike lines in the community?

Share the road/ Bike loops

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Not counting the trail, are there marked "share the road" or bike loops?
- ☐ ☐ Is there an opportunity for new "share the road" streets?

Sidewalks

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Are the sidewalks in good (smoothly bikeable & safely walkable) shape?
- ☐ ☐ Are the sidewalks ADA accessible?
- ☐ ☐ Are the sidewalks wide enough to accommodate pedestrian traffic?
- ☐ ☐ Does the central business district have sidewalks?
- ☐ ☐ Do the sidewalks abruptly stop?
- ☐ ☐ Are there sidewalks connecting trail to town?

Pedestrians and crosswalks

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Are there pedestrian walk/don't walk signals?
- ☐ ☐ Do the signals allow enough time for a child or older adult to cross the street?
- ☐ ☐ Are the crosswalks well marked?
- ☐ ☐ Are pedestrians highly visible to motorists at crossing?
- ☐ ☐ Do motorists generally respect pedestrians in crosswalks?
- ☐ ☐ As a pedestrian, do you feel safe when walking through town?
- ☐ ☐ If the trail crosses any roadways, are the crossings safe?

3. PARKING

Trail access

_____ How many parking spaces are available at the trailhead(s)?

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Are the spaces well marked or lined? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there a need for overflow parking? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does parking lot fencing have convenient openings for trail access? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Would the openings fit specialty bikes? (Tandems, tricycles, etc.) |
| ☐ | ☐ | Do parking spaces have extra length for hitch-mounted bike racks? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the parking area have extra turning radius for shuttle vans? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the parking area accommodate horse-carrying vehicles? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the parking area accommodate boat parking? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there safe interface between trail users and vehicles? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there adequate lighting at the trailhead? |

Downtown/ Business district

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there sufficient on-street parking? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are off-street parking lots placed behind stores? |
| ☐ | ☐ | If yes, are the lots easily accessible or signed well? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there a need for a parking study? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there adequate lighting in the business district? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there a need for additional lighting? |

4. BIKE PARKING

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Are bike racks easy to find and well-placed? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are the bike racks simple enough for the rookie rider to use correctly? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there bike corrals for high-traffic areas or events? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there bike racks at the trailhead(s)? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there bike racks in front of or near businesses? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there secure off-sidewalk bike parking areas close to the business district?
<i>Ex: parking lots</i> |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there bike racks in public spaces and parks? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there creative bike racks?
<i>Ex: A bike rack/bench combo, or dual use of decorative metal fencing</i> |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there hitching areas for horses, if applicable to your community? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there public bike repair stations available?
If yes, where are they? |

-
- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Do bike racks allow riders to lock their bike with 2 points of contact?
<i>(Example below)</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|

RACK EXAMPLE



< Because tires can be removed, the most secure way to lock a bike is to loop both the frame and the wheels.

Some grid racks only let cyclists lock 1 part of their bike. Racks that have 2 points of contact, like common U racks, give riders peace of mind to keep shopping and exploring.

5. GENERAL SIGNAGE

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Are there municipal signage ordinances?
- ☐ ☐ Are the ordinances being enforced? (Leave blank if unsure.)
- ☐ ☐ Overall, is signage clear and consistent in style, content, etc?
- ☐ ☐ Are there areas of sign clutter?

If yes, where?

6. SIGNAGE IN TOWN

Downtown

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Is there sufficient signage for visitors to find businesses and services?
- ☐ ☐ Is there interpretive information?
- ☐ ☐ Is there an informational kiosk or bulletin board?
- ☐ ☐ Does it include a business directory/map?
- ☐ ☐ Does it include a regional map?
- ☐ ☐ Is there a take-away town map with businesses/services listed?
- ☐ ☐ Is there a take-away trail map?

Business signage

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Are businesses' signs clearly visible and well-designed?
- ☐ ☐ Do the signs clearly state the service, or what is being sold?
- ☐ ☐ Do businesses clearly indicate when they're open?
- ☐ ☐ Are business hours posted on front doors or windows?

Note exceptions to any of the above:

7. SIGNAGE INTO TOWN

ON-ROAD/ MOTORIST SIGNAGE

Is there adequate signage for motorists to find:

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | Trail access |
| ☐ | ☐ | River/water access |
| ☐ | ☐ | Your business district |
| ☐ | ☐ | Services and amenities |
| ☐ | ☐ | Public parking |

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | Attractions |
| ☐ | ☐ | Parks and greenspaces |
| ☐ | ☐ | Emergency services |
| ☐ | ☐ | Other towns/destinations nearby |

ON-TRAIL/CYCLIST SIGNAGE

Is there adequate signage for users to find:

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | Trail access |
| ☐ | ☐ | River/water access |
| ☐ | ☐ | Your business district |
| ☐ | ☐ | Services and amenities |
| ☐ | ☐ | Public parking |

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | Attractions |
| ☐ | ☐ | Parks and greenspaces |
| ☐ | ☐ | Emergency services |
| ☐ | ☐ | Other towns/destinations nearby |

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there an informational kiosk or bulletin board? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does it include a business directory/map? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does it include a regional map? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there a take-away town map with businesses/services listed? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there a take-away trail map? |

Are there signs for:

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | Trail rules and courtesies |
| ☐ | ☐ | Interpretive information |
| ☐ | ☐ | Contributing or volunteering |

Business & promotions

8. GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Are downtown businesses clustered in a compact area?
- ☐ ☐ Do business hours match visitors' needs?
Ex: Open on weekends
- ☐ ☐ Do some business close in "off season" months?
- ☐ ☐ Are customers greeted warmly when they walk through the door?
- ☐ ☐ Are merchandise and stores clean and well kept?
- ☐ ☐ Do businesses cross-promote?
- ☐ ☐ Do businesses offer out-of-town shipping for large items?
- ☐ ☐ Are there public restrooms in available in any businesses?
- ☐ ☐ Do businesses offer information on the town/region/attractions?
- ☐ ☐ Can employees answer questions about the town/region/attractions?

Who did you talk to? _____

Conversation comments:

- ☐ ☐ Do employees answer questions in a friendly manner?
- ☐ ☐ Do shops carry souvenirs, especially related to the town/region/attractions?
- ☐ ☐ Is there a tourist information or visitor center?
- ☐ ☐ Is there a chamber of commerce?

BUSINESS/SERVICES AUDIT

The following few pages will guide you through a checklist of your town's businesses and services.

There is no magic formula for what a trail town has to have, but looking at what you have and what you don't might help give you some ideas about opportunities in your business district.

In addition to checkmarking whether a service is available, mark whether it's available on Saturdays and Sundays, too— these will likely be peak times for trail visitors.

YES NO SAT SUN

☐	☐	☐	☐
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If you want to dig deeper: make note of whether services are available late on weekdays (another key time for trail traffic), or whether they're only available seasonally.

9. BUSINESS/SERVICE CHECKLIST

NOTES

YES NO SAT SUN

Lodging

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Hotel (If yes, # of miles from town:___) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Motel (mi from town:___) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Bed & Breakfast (mi from town:___) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Vacation rental/guest house (mi from town:___) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Hostel (mi from town:___) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Cabins (mi from town:___) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Camping in town (mi from town:___) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Camping on trail (mi from town:___) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Secure bike storage at lodging sites |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Secure paddle storage at lodging sites |

Food & Drink

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Grocery store |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|

Dining:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Fast food or chain restaurants |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Locally-owned restaurants |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Café |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Bar/Tavern/Pub |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Brewery or wine bar |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Family-style dining |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | BYOB |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Specialty or international foods |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Ice cream |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Bakery |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Sweets/Candy |

Facilities that offer:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Outdoor seating |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Local foods |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | To-go options |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Options for special diets |

Ex: Gluten Free

... BUSINESS/SERVICE CHECKLIST CONT'D

YES NO SAT SUN

Recreation

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Outdoor recreation outfitter

Biking

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Rental

☐	☐	☐	☐
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Sales

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Equipment + repair

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Bike share

Paddling

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Canoe or kayak sales

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Canoe or kayak rentals

Livery Service

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Motorized watercraft

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Equipment + repair

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Sales

☐	☐	☐	☐
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Rentals

Hunting

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Fishing/tackle equipment or rental

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Hunting/trapping supplies

Sports Supply

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Running

☐	☐	☐	☐
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Walking

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Hiking

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Apparel

Other recreational:

Cultural Sites

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Art museum

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Art gallery

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Music/concert venue

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Historical society or museum

☐	☐	☐	☐
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Library

NOTES

... BUSINESS/SERVICE CHECKLIST CONT'D

YES NO SAT SUN

Retail & Services

☐	☐	☐	☐	Convenience store
☐	☐	☐	☐	Pharmacy/drug Store
☐	☐	☐	☐	Bookstore
☐	☐	☐	☐	Gift shops
☐	☐	☐	☐	Antiques
☐	☐	☐	☐	Hardware store
☐	☐	☐	☐	Laundromat
☐	☐	☐	☐	Bank
☐	☐	☐	☐	24-hour ATM
☐	☐	☐	☐	Gas station
☐	☐	☐	☐	Emergency medical services

Other:

Transportation

☐	☐	☐	☐	Shuttling - Local (Appx 25 miles)
☐	☐	☐	☐	Shuttling - Long-distance
☐	☐	☐	☐	Public transportation
☐	☐	☐	☐	Taxi service/Ride share

Technology

Free public WiFi

☐	☐	☐	☐	During Business Hours
☐	☐	☐	☐	24/7

Cell Reception

☐	☐	☐	☐	In Town
☐	☐	☐	☐	Recreational Areas
☐	☐	☐	☐	Access to public email service Ex: library/internet café
☐	☐	☐	☐	Are there phone charging areas?
☐	☐	☐	☐	Do businesses offer phone charging areas?
☐	☐	☐	☐	Is there access to a public phone? Ex: at the visitor center, police station

NOTES

10. PROMOTIONS & EVENTS

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the town use special events to encourage people to come to town? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the trail uses special events to encourage people to come to the trail? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is the trail linked to downtown events and happenings? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is the town linked to trail events and happenings? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there any organized town-to-town bike rides or paddles? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there any on-going events throughout the year/season? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Monthly? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Weekly in Summer? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there concert/art related events? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there promotional materials for individual events? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there promotional materials for multiple events? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are events promoted online (websites, social media, etc)? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Do communities cross promote other town and regional events? |

11. GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

YES NO

☐☐

Does the town appear economically healthy?
Why or why not?

☐☐

Does the town appear clean?
Why or why not?

☐☐

Does the town feel safe?
Why or why not?

☐☐

Are parks and greenspaces accessible and
welcoming to visitors?
Why or why not?

☐☐

As a whole, are you enjoying your walk of
downtown?
Why or why not?

THINGS TO WATCH FOR

Are there empty storefronts?
Blighted buildings?

Are there appropriate garbage
cans to keep the area clean?
Is there graffiti?

Is there appropriate
lighting? Is the atmosphere
approachable?

Are there places to sit or
walk? Plantlife displays?
Welcoming signage?

12. STREETScape

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Does the community enforce building codes? (Leave blank if unsure.)
- ☐ ☐ Is there a solid strip of buildings/businesses?
Ex: Not broken up by parking lots
- ☐ ☐ Are the walls and storefronts kept free of graffiti?
- ☐ ☐ Overall, are the structures in town in good condition?
- ☐ ☐ Are historic buildings restored and recognized?
- ☐ ☐ Does the town use decorative lampposts for night lighting?
- ☐ ☐ Are there banners?

13. STOREFRONTS

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Are storefronts maintained?
Ex: No broken glass, crumbling brick, peeling paint, etc.
- ☐ ☐ Are the storefront windows clean?
- ☐ ☐ Are window displays appealing and inviting?
- ☐ ☐ Do the displays incorporate heritage, art, recreation, events, etc?
- ☐ ☐ In general, are vacant storefronts reasonably maintained?
- ☐ ☐ Are the storefronts decorated?
Ex: flowers or hanging baskets in spring, seasonal holiday decorations
- ☐ ☐ Are store windows lit at night? (Leave blank if unsure.)

14. AMENITIES

IN TOWN

AT TRAILHEADS

IN GREEN SPACES

☐	☐	☐	Flush/compostable toilet
☐	☐	☐	Portable toilet
☐	☐	☐	Public water fountain
☐	☐	☐	Pavilions or shelters
☐	☐	☐	Picnic tables
☐	☐	☐	Benches
☐	☐	☐	Are they well placed?
☐	☐	☐	Are there enough of them?
☐	☐	☐	Trash cans
☐	☐	☐	Are they well placed?
☐	☐	☐	Are there enough of them?
☐	☐	☐	Recycle bins
☐	☐	☐	Are they well placed?
☐	☐	☐	Are there enough of them?
☐	☐	☐	Security Lighting
☐	☐	☐	Public art

Other amenities:

Landscaping:

☐	☐	☐	Are street/shade trees well placed?
☐	☐	☐	Are the decorative plants native to your area? (Leave blank if unsure.)
☐	☐	☐	Are rain gardens or permeable surfaces being used?

15. CHARACTER

One important thing visitors are looking for is a sense of a place's identity and uniqueness.

YES NO

☐☐

Does the downtown feel unique, memorable or special?

Why or why not?

☐☐

Is the local culture visible?

Why or why not?

☐☐

Are there audible touches, like chimes, church bells or music?

If so, what?

What 3 words best describe what makes your community unique?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

For each of the characteristics you chose, describe how visitors could also see that feature in your town— even if they are just passing through:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

For each of the words you chose, what could your town do to make people even more aware of this characteristic from the moment they enter, and as they explore?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

FINAL NOTES & THOUGHTS



created by

 **The Progress Fund**

The Allegheny Trails Association partnered with The Progress Fund to implement Trail Town assessments along the Great Allegheny Passage and other trails.

The Progress Fund has updated the assessment as we've learned from the process through its 10+ years in practice, and also to reflect modern trends. This current version of the Trail Town Assessment is intellectual property of The Progress Fund and the Trail Town Program®.

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