Many people realize exercise is important for maintaining good health in all stages of life; however many do not regularly exercise... There is scientific evidence that supports providing convenient access to places for physical activity, such as trails connecting to parks or other recreational facilities, increases the level of physical activity in a community. In addition to helping control weight, physical activity helps prevent heart disease, helps control cholesterol levels and diabetes, slows bone loss associated with advancing age, lowers the risk of certain cancers and helps reduce anxiety and depression. The power of physical activity to improve mood and prevent disabilities and chronic diseases is especially pronounced for older adults.

Neighborhoods where children can safely walk or bike to a park, school, or to a neighbor’s home are generally also good places to live. Trails connect neighborhoods and schools so children can cycle or walk to their friends homes or to school, especially in communities that lack sidewalks. Integrating unique features such as trails and greenways into cities help build a sense of place and community pride by providing informal opportunities to meet and interact with neighbors. These efforts are magnified when communities use trails and greenways to highlight and provide access to historic and cultural resources. Trails and greenways can reduce crime and illegal activity through regular use and high visibility of users.

In addition to having the ability to create more livable communities, greenways and trails often function as viable transportation corridors. Trails can be a crucial element to a seamless urban or regional transportation system that connects people to where they want to be, and economic benefits come from connecting people to places that they want to be. Countless communities across America have experienced economic revitalization due to whole or in part to trails and greenways.