Appendix I

Case Studies and Best Practices
Bike Share Programs

While bike sharing programs are becoming common in larger cities such as Washington D.C., two Pennsylvania bike share programs are showing this type of active transportation program is possible in smaller communities as well. Bike Pottstown and Bike Schuylkill are both free share programs that encourage people to run errands, attend meetings or just enjoy the ride around town. Participants sign a “ride at your own risk” waiver and leave their driver’s license at the bike shop either for short hour-long errands or for a day-long ride. The Schuylkill River Heritage Area manages the program. Bike Pottstown was developed with a grant from Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation; Tri County Bicycles provides maintenance and storage for Bike Pottstown, while Phoenix Cycles does the same for Bike Schuylkill-Phoenixville, with further support provided by Phoenixville Green Team, Our Town Foundation in Hamburg and the boroughs of Hamburg and Pottstown.

For more information

http://bikeschuylkill.org/

Parks Prescription Programs

In a perfect marriage between recreation and the medical community, parks prescription programs are taking hold in several cities across the country.

In one such example, Dr. Robert Zarr kick-started a program in 2013 in the nation’s capital to provide a healthy, safe and affordable treatment option that is easily accessible to families in the D.C. area. Prescribing parks is a very low risk, affordable option for treatment of chronic diseases including diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and mental illnesses such as depression. More than 350 parks have been mapped, categorized by safety, cleanliness and activity level and compiled into a database that is linked to physicians’ electronic medical records. Since inception, doctors have written more than 400 parks “prescriptions.”

The prescriptions specifically address where and when a child will play outside for that particular week, which helps the child, as well as the family, to have a very specific treatment plan and goal for the week. The database of park options provides peace of mind in finding a safe and accessible park, reducing the anxiety level some citizens may have in an urban setting.

The program also hopes to instill a sense of value for the environment so that these children can become the next generation of environmental stewards.

This program was conceived with the help of the National Park Service, volunteers from the School of Public Health at George Washington University, as well as with support from park rangers and physicians. Funding from the National Recreation and Park Association, National Environmental Education Foundation as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics made this program possible.

For more information


Get Your Tail on the Trail

“Build a healthier community one mile at a time” is the goal of a new partnership between St. Luke’s University Health Network and Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. “Get Your Tail on the Trail” incentivizes people for traveling the 165 miles that make up the D & L Trail in northeastern Pennsylvania via foot or bicycle or a combination of the two. The free program doles out rewards at key milestones. Participants log their mileage through the “Trail Tracker,” receive prizes as they complete their goals, and can even receive additional prizes for doubling or tripling the 165-mile goal. In addition, the partnership has compiled many special events throughout the six-month program for participants, which count toward the mileage goal. These special events include 5Ks to benefit local charitable groups, a celebration at the halfway mark of the program and special sponsored events provided by L.L. Bean, such as paddle boarding and a “Kayak Discovery Course.” During the first year of the program, which launched in the spring of 2013, 2,500 participants logged a total of 255,000 miles. During the Winter Mini-Challenge in 2014, 580 participants tracked 44,000 miles.

For more information

http://tailonthetrail.org/

Everybody Walk Across PA

Not everyone gets to travel across northern Pennsylvania by car on the 400-mile iconic PA Route 6, so why not do it by foot? The Route 6 Alliance recently partnered with Penn State Extension as part of its “Road to Health” initiative to create a program called “Everybody Walk Across PA.” For two months in spring of 2014, Pennsylvanians were encouraged to take a virtual walk along Route 6. Participants registered in teams of five, and each team member was to exercise and report at least 10 miles per week. Participation rates were three times greater than expected during the first eight-week session, with over 250 teams committed to walk at least 50 miles a week. Participants logged over 107,000 miles. Everybody Walks Across PA provided participants with a team support network as well as useful information for a healthy lifestyle and a history lesson along the 400-mile journey. Respondents to a post-walk survey indicated that 94 percent increased their physical activity, and 42 percent increased their vegetable and fruits intake.

For more information

Get Outdoors (GO!) York

Who doesn’t love a scavenger hunt? Banking on kids’ love of searching for things, the Healthy York County Coalition launched “Get Outdoors and Experiment” within 26 parks and trails in York County. Thirty scientific terms were hidden throughout parks and trails on wooden markers, and hints to the location of markers were found in the “Go and Experiment” Lab Notebook, downloaded from the Go York website. The terms related to scientific disciplines including chemistry, biology, medicine and physics. Each term had a unique etching alongside it, and participants who collected at least three etchings received a prize and were entered to win one of three grand prizes. The more etchings found (i.e. parks visited) the more chances to win a grand prize. Free activities in the parks were held during the scavenger hunt to encourage participation in the program.

For more information

http://www.goyork.org/index.htm

Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds

- The Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation held a “Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds Institute” in 2014 for 230 educators to promote and encourage the use of physical activity as a learning mechanism in the classroom for interdisciplinary teams of educators and administrators. Breakout sessions taught how to incorporate the different components necessary for implementing physical activity throughout the school-day. Sessions included nutrition, community partnerships, staff and student wellness, as well as best practice models that show tried and true techniques to incorporate physical activity into lesson plans. The annual event aims to accomplish four main objectives: reviewing the current research on physical activity in the learning environment; creating a multi-disciplinary team capable of executing the ideas presented; providing an environment for open-dialogue discussion and collaboration; and assisting schools in developing a realistic plan for implementation. The use of an interdisciplinary team provides a stronger base of support for implementing these active learning strategies. The institute enables educators to promote active learning in their schools with real-world advice from specialists and implementation strategies from schools that have already taken the steps necessary for having an active learning environment.

For more information

Smoke-Free Recreation Areas, Playgrounds and Outdoor Pools, Philadelphia

While indoor smoke-free regulations have been gaining traction all over the United States, outdoor regulations are far behind. Only 600 municipalities in the U.S. have outdoor smoke-free regulations, and out of the 50 largest U.S. cities only 13 have smoke-free parks, seven of which are in California alone. When comparing the 10 largest cities in the U.S., Philadelphia has the highest prevalence of adult smoking and one of the highest rates of youth smoking. These high rates are often attributed to high poverty levels, low cost of cigarettes and the acceptability and normalcy of smoking.

Philadelphia adopted the Clean Indoor Air Worker Protection Law (CIAWPL) in 2006, and by early 2007 this law prohibited smoking in most workplaces, restaurants and bars. This caused a decrease in smoking among adults from 27.3 percent to 25.2 percent. This is the largest decrease recorded in 10 years. Mayor Michael Nutter campaigned forcefully for the adopting of the CIAWPL law and knew the challenges ahead when he started campaigning for outdoor smoke-free regulations as well. The policy was enacted through an executive order to gain media attention and traction with the public. However, it also had the support of the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR), which gave the policy the force of law as well.

The importance of enacting this smoke-free regulation in recreation areas, playgrounds and outdoor pools manifests itself in four ways. Firstly, children are physically protected by having smoke-free areas in which to play. Children’s vulnerable development can be easily hampered by second-hand smoke, and second-hand smoke has been proven to be harmful in study after study. Secondly, the hope is that this policy will help to change current smoking norms and send a clear message to children that smoking is harmful. Studies have already shown that indoor air laws can have a positive effect on children, with an association between these laws and “lower odds of youth progressing from experimental to regular smoking” (Leung et al., 2013). The third reason behind this policy is to provide further motivation for smokers to quit. The policy-makers decided against the installation of designated smoker areas as that would undermine the important goal of “protecting children from the normative effects of seeing trusted adults smoking” (Leung et al., 2013). Instead, the coalition provided greater cessation support for employees that would be directly affected by the policy. In addition, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) and PPR partnered to offer free cessation classes at community recreation centers and the City of Philadelphia increased cessation benefits for city employees and dependents. Lastly, this policy will have the ability to lower sanitation costs as recreation areas will no longer have to clean up...
cigarette butts and cartons. It is estimated that each carton of cigarettes costs 20 cents in sanitation costs. As budgets are being tightened, this is an important aspect to take into consideration. While it is too early to glean the direct benefits that this policy has had on residents, there has been great support for its enactment, and now an estimated 3.6 million annual recreation visits will be smoke-free.

For more information


Smoke-free recreation centers, playgrounds and outdoor pools available as of 2012. (Figures courtesy of Leung et al., 2013, Instituting a Smoke-Free Policy for City Recreation Centers and Playgrounds, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2010)
Promoting Active Communities Program in Michigan

The Promoting Active Communities Program in Michigan is designed to easily enable communities to transition themselves into becoming active living communities. An active living community incorporates fitness ideals into daily living routines. This can include road diets, connecting sidewalk routes, creating greenbelts, as well as instituting and promoting safety and awareness educational programs. The significance of Michigan’s program lies in its self-assessment tool.

Michigan communities of all sizes can use this tool to assess the ease at which the community lends itself to an active lifestyle. There is a preview mechanism available online to those interested but living outside of Michigan. The preview shows that there are 14 components to the assessment. These components include community planning; ordinances, zoning and codes; maintenance; programs, promotions and facilities for physical activity; policies and education for safety and security; bicycle facilities; public transportation; downtown areas; schools; and neighborhoods, as well as other important planning sections.

The assessment requires community leaders to work with one another as well as to work with their citizens in order to complete the assessment in its entirety. This provides a platform for partnerships to develop and for individuals and agencies to learn from one another and work together to make improvements as well as generate new ideas to better their community. The program lists five benefits to completing the self-assessment. The first of which was already mentioned, the benefit of developing new partnerships. The second is that the tool enables a community to better plan for future additions and improvements on its way to becoming an active community. The third benefit is that of recognition. Communities that complete this assessment are also eligible to apply for one of five awards given out by the Michigan Fitness
Foundation and recognized by the state at the Governor’s Fitness Awards Ceremony. While 147 communities from 58 different counties have completed the assessment, 58 of these communities have earned an award more than once. The awards range from “copper” in which “Communities have made a commitment to becoming a healthier place to live and have begun to take steps toward removing barriers to physical activity” to the highest award of “Platinum” -- communities that are “models of commitment to healthy, active living.” As of yet, no community has earned the platinum level award, but many communities are working towards this goal.

The program also has funding and marketing benefits. Having completed the assessment, the community is well aware of its strengths, weaknesses and areas in need of improvement, allowing the community to be more competitive for available funding opportunities and more marketable.

In addition, the program provides a design handbook to guide community leaders, planners, transportation personnel, parks and recreation professionals and residents in creating active living communities. The handbook is available in pdf format and is downloadable from the PAC Program website to any individual or agency that is interested. The handbook provides sections describing the ‘vision’ of active living as well as sections with specific ideas and designs to incorporate bicyclists, walkers, shared-use paths and parks into a master plan for an active community.

For more information

http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities/default.asp?tab=about

http://www.michiganfitness.org/promoting-active-communities

Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities Handbook:
http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities/default.asp?tab=designguidelines#printsave
LiveWell

The LiveWell Lancaster County Coalition is working to combat chronic disease in Lancaster County by focusing efforts on five key strategic areas: that of clinical preventative services, nutrition, providing a healthy and safe built environment, enabling and promoting physical activity, and providing resources for residents to live a tobacco-free lifestyle. Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, LiveWell Lancaster has partnered with Lighten Up Lancaster to address their goal of constructing a healthy and safe built environment through the creation of walkable and bikeable communities. As of now, none of the municipalities in Lancaster have bicycle friendly communities or a “complete streets” policy. However, many municipalities are moving in that direction and have completed walkability audits and are in the beginning phases of creating and instituting complete streets policies.

The organizations also are currently in the process of searching for a contractor to increase Lancaster County’s amount of bicycle friendly businesses, communities and universities, developing a toolkit to provide technical assistance to businesses completing bicycle friendly applications, and have drafted a bike-share proposal that is currently on hold as the organizations seek funding.

LiveWell Lancaster has also released an app for smartphones to further enable citizens to reach their health and fitness goals through fitness tracking, locating nearby trails and activities as well as providing nutritious recipes.

For more information

http://livewelllancaster.org/Resources/Built-Well.aspx

http://www.lightenuplancaster.org/LULC/media/media/in%20the%20community/TAC-1-8-update.pdf

March for Parks, Westmoreland County

To boost its ability to support programs and facilities, the Westmoreland County Parks and Recreation Department has held a March for Parks event for the last 12 years. In 2014, participants raised $104,000, which will be used for a variety of park-related initiatives and has been valuable in helping to match other grants and to advance the county's comprehensive parks, recreation and open space plan. More than 1,050 marchers, 65 teams and 80 businesses sponsored or participated in the walk.

For more information

http://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/index.aspx?NID=761
http://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/index.aspx?NID=1383

Step Outdoors, Tioga County

Pooling resources helps to expand the reach of recreation initiatives. The Tioga County Partnership for Community Health has teamed up with several state and local parks in the area to help host large events under a “Step Outdoors” brand, including “Tryathlon” at Hills Creek State Park, a Trail Challenge at Ives Run Recreation Area, and Springfest and Winterfest both hosted at Hills Creek State Park. At Springfest and Winterfest free equipment is available, including kayaks, canoes, fishing poles, skis, snowshoes, sleds and ice skates as well as free hot dogs and hot chocolate during Winterfest. Much of this equipment is provided by Pennsylvania State Parks and Wellsboro Parks and Recreation. There are also nature walks, birding and educational courses on topics such as ice fishing. This program is a great way to get both children and adults out into the parks to enjoy all that they have to offer.

For more information

http://www.stepoutdoors.org/
Gettysburg Alternative Sports Park – Gettysburg Borough, Adams County

Sometimes you just have to take matters into your own hands if you want something to happen. That’s what local youth did in Gettysburg to provide a venue for BMX stunt riding, inline skating, and skateboarding -- activities that were not safe on the borough streets. A local advocacy group, Collaborating for Youth, petitioned for a skate park in the borough, and eight years ago, the Gettysburg Alternative Sports Park (GASP) became reality for $87,000. Users pay a low registration fee to offset some of the costs associated with staffing the park, and the venue can be rented for private functions. A group, including a former BMX professional, is currently lobbying for longer hours and more activities at the park.

For more information


http://cfygettysburg.com/component/content/article/80-projects/98-gettysburg-alternative-sports-park

Love Your Park Week, Philadelphia

Every year Fairmount Park Conservancy, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation and Philadelphia park friends groups collaborate to conduct a week-long celebration of Philadelphia’s parks. The focus of the 2014 event was the creation and installation of Philadelphia’s very first pumptrack -- an area of hills and bumps designed for BMX and mountain bikers. More than 90 parks took part in the kick-off service project in 2014, and thousands of volunteers participated in the eight-day event. Park friends groups throughout the city put on events and activities during the celebration to help promote their parks. Love Your Park Week helps instill a sense of community and promote volunteerism and stewardship of these natural areas, in addition to providing necessary maintenance for Philadelphia’s local parks.

For more information

http://loveyourpark.org/
Phillips Park – Carrick, Allegheny County

Phillips Park in Carrick, outside of Pittsburgh, is an example of how citizens can help map out future recreation and park community needs. Interested community members identified the park as one in serious need of repair and updated equipment. After initial analysis, a project team with assistance from Penn State University’s Department of Landscape Architecture, held a community charrette to “re-visualize Phillips Park as a 21st century park to restore ecological processes while consolidating recreational facilities and engaging community participation.” The project developed action items at a community meeting and then conducted site reviews to create proposals addressing the needs that the community identified. These items dealt with restoring and providing future protections for the urban forest, storm water and erosion management, park entrance maintenance and improved parking as well as increasing park safety through improved lighting and ways to reduce vandalism. In the process, the plan identified 16 partners who could help implement the various elements of the park improvements, from the local school district to the historical council to regional conservancies and tree organizations.

For more information

http://pittsburgh.center.psu.edu/sites/pittsburgh.center.psu.edu/files/attachments/Carrick_Thwing.pdf

“Outdoor Berks” Phone App, Berks County

“Outdoor Berks” is a phone app developed by Reading Health System’s Community Health Department with funding assistance provided by The Friends of Reading Hospital. The app can be used to search by location or amenity through 170 parks and trails located throughout Berks County, and users can bookmark favorite parks as well. The app is free to download and can be used on both Apple and Android devices. It enables residents and visitors to easily sift through and discover the many beautiful and free outdoor amenities that Berks County has to offer.

For more information

“On Your Park, Get Set, Go!”

A little friendly competition among local parks never hurts, and in the case of the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation’s “On Your Park, Get Set, Go!” contest, winning means money. Park users were encouraged to visit one of 12 area parks and cast a vote for their favorite using one of several methods: scanning a QR code on a sign in the park with their smartphone, which earned 10 votes per visit; posting a photo from the park, which earned 10 votes; using Facebook to earn two votes; or emailing a “selfie” photo taken at their chosen park, which earned 10 votes. Bonus votes were also available by going to the parks on Saturdays throughout the month.

The park with the most votes received a $10,000 grant. The second-place winner received $7,500, and third-place received $5,000. There was also a lottery worth $2,500 that the remaining participating parks were entered into for a chance to win.

Parks were encouraged to host a variety of outdoor events, including puppet shows and jazz performances, and to use an assortment of promotional strategies, such as handing out flyers to local business to draw people to the park. In all, more than 700 participated in the contest. Half of the total votes came from the QR code scans, meaning people were visiting the park while voting. Proof of that visitation came in via 400 “selfies” of park patrons enjoying their favorite parks, and Facebook friends for the Foundation more than tripled during the contest timeframe.

For more information

City Nature Finders, Lancaster County

In the summer of 2013, the Lancaster County Conservancy partnered with the Lancaster Recreation Commission and several elementary schools in the Lancaster school district to provide outdoor education opportunities for local children in the area. Mike Burcin, director of education for Lancaster County Conservancy, had conducted an environmental science needs assessment and discovered that many of the elementary children attending schools in the Lancaster School District were lacking basic outdoor education. Burcin reached out to the agencies listed above, as well as obtained a $20,000 grant from Hershey Foods, to create a 12-week summer day camp focused on providing outdoor education to the children of Lancaster. Many of these children live in an urban environment and have limited access to outdoor opportunities. The program’s goal was to enable these children to better connect with nature as well as educate and fuel a passion for the outdoors.

The program incorporated outdoor activities into an academic structure to continually enhance the children’s academic skills. The children used microscopes to learn about worms, bug boxes and nets to catch and identify different insects, and played a game of ‘food chain tag’ to learn the importance of a healthy food chain network. These activities aimed to lessen the ‘yuck’ factor associated with insects and instead promote their importance and unique abilities. In addition, the children used binoculars to look for various birds in the area and were even able to observe a red-tailed hawk. The program was a great success, and the Conservancy is hoping to continue the program in the future.

For more information

**Car-Free Sundays**

The Trust for Public Land published "*From Fitness Zones to the Medical Mile: How Urban Parks can Best Promote Health and Wellness*" to provide best practice cases for urban areas trying to promote health and wellness techniques in their communities. One significant deterrent to getting outside was found to be the stress caused by vehicles. The organization showcased San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park’s car-free Sundays, which increased participation rates dramatically. For every 100 people in the park on Saturday, there were 216 people there on Sunday. Planners are attempting to implement car-free Saturdays as well. Additionally, in another case study presented on Portland, Oregon, six to eight miles of streets are closed to cars on select Sundays throughout the summer. Each of these events attracted between 15,000-25,000 people to get outside and be active.

*The left photo shows the park on a Saturday while the right photo shows the park on a car-free Sunday.*  *(Photo courtesy of Christopher Duderstadt, the Trust for Public Land)*

**For more information**


Elk Country Visitor Center, PA Wilds

The Pennsylvania Wilds in northcentral Pennsylvania is home to the largest herd of wild elk in the Northeast. For years, after the successful reintroduction of the elk herd to the region, thousands of people would flock each year to see the magnificent animal. With no formal tourism guidance, visitors overwhelmed the small towns, creating traffic jams and parking nightmares.

In 2002, the “Plan for Elk Watching and Nature Tourism in North Central PA” identified the economic potential of Pennsylvania’s wild elk herd, and paved the way for the development of the entire Pennsylvania Wilds nature tourism initiative. The Elk Country Visitor Center was a signature component of that tourism strategy.

The center opened in September 2010, managed as a public private partnership between DCNR, who owns the facility, and the non-profit Keystone Elk Country Alliance, who operates the center with non-state funds. The first three years of the center’s operation saw an increase in annual visitation from 80,000 to 200,000 people, with visitors coming from all over the country and internationally to experience Elk Country.

The increase in elk tourism has spurred economic growth in the region, with a sharp increase in lodging, restaurants and wineries observed in the past few years. KECA is adding one large event per year until every month of the year has an event to draw in more visitors. In 2013, KECA reintroduced the Elk Expo in August and received 11,000 visitors that month alone.

The visitor center not only provides a destination for elk tourists to view and educate themselves about Pennsylvania’s elk herd, but also created a venue for entrepreneurs and artisans in the region to display and sell their products. A full 70 percent of the products sold at the Elk Center are Pennsylvania-made, with most of these being produced nearby in the Pennsylvania Wilds. The Elk Country Visitor Center is a perfect example of how a strategic state investment and partnership can fuel new and significant economic opportunity for local communities.

For more information

http://www.keystoneedge.com/features/pennsylvaniaelkcountry0912.aspx
http://elkcountryvisitorcenter.com/drupal/general-information
River Towns

Where they once carried commerce and served as the backbone of our industrialization, Pennsylvania’s rivers are again fueling new growth. Launched in 2011 by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, the River Towns program focused on five communities along the Monongahela River as pilots to demonstrate how economic development based around the natural resource could spur growth and employment. In the three years since the program’s launch, more than one million dollars has been raised to put towards projects to increase tourism to these areas. These projects mainly focus on areas of trail development, river accessibility, providing scenic views from unforgettable locations and essential tourist services and amenities. The River Town webpage has also developed a sample itinerary for each pilot River Town. Recently, the River Town Program published a five-year strategic plan, “The Monongahela River Valley Plan: A Five-Year Action Agenda to Increase Tourism to the Region” and proposed five key regional initiatives geared towards attracting more visitors and businesses to the Monongahela River Valley. The initiatives put forth in this document will be a vital component in the continued success of the River Towns Program.

For more information

http://www.riverlifepgh.org/why-riverlife/economy/

http://monrivertowns.com/plan-your-trip/sample-itineraries/

http://susquehannagreenway.org/river-towns-program
Nature Based Place-Making

Nature based place-making is a concept focused on the revitalization of Pennsylvania’s towns through the realization, development and promotion of their diverse environmental resources. This program aims to increase visitation to Pennsylvania towns by promoting natural resources that already exist in the area. Nature based place-making is built upon three tenets: fostering civic stewardship, creating business opportunities, and developing amenities and services to support increased tourism to the area. The Pennsylvania Downtown Center developed planning strategies and standardized benchmarks that can be used in demographically diverse communities of all sizes and with access to diverse natural resources. This project was made possible through support and funding provided by DCNR and addressed specific recommendations and action items in the Pennsylvania Outdoor Recreation Plan 2009-2013: The Keystone for Healthy Living. In June 2014, pilot programs employing the strategies developed by PDC were implemented in select Pennsylvania towns.

For more information:


http://padowntown.org/programs-services/nature-based-placemaking/about-nbp

http://padowntown.org/assets/files/list-714/file-629.pdf

PA Wilds Small Business Ombudsman

Tataboline Enos has the official title of being the PA Wilds’ “Small Business Ombudsman.” While she does not solely tackle complaints as is typical of an ombudsman, she acts as a purveyor of information to help start-up businesses succeed in the region. She also works to actively discover new and old “hidden gems” throughout the region and to help promote these businesses and natural areas to the many new tourists flocking to the PA Wilds. According to Enos, the businesses in the PA Wilds differ vastly in their structure, location and offerings, so there is no one business and funding strategy to encompass all entrepreneurial needs. Enos enables these businesses to find a workable strategy to create their company from the ground up, obtain funding resources to do so, and also to effectively promote their business and amenities to tourists in the PA Wilds.

For more information:


http://www.pawildsresources.org/oldnews/march-2012-e-update
Get on the Trail Entrepreneurial Business Contest

Using natural assets like trails and rivers to drive economic development is a practice that is having growing success across Pennsylvania. A new program is rewarding these natural connections along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.

The Get on the Trail Entrepreneurial Business Contest, sponsored by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism, offered financial and technical assistance to new and expanding businesses that submit solid business plans to provide goods and services to trail users. This pilot program, now evolving into a business incubator concept, encourages businesses to reach out to a new clientele riding or paddling on the trail or waterway that is being connected to the downtown business districts along the routes.

In the first two years, 19 businesses submitted plans. Educational forums were held introducing financing and marketing strategies including seasonal business opportunities.

While every business can continue to receive assistance, the contest had six winners ranging from the traditional to the unique. A refurbished bed and breakfast will serve local products. A mobile ice cream vending cart serves locally produced treats at trail events. A coffee shop rents GPS units leading trail users on tours. A fine dining restaurant will have expanded outdoor seating, and a local outfitter will rent specialized bikes to assist mobility challenged customers and winter equipment to extend the season. An antique and gift shop will expand marketing to attract trail users into town.

The contest was funded with $16,000 from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development as well as free services for website and logo development.

For more information

http://www.getonthetrail.org/
The Keystone Active Zone Passport Program in Luzerne County makes it easy and fun for families and individuals to get outside and explore all the wonderful parks and trails in Luzerne County. The passport program is free and simply requires that participants register on the KAZ website to be eligible to earn rewards and win prizes.

The program is constructed as a scavenger hunt with 30 stops. The passport can be downloaded from the KAZ site and directs participants to local parks and trails that are a part of the program. At these participating locations, participants can gather answers to the scavenger hunt questions listed within the passport booklet. These answers can then be catalogued online after the participant has registered. Everyone can earn a reward after visiting five stops and the rewards continue every five stops. Participants are also eligible to win prizes such as a kayak fishing trip for two on the Susquehanna River, complete with all gear and bait needed from Anthracite Outfitters, or a trip for four to the Lehigh Valley Zoo. With the variety of prizes available, there is something for everyone.

The program also conducts guided walking tours throughout downtown Wilkes-Barre focusing on topics such as architecture, history and wildlife. The KAZ Passport Program is a great way to motivate Luzerne residents to connect with nature and learn about local natural and historical gems in Luzerne County.

For more information

http://www.kazpassport.com/getting_started.php
Endurance Challenges

All across the country, endurance races are surging in popularity. While marathons, 5Ks and 10Ks have been around for decades, grueling events that take advantage of the challenges and natural beauty of the forests and mountains are all the rage – and not just during the warm months. From 100-mile races, to canoe competitions to obstacle courses, these new or growing race events are winning widespread community support for the boost they give local businesses and how they inspire healthy living and pride of place.

Many times registration for endurance events open and close within days due to their cult-like followings. Outfitting businesses are getting in on the action too, realizing their participation in the events can help to fuel business. When Country Squirrel Outfitters, formerly located in Colorado, moved their business to Ridgway in the PA Wilds, the owners were surprised to see such a vast number of endurance events in the region, something that was common in Colorado. Race enthusiasts flock to the region for the wildly-popular Hyner View Trail Challenge, Megatransect and Prowl the Sproul events. More than 150 diehards tackle the Frozen Snot Run over each year – a 13.5-mile run over Bald Eagle Mountain during the coldest week of the year.

For more information

http://www.hikerun.com/
https://ultrahike.com/
http://frozen-snot.com/
Brownfields

Thanks to a robust brownfields redevelopment program in Pennsylvania, former industrial sites that helped to fuel this nation are being reborn as productive spaces. As the country’s first naval shipyard, the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard Yard was one of the main military installations and shipbuilders in the United States. Base realignments and closures led to its demise, and by 1995 nearly all activities ceased at the facility.

Today, the Navy Yard is a thriving 1,200-acre mixed-use area with more than 140 businesses engaged in research, manufacturing and development. More than 10,000 are now employed at the site, the same amount of jobs available as when the site was a shipyard in its peak years. Incorporated into the campus are 1.5 miles of riverfront trail and 21 acres of green space and parks. Additional acreage of open space is proposed in the Navy Yard’s master plan for vacant parcels that are slated for future development.

On a smaller scale, an abandoned mine reclamation project at Newtown South, located between the boroughs of Newtown and Tremont in Schuylkill County, has remediated land that had been mined for 80 years. The mine openings and subsidence led to damaged streams and harmed local fish populations located in a 12-mile stretch of the Swatara Creek. The project regraded 50 acres of abandoned mines, reclaimed three vertical openings and four hazardous water bodies and used newly constructed limestone beds and wetlands to treat one discharge and two water seeps. The cleanup of the watershed has returned fish to miles of the mine-impacted stream and reclaimed open mine hazards in an area visited annually by thousands of hunters. The project also created wetlands and improved wildlife habitat.

Redevelopment of brownfields can lead to a cleaner, safer environment and encourage economic growth at previously abandoned sites.

For more information

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/brownfield_redevelopment/20540

http://www.navyyard.org/

DEP’s brownfield redevelopment success stories

http://www.youtube.com/user/pennsylvaniadep
Mentored Youth Programs

The rich history associated with fishing and hunting in Pennsylvania spurred the creation of the Mentored Youth Programs, developed to connect youth to these sports at a younger age. For each of these programs, a mentored youth permit can be purchased, enabling the youth to hunt or fish with an individual who is of age: 21 for hunting and 16 for fishing. To further encourage participation, the Fish and Boat Commission conducts one or two Mentored Youth Fishing Days every year. For every Voluntary Youth License purchased, the PFBC receives five dollars back as a federal reimbursement. The funds collected through this event are all directed to support youth education and outreach programs. The Mentored Youth Hunting and Fishing Programs enable youth to experience these sports at a young age alongside an adult mentor whom can show and explain the ethics, safety and enjoyment involved when participating in these sports responsibly.

For more information

http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/pgc/pa_huntingdigest1415/#/15

http://fishandboat.com/MentoredYouth.htm

CyclePhilly

As the first attempt to record Philadelphia’s bike patterns -- despite the city having the highest rate of cyclists per capita of the nation’s 10 largest cities -- a team of civic-minded technology experts at Code for Philly developed an app in conjunction with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission to have community cyclists crowd source their bike routes for planning authorities. City or regional bicyclists are encouraged to download and use the app to track their bicycling routes. In its first two months, 150 users logged more than 5,000 trips in the application, about half of them marked as commuter rides. The route data is linked to a web mapping viewer that allows users to view the recorded routes and bike patterns in real time. The data generated could supplement the planning commission’s existing demographic data and help to better understand bicyclists’ movements through the city from a network perspective. This will provide another data resource to help prioritize improvements to the city’s infrastructure.

For more information

http://www.cyclephilly.org/

http://codeforphilly.org/
Mellon Square Maintenance Fund

Opened in 1955, Mellon Square's significant landscape and Modernist design has brought liveliness and beauty to downtown Pittsburgh for almost 60 years. The first modern garden plaza to be built atop a parking garage, Mellon Square's design makes it a forerunner of today's rooftop gardens.

But by the 1990s, this Modernist masterpiece had fallen into serious disrepair. While good faith efforts to care for and restore Mellon Square were made in past decades, the Achilles heel of lasting results proved to be the maintenance and upkeep of this unique public space. Indeed, the attributes that make Mellon Square so distinct -- including its garage-roof location, multiple fountains on different levels, intricate stonework, and shallow tree and flower planters -- are also those that present maintenance challenges.

Understanding that a long-term maintenance plan with secure, lasting funding was key to the future of Mellon Square remaining a valuable asset to the city, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy made establishing such a fund a key component of their restoration plan. The Parks Conservancy worked closely with funders in creating a dedicated and permanent maintenance fund that includes ongoing monitoring of the water, plants and stonework for adjustments that may be necessary as seasonal weather, condensation variations, and other elements intrinsic in a natural setting arise.

The extensive restoration – completed in 2014 – also included an agreement with the City of Pittsburgh that gives the Parks Conservancy management responsibilities for Mellon Square. With such regimented monitoring and a permanent maintenance fund in place, the state of this magnificent public space will remain in excellent health for perpetuity.

For more information

http://www.pittsburghparks.org/environmentalcenter
As cities transform their downtown districts to attract new workers, they are incorporating innovative designs and green technologies in their redevelopment projects. The Century Building in Pittsburgh, built in 1907, was repurposed in 2009 with 60 housing units and two floors of office space and a restaurant. While it incorporated the traditional sustainable and green engineering techniques to earn it a Gold LEED certification, the building designers also incorporated wellness features into the design. To show commitment to indoor air quality, the building has a no-smoking policy and used low-VOC paints and nontoxic building materials in the construction. The building has a bicycling commuter station constructed out of recycled shipping containers where residents can safely store their bikes. The commuter station containers kept the cost of construction low and allow the facility to be maintained for only $1000 per year, including the utilities used to run the facility. The building was the first residential development in Pittsburgh to achieve Gold LEED certification, has a Walk Score of 100 which is indicative of a “walker’s paradise,” and was the first affordable housing constructed in the downtown area.

For more information

Bike-Only Lanes, Pittsburgh

In conjunction with the 18th Annual Pro Bike/Pro Walk/Pro Place conference that took place in Pittsburgh in September 2014, the city implemented bike-only lanes in certain downtown areas. The bike lanes were installed in each direction on the eastbound side of Penn Avenue from 11th Street to Stanwix Street. Vehicles using these streets are rerouted to parallel streets. Posts with reflective patches were installed to delineate the bike lanes from oncoming vehicular traffic and locations are painted a bright green where bicycles and vehicles coincide. The city hopes to connect this new bike lane with Point State Park. A popular idea is to introduce a shared lane to connect the new bike lanes at Stanwix Street to the park. In addition, the city was recently selected by PeopleForBikes, a non-profit bicycling organization from Boulder, Colorado, to receive financial and technical assistance for the installation of bike lanes over the next two years. This will aid in the city’s plan to install five miles worth of bicycle-only lanes within this two-year timeframe.

For more information:

State of the Environment Reports, Berks County and Southeast Pa.

Berks Conservancy conducted a study of five environmental categories to determine the state of the environment in Berks County. This was the first study of this type conducted in Berks County and one of the first in the state of Pennsylvania. The report focused on the environmental categories of water, energy, air, waste and land. The conservancy chose leading professionals to form subcommittees for each category, which were then tasked with choosing four to five key indicators that would establish a quantitative measurement for the state of their respective environmental category. These indicators were not only used to provide a measurable state of the environment in Berks County, but also to provide methods in which residents, corporations and organizations could change their current behaviors to have a more positive impact on the surrounding environment. Since this report was published in 2009, the Berks Conservancy has published an addendum entitled “The Business of Nature: The Return on Environment in Berks” which addresses the monetary value associated with the different functions and maintenance that a healthy ecosystem provides.

In 2011, a separate Return on the Environment study was conducted and prepared by The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia, Econsult Corporation and Keystone Conservation Trust. These entities partnered to author “Return on Environment: the Economic Value of Protected Open Space in Southeastern Pennsylvania” for the GreenSpace Alliance and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission with funding provided by The Lenfest Foundation and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

This report focused on four main categories -- property values, environmental services, recreation and health, and economic activity -- and attempted to quantify the environment’s monetary return. The report assessed the effect that nearby open space has on residential property values and found that $16.3 billion was added to the value of southeastern Pa.’s housing stock, in that those purchasing homes in southeastern Pa. were willing to pay a premium to live near protected open space. In terms of environmental services, the report states that $133 million in costs were avoided due to the direct provision of natural environmental services. For the category of recreation and health, the report made a case for the low cost or free recreation activities available due to nearby open space and that health costs were reduced or even avoided due to nearby recreational activities. The report states that nearly $800 million in medical costs was avoided due to the ability to recreate on protected open spaces. Lastly, the report found that nearly 7,000 jobs were created on or in conjunction with protected open areas in southeastern Pa. This report emphasized the importance of protected open space in perspectives not generally associated with environmental benefits.

For more information

http://www.berks-conservancy.org/learn/state-of-the-environment

http://www.dvrpc.org/reports/11033A.pdf
Conservation Leadership Academy, Allentown

Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center, Moravian College and Lehigh Gap Nature Center in Slatington, Lehigh County partnered to create the Conservation Leadership Academy in 2014 for urban youth from Allentown. The Academy was part of Lehigh Gap Nature Center’s Color of Nature program, which is designed to engage Latino audiences in environmental education. Latino youth are trained and paid to lead bilingual environmental education programs and nature walks for families in Allentown’s parks and nearby natural areas, including Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center. The connection with Jacobsburg led the formation of the Academy. With a grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection and support from Jacobsburg and Moravian College, the Academy hosted 10 urban youth from Allentown in a weeklong intensive day camp that studied environmental issues and nature, visited Moravian College, enjoyed outdoor recreational activities such as hiking and kayaking at Beltzville State Park, and learned about conservation careers. It is hoped that the camp will be held annually and will develop interest in conservation in the Latino community, develop new recruits to train in the Color of Nature program, and lead to a future with more diverse conservation professionals.

For more information

http://lgnc.org/