



Minnesota's Parks, Trails, and Economy

Outdoor recreation in the United States is big business. Americans spend more on outdoor recreation than on pharmaceuticals, motor vehicles, gasoline, or household utilities. And outdoor recreation spending spurs job growth; the outdoor recreation industry employs more Americans than finance, construction, transportation, education, or real estate.

Minnesotans love outdoor recreation. Nearly 9 million people visit Minnesota's state parks every year, and more than just enjoying world-class recreation, these visitors are integral to the state's economy. Parks and trails are instrumental in Minnesota's economic output: they increase retail sales, support jobs, attract new residents and businesses, and boost property values. A University of Minnesota study has found every dollar invested in conserving natural lands nets a return of \$1.70 to \$4.40.

Minnesota's parks and trails...

Create Jobs

During the summer months, Minnesota's state parks generate \$1 million every week from camping, vehicle permits, and sales of wood, pop, ice, and merchandise in state parks. Similarly, Minnesota's non-motorized trail users spend approximately \$2.7 billion annually on trips and equipment, and support 37,000 jobs statewide. Communities located along state trails are the primary beneficiaries of this economic activity. For example, the Paul Bunyan State Trail, Heartland State Trail, and Root River State Trail each generate



The American Planning Association's

KEY POINTS ON PARKS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Real property values are positively affected •
- Municipal revenues are increased •
- Affluent retirees are attracted and retained •
- Knowledge workers and talent are attracted and retained •
- Home buyers are attracted to purchase homes •

between \$1.2 million and \$2.2 million for their local regions respectively. The majority of this spending – 90% or more – comes from trail users who reside outside the local economy, and thus are “new” dollars that would not otherwise be spent in the community. A similar study in Wisconsin found biking-related tourism and recreation contributes nearly a billion dollars to the state economy.

Wildlife watching and fishing are common activities in Minnesota's state parks, and both activities generate substantial economic activity. Wildlife-watchers in Minnesota spend \$621 million annually, while anglers spend \$2.4 billion and support 35,000 jobs.

Minnesota's parks and trails...

Attract residents and businesses

Community parks, trails, and open natural space are important



Non-motorized trail users spend \$2.7 billion annually and support 37,000 jobs in Minnesota.



Wildlife watchers spend \$621 million annually in Minnesota.



Anglers spend \$2.4 billion annually and support 35,000 jobs in Minnesota.

factors that influencing people's decision on where to live and work.

In the Twin Cities, parks and trails are overwhelmingly cited as the area's most attractive feature, and 85% of residents say expanding and maintaining the area's parks and trails is important for maintaining the area's quality of life.

National real-estate associations confirm the importance of parks and trails. According to the

(continued on back)



Minnesota's Parks, Trails, and Economy, *continued from front*



“Minnesotans value open space and that value is reflected in higher values for properties in relatively close proximity to open space amenities”
~ Wilder Research

National Association of Home Builders' most-recent data, walking trails, jogging trails, and park areas strongly influence the purchasing decision of a majority of home buyers. Similarly, data collected by the National Association of Realtors indicates outdoor recreational facilities are an important neighborhood trait people look for when buying a home.

Just as residents are attracted to communities with easy access to parks and trails, so are businesses. Studies show small businesses rate parks and recreation space as the most important quality-of-life element when deciding on where to locate or expand.

Minnesota's parks and trails... Increase property values

As a general guideline, researchers have found nearby parkland increases home values 5%-15%, depending upon proximity and quality of the park. Trails have a similar effect: researchers estimate homeowners are willing to pay an additional \$4,000-\$9,000 to be

80% of home buyers say walking trails are a top community characteristic when choosing a new home.

53% of home buyers say they would prefer a home with a small yard close to a park to a home with a large yard but no nearby parks.

52% of home buyers say nearby bike trails are an important deciding factor when choosing a new home.

30% of homeowners say their neighborhood has too few parks and playgrounds.

located within a thousand feet of a trail.

Minnesotans value open space, leading a Wilder Research analysis to conclude: “the additional future tax revenues generated by residential properties near an open space may be sufficient to pay the debt service on funds borrowed to acquire and/or develop a park.”

Overall, the message is clear: Minnesota's economy benefits when we invest in parks and trails.

Resources

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