

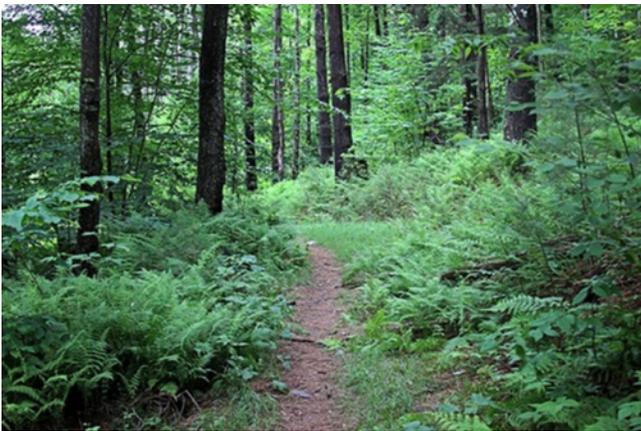
The Shelburne Heights-Boulder Hill Primitive Connector Trail

Residents of Shelburne Heights are seeking permission to construct a primitive path on Town owned land that would connect Shelburne Heights to Boulder Hill. Here are some facts.

What are we talking about?

The proposal is for what the USFS (United States Forest Service) calls a Class III "Primitive path" connecting Shelburne Heights and Boulder Hill neighborhoods. In other words, a basic walking path.

What would the path look like?

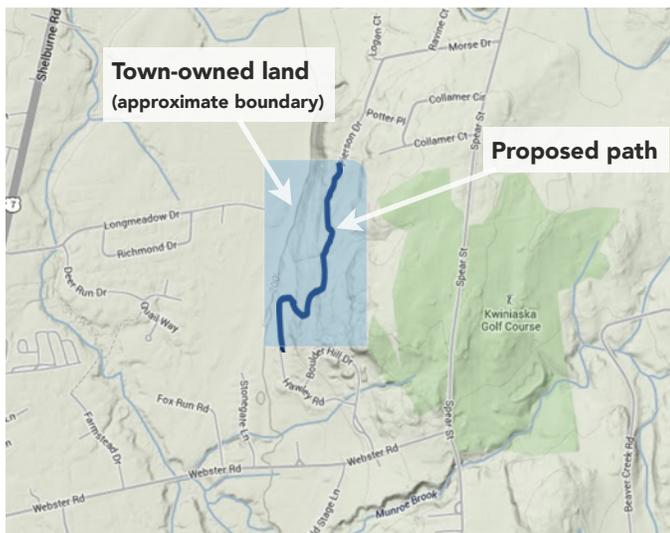


Class III trails have minor trail enhancements. Here is an example of a class III trail from a US Forest Service guide.

- The tread (actual path) would be about 24" wide
- The corridor (the space cleared to accommodate the tread) would be 6-8 feet wide
- This path would be about 2400 feet long

Where would the path run?

This trail would connect the end of Pierson Drive (in Shelburne Heights) with Hawley Drive, behind the storm water retaining area at the end of the road. The proposed trail is entirely on town-owned land. No private property would be involved. There are already several sections and different segments of "social trails" in the area, which predate the neighborhoods.



- The tread would remain mostly dirt (nothing paved; gravel only in a few wet areas)
- Minimal trail structures would be built (water bars in a few spots to channel water off the trail, and elevated trail in a couple of areas to avoid mud)
- No large trees would be cut (only some brush and ground cleared)
- The project would be entirely volunteer and community built at no cost to the town or taxpayers
- This trail would create an alternative to traveling on Spear Street to get to the Webster Road bike path

What are the benefits of trails for our community?

Trails increase property values.

The impact of trails on property values has been studied extensively around the country. Some studies show that property values near trails rise at a rate significantly higher than in similar areas not near trails. Others find the rates of increase to be marginally higher. However, none have shown that trails decrease property values. In summary, trails and paths create "value premiums."

- Zillow Talk, by Zillow's CEO Spencer Rascoff and Chief Economist, Stan Humphries, explain what they call "The New Rules of Real Estate." *Zillow Talk* tracked home values in several major markets from 2000 through 2014, and reported average sales values for the most walkable neighborhoods ("Walker's Paradise" and "Very Walkable") and the less walkable places ("Somewhat Walkable" and "Car Dependent.") In every market they examined, home values in more walkable neighborhoods outperformed those in less walkable neighborhoods in the same market – particularly in recent years.
- A 2009 survey of 2,000 home buyers was co-sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders and the National Association of Realtors ("What Home Buyers Really Want" 2009) asked about the "importance of community amenities," and trails came in second only to highway access. Those surveyed could check any number of the 18 amenities, and 36 percent picked walking, jogging or biking trails as either "important" or "very important."
- Ranier vom Hofe and Olivier Parent of the University of Cincinnati found in an October 11, 2011 report that housing prices went up by nine dollars for every foot closer to a trail entrance. In other words, homeowners were willing to pay a \$9,000 premium to be located one thousand feet closer to the trail.
- Over 160 studies from late 80s to the present have been conducted showing that trails almost uniformly increase property values!

Trails increase safety by reducing crime rates.

- Edward O'Donnell, Andrew Knab, and Lorene Athey. 2007. "Sidewalks and Shared-Use Paths: Safety, Security, and Maintenance." Study found that trails decrease crime and increase safety in several ways. Trails and paths do this by "increasing the number of people with eyes on the neighborhood" – more people out and about mean more people watching for trouble.
- Rail-Trails and Safe Communities: The Experience on 372 Trails (1998), Tammy Tracy and Hugh Morris This study addresses many misconceptions concerning trail security. It reveals that crime rates are lower on trail networks than the overall crime rate for the region in which they are located, whether urban, suburban, or rural.

Trails are conservation tools.

Trails conserve open spaces and wild places by concentrating traffic in a designated walking area, where use can be managed and overall impact minimized. This is much better for conservation than if people wander at will through valuable natural areas, where they might disturb rare or sensitive habitat, disrupt wildlife, and cause erosion. These findings are supported by numerous studies from the USFS, the National Park Service, and The Nature Conservancy.

This proposal was created by Mike Ashooh of 87 Ravine Court, after discussion with neighbors in both Shelburne Heights and Boulder Hill. Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns: 985-3734 or mashooh@gmail.com.