MARKET RESEARCH: EQUITY OF ACCESS TO TRAILS

STUDY BY OPINIONWORKS

FOR THE CIRCUIT TRAILS JEDI TASK FORCE
Purpose of Study

- What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people living near trails in underserved neighborhoods?
- Who is using the trails, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?
- How can trail organizations engage, motivate, and welcome these residents onto the trails?
- How can results in focus communities be generalized for a broader population of potential trail users across the region?

Market Research: Equity of Access to Trails

Camden
Norristown
Cobbs Creek
Trenton
Market Research: Equity of Access to Trails
Research Methodology

• Focus communities were selected based on specific criteria:
  • A Circuit Trail runs through underserved neighborhoods
  • A trail organization or public sector trail owner engaged in building inclusive trails
  • Community stakeholders interested in using the trail to advance community objectives.
  • A diversity of demographic conditions so the project can be useful beyond the focus communities
Research Methodology

- The study was completed in four phases:
  
  1. Community Stakeholder Meetings
     1 per focus community
  
  2. Trail Survey: Intercept Survey of Trail Users
     237 trail users
  
  3. Community Survey: Survey of Neighborhoods Surrounding the Trails
     718 residents within 10 blocks of the trails
  
  4. Focus Groups among Residents of color
     8 focus groups/2 per community
Study Results

What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

Three Archetypes

**The Besieged**
- Directly impacted by violence, tend to see the outdoors as a place of threat and danger.
- Life offers them very little respite.

**The Juggling**
- Essential workers, gig workers, students, parents.
- The day is never long enough to get everything done. Stealing time to relax.

**The Empowered**
- Their community may be challenging, but they have found a way to feel safe.
- Often community-engaged, with capacity to give.
Study Results

What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

The Besieged

“Just making it out of the trenches. I just want to make it out of the hood, get my mom out of the hood, make sure me and my little brother ain't got to die here. That's it. ... I mean, to think that I'm still here. I mean, I lose a lot of friends that I grew up with. I lost a friend today .... It's so normal now.... I just grateful that it ain't me or my little brother, for real. So we could get out of here, that's all you got to do is get out of there. It's a war right now.”

— Donnell, 21, Southwest Philadelphia
Study Results

What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

The Juggling

“[In addition to hosting the podcast,] I have two jobs. One of the jobs I do, I actually go Wednesday, Thursday and Friday… And also, I'm a recovery coach, so I work from home… offering wellness tips. People call me, and I provide encouragement. Some people, they're afraid of success. Me, I embrace the opportunity, I embrace the challenge. I'm afraid of failure. I'm afraid of not living out my potential. That causes depression.”

-Eric, 30, Trenton
Study Results

1. What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

The Empowered

“My mother was a Girl Scout, and she had five girls so she might as well have started a troop, which she did, right? Yeah. So I just followed her because we had so much fun.”

-Lynn, mother of three, Southwest Philadelphia
### Study Results

What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

For many, trails are not inviting; they are a potential threat or a demand on limited time. Residents badly need to find respite in the outdoors, but a trail may offer just the opposite.

### Three Archetypes

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### Study Results

**What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?**

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Study Results

1. What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

Some residents expressed sadness or anger that they no longer felt welcome in gentrifying areas.

The Empowered archetype rejected the idea that they were not welcome.

Three Primary Barriers

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Market Research: Equity of Access to Trails
Study Results

Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Despite profound concerns about COVID, personal safety, and neighborhood neglect – people **want** to get outdoors.
Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Despite profound concerns about COVID, personal safety, and neighborhood neglect – people want to get outdoors.

“Being outdoors in parks or on trails makes me feel happier.”
Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Fewer than two-thirds of residents were aware that there is a trail close to where they live.

When the specific trail name is mentioned, awareness of the trail increases.
Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

The presence of water increases feelings of peace –

Especially among the besieged archetype

Market Research: Equity of Access to Trails
Study Results

Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

The presence of water increases feelings of peace – especially among the 
besieged archetype

Being near water brings “purification...re-strategizing my mind, re-organizing my thinking.”

Jumping into the water after living through great trauma “made me feel invincible”
Study Results

2. Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

However, connection to water is limited.

One-quarter of participants could not picture the waterway in their neighborhood.
Study Results

2. Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

“When I am in the parks or on the trails around here, I see other people like me.”

Demographics change the narrative

White respondents: 76% agree

Respondents of color: 45% agree
Study Results

Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Demographics change the narrative

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<th>Trail Users (Intercept Study)</th>
<th>Neighborhoods (Census Data)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>69%</td>
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<td>Trenton</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cobbs Creek</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norristown</td>
<td>16%</td>
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Study Results

Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

How are people connecting to the outdoors?

- Walking on trails: 65%
- Relaxing in parks: 40%
- Biking or running: 25%
Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Most potential users are looking for a place to just BE

What would you like to use the trail for today?

- **78%** Exercise
- **61%** Recreation
- **10%** Transportation
Study Results

Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Most potential users are looking for a place to just BE

What amenities would draw you to a trail?

food trucks
places to sit and enjoy the natural setting
music festivals
3 Study Results

What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Imagine the trail that would welcome and attract you.

What amenities would it have?

What programs would it offer?

What would it look and feel like?
Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Security
Greening
Imagine the trail that would welcome and attract you.

Physical Infrastructure
What amenities would it have?

Programming and Welcome
What programs would it offer?

Outreach
What would it look and feel like?
Study Results

What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Security

1. An appropriate security presence
   - Trail ambassadors
   - Call boxes
Study Results

What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Greening

1. A green oasis
   - Creative design
   - Colorful and natural
Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Physical Infrastructure

1. Places to Gather and Relax
   - Picnic and barbecue spots
   - Playgrounds
   - Benches and other places to sit

2. Trail Maintenance and Amenities
   - Lighting
   - Parking at trailheads
   - Restrooms, bike share, boat rentals, etc.

3. Signage
   - Wayfinding from neighborhoods to trails
   - Circuit signage
   - Signage to trail destinations
Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Programming and Welcome

1. An invitation to have fun
   - Offering events and activities
   - Festivals and music that tie to local culture
   - Pop-up shops, local vendors, etc.

2. Overt Welcome
   - Public art that shows people of color
   - Black Lives Matter signage
   - Feeling seen and respected

3. Organized Group Activities
   - For fellowship and for safety
   - Explore interests – birdwatching, nature hikes
   - Exercise groups, yoga
Study Results

What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Outreach

1. Show people enjoying the trail
   - Images of people who look like them
   - Images of real people from the neighborhood

2. Leverage Local Social Media and Traditional Door-to-Door
   - Engage local influencers to get on the trail
   - Leverage social media
   - Door-to-door flyers, mail, and conversations
Study Results

What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

10 Actions to take

1. Establish an appropriate security presence
2. Create a green oasis
3. Develop places to gather and relax
4. Focus on trail maintenance and amenities
5. Install signage
6. Invite folks to have fun
7. Extend an overt Welcome
8. Host organized group activities
9. Show people enjoying the trail
10. Leverage social media and traditional door-to-door
Study Results

What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

11th Action: A long-term focus

11. A community-supported trail

This research indicates that there is the potential to engage neighborhood residents to care for their own section of trail, to help maintain and design it to their liking.
Study Results

How can the results in several focus communities be generalized onto a much broader population of potential trail users across the region?

The results revealed universal human values

Major take-aways

- The trail is a place to be, not always a place to be in motion.
- Immerse residents in a close-to-home natural experience.
- Build a connected trail system.
- Exude a sense of welcome.
- Don’t assume people who live near the trail know about the trail.

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