

**THE
CIRCUIT
TRAILS**

**Semi-Annual Meeting
November 14, 2024**

Welcome!



2021 Strategic Plan:
Assessing Progress +
Lessons Learned

2021 Strategic Plan:
Report Backs

Strategic Plan
Conversations:
Looking Forward

Closing
Outdoor Activities 2:45pm

10:15am

12:30pm

1:25pm

2:20pm

9:30am

11:45am

12:50pm

1:55pm

Welcome
Agenda Review
Intro Activity

Lunch
AIM Academy Presentation

Coalition Assessment:
Findings and Activity

Summary and
Next Steps

Today's Agenda

The 2021 Circuit Trails Coalition Strategic Plan:

Assessing Our Progress & Lessons Learned

Significant Accomplishments

- **Expand the Circuit Trails Network**, Adding Miles and Making It More Accessible and Inclusive
- **Expand the Circuit Trails Community**, Increasing the Diversity of Trail Users
- **Expand the Circuit Trails Coalition**, Making It More Relevant and Representative

Expand the Circuit Trails Network

- Engaged elected & agency officials to help secure \$200+ million in trail projects on the PA TIP
- Completed Gap Analysis Report & Online Portal
- Published annual Moving the Circuit Forward
- 500 Miles by 2025 Success
- Launched a Maintenance Committee
- Clear advocacy strategies developing among NJ members

Expand the Circuit Trails Community

- **Implemented an inclusive marketing strategy based on Equity of Access to Trails**
 - **Earned + paid media, strategic partnerships, street teams**
- **Invested \$317,000 in 16 grantee partners to activate trails among under-represented groups across the network**
- **Grantee programs reached more than 2,000 people in 2024**

Expand the Circuit Trails Coalition

- **Completed assessment of coalition model and structure**
- **Implemented short-term changes (committees)**
- **Completed research into program providers and program hosts**
- **Established the Learning Community**

A woman in an orange tank top and black shorts is jogging on a sidewalk. She is wearing a black cap and sunglasses. The scene is set outdoors with a large tree in the foreground that has many white blossoms. In the background, there are parked cars and a street. The text "Strategic Plan Update: Moving Forward" is overlaid on the image in a green box.

Strategic Plan Update: Moving Forward

Key Questions

- **Leveling up.** How can we integrate what we've learned since 2021 into the Coalition's next chapter?
- **Increasing participation.** How can we strengthen and grow engagement in the coalition, especially in diverse and underserved communities?
- **Strengthening our foundation.** How can we evolve our structure, develop the next generation of leaders, and address emergent funding needs? How can we ensure adequate support for trail networks for programming, operations & maintenance?

How We'll Do It

- Work in partnership with the **Institute for Conservation Leadership**
- **Create space for dialogue & reflection** within existing/planned committee meetings
- **Identify additional avenues** for current CTC members, partners and others to share their ideas & hopes for the future
- **Work with small groups** to develop different aspects of the strategy, revise & approve with full Steering Committee, then share with full CTC & begin to implement

Timeline

Develop engagement strategy

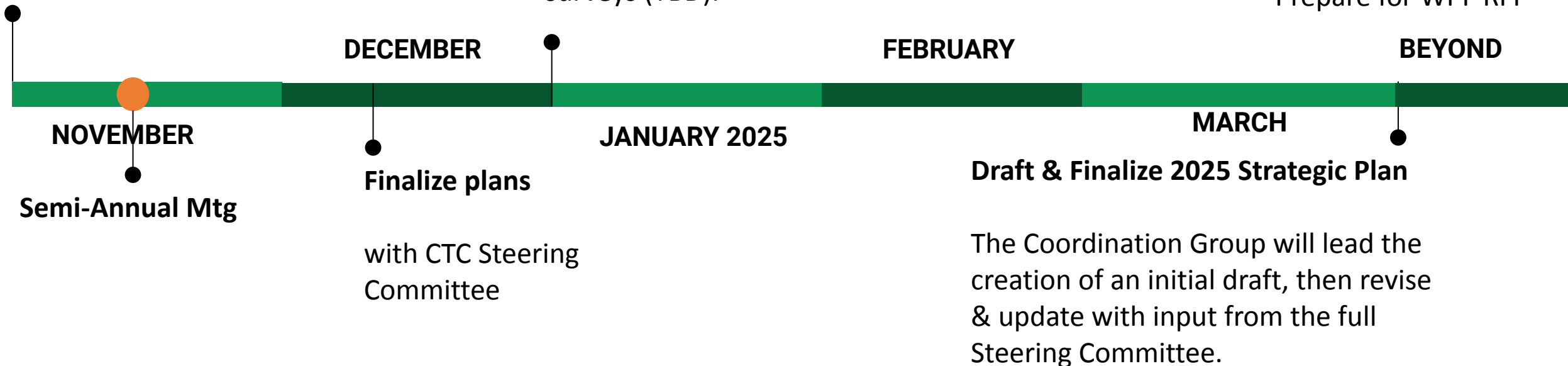
Identify spaces & avenues for feedback among members, partners & beyond

Jan - Feb: Gather feedback & develop strategies

In committee meetings, small group discussions, 1 on 1 conversations and/or surveys (TBD).

Begin to implement Strategic Plan

Share with the full CTC; begin to take next steps together.
Prepare for WPF RFP



Strategic Plan Update Coordinating Group

- **Patrick Starr**, PEC, Coalition Chair
- **Justin Dennis**, Trust for Public Land, NJ Chair
- **Anya Saretzky**, Rails to Trails Conservancy, PA Chair
- **Eleanor Horne**, Advisor
- **Emilia Crotty**, PEC, Project Manager

WANT TO ADD YOUR NAME TO THIS LIST? JUST OFFER!

Equity of Access to Trails Recommendations

1. Invite everyone to have **their fun** on the trail
2. Extend an **overt welcome**
3. Host organized **group activities**
4. Create spaces where people **feel safe**
5. Develop **places** to gather and relax
6. Prioritize trail **maintenance and amenities**
7. Install useful **signage**
8. Build an **urban oasis**
9. **Show people enjoying** the trail
10. Leverage local **social media** and traditional **door-to-door**

A man in a dark blue jacket, jeans, and a cap is walking on a paved path in the foreground. Behind him is a large, multi-arched steel truss bridge spanning a wide river. The background features a line of trees with autumn foliage under a clear blue sky. A green text box is overlaid on the bridge structure.

Strategic Plan Update: What We Did

Stations

- A. **Expand the Circuit Trails Network** (Patrick Monahan)
- B. **Expand the Circuit Trails Community** (Anya Saretzky)
- C. **Expand the Circuit Trails Coalition** (Daniel Paschall)

Progress, Lessons, Status Activity

1. **5 minute individual worksheet**
2. **Three stations: Rotation 1 (20 min)**
3. **Three stations: Rotation 2 (20 min)**

-- Lunch --
4. **Report backs**

Lunchtime Presentation: Jeff Fetterman, AIM Academy





SEND it!

FOR SAM



STRONG
BALANCED
TEAM PLAYER
HERIT

SEND IT!
Your everything together
gear, clothes and more
that have style
and staying power

212



PROJECT BIKE TECH



OUTRIDE



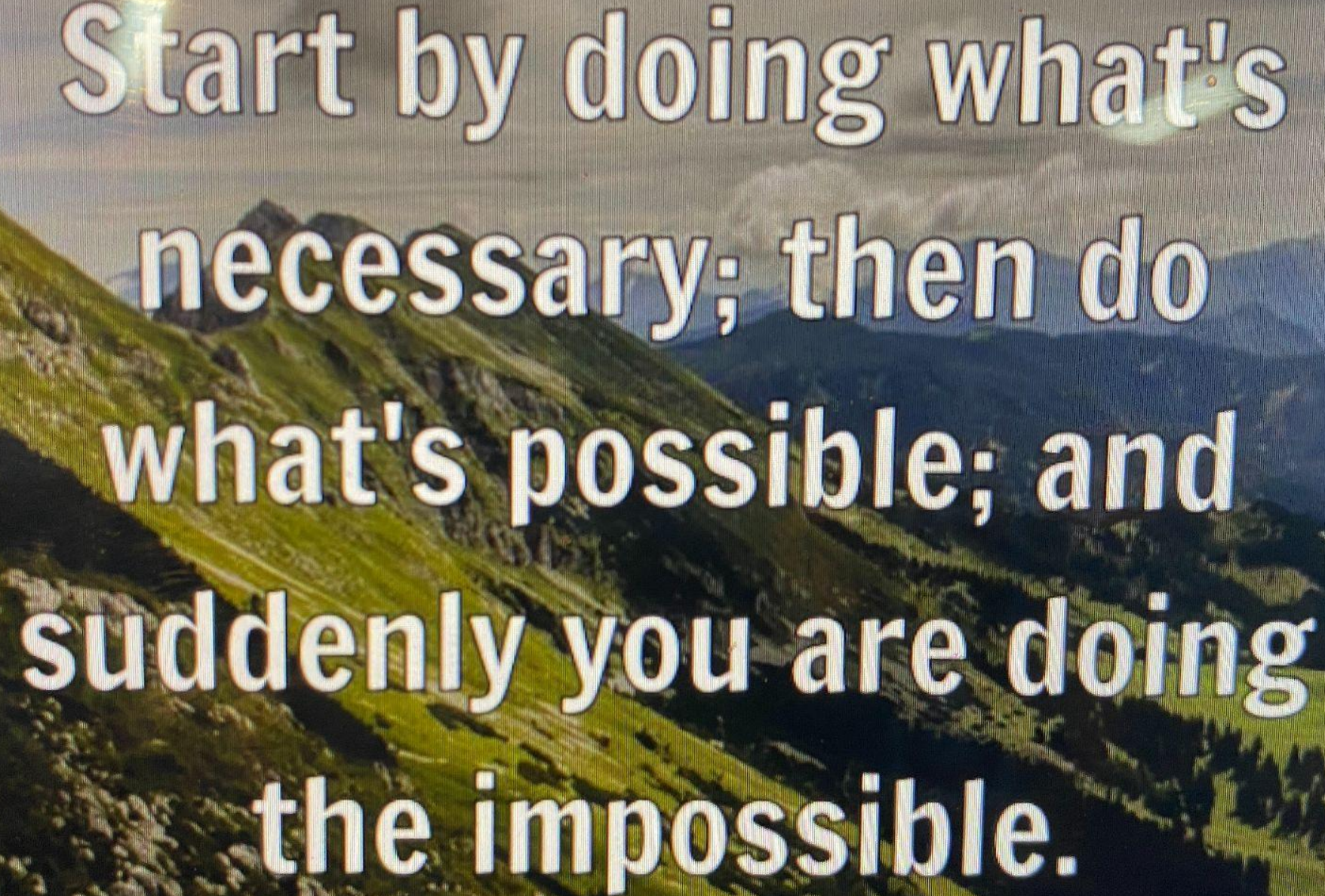










The background of the image is a photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a steep, rocky slope covered in green grass and small shrubs descends from the left. In the middle ground, a valley with green fields and scattered trees is visible. In the background, several layers of mountain ranges are visible, with the furthest peaks appearing in a hazy blue tone under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is bright and natural, suggesting a high-altitude or alpine environment.

Start by doing what's
necessary; then do
what's possible; and
suddenly you are doing
the impossible.

Francis of Assisi

Progress, Lessons, Status Activity

1. 5 minute individual worksheet
2. Three stations: Rotation 1 (20 min)
3. Three stations: Rotation 2 (20 min)

-- Lunch --

4. Report backs

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Cultivate Relationships

- Led by PEC and coalition Assessment Team
- Supported by consultant Varissa McMickens-Blair
- January 2024 - September 2024

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Cultivate Relationships

- Original goal
 - Develop a coalition that is more diverse and representative of current + potential trail users
- Original objective
 - Increase the size of the coalition and steering committee

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Cultivate Relationships

- Learn from **program providers & place-based program hosts**
 - Interviews
 - Small focus groups
- **Survey coalition members** about programming
- Inventory successful **existing programs**
- Explore ways for program providers to **engage with the coalition**
 - Committees? Other structures?



Actions Taken Based on Scope of Work

- **14 Individual and Group Interviews Conducted**
- **20 Google Survey Respondents**
- **Participation in 2 In-person PEC/Coalition Convenings**
- **3 Coalition/Assessment Committee Virtual Meetings**
- **Participation in 2 Virtual PEC/Coalition Convenings/Sessions**
- **3 case studies have been identified from among interviewees. These examples help to clarify grantees', place-based organizations, and other program providers' needs, challenges, and experiences as they conduct programs on and near the trails.**

Case Study #1

- Grassroots in nature
- Serves in a unique capacity within the Chester community
- Youth focused – reach the youth and get their families also
- Fun on and near the trails
- **Maxing out in terms of internal capacity to do more**
- Focus on education and safety
- **Prioritizing need to pay people to do the work**
- Addressing physical needs of the trails in Chester AND the people needed to care for them
- Takes careful steps towards real collaboration – in a community that has too often been disappointed by partners making big promises who don't stay



Barron Lacy
9th Street Youth + Community
Center, City of Chester



Case Study # 2

Ajoa Abrokwa, She Is Focused & Fit

- Smaller and more grassroots
- Connections are made thru word of mouth communication
- Potential to grow the work is enormous
- **Organizational capacity building and funding are greatest needs**
- Success stories are more qualitative in nature

Jessica Day West, Neighborhood Bike Works

- Larger organization, more staff with longer org history
- Collects data to tell the story of their success
- Tiered system of programs
- Two-pronged approach to outreach – repair & group riding
- **Could serve as an organizational capacity mentor – share their growth steps with others**



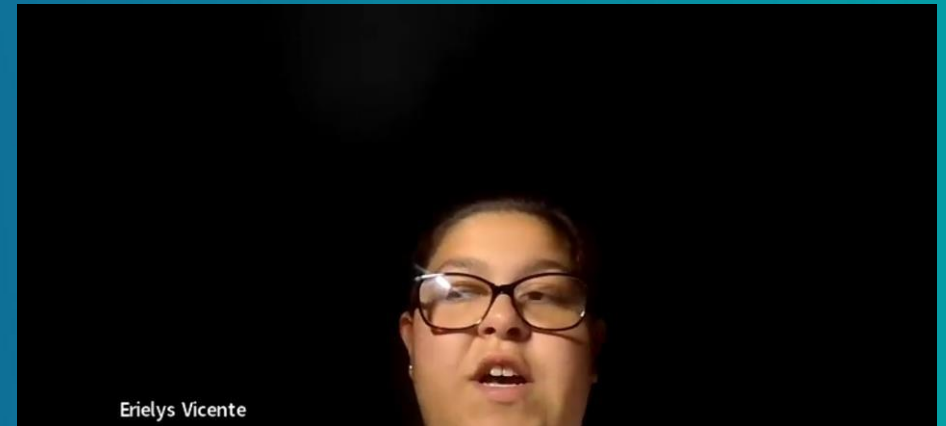
Case Study #3

Neighborhood Collaborative Community Gardens

- Smaller and more grassroots
- Neighborhood centered
- Work study, education and career training for youth
- **Transportation is a serious challenge**
- From safe places to play, to gardening, to community stewards
- Instilling community pride and growing social capital
- Transforming blight into beauty
- Combating negative image of their city
- **Inspiring a new/next generation of leaders and service provider in Camden**
- **Funding and internal staff capacity are also challenges**



**Jacqueline
Santiago**



**Erielys
Vicente**



Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Survey Findings

Challenges to increased equity and/or to organizational growth/capacity

- Limited Organizational Capacity / Funding (10)
- Promotion / Marketing / Generating Interest (6)
- Safe & Convenient Access to Trails (5)
- Volunteer Recruitment & Retention (3)
- External Conditions (1)

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Survey Findings

Strategic supports, solutions, or assistance could the Circuit Trails Coalition provide

- Connection to Potential Partners & Institutions (6)
 - Support Increased Organizational Capacity (5) —————→
 - Promotions / Amplify Offerings (3)
 - Information (3)
 - Connection to Funders / Funding (2)
 - Advocacy for Engagement & Maintenance Funding (1)
 - Physical Improvements (1)
- Administrative support
 - Programmatic support
 - Leadership development

Recommendations for Strategic Planning

1

FUNDING

This is the number 1 need and challenge for most organizations we engaged through this process. Collaborative grants, transportation funds, staff wages, and introductions to funders all rose to the top of people's minds when asked how they thought the Circuit Trail could help. Not always as the funding source, but as a bridge/connector.

2

WAYFINDING/NETWORKING

The desire for additional and more innovative and connective wayfinding signage, maps, QR codes, and trail details was consistent across interviewees and survey respondents. Similarly, there was hope that the Coalition could support expanded sharing of information about available programs along the trails.

3

CAPACITY BUILDING

Many interviewees and survey respondents described organizational and individual overload as a major issue. There was a consistent suggestion that the Circuit Trails Coalition could increase its efforts to develop mentorships, offer capacity building workshops, and otherwise support organizations struggling at the leadership level.



Gathering Insights

- What insights did you gain?
- What is one question or idea this brings up for you at the coalition considers its direction for the next three years?

Trio conversations (10 min)

Mentimeter Polls

Strategic Plan Update: Looking Ahead



5 Questions for Deeper Thinking

- Why is participating in the coalition important to your organization?
- What aspect of the work are you / your team most excited by?
- What is important to pursue or address at this time?
- Some general areas that are rich with opportunity might be...
- What limitations in time, energy, money, and resources do we need to deal with?

5 Questions for Deeper Thinking

- Individual Thinking (5 min)
- Talk in Trios (15 min)
- Whole Group Share / Mentimeter Poll (10 min)

Check out a committee meeting!

- Steering Committee Meetings are open to all
 - 2nd Thursdays at 1:30pm
- Maintenance Committee
 - 1st Mondays at 11am
- PA & NJ Trail Development *(Coalition Partner agencies, counties, municipalities especially welcome)*
 - 3rd Thursdays: PA at 10am, NJ at 11am
- Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Committee
 - 4th Wednesdays at 10am

For more information and calendar invitations: anya@railstotrails.org

Stay Involved with the Coalition All Year!

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- Monthly Pennsylvania Trail Development Meeting
 - Next meeting: Nov 21, 10am
 - Email patrick@bicyclecoalition.org to receive invite
- Monthly New Jersey Trail Development Meeting
 - Next Meeting: Nov 21, 10am
 - Email patrick@bicyclecoalition.org to receive invite
- Monthly Advocacy, Communications and Policy Committee Meeting
 - Next meeting: Nov 27, at 10am
 - Email pstarr@pecpa.org to receive invite
- Monthly Maintenance Committee Meeting
 - Next meeting: Dec. 2 at 11am
 - Email wfraser@cleanair.org to receive invite
- Learning Community virtual session on Green Gentrification
 - Monday, December 9 from 3pm-4:30pm
 - Email daniel@greenway.org to receive invite or join the Zoom meeting by clicking [here](#)
 - In August, Trust for Public Land Published [an important paper on Green Gentrification](#), which reports that large greenway projects are one of two types of urban greening projects that cause gentrification. Want to learn more about TPL's paper and think together about how the Circuit can work to prevent displacement that can result from green gentrification? Join us for the December Learning Community, featuring Linda Hwang of the Trust for Public Land presenting key findings from TPL's report.
- Monthly Steering Committee Meeting
 - Are open to all
 - Next meeting: Dec. 12, 1:30-4pm
 - Email anya@railstotrails.org to receive invite
- Circuit-wide Happy Hour on Dec. 12 at 4:15pm at Uptown Beer Garden
 - Email anya@railstotrails.org to receive invite

Other important Reminders:

- Steering Committee election and nomination process
 - [Nominations](#) due Monday, December 2
- Share your events and accomplishments for promotion! Email anya@railstotrails.org

Thank you!