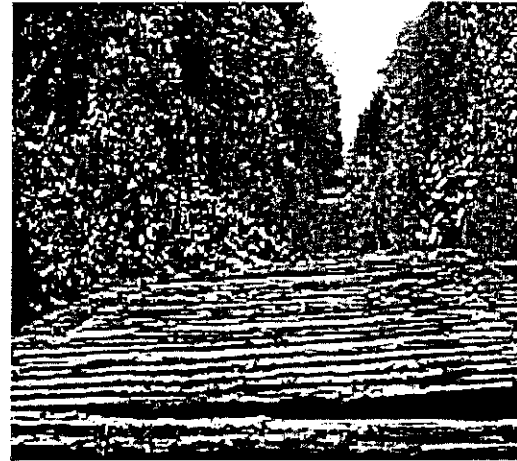




FRIENDSHIP TRAIL

FORT ERIE'S RAIL-TO-TRAIL PROJECT



**Connecting Fort Erie's Communities along the
Historic Buffalo & Lake Huron Railroad Route**

HOME	ROUTE MAP	HISTORY	FACTS & FIGURES	TAKE OUR SURVEY!	E-MAIL US
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*The Friendship Trail is funded by the Corporation of the Town of Fort Erie,
the Regional Municipality of Niagara, and the generous donations of individuals and
community groups throughout Greater Fort Erie*

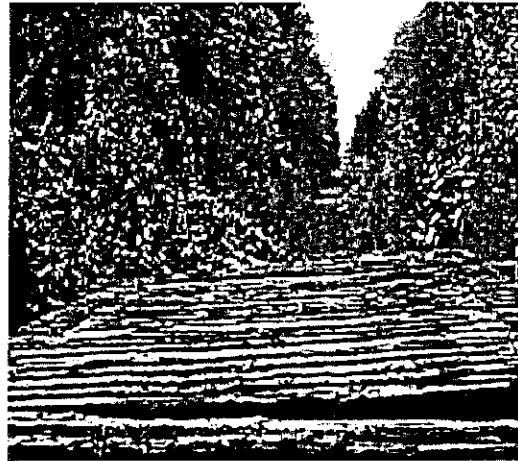


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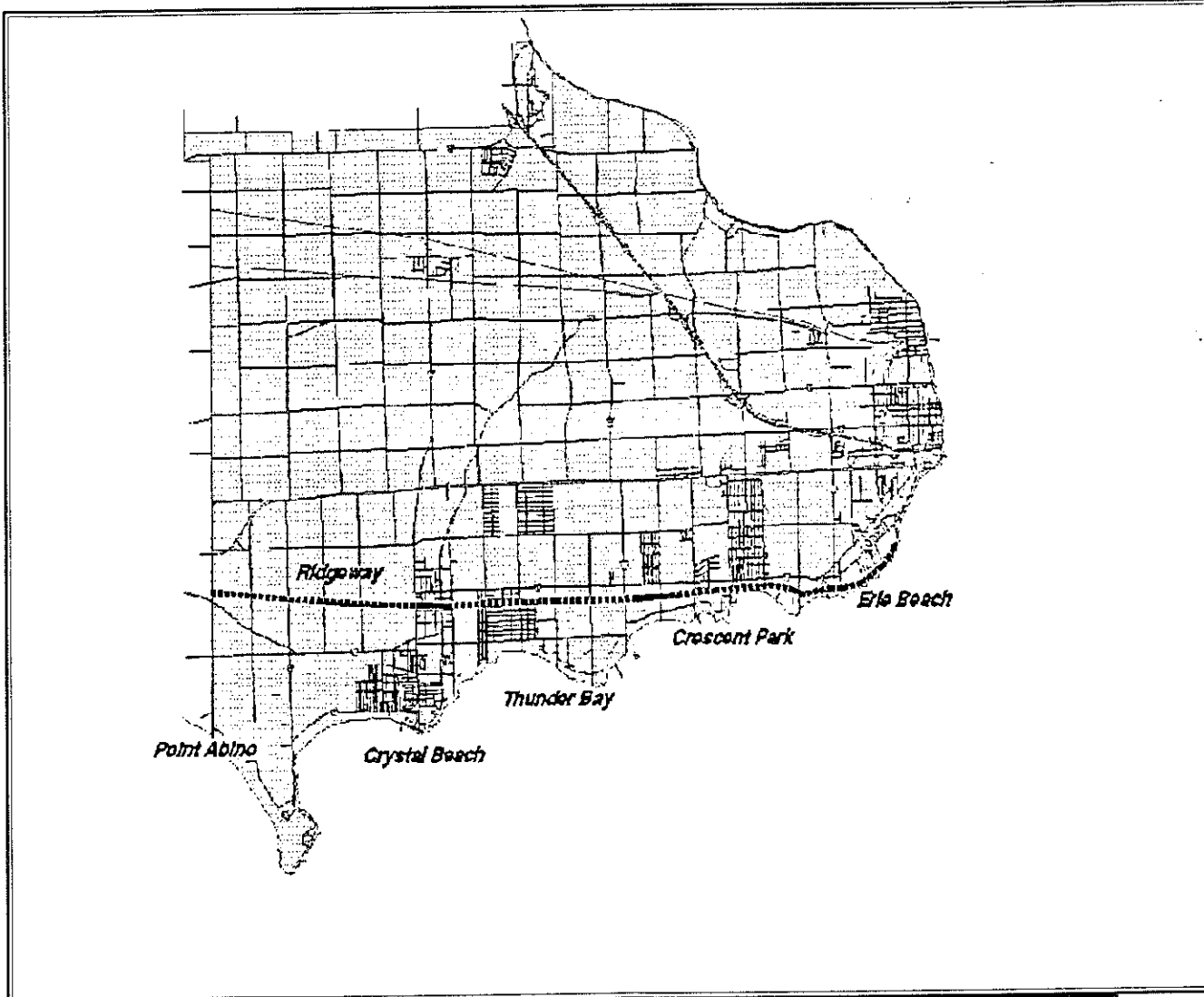
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FRIENDSHIP TRAIL

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Route Map

The Friendship Trail runs along the former Buffalo and Lake Huron Railroad from Holloway Bay Road in the west (Point Abino Area), to Edgemere Lane in the east (Crescent Beach/Crescent Park area). From there the trail runs along Edgemere Lane to Waverly Beach Park, and through the Erie Beach Woods to Lakeshore Road. The trail then runs along the south side of Lakeshore Road to Old Fort Erie, where it connects with the Niagara Parks Recreational Trail.



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FRIENDSHIP TRAIL

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History of the B&LH Railroad



tranquil surroundings.... Crescent Beach area

The "Buffalo and Lake Huron Railroad" dates back to 1854, and was a major link between the industrial areas on Lake Huron and the Port of Buffalo, New York.

In later years, the line was transferred to Canadian National Railways, and was used mainly for freight transport. From the turn-of-the-century until the 1960's, the line also provided passenger service from Buffalo to Ridgeway, where visitors would transfer to another train or bus bound for a favourite summer destination, Crystal Beach.



historic bridge over Six Mile Creek



Erie Beach area, a Biological Programme Site

The line became less and less active over the years, and was finally abandoned in the 1980s. The trackage was subsequently removed and the rail bed left in it's original state. The Regional Municipality of Niagara purchased the line from CN in 1998, and subsequently sold it to the Town of Fort Erie in 1999.

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FRIENDSHIP TRAIL
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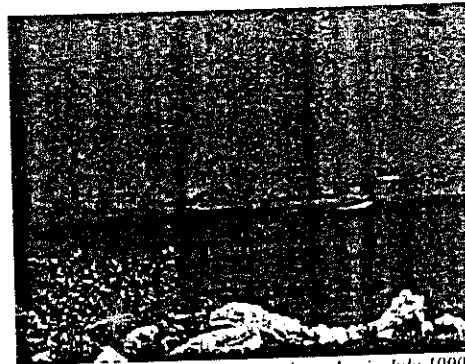
Facts and Figures



trailhead, juncture of Lake Erie and the Niagara River

"The goal of the Friendship Trail Project is to create a multi-use trail spanning the entire Town from east-to-west, parallel to Lake Erie, connecting Fort Erie's various urban and rural communities."

In January 1999 the Town of Fort Erie acquired the former "Buffalo and Lake Huron Railroad", operated most recently by CN. The property represents an excellent opportunity for development of a linkage system between the various urban settlements within the municipality, and also as an access to the municipal beaches on the Lake Erie shore.



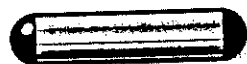
beautiful Lake Erie on a warm, hazy day in July 1999



proposed trail location atop retaining wall, Lakeshore Rd.

The Friendship Trail Project represents an opportunity to complete a regional objective, that of having a **continuous circle route through the entire Niagara Region**. The Fort Erie Trail would link two other existing trail systems, the Welland Canals Trail System, and the Niagara Parks Recreational Trail. This will provide a major recreational resource for the millions of visitors hosted by Niagara annually, and provide an economic, recreational and health benefit to the local residents as well.

FAQ



click here to access our "Frequently Asked Questions" page



shared-use trail/laneway through Waverly Beach


FRIENDSHIP TRAIL

FORT ERIE'S RAIL-TO-TRAIL PROJECT

Frequently Asked Questions

How did this project begin? Who decided that a town-wide trail system was a goal of the municipality?
 How is the Town deciding on what the trail will look like and where it will go?
 What stage is the project at? When will construction begin?
 How much is this project going to cost?
 How is it being funded?
 What types of users are going to be permitted on the trail?
 What protection will there be regarding potential liability claims from trail users?
 Who will be the main users of this trail system?
 Who will maintain the trail once it is completed?
 How will the trail connect to other trails in the Region?
 What impact will the trail have on property values?
 What is the potential for an increase in crime associated with the trail?
 What is the economic benefit of the trail?
 What is the Trans-Canada Trail? How does it affect Fort Erie?
 How can I contribute to the success of this project?

How did this project begin? Who decided that a town-wide trail system was a goal of the municipality?

The concept of a multi-use trail along the CN corridor was identified as a goal of the municipality as far back as 1987. When developing recreational policies for the **Town of Fort Erie Official Plan**, a number of opportunities for enhancing the existing recreational facilities in the town were identified, one being a trail corridor connecting the wide-spread communities and parks throughout the town. The abandoned CN corridor was identified as a prime location for such a trail. As well, the **Town Master Recreation Plan (1992)** identified the CN corridor as a possible future recreational trail location. In 1998, the **International Waterfront Gateway Strategy** prepared by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust also recommended a recreational trail linking the Peace Bridge. Public meetings were held during the formulation of the above noted policy documents.

In January 1999, with the assistance of Regional Niagara, the Town finally acquired the entire former CN corridor, from Holloway Bay Road to Kraft Road, at a cost of \$42,000.

How is the Town deciding on what the trail will look like and where it will go?

Shortly after acquisition, the Town Council approved the hiring of **peter j. smith and company**, a landscape and planning consulting company specializing in such ventures. As well, Council appointed the **Rail-to-Trail Citizens' Advisory Committee**, a group of

community volunteers, to work with the consultant and Town staff. The committee's function is to make recommendations to the consultant and to Town Council respecting trail issues. They also are instrumental in the private fundraising campaign for the trail project.

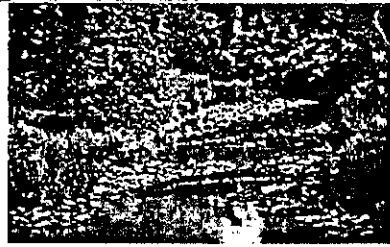
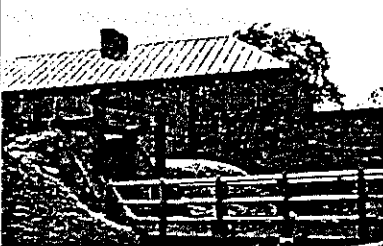

The Community also has a hand in the decision making process, through Public Consultation forums. A general forum was held May 11, 1999 at Town Hall. Many comments were received and were incorporated into the consultant's final report to Council. Neighbourhood forums will be held in the future as each section of the trail is developed.

Finally, **staff of the Town Planning Department** are at the disposal of the consultant, the advisory committee and the community, to assist in the development of the trail, and to act as liason between the stakeholders and the Town Council. Planning Staff, through Council reporting, make final recommendations to Council on various trail issues, based on information gathered throughout the process.

What stage is the project at? When will construction begin?

As of July 1999, the Master Plan for the entire trail project had been completed by the consultant, and adopted by Town Council. The Master Plan lays out the trail route, and identifies constraints and opportunities along the corridor. This plan is a **Concept Plan**, and is meant to be a guideline for future development of the corridor. Working documents are yet to be completed, and are subject to change based upon factors encountered in the field. A copy of the Master Plan is available from the Planning Department Offices, 2nd Floor, Town Hall, 1 Municipal Centre Drive, Fort Erie.

The project is divided into three development stages:

<p>Phase I - Ridgeway/East Bertie Section Trail development from Gorham Road easterly to Bertie Bay Road, through the communities of Ridgeway and Thunder Bay.</p>	 <p><i>Six Mile Creek, East Bertie section</i></p>
 <p><i>Historic Fort Erie, at the trailhead</i></p>	<p>Phase II - Fort Erie/Lakeshore Section Trail development from Bertie Bay Road easterly to the trail terminus at Old Fort Erie, through the communities of Crescent Park, Waverly Beach and Erie Beach.</p>
<p>Phase III - West Bertie Section Trail Development from Gorham Road westerly to Holloway Bay</p>	

Road (town limits)



rural tranquility... West Bertie section

Phase I development is currently in the design stage. Working documents are being prepared and construction is set to begin in September 1999, completed by December 1999.

Phase II development is currently in the study stage. Property acquisitions in the Crescent Beach and Erie Beach area will be required prior to designing this stage. Town Staff expect to hold Neighbourhood Forums on this stage in Fall 1999/Winter 2000. The current estimated construction time is Fall 2000/Winter 2001.

Phase III development is currently in the conceptual stage. Design of this section will not commence until the **City of Port Colborne** begins to develop their trail system, which connects to this portion of our trail system. The current estimated construction time is Fall 2001/Winter 2002.

How much is this project going to cost?

The total estimated cost of construction of the trail is **\$1.56 million**.(1999)

Phase I (Ridgeway/East Bertie)- \$517,000

Phase II (Fort Erie/Lakeshore)- \$658,000

Phase III (West Bertie)- \$382,000

This pays for construction of a three-metre wide (10') paved trail and appropriate grading, landscaping and signage for the entire 16km length of the trail. Other special amenities such as parks, benches, amenity areas, etc. are not included in this price, and will be funded separately.

How is it being funded?

Town of Fort Erie Council

has allocated \$250,000 to the project in the 1999 budget.

Regional Municipality of Niagara

has funded this project for \$250,000 in 1999. The Region is contributing to this project, as it will ultimately provide a much-needed link in the proposed Greater Niagara Circle Route.

Fort Erie Rail-to-Trail Citizens' Advisory Committee

has been hard at work soliciting donations from community organizations, private companies, and individuals.

Federal/Provincial Grants

Town Planning Staff have identified various sources of funding for trail projects. An application to the Canada Millenium Committee was submitted in May 1999. A decision is expected on this application by late summer 1999.

Funds are currently in place for Phase I construction. Construction of future phases will be contingent upon adequate funding in 2000 and beyond.

What types of uses are going to be permitted on the trail?

The trail is multi-purpose, and will be handicapped accessible. It is useable by cyclists, walkers, joggers, in-line skaters, wheelchairs, and cross country skiers. Given the corridor allowance width of 20 metres (66'), provision has been made in the Master Plan for a parallel equestrian trail for future development. Such a trail is anticipated to be developed completely at the expense of private equestrian groups.

Motorized use of the trail is prohibited (with the exception of motorized wheelchairs).

What protection will there be regarding potential liability claims from trail users?

The trail is part of the Town's land inventory, and is considered to be a Linear Park. As such, the trail is covered fully by the Town's liability insurance. Any community group or individual who contributes financially, or otherwise, to this project will have no exposure to liability as they will not be owners nor constructors/maintainers of the trail system.

Who will be the main users of this trail system?

The majority of the trail users are expected to be local, from the Town and the Region. However, given the linkage to the Niagara Parks Recreation Trail and ultimately the Welland Canals Parkway Trail, the potential exists for a significant influx of tourists from other areas, especially cyclists.

Who will maintain the trail once it is completed?

The trail will be maintained by the Town Parks and Recreation Department, as a Linear Park in their system. The Town may also request the involvement of local service clubs in the maintenance of the trail, similar to the "adopt-a-mile" program on regional highways.

How will the trail connect to other trails in the region?

The trail will be connected to the Niagara Parks Recreation Trail in the vicinity of Old Fort Erie. The Parks Trail currently ends at the lakeside parking lot across Lakeshore Road from the fort. This will be the starting point of the Friendship Trail.

The trail is proposed to be connected to the Welland Canals Trail through a continuation of the CN trail through the City of Port Colborne. Port officials are currently negotiating purchase of the rail corridor from CN.

Once all linkages are complete, the trail will form part of the Greater Niagara Circle Route, a 156 km long multi-use trail system

connecting Niagara communities. This system has the potential to become a major magnet for tourists and cycling enthusiasts from all over, due to it's connection with Niagara Falls, the wine country to the north, the canal heritage to the west, and the railway and lakeside heritage to the south.

What impact will the trail have on property values?

A comprehensive US National Parks Service/Penn State University study conducted in 1992 quizzed land owners about their views on property values in the neighbourhoods surrounding three different rail-trails across the country. Only 1 out of every 20 (5%) of the surrounding landowners felt that the trails has worsened the quality of their neighbourhoods. An average of 93% thought that living near the trail was better or about the same as they expected it to be. More than 90% of the adjacent landowners believed that the trail bordering their land had no negative effect on their property values. Typically, initial worries about nearby rail-trails appear to vanish in the face of what turns out to be a positive experience for the vast majority of those involved.

What is the potential for an increase in crime associated with the trail?

No statistical evidence associated with any rail-trail reflects an increase in crime. To the contrary, substantial anecdotal reports suggest that rail-trails mean better, cleaner, and more policed pathways, which have resulted in some cases in a perceived decrease in crime. This view is supported by Bruce R. Searles, Chief of Police for Chittendan County, Vermont, who is quoted as follows in a rail-to-trail conversion in his jurisdiction:

"There has been no increase in crime in Burlington or Stowe which is attributed to the bike paths. My position is that bike paths proposed for Chittendan County communities provide a healthy way of linking neighbourhoods and are likely to have a positive effect on the overall safety of the public. Crime and the fear of crime do not flourish in an environment of high energy and healthy interaction among law abiding community members. Thus, the quality of life is enhanced in several ways including the enhancement of individual physical fitness, a safer mode of transportation for cyclists and pedestrians and the potential for less crime overall in the communities. In terms of public safety, a system of bike paths for the county is a great idea."

What is the economic benefit of the trail?

Rail-trails provide excellent recreation and transportation opportunities, preserve critical open space, create natural corridors for wildlife and enhance communities in the process. But rail-trails do even more, they bring money into the communities through which they pass.

Trails are highly desirable destinations for an increasing number of people. Trail users need food, and lodging. They also need special clothes, shoes and equipment for running, hiking, biking, skiing and skating. Many of them buy souvenirs and other items during the trip, or combine the trail experience with another type of revenue generating activity.

A major 1992 study of three rail-trails by the National Parks Service

has shown that the total economic impact of a trail involves a combination of newly created trail related jobs and the expansion of existing businesses related to travel, equipment, cloths, food, souvenirs and maps.

Just how much can a rail-trail impact a community? The above study found that the average user of the Heritage Trail in rural Iowa spent \$9.21 per day. The figure for Florida's Tallahassee-St. Marks Trail was \$11.02, and for urban California's Lafayette-Morgana Trail, \$3.97. With use in the tens and hundreds of thousands, the total annual economic benefit for each of the three trails ranged from \$1.2 million to \$1.8 million per year. Considering that Americans used rail-trails 85 million times in 1993, communities that have responded to trail users have profited generously.

Trail-related and trailside businesses vary and may include bike shuttle services, campgrounds, restaurants, concession stands, motels and bed-and-breakfast establishments. Businesses that spring up or are revitalized because of a trail are as different as the people who run them.



Windmill Point Campground, a recreational amenity located on the Friendship Trail

For example, before the Katy Trail went through his back yard in Defiance, Missouri, woodworker Karl Koenig barely got by on a few commissions. Since the trail opened, Koenig's Carpenter Love Shop has been deluged with surprised and appreciative browsers and buyers. Koenig today has a mailing list of over 100,000 people.

It took 17 years to clear the bureaucratic hurdles and build the Minuteman Trail near Boston, but the wait may have been worth it for The Bike Shop. It served an amazing 1,800 people on a single beautiful Saturday in 1994. The Minuteman has also been good for Steve's Ice Cream Shop in Arlington, which serves about 200 more people a week, and the Gap clothing store in Lexington, which claims a 30 percent business increase because of the trail.

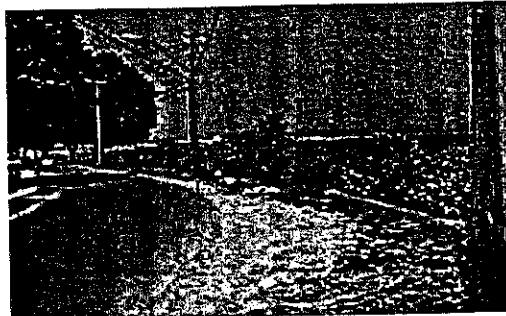
The downtown area of Dunedin, Florida was suffering a 35% storefront vacancy rate in early 1990's until a 344-mile section of abandoned CSX railroad track became the phenomenally successful Pinellas Trail. Now, storefront occupancy is 100 percent, old establishments are remodeling and business is booming.

Peak season hotel rooms along Wisconsin's 32 mile Elroy-Sparta State Park Trail are booked up to full year in advance. A state study of the trail revealed that the destination is so desirable that the average visitor travels 228 miles to experience it. Half of all the trail's users are out of state visitors who bring "new" money into Wisconsin.

After biking the Youghiogheny River Trail in southwestern Pennsylvania, Robert Benns and his wife purchased a rundown

trailside building and converted it into the River's Edge Cafe which now serves over 1,000 meals a day to people who can pronounce Youghiogheny.

An additional benefit of rail-trails is the revenue they produce for the state and their communities through taxes from trail related sales. For example, a recent study of Maryland's Northern Central Rail-Trail found that while the trail's management and maintenance cost to the public in 1993 was \$191,893, the trail related tax income to the state totaled \$303,750.



The Friendship Trail will run directly adjacent to Lake Erie in places, affording a beautiful view of the water and the rolling Boston Hills of New York State.

Rail-trails provide countless opportunities for economic renewal and growth. As people spend more time on trails they are also spending more money, near the trails and on their way to them. As more establishments recognize the purchasing power of cyclists, walkers, runners and others, they are orienting their merchandise, advertising and service toward trail users.

Many people already know that rail-trails are good for our communities, our health, and our environment. Every day, more people are realizing that they also benefit our local economies.

What impact can it have on a community?

It will increase tourism. It will promote many businesses; bed and breakfast inns, restaurants, craft shops, bike shops, rental outlets and many others. A thriving downtown brings prosperity to the whole community. It will give a community something to work together on; trailways that a community can enjoy; trailways that will bring thousands of people every year to a town to see the pride in the community.

What is the Trans-Canada Trail? How does it affect Fort Erie?

The Trans-Canada Trail is a millennium project of the Canadian Federal Government. The goal is to create a system of linking recreational corridors spanning the country. When completed, the TC Trail will stretch almost 15,000 kms from Newfoundland to BC, and north to the Arctic Ocean. Fort Erie Town Council has resolved to register our trail with the Trans-Canada Trail System. This will bring national recognition to our project, and instill pride in our community. A trail pavillion (of which there are few in Ontario), is proposed to be located at the trailhead where it connects with the Niagara Parks Trail (at Old Fort Erie). Pavillions signify a major stopping place on the trail network, and having one located in Fort Erie is a proud achievement.

More information on the Trans-Canada Trail can be found at
www.tctrail.ca

How can I contribute to the success of this project?

The Friendship Trail project is an important part of the future of Fort Erie. Not only will it provide locals with a picturesque and healthful recreational resource, it will also be an important piece of our tourism strategy. It's success depends on the support of our citizens, local businesses and our communitiy groups. If you are interested in finding out how you can be a part of this worthwhile community effort, or if you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, please contact:

Fort Erie Rail-to-Trail Citizens' Advisory Committee
P.O. Box 65
Fort Erie, Ontario
L2A 5M6

or:

Planning and Property Safety Department
1 Municipal Centre Drive
Fort Erie, Ontario
L2A 2S6
(905) 871-1600 ext. 223

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FRIENDSHIP TRAIL

FORT ERIE'S RAIL-TO-TRAIL PROJECT

Citizens' Advisory Committee COMMUNITY SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to collect information from the citizens of Fort Erie, including abutting property owners and trail users, regarding the FRIENDSHIP TRAIL PROJECT. This information will be regularly evaluated by the Citizen's Committee, in order to assist in making recommendations to the Town Council regarding trail usage and other related topics. We appreciate your input!

*THIS IS YOUR TRAIL, FORT ERIE, A RECREATIONAL RESOURCE TO TAKE PRIDE IN
AND TO PASS DOWN TO FUTURE CITIZENS OF OUR TOWN*

Fill out the information in each section as requested. Then at the end of the form supply your name and contact information, and submit the form. You will receive a confirmation message from us shortly.

Please provide us with the following details:

Do you support the development of a rail-trail system in Fort Erie?

If yes, do you plan to use the trail once completed?

If yes, how many hours a week do you plan to use the trail?

- None
 1-5 hours
 5-10 hours
 10-20 hours
 More than 20 hours

What is the MOST PREVALENT activity you would use the trail for? (select only one)