

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Genesee Valley Trail Town Initiative

What is the Genesee Valley Trail Town Initiative?

In 2021 LGV will be working with 10 municipalities in Southern Monroe, Livingston, Wyoming and Allegany Counties to establish a network of Trail Town hubs along the Genesee Valley Greenway and Genesee River corridor. The project aims to boost outdoor tourism, create more resilient communities and support the region's post-COVID recovery.

The goal of this initiative is to establish a Trail Town model that can be replicated across other rural communities in the five-county Genesee Valley region in the future. Project components will include:

- **Destination capacity building for each municipality** (e.g. business coaching and support, digital marketing training, networking and assessments)
- **Development of consistent trail town branding guidelines** for signage, wayfinding and other marketing assets.
- **Trail town enhancements**, including kiosks, signage and wayfinding, trailhead improvements, and public art that improve trail to town connectivity.
- **Development of a revolving loan / rural impact fund model** to support new venture creation and other municipal activities that advance outdoor recreation tourism, now and into the future.

What is a Trail Town Program?

The Trail Town Program® revitalizes rural communities by growing outdoor tourism and small businesses. First launched in 2007 to help support communities along the 150 mile Great Allegheny Passage (GAP), the program now helps trails nationwide follow their lead. Through a combination of assessment and research, consistent trail-wide marketing, business coaching and support, and network-building, the Allegheny Passage Trail Town program was able to grow 65 new businesses and 270 jobs in 10 years, achieving an overall economic impact of \$50 million per year with 40% of local income generated from outdoor recreation (up from 25% when the initiative started).¹

¹ Progress Fund Trail Town Program Impact: <https://www.trailtowns.org/about-us/>

How did this initiative get underway?

The Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (FOGVG) initiated a Trail Town Program in 2018 to work with communities along the Greenway to become economic hubs and attractive destinations for trail users.

In 2019 LGV was awarded technical assistance through the [USDA Innovation Center's Rural Economic Development Innovation \(REDI\)](#) initiative for an 18 month regional planning process aimed at bolstering the Genesee Valley's outdoor recreation economy. The Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway participated in REDI along with several other stakeholders in the Genesee Valley region to identify priorities and strategies for growing the region's outdoor recreation economy.

The Genesee Valley Trail Town Destination program is a direct outcome of the REDI planning process and a key step in helping [this coalition](#) enact their vision to establish the Genesee Valley as an outdoor recreation and heritage tourism destination, along with a formal stewardship organization to financially sustain it.

Who is coordinating the Trail Town initiative ?

Letchworth Gateway Villages will serve as the lead implementing organization for this initiative in collaboration with the [Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway](#). LGV has also contracted [Michele Archie, from Harbinger Consulting](#) to lead the community placemaking workshops. Michele has worked with LGV since 2017 on a number of projects to help partners establish the Genesee Valley as a sustainable tourism destination, including the [Explore Genesee Valley](#) map guide.

Each municipality participating in this initiative has identified a [Trail Town Committee](#) who will support coordination and implementation of the program at the community level.

What do communities participating in the Trail Town program get?

Key benefits to partner municipalities include:

- **Small business coaching and support**, including digital transformation and adaptation to new economic realities in a post-pandemic environment
- **Consistent marketing, branding and wayfinding** for communities and businesses near Letchworth State Park, the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park, the Genesee River, and DEC State Forests in the Genesee Valley Region.
- **Increased visibility to strategic visitor markets** via [ExploreGeneseeValley.com](#)

- **Improved capacity at the municipal level** for destination planning, collaborative marketing, assessments and funding.
- **A model trail town program** that can be replicated in other communities across the Genesee Valley Region.

What communities are participating?

Community	County
Perry	Wyoming
Hume / Fillmore	Allegany
Caneadea /Houghton	Allegany
Cuba	Allegany
Town of Wheatland / Scottsville	Monroe
Geneseo	Livingston
Mount Morris	Livingston
Nunda	Livingston
Leicester	Livingston
Avon	Livingston
York	Livingston

My community is participating in this initiative, how can I get involved?

There will be ample opportunities for residents and businesses to get involved in their community’s trail town work. If you fall into any of the following categories and want to get involved, please reach out to Nicole Manapol at director@lethworthgatewayvillages.org and she can put you in touch with your local committee.

- Hiking, cycling and other outdoor recreation clubs and organizations
- Merchants, hospitality-related businesses (i.e. B&Bs, restaurants, breweries, events)
- Outfitter businesses and bike shops
- Park managers and interpretation staff
- Volunteer or Friends groups that support trails

- Local authors and photographers
- Historic preservation, agricultural, and conservation groups
- Local schools and colleges or extensions offices
- Parks and recreation staff
- Local Youth

Why a focus on Outdoor Recreation - why now?

With the COVID-19 pandemic, our communities are going to need all the support they can get to recover including how to adapt to a new normal in a post-pandemic environment. Forecasts on consumer behavior anticipate that consumers will shift towards buying local, travel closer to home and seek opportunities for outdoor recreation in nature. Developing a Trail Town destination model for our area represents an important opportunity to build resilient and sustainable communities now and in the future.

Who is funding this initiative?

Letchworth Gateway Villages received funding from the USDA Rural Business Development Grant program and the Northern Border Regional Commission to implement the Trail Town program.

USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program

The USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program provides funding to support targeted technical assistance, training and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas which will employ 50 or fewer new employees and has less than \$1 million in gross revenue.

The Northern Border Regional Commission

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is a partnership between the federal government and the States of Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont. Its mission is to catalyze regional, collaborative, and transformative community economic development approaches that alleviate economic distress and position the region for economic growth.

For more information contact:

Nicole Manapol
Director, Letchworth Gateway Villages
www.letchworthgatewayvillages.org
Email: director@letchworthgatewayvillages.org
Phone: (585) 237-8079