

Trails... a Direct Path to Better Health

Flint Hills Trail State Park



Elizabeth Burger, PhD, MBA
VP, Healthy Communities
Sunflower Foundation (Kansas)

Trails... a Direct Path to Better Health

Health Benefits of Trails

- *Physical Activity
- *Mental Health
- *Access to Nature
- *Emotional Wellbeing
- *Community Cohesion / Civic Pride
- *Quality of Life
- *Public Resource
- *Opportunities for Equity
- *Economic development with potential to be sustainable and non-extractive/exploitive

An aerial photograph of a long, straight dirt road stretching across a vast, flat, brown landscape. The terrain appears dry and cracked, with sparse, dark vegetation along the road's edge. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, with some light breaking through near the horizon.

So if trails are so great for health...

Why aren't more health
foundations funding
them???

- 
- *Story of Sunflower... Why Trails?
 - *Health Benefits... Trail Talking Pts
 - *Health Philanthropy 101
 - *Finding the Fit & Making the Case



Sunflower Foundation

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[Kansas Fights Addiction](#)

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▶ Investing in People and Places for a Healthier Kansas

[ABOUT SUNFLOWER FOUNDATION](#)

OUR MISSION

*Serving as a Catalyst for Improving
the Health of All Kansans*

OUR WORK

Investing in Communities





OUR WORK

Healthy Communities

We strive to enhance the built environment and expand access to healthy food through systems, structures and surroundings that make healthy living achievable and affordable for all.



Sunflower Trails

Time spent in nature is important to our health. Since 2005, Sunflower Foundation has been partnering with communities, schools and nonprofits across the state to ensure that all Kansans have access to trails and are able to enjoy the physical, mental and community benefits that come with connecting to nature.

— [Click to Read More](#)

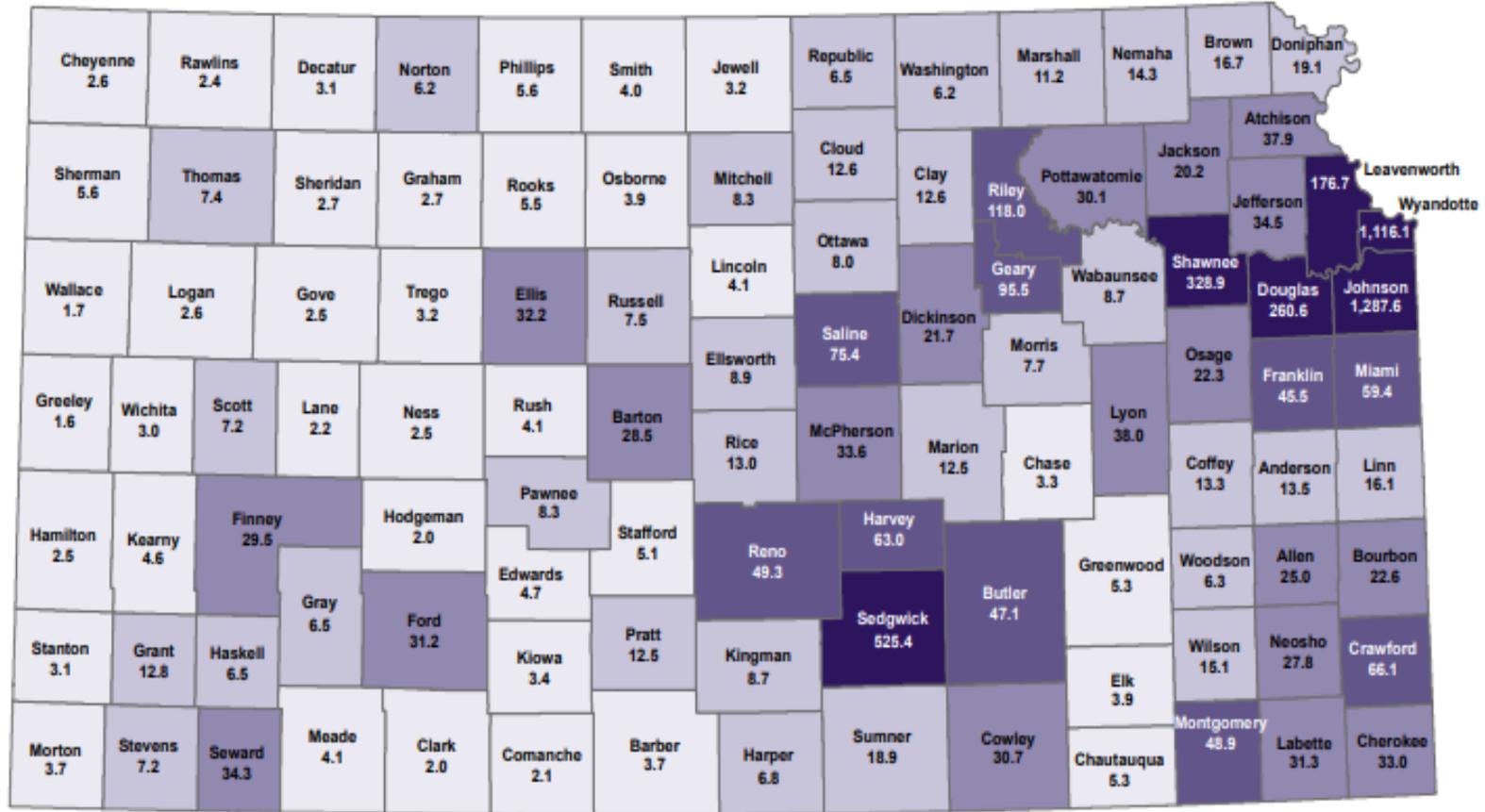
The foundation has supported over 200 trail projects through community-based trail builder grants, the Trail-in-a-Box community volunteer program and other regional trail planning initiatives.

Links to other trails resources:

- [Sunflower Trails Finder](#)
- [Kansas Trails Council](#)
- [Get Outdoors Kansas](#)
- [10 Steps to Successful Trail Building](#)
- [VIDEO: Trail Appreciation Day 2023](#)



Population Density Classifications in Kansas by County, 2020



Source: Institute for Policy & Social Research, The University of Kansas; data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census.

State: 35.9

Population Density by Classification* (persons per square mile)

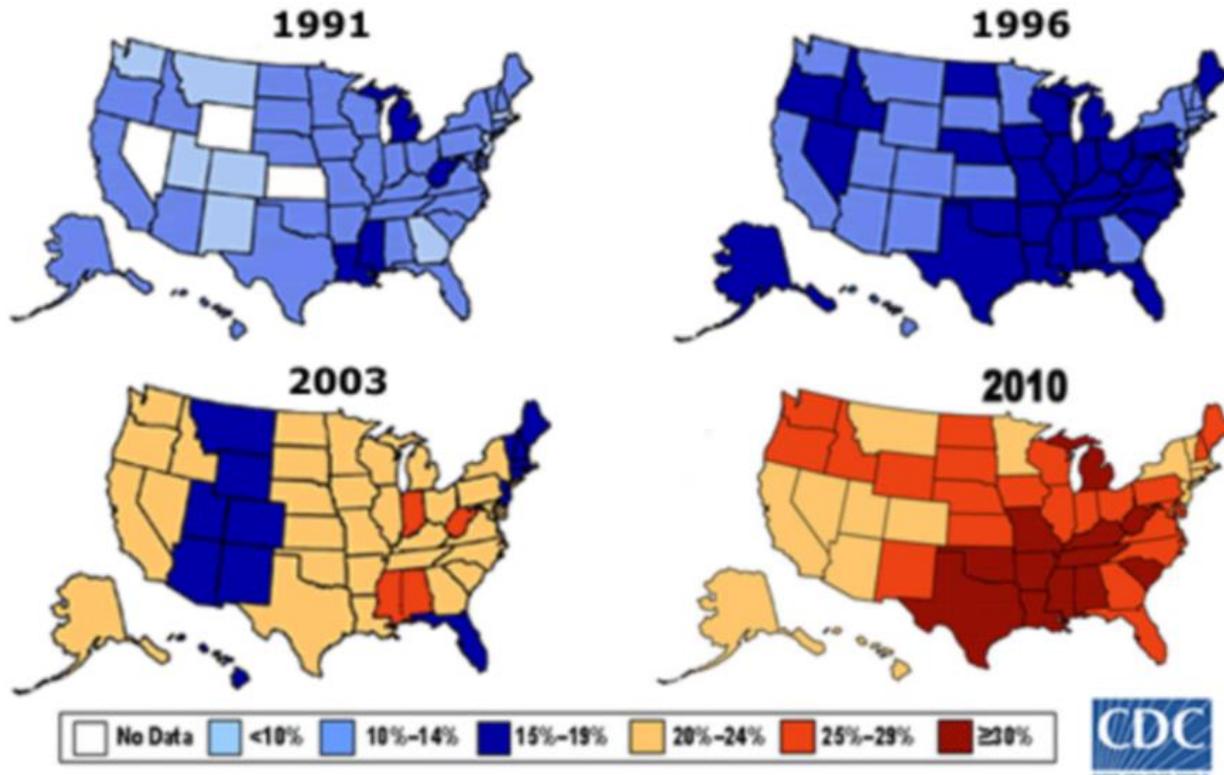
- Frontier (less than 6.0 ppsm)
- Rural (6.0 - 19.9 ppsm)
- Densely-settled Rural (20.0 - 39.9 ppsm)
- Semi-Urban (40.0 - 149.9 ppsm)
- Urban (150.0 or more ppsm)

* Kansas Department of Health and Environment classifications.

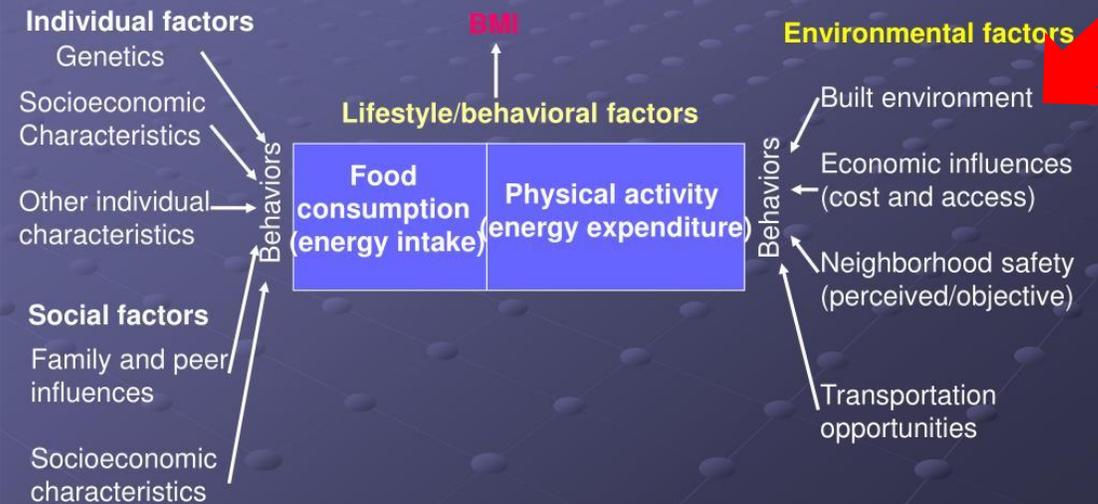
OUR MISSION

*Serving as a Catalyst for Improving
the Health of All Kansans*

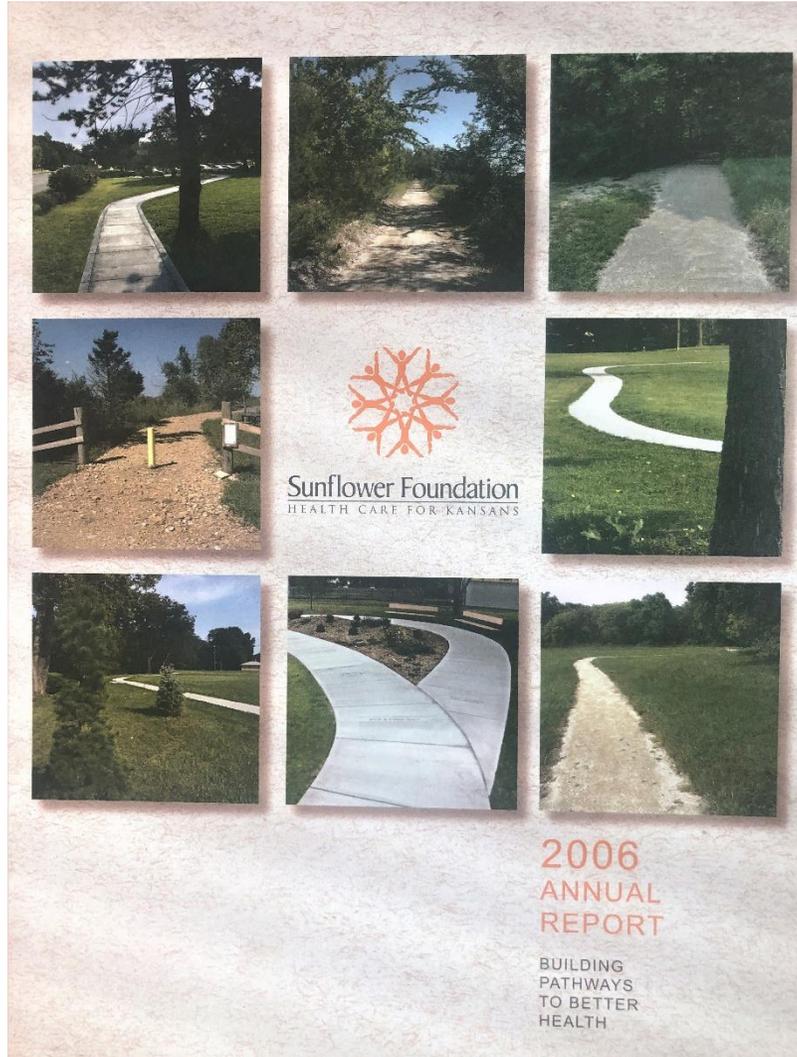
In 2005, we were a Small Foundation Facing a Big Public Health Issue...



Built Environment in Relation to Overweight or Obesity, and Physical Activity: An Ecologic Model



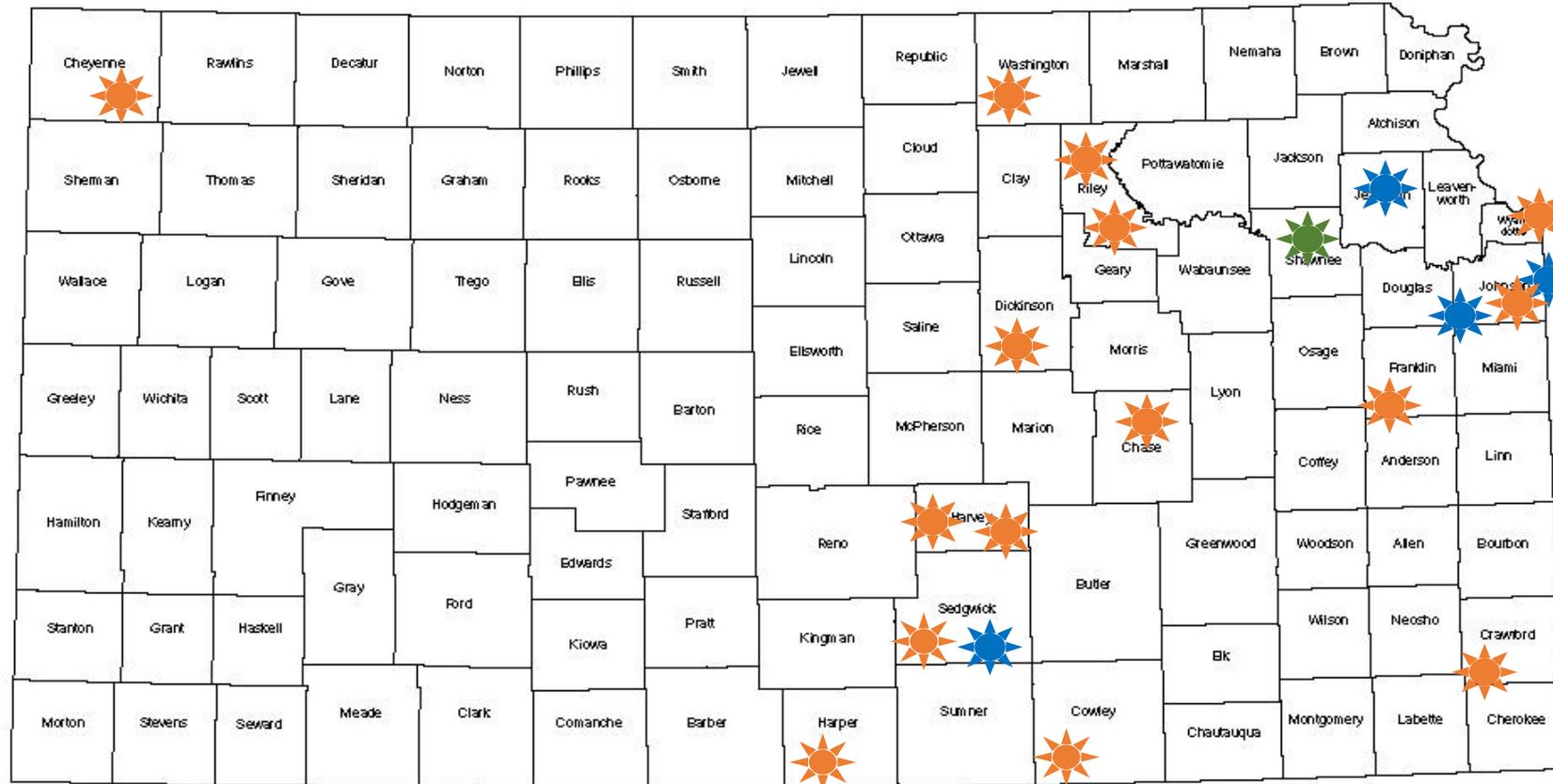
First Sunflower Trails RFP in 2005



First trail grants established some of the same criteria we use today:

- Public access
- Strongly suggested length/width (depending on geogaphy)
- Must be “more than a sidewalk” – located in a designated place where community gathers or creates vital linkages
- 1:1 dollar match
- Applicant must demonstrate community desire, need and input
- Public-private partnerships encouraged

Sunflower Trails 2005-2007

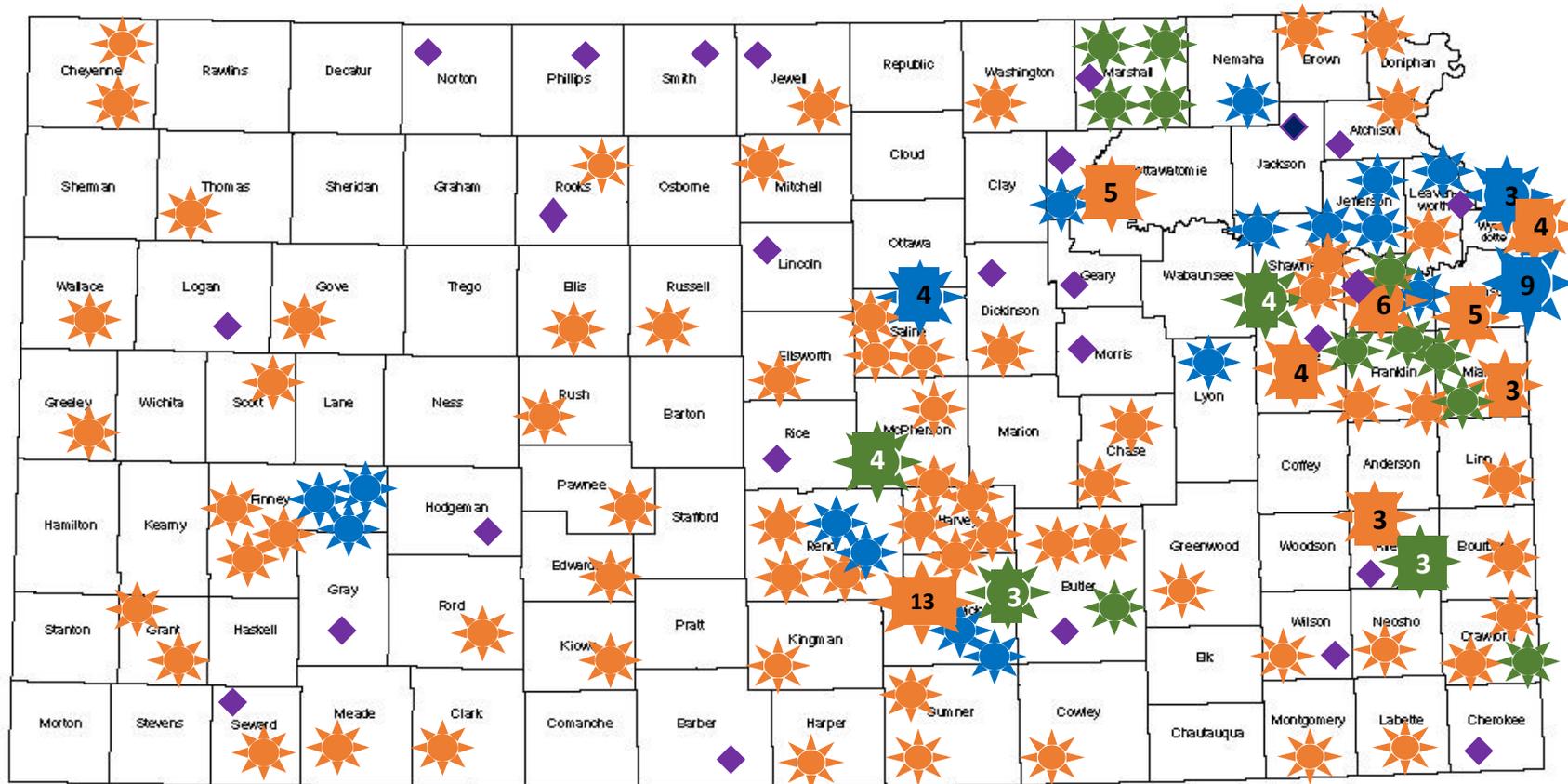


Community-Based Trails: 

School-Based Trails: 

Rail-Trails: 

Sunflower Trails 2023



Community-Based Trails:  Rail-Trails: 

 School-Based Trails: 

Trail in a Box Projects 

Community Trails

More than half of all Sunflower Trails are “community-based trails.” They are developed in the outdoor spaces accessible and important to community members: public parks, recreation areas and green spaces. The trails range from being a stand-alone feature (e.g., trail around a lake or ballfield), to trails that enhance connectivity and allow for active transportation to places of education, commerce or services. Since all Sunflower Trails must be publicly accessible, the local municipality is typically one key partner. However, the nature of community trail projects – including the need for 1:1 match funding – helps to attract a variety of stakeholders and partners. These include parks and recreation, health departments, hospitals and health clinics, schools and colleges, chambers of commerce, economic development, private businesses, social service nonprofits, civic groups, libraries, arts and culture, and of course, the backbone of trail work: committed volunteers.



School Trails

School trails account for 35 Sunflower Trail projects at this time, ranging from a large high school in the urban core of Kansas City to elementary schools in western counties where the school trail is the only dedicated walking venue in town. The school trails not only see consistent daily use due to the “captive audience” of the student population, but there is a myriad of ways to use them: pre-test stress walks, after-school marathon clubs, science class outings, and so forth. More often than not, school trails also serve as community/neighborhood trails, and many trails become the foundation for other outdoor school projects such as gardens, native grass landscaping, art projects and outdoor reading activities.



Rail Trails

Sunflower has been a partner on **at least 25 rail-trail projects thus far**, supporting the development of legally railbanked corridors that link small towns across the state. These projects have the highest potential to spur economic development and outdoor recreation tourism, especially in rural areas, just like the famed KATY Trail in nearby Missouri. The right-of-way on rail-trails is typically “owned” by a nonprofit conservancy which does the legal work to preserve the corridor and then develops the trail for public use. Since most conservancies in KS are volunteer-led, Sunflower has focused on increasing their capacity with tailored grants that encourage public-private partnerships as well as special education/networking events. In 2019, the Kansas House Agriculture Committee asked Sunflower to hold a series of community conversations and submit a legislative report regarding the role of rail of trails in rural Kansas. We learned that while some longstanding tensions still exist among adjacent landowners, a major shift in thinking has occurred – many landowners now see rail-trails as drivers of economic opportunity for their small rural towns.





Natural Surface Trails: Trail in a Box Projects

The innovative “Trail in a Box” project, spearheaded by the Kansas Trails Council (KTC), helps a unique set of trail-builders – those who develop and maintain natural-surface trails (i.e., “dirt” trails). These trails don’t need expensive materials (concrete), but they do require enormous volunteer sweat equity. Sunflower and KTC envisioned a roving “trail trailer” that could lend high-quality tools to support these grassroots efforts. The project started with 1 pilot trailer in 2014 and has grown to 7 TIAB’s scattered across the state. The superior training and technical assistance provided by the volunteers at KTC has been key to TIAB’s success, especially for small rural towns with few financial resources but the public land and determination to build a trail. **At this time, there are 30+ TIAB projects either completed or in progress.** Of note, the majority of the most recent projects have been led by women volunteers, eager to learn how to use a Pulaski in order to create a safe place in nature for local children and families to enjoy.





Trail in a Box... “Just add Volunteers!”



SEVEN trailers in circulation across KS now. Local governments & nonprofits can borrow to work on **public** trails.



Trailer outfitted with everything needed to build/maintain a natural surface trail
BONUS: comes with technical assistance!



That's Mike Goodwin
State's #1 Trail Guru!

Go to kansastrailsCouncil.org to learn more



Download the FREE app
under the name
getoutdoorsKS



Several ways to use it...

- * FIND a trail - **almost 5000 miles mapped!**
- * LOCATE an outdoor event or place
- * JOIN the online coalition
- * ADD & PROMOTE your trail, event, park, etc
- * CONNECT to other towns & groups

There is no fee to join or use the website or app. The project is a partnership among the Sunflower Foundation, Kansas Trails Council & the Evergy Green Team



Sunflower Foundation
HEALTH CARE FOR KANSANS

POWERED BY TRAILS: DAY OF LEARNING AT THE POWERHOUSE

Wednesday, April 27, 2022
(9am to 4pm)
Sunflower Powerhouse
Education Center in
Topeka

- Expert speakers on topics of interest
- Community presentations
- Networking

No fee to attend; lunch & snacks will be provided
More details to come – stay tuned!

Questions?
Contact Elizabeth Burger at
eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org



Sunflower State Trail Appreciation Day

Monday, January 30

8:30 am - 2:30 pm

Kansas State Capitol, Topeka

Keynote speakers

Lt. Gov. David Toland and Mike Passo,
Executive Director of American Trails

Join trail champions from across the state
and connect with your legislators!

Registration details coming soon!

Back by
popular
demand:
Our EPIC Trail
Mix Bar!



Sunflower Foundation







Effective Communication with Elected Officials: Making the Case for Trails

Thursday, January 19, 2023

10:00am - 11:00am US Pacific

Presenters



Ashley Jones-Wisner
Principal Owner

Ashley JW, LLC
Lawrence, Kansas



Bob Walker
Chair

Montana Trails Coalition
Dancy, Montana

Shameless
Plug!!!

It paid off!!!

THE IOLA REGISTER

65° | Mon, Apr 17, 2023

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PROUD WINNER PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Lehigh Portland State Park approved

Kansas lawmakers overwhelmingly approved a proposal Thursday to create Lehigh Portland State Park, utilizing the existing Lehigh Portland Trails complex and the quarry formerly known as Elks Lake.



By RICHARD LUKEN - THE IOLA REGISTER

LOCAL NEWS

April 6, 2023 - 9:16 PM



Kansas Lawmakers have overwhelmingly approved creation of Lehigh Portland State Park in Allen County. COURTESY OF NICK ABT / ABT MEDIA

Testimony from hundreds of trail advocates across the state helped push the bill for a new state park across the finish line.

In summary...

17 years later... still doin' that Trail Thang!



A large stack of cement bags, likely in a warehouse or construction site. The bags are brown and feature the brand name 'COLACEM' and 'HRS 1' in blue and black text. The bags are stacked in a way that creates a sense of depth and volume.

And yet...

What does
cement have
to do with
health?

**This is
why...**





And this...

Physical Health Benefits
of Outdoor Activity/Exercise

Positive Effects on Mental Health: Improved
Cognition, Enhanced Mood & Emotional Well-Being

A Great Equalizer... (*mostly*) accessible to people of all
ages, incomes, abilities and backgrounds

Economic Potential...
Attracting tourists, visitors and even new residents.

Community Pride, Quality of Life, Social Cohesion

What makes this an especially
opportune time for health funders to
support trails?

1. Nature

Reconnection to the outside world is fundamental to human health, well-being, spirit and survival.”

Richard Louv



Data on the following 4 slides provided by:

Courtney Schultz, PhD



Courtney@HealthandTechnologyPartners.com



HealthandTechnologyPartners.com


Health & Technology
PARTNERS, LLC

Physical Benefits

Diseases & Illnesses

- Reduces hypertension
- Improves diabetes symptoms and reduces blood glucose
- Increases number & activity of human natural killer cells
- Improves immune function
- Improves post-operative recovery
- Reduces risk of cardiovascular disease

General Physical Health

- Reduces systolic & diastolic blood pressure
- Improves pulse rate
- Improves sleep
- Promotes healthier birth weights
- Reduces nearsightedness
- Increases vitamin D levels
- Reduces headaches

Physical Activity

- Greater feelings of revitalization
- Increased energy
- Greater satisfaction
- Lowers risk of obesity/BMI

Psychological Benefits

Cognitive Function

- Reduces mental fatigue
- Improves academic performance
- Improves productivity
- Promotes attentional restoration
- Improves ability to perform tasks

Psychological Wellness

- Increases self-esteem
- Improves mood
- Reduces stress
- Reduces anger/frustration
- Reduces anxiety
- Improves behavior

Mental Illness

- Contact with nature improves
 - depression
 - anxiety
 - mood disorders
 - PTSD
 - addiction recovery

Social Health Benefits

Social Connectedness

- Increases sense of belonging
- Decreases social isolation
- Promotes social ties
- Improves relationship skills in children
- Increases interaction with community

Social Coherence

- Increases longevity in older people
- Reduces crime rates
- Reduces violence
- Enables interracial interaction

Resilience

- Urban forests and parks build physical resistance in a community and can help mitigate natural disasters
- Natural resource stewardship correlates to increased civic engagement

The Nature-Health Link

01

NATURE EXPOSURE & CONTACT

- time in nature
- views of nature
- residential green
- destination green
- distance to park
- quality of greenspace
- virtual reality
- etc.

02

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS

- phytoncides
- negative air ions
- mycobacterium vaccae
- environmental biodiversity
- natural sights
- natural sounds
- decrease air pollution
- decrease heat
- decrease violence

03

MITIGATION & RESTORATION MECHANISMS

- DHEA
- adiponectin
- normalized blood glucose
- relaxation
- awe
- vitality
- attention restoration
- immune function

04

INSTORATION MECHANISMS

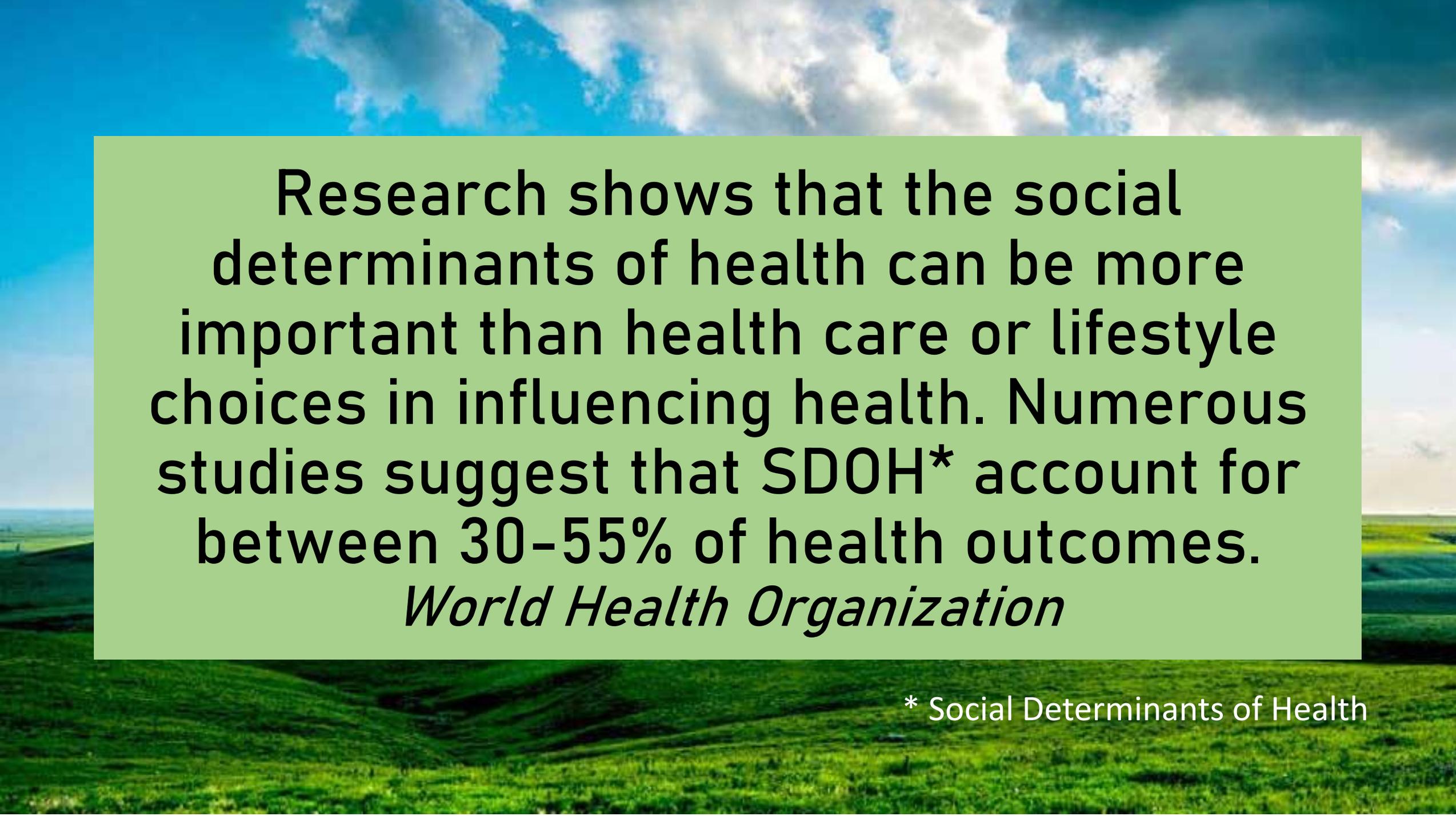
- physical activity
- decrease obesity
- sleep
- social ties

05

HEALTH OUTCOMES

- Growing list of evidence of nature experiences contributing to both health promotion & disease prevention
- Need for more experimental research

EFFECT MODIFIERS:
SITUATIONAL & INDIVIDUAL



Research shows that the social determinants of health can be more important than health care or lifestyle choices in influencing health. Numerous studies suggest that SDOH* account for between 30-55% of health outcomes.

World Health Organization

* Social Determinants of Health

A vibrant landscape of rolling green hills under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The hills are lush and green, with some darker patches of shadow. The sky is a deep blue, with large, fluffy white clouds that catch the light, creating a bright and airy atmosphere. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

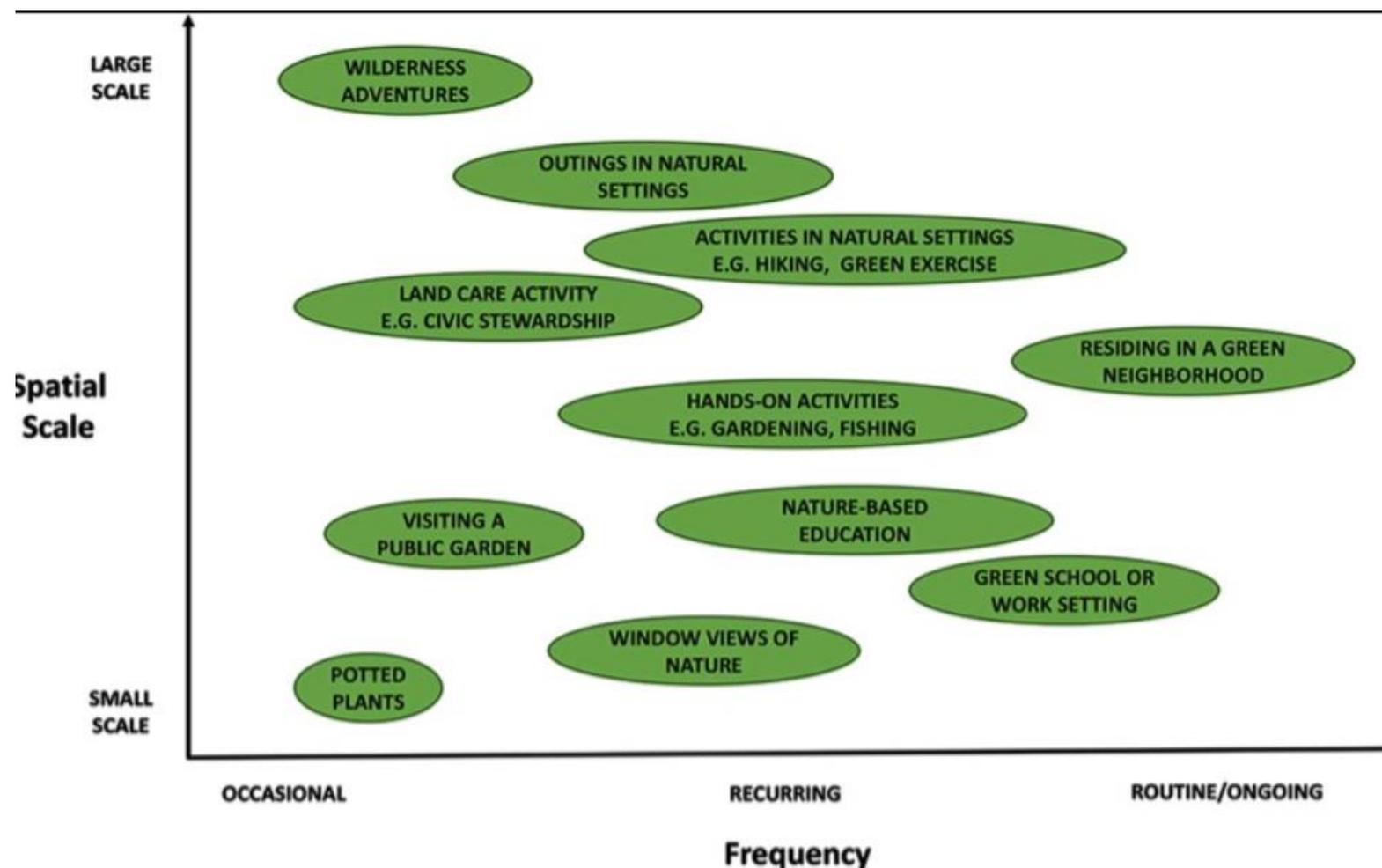
Access to Nature is a
commonly accepted
SDOH.

Nature Contact and Human Health: A Research Agenda

Howard Frumkin 1, Gregory N Bratman 2 3 4, Sara Jo Breslow 3, Bobby Cochran 5, Peter H Kahn Jr 4 6, Joshua J Lawler 3 4, Phillip S Levin 4 7, Pooja S Tandon 1 8 9, Usha Varanasi 10 11, Kathleen L Wolf 4 12, Spencer A Wood 3 4 13

“According to the best available evidence, nature contact offers considerable promise in addressing a range of health challenges. Nature contact offers promise both as prevention and as treatment across the life course.

Potential advantages include low costs relative to conventional medical interventions, safety, practicality, not requiring dispensing by highly trained professionals, and multiple co-benefits. Few medications can boast these attributes.”



2. Trails: a potentially powerful tool for health equity.



A person wearing a red tank top, grey shorts, and a blue helmet is riding a bicycle on a narrow, rocky trail. The trail is carved into a steep, layered rock face that overlooks a river. The surrounding landscape is arid, with dry grasses and sparse vegetation. The river is visible on the right side of the frame, with a calm surface reflecting the sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of adventure and outdoor recreation in a rugged, natural setting.

BUT...
That takes intention.

Wilson State Park in Central Kansas



“Equality is leaving the door open for anyone who has the means to approach it; equity is ensuring there is a pathway to that door for those who need it.”

Equality



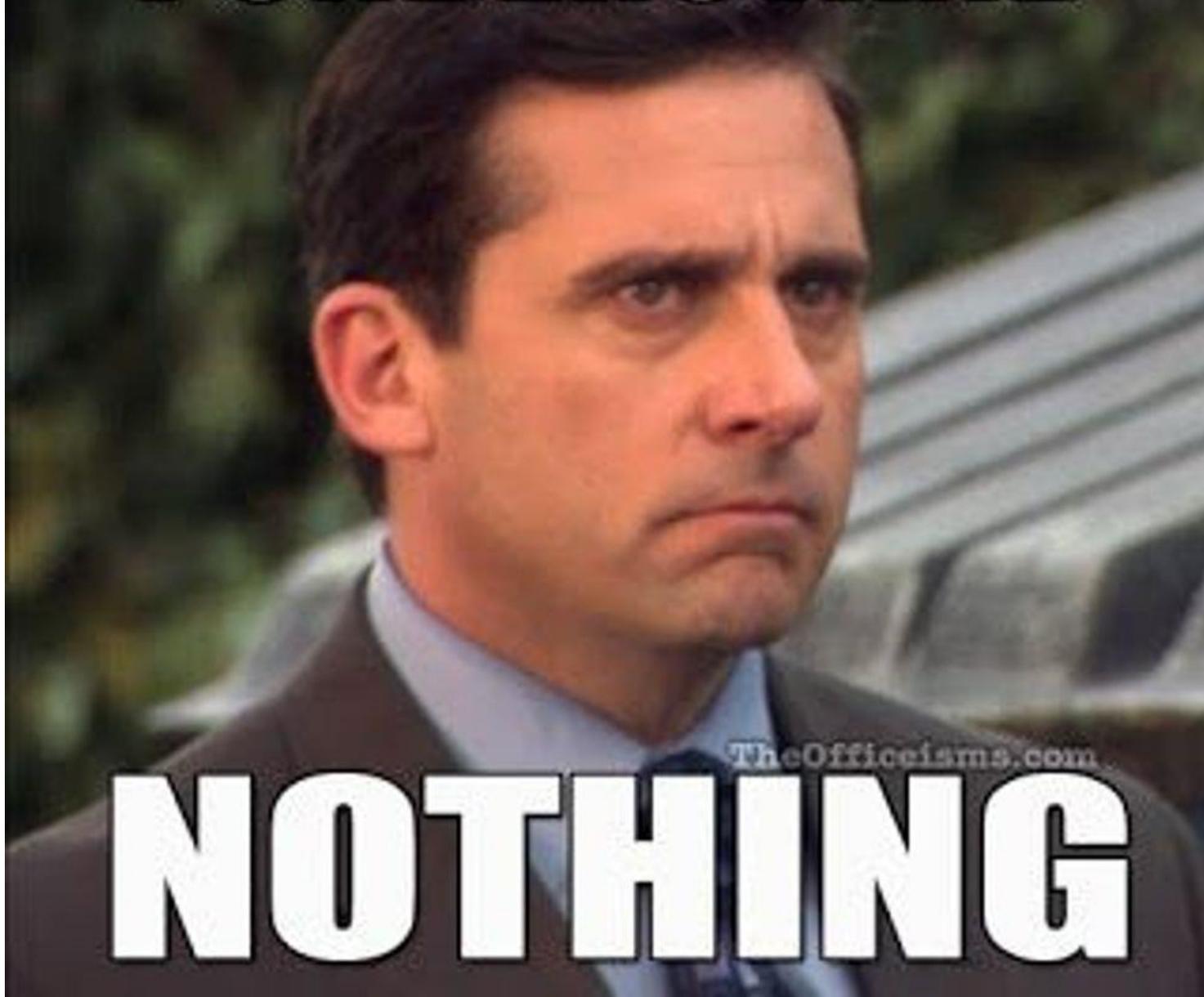
Equity





So again, if trails are so great for physical, mental, emotional, community, civic and even economic health, why do so few health foundations fund them?

I UNDERSTAND



NOTHING



Trails are Tangible. Too Tangible.

PHILANTHROPY VS CHARITY

- Philanthropy - literally, “love of mankind” - refers to active efforts to promote human* welfare. Philanthropies provide resources in the form of gifts, grants, technical support, capacity building, in-kind donations, community development and strategic planning.
- Charity is used to describe giving that directly fulfills urgent and basic needs and alleviate human* suffering. **“DOWNSTREAM”**
- Philanthropy is designed to address deeply-rooted, systemic issues that cause the human suffering. **“UPSTREAM”**
- *Example:* Food pantry provides emergency assistance food: **CHARITY**
- *Example:* Food pantry part of larger initiative to change the quality of food offered to clients in order to address the systemic challenge of food insecurity’s link to chronic disease: **PHILANTHROPY**



Without the right framing, trails can be seen as too “downstream.”



Home > Priority Areas > Social Determinants of Health

Social Determinants of Health

Where do trails fit?

What are social determinants of health?

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

SDOH can be grouped into 5 domains:



[Economic Stability](#)



[Education Access and Quality](#)



[Health Care Access and Quality](#)



[Neighborhood and Built Environment](#)



[Social and Community Context](#)



[Download SDOH graphic](#) (141.23 KB)

Suggested citation





MESSAGE

The trail is **more** than physical infrastructure and the great experience it provide to each **individual** user.

The trail is a valuable tool that can play a key role to address **upstream community** conditions that lead to problems **downstream**.



Trails have to the potential to be a vehicle or catalyst to advance a larger movement; the trail is a tool to reach an even larger goal.

Think: How Can Trails Do the Following?

- * Provide unique benefits – far beyond “getting a workout” - to populations with a history of disinvestment, discrimination, and/or neglect?
- * Represent a physical marker to acknowledge and address systemic racism?
- * Increase community resilience, civic discourse, collective understanding?
- * Improve our current strategies around mental health – and its downstream deleterious correlates and effects– by optimizing nature-derived benefits?
- * And because it invites and evokes such an individual experience – be a blank slate for tangible actions to inspire health equity at population level?

Equality



Equity



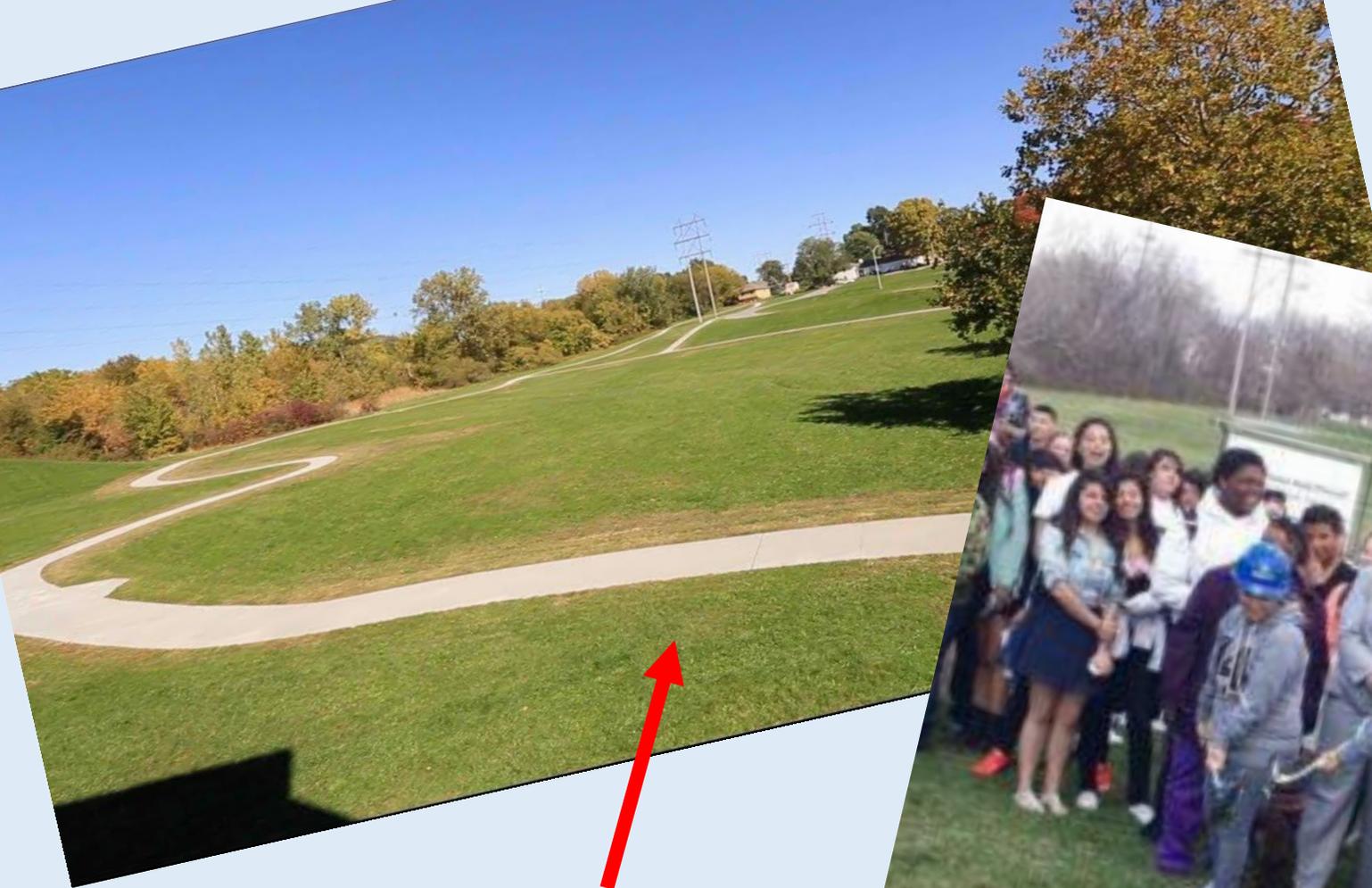
Can we make this analogy work for trails?





Think beyond the public access and the actual physical structure. It's also about intentional efforts for inclusion, creating a space where everyone can have their own unique and important experience.

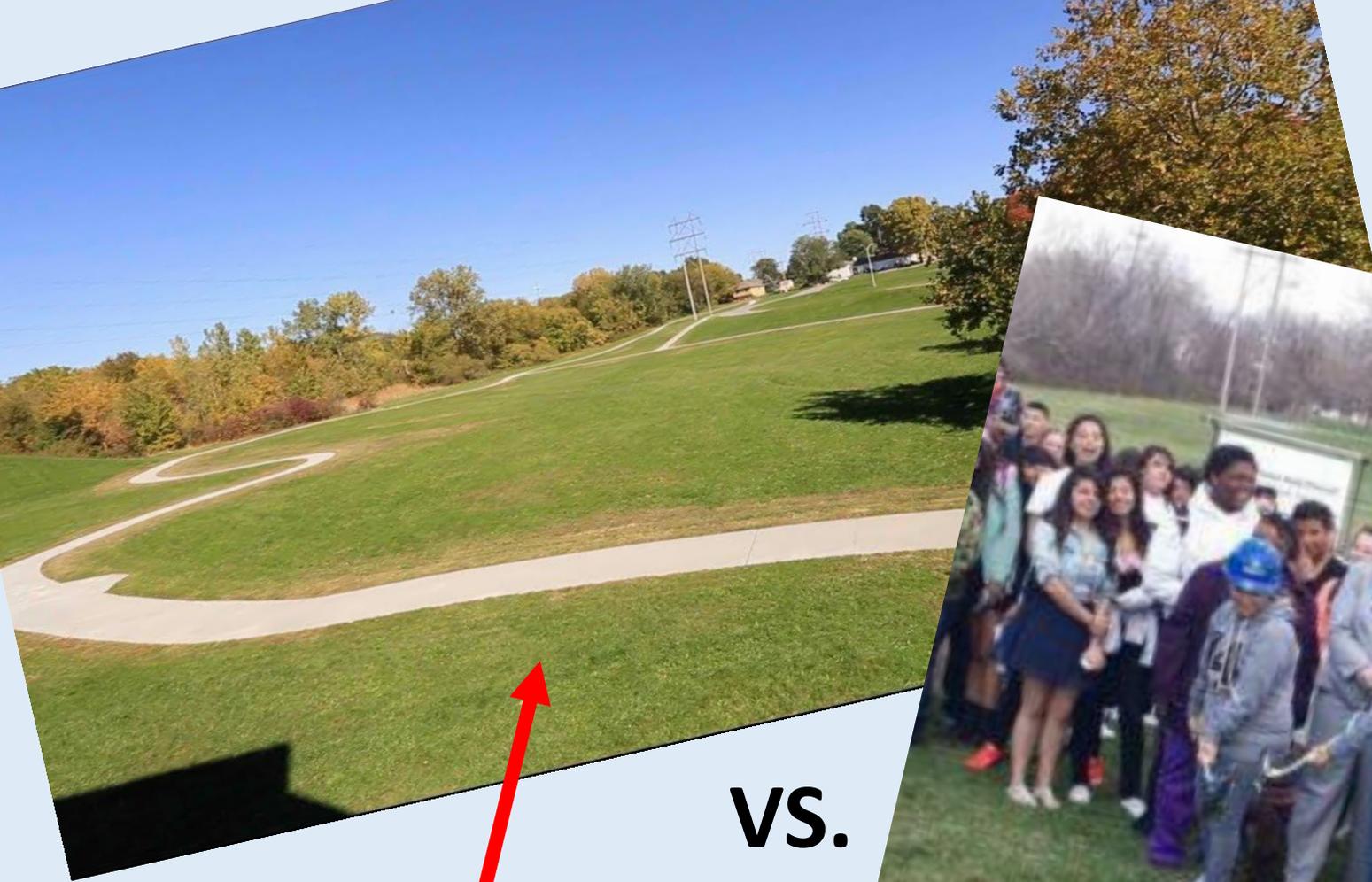
Elk River Hiking Trail, Elk City State Park, KS



JC Harmon High School
Walking Trail...
so much more than
a strip of concrete!



THIS is part of the
bigger picture!



“We’re building a trail.”



VS.



“We’re changing the world.”



**THAT is the
message to
convey to
health funders.**

Working with philanthropy requires a different set of tools.





Less about Pulaski's...
More about
Partnerships, People
and Possibilities

Less about
Benchcutting...
More about Cross-
cutting Collaboration
and Community
Connectivity

Less single focus
("build more trail");
more big picture
("what does this trail
represent?")

Get (even more) familiar with these phrases...

- Social Determinants of Health (SDoH)
- Upstream, Downstream (*“Water Always Wins” LOL*)
- Health Equity and DEIB/DEIA/JEDI
- PSE’s: Policy, Systems and Environment
- Community Resiliency and its relationship to Health
- Connection of Health Disparities to Historically Underserved Communities
- Trust-Based Philanthropy
- Access to NDHB (Nature-Derived Health Benefits)
- *Notice what words are NOT on this list... (obesity, fitness, competition, etc)*

Then explain how a trail fits in the picture.



Show the How, Where, and Why of trails as an essential part of a healthy community.



Measuring Trails Benefits: Public Health

How are trails related to public health?

Trails can improve public health by increasing physical activity and providing safer transportation routes for pedestrians and cyclists. In light of increasing chronic disease in the U.S., the Surgeon General has identified physical activity as one of the most effective actions people can take to improve their health.

Trails often encourage inactive people to become active and modestly increase the activity levels of already-active residents. Because they provide a safe environment, trails are the only place where many residents exercise.

The gains in physical activity are most significant in rural places with few parks and narrow road shoulders. Increased physical activity is greatest among people at greatest risk of inactivity, including people with low income, low education attainment, and the elderly.

Research has found that the benefits of reduced health care costs associated with increased physical activity on trails far outweigh the costs of trail construction, are

Additional details on each of these topics, as well as other relevant research, are available at <http://headwaterseconomics.org/trail>.

Select Research Highlights

- In [Morgantown, West Virginia](#), 60 percent of trail users report they exercise more regularly since they began using trails, and 47 percent of trail users report getting their recommended physical activity through trail use alone. Twenty-three percent of respondents did not exercise regularly before using the trails.¹
- Walking trails in rural, [southeastern Missouri](#) increase exercise particularly among people most at risk of inactivity: those who were not already regular walkers, have a high school education or less, or who earn less than \$15,000 per year. Trails that are at least a half mile long, paved, or located in the smallest towns are associated with the largest increases in exercise.²
- In the [United Kingdom](#), separate studies of 10 different studies found significant improvements in self-esteem and mood after participants exercised outside in urban parks, farmland, forests, waterside, and wilderness. The greatest gains are seen after short duration, light exercise, and among the mentally ill.³
- Several communities^{4, 5} and states^{6, 7} have measured the [savings](#) in health care costs due to [residents' exercise](#) on trails, and [compared these benefits](#) to the costs of building the trails. Although it can be challenging to isolate physical activity associated only with trails, researchers have found the [benefits from reduced health care costs](#) far outweigh the [cost of trail construction](#).



How to use this information:

This research is of interest to public health agencies, hospitals and medical providers, and others advocating for community health, particularly for low income or elderly people.

This research can help to inform strategies to improve public health through increasing physical activity on trails and support public investment in trails programs.

This summary is one of several handouts describing the state of research related to the benefits of trails. The other summaries address:

- Business impacts
- Property value
- Quality of life
- General benefits
- Access

This series offers a succinct review of common benefits identified in the 130+ studies in Headwaters Economics' free, online, searchable [Trails Benefits Library](#).

Measuring Trails Benefits: Overall Benefits

What kind of benefits can trails bring?

Trails can bring a wide range of benefits to communities, including increased business, improved public health, and higher property values. Measurable benefits from trails in similar communities with similar goals can support investments in new trail projects.

A growing body of research measures how trails bring benefits to communities. This research shows that not all trails bring all benefits. Matching a community's priorities—such as increasing local employment, encouraging more physical activity among residents, or attracting new residents—to the type of trails that can deliver these benefits will increase the likelihood of success.

Research highlights across four categories are summarized below. Additional details on each of these topics, as well as other relevant research, are available at <http://headwaterseconomics.org/trail>.

Select Research Highlights

Business Impacts

- Overnight stays are the biggest contributor to total spending. At a mountain bike race in [North Carolina](#), for example, each additional night adds \$101 to a visitor's total spending.¹ Along the [Great Allegheny Passage](#), overnight users spend seven times more than day users.²
- Communities can capitalize on trails when the trails are [directly linked](#) to towns via [spur trails](#) or [shuttles](#).^{3, 4, 5}
- Although events are short-lived, [participants often return](#) to the community [after the event](#), increasing events' economic impact.^{6, 7}
- After visiting an area, some tourists [become residents](#) or second home owners, bringing their businesses, [supporting the local economy](#), and paying taxes.^{8, 9}
- In places that have become destinations, like [North Carolina's Outer Banks](#), the economic contribution of visitors far exceeds the original public investment.¹⁰

Quality of Life

- In [Bloomington, Indiana](#), property owners adjacent to trails most commonly identified convenience and access to recreation, physical fitness, social connection, and connection to the natural environment as benefits of living near trails.¹¹
- In [Jackson, Wyoming](#), nine out of ten respondents use pathways and trails. Residents use area pathways and trails every other day in the summer and every three days



How to use this information:

This research is meant to help community leaders, transportation planners, and economic development staff better understand how benefits from trails can be measured.

This summary is one of several handouts describing the state of research related to the benefits of trails. The other summaries address:

- Public health
- Business impacts
- Property value
- Quality of life
- Access

This series offers a succinct review of common benefits identified in the 130+ studies in Headwaters Economics' free, online, searchable [Trails Benefits Library](#).

Philanthropy is different than government funding.

It's more like this...



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First Name:
First name only please!

I'm a: seeking

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Country:

Email:
Now: Your email is used to log back in

Confirm Email:

Password:
Must be at least 5 characters

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David+Kimbra
Matched by eHarmony

See why eHarmony is responsible for nearly 5% of marriages in the U.S.* *2009 U.S. survey conducted for eHarmony by Harris Interactive®



Not like this!



Learn the Lingo... Grantmakers in Health

Focus Areas

As part of our 2025 strategic plan, Grantmakers In Health has identified five areas that are critical to achieving better health for all:

**Health Equity
and Social Justice**



**Access and
Quality**



**Community
Engagement and
Empowerment**



**Philanthropic
Growth and
Impact**



**Population
Health**



Learn who's out there...



Organization Name: ↑	City (Primary):	State (Primary):	Funding Partner Type:	Website:
ABFE	New York	New York	Philanthropy Support Partner	http://www.abfe.org
Alliance Healthcare Foundation	San Diego	California	Funding Partner	http://www.alliancehf.org
Altman Foundation	New York	New York	Funding Partner	http://www.altmanfoundation.org
Anchorum St. Vincent	Santa Fe	New Mexico	Funding Partner	https://anchorum.org/
Andy Hill CARE Fund	Bothell	Washington	Funding Partner	https://www.wacarefund.org/
Archstone Foundation	Long Beach	California	Funding Partner	http://www.archstone.org
Arcora Foundation	Seattle	Washington	Funding Partner	https://arcorafoundation.org/
Ardmore Institute of Health	Ardmore	Oklahoma	Funding Partner	http://ardmoreinstituteofhealth.org/
Asset Funders Network	Evanston	Illinois	Philanthropy Support Partner	http://assetfunders.org/
Baptist Community Ministries	New Orleans	Louisiana	Funding Partner	http://www.bcm.org
bi3	Cincinnati	Ohio	Funding Partner	http://www.bi3.org
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation	Baton Rouge	Louisiana	Funding Partner	http://www.bcbslafoundation.org

ABOUT

Mission & Vision

Leadership

Members

Partner Networks

Program Committee

Staff

About



Established in 2014, the Blue Sky Funders Forum is a funders collaborative that exists to inspire and increase philanthropic investments and the community of funders supporting equitable access to meaningful outdoor experiences and connections to nature. Our vibrant membership welcomes all types of funders and supporters of this vision. We aspire to spark meaningful connections and collaborations and provide strategic vision for a stronger, more unified movement.

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Members

[Learn about the benefits of being a Blue Sky member and apply.](#)

11th Hour Project / Schmidt Family Foundation

Adams Legacy Foundation

Alumbra Innovations Foundation

Arc'teryx

Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation

Captain Planet Foundation

David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Elmina B. Sewall Foundation

Environmental Stewardship Fund

Evo

George B. Storer Foundation

Gray Family Foundation

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)

Harold M. and Adeline S. Morrison Family Foundation

JT Hershey Foundation

Justice Outside

Outdoor Foundation

Parish Family Fund

Pisces Foundation

Pittman Family Foundation

Quimby Family Foundation

REI

Roundhouse Foundation

Sahm Family Foundation

Sand Hill Foundation

Swantz Family Foundation

Telluray Foundation

The Curtis & Edith Munson Foundation

The Grossman Family Foundation

The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment

The Russell Family Foundation

The San Diego Foundation



*Every child deserves
to see the stars*

We believe that nature makes kids
healthier, happier and smarter

Potential Funding Partner? Do some research.

Take the time to really READ the website.

- Most important – what is the service area?
- Mission, values, philosophy
- What do they fund? Areas of interest?
 - Don't be fooled by broad phrases like “healthy living”
- Read annual reports and lists of grant awards – then visit websites of successful grantees
- Sign up for any e-news type service

Learn the protocols.

- Do they encourage phone calls and emails?
- Do they ever take unsolicited requests or RFPs only?
- You have nothing to lose by sending a polite, introductory email with no funding request; just information about your work, how it might relate to foundation's work, ask for a brief meeting to share more.
- Some foundations appreciate and understand the benefits of learning directly from those actually doing the work and welcome the opportunity to talk more.
- Always stress your interest in learning about foundation's priorities.

Be Polite. Be Patient. Don't be Patronizing.
Most health funders are educated, hardworking and passionate, juggling many variables and stressors, just like you. Many secretly wish they could fund EVERYTHING!

Investing in People and Places for a Healthier Kansas

[ABOUT SUNFLOWER FOUNDATION](#)



Philanthropy is less interested in people already using trails, and more interested in those NOT using trails.

Sorry, not many health foundations will fund this guy.

Ribbon Cutting for Jersey Creek Trail in Kansas City, Kansas





- Remember the original goal of philanthropy – address the root cause of human suffering and societal injustice.
- Health philanthropy is currently leaning quite progressive – critical to show inclusivity.
- Demonstrate intention to reach out to non-trail users – or share data if you already have.
- The more sedentary the population, the greater ROI in regards to health benefits from physical activity.



Opportunities to Illustrate Upstream Value of your Trail...

- Historically marginalized communities – BIPOC, low-income, differently abled; how can trails benefit their unique needs?
- Mental health benefits of nature; role of trails
- Healthy civic environment; role of trails
- Areas with disproportionate low access to nature; role of trails
- Rural – yes, rural! Lack of people does not mean access to trails.

1 in 3 Americans do not have access to therapeutic green space and nature.

BROOKINGS

CLIMATE AI CITIES & REGIONS GLOBAL DEV INTL AFFAIRS U.S. ECONOMY U.S. POLITICS & GOVT MC

SERIES: Metropolitan Infrastructure Initiative



THE AVENUE

**Parks make great places, but not enough
Americans can reach them**

Joseph W. Kane and Adie Tomer · Wednesday, August 21, 2019

THE AVENUE

The Nature Gap



Confronting Racial and Economic Disparities in the Destruction and Protection of Nature in America

People of color, families with children, and low-income communities are most likely to be deprived of the benefits that nature provides.

- **Communities of color are 3x more likely than white communities to live in nature-deprived places.**
- **70% of low-income communities across the country live in nature-deprived areas.**
- **Nature destruction has had the largest impact on low-income communities of color**



Rural America: Philanthropy's Misunderstood Opportunity for Impact

Community Strategies Group

aspen institute

ABOUT US

OUR APPROACH

THRIVE RURAL F

Thrive Rural

About the Framework

How to Use

Thrive Rural Framework

The Ultimate Outcome

THRIVE RURAL FRAMEWORK

We work towards a future where communities and Native nations across the rural United States are healthy places where each and every person belongs, lives with dignity, and thrives.

SCROLL DOWN



Health Philanthropy, like most of the world, does not understand the care and feeding of trails.



- If asked about trails, most people will think it's the job of local government/municipality with a dedicated budget & staff. You know, like roads!
- Few people realize that trails are birthed by a powerful (if fragile) process of persistent leadership, technical expertise, grants and fundraising, and volunteer sweat equity.
- Even fewer people realize this same process is necessary to support these trails... in perpetuity ("Failure to Launch" 😊) But not a bad thing!



**Stress to health funders the
volunteer aspect of trail
development & maintenance.
Volunteerism is strongly correlated
with improved mental health.**



Final Reason Why Health Foundations
Are Not Funding Trails?

Trails are Fun!



Philanthropy is designed to address societal problems and injustices, preferably in a very upstream, permanent way. Your challenge is to demonstrate how **THIS** (smiles) will accomplish that.



Plus, you need to ask.



Trails... a Direct Path to Better Health

You were here...



Now you're here...???



Elizabeth Burger
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