

## **Creating Opportunities Along the Nation's Trails**

425 West Pittsburgh Street | Greensburg, PA 15601 | (724) 216-9160 | www.trailtowns.org | www.progressfund.org

## **Tips for Tapping into the Trail Market**

Using Your Trail to Build Your Business



**Be knowledgeable about the trail, your community, and the region.** You can best serve your customers by knowing the product - in this case the trail system and the towns along the way. So get out there to explore and have some fun! Also, **brush up on upcoming events and activities** that your customers may want to check out during their ride!

**Offer ample bike parking.** Bike racks make a statement that cyclists and their bikes are welcome at your business. Overnight bike storage is a must for lodging properties.

**Lodging properties:** If Rule #1 is to provide secure, overnight bike storage, Rule #2 is to allow bikers to stay for only one night. Two-night stay requirements can really hamper trip planning along long distance trails.

**Post a "Bikers Welcome!" sign in your window**, or better yet, "Cyclists Welcome!" so that people know that you're targeting Treks, not Harleys.

**Keep a bike pump and basic tools on-hand**. They may not be needed often but will be appreciated when they are.

**Bike shops:** Offer locks with your rental bikes so that your customers can relax and visit other businesses in a care-free state of mind.

**Consider visitors' needs when setting your hours.** Some cyclists come off the trail later than expected and need basic services. Post your hours in plain sight and extend hours when needed.

**Advertise in regional guides and cycling oriented outlets.** These guides help visitors plan their trip and where to stop along their journey.

**Advertise in visitor centers and bike shops** to the extent that is permitted locally. Reach out to businesses in nearby towns to trade brochures.

**Implement a referral marketing strategy**. There's no advertising as valuable as word of mouth, so incentivize your customers to recommend your business to others.

**Create a "photo-op" in your business.** Many cyclists take photos along the trail, why not infront of their new favorite Trail Town eatery or B&B.

The Trail Town Program® is an initiative of The Progress Fund. Sign up to receive Trail Town News at www.trailstowns.org.



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**Partner with other businesses to create trip packages** that are exciting and take the headache out of planning. Offer to transport people, luggage, and gear.

**Join the Trail Town Certified Network.** You can appeal to an eco-conscious market (most cyclists) and improve trail friendly practices while improving your bottom line while networking with other Trail Town businesses.

**Sell small items** that bikers can carry and **offer shipping for larger items**. Also stock easy to carry snacks like trail mix, apples, and protein bars.

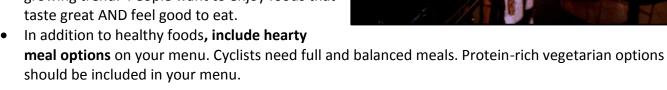
**Keep a guestbook and send out special promos**. Attracting repeat customers is a big part of your tourism business. Imagine sending a personalized appeal that reminds past guests that it's time to start planning their annual bike trip.

Commit this sentence to memory and use it daily: "Please recommend us on Trip Advisor." TripAdvisor is the most used travel site. Other venues include Google Places, Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, Urban Spoon, and Virtual Tourist.

**Seek honest customer feedback** via surveys, customer polls, online reviews, and giveaways.

## **Restaurants:**

- Post your menu so that it can be easily seen from the sidewalk.
- Consider a dress code that is welcoming to patrons who may be wearing bright-colored, tight-fitting bicycle attire.
- Go the "extra mile" and offer meal delivery to nearby campsites and other lodging properties.
- Offer menu items that are bike-themed or pay homage to local culture.
- Serve up takeout orders in eco-friendly containers. Nothing guilts an eco-conscious customer more than using Styrofoam.
- Include fresh, local foods on your menu.
  Consumer demand for these is not a fad; it's a growing trend. People want to enjoy foods that taste great AND feel good to eat.



**Just be friendly!** Have a positive attitude about your town and a welcoming demeanor. Visitors almost always notice the small town hospitality along long distance trails, so let's keep up the good work!