



Florida Gulf Coast Trail

With help from partners across the state, The Trust for Public Land is creating the Florida Gulf Coast Trail, a 336-mile long corridor traversing 7 coastal counties (Hillsborough, Pinellas, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, Collier). It's a trail that's packed with potential, and not just for those who might someday traverse its entire length. Having green space in your neighborhood opens up possibilities: a quick jog before work, a picnic lunch break, or sending kids out to play after school.

While sections already exist, there are many gaps. The Trust for Public Land is coordinating a regional effort with local stakeholders to complete the missing links along the Florida Gulf Coast trail and connect communities along the corridor. Here are just a few reasons why this project is so important:

Building Safer Communities

More than 4 million people live in this region, which is experiencing some of the highest population growth rates in the state. Our pedestrian infrastructure is not evolving in pace with our cities and towns. In fact, three of the 10 deadliest places for pedestrians in the U.S. are metropolitan areas within Southwest Florida.¹

A Destination Trail

Epic trails of this kind draw visitors in search of adventure. These mighty “destination trails” increase tourism, a benefit for lodging, restaurant, retail, and the outdoor economy. In Florida, outdoor recreation generates \$58.6 billion in consumer spending, 485,000 job, and \$3.5 billion in state and local tax revenue annually.² Outdoor tourism is essential to Florida’s economy, and this trail will offer miles of fun for visitors.

Strengthening Connections

The Gulf Coast Trail will provide an opportunity for people of all abilities to get outdoors close to home. With nearby access to the trail, neighbors will be connected through random encounters and planned events on the trail. Proximity to the trail enhances property values and desirability of a community.³ Trails also make communities attractive to businesses looking to expand or relocate because of the amenities they offer to employees.

Improving Health Outcomes

This trail will improve public health and offer residents an easy way to walk out their doors and get active. Trails reduce auto use, alleviate congestion, and mitigate air pollution. Close-to-home parks boost well-being for the entire neighborhood, especially if the space is well maintained, safe, and accessible. Investment in trails improves quality of life and encourages behavioral changes that reduce chronic diseases and health care costs.⁴

Where Trust for Public Land comes in:

- Branding and promoting the trail and creating a common identity to inspire public and funding support.
- Creating digital and GIS tool for planners, advocates and stake-holders to monitor trail progress and funding commitments.
- Convening an advisory board of partners to advocate for trail funding.
- Providing real estate acquisition services and assistance to fill in trail gaps and complete the Gulf Coast Trail.
- Providing public finance technical assistance.

Get Involved

This trail will serve as a vital component of daily life, and a place where memories are made. It will be the safe and trusted route for commuters on their way work, and the place where parents teach their kids to first ride a bike. Please join us in the effort to make it a reality.

¹<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

²Florida Recreation Economy Report, Outdoor Industry Association, available at: https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/OIA_RecEcoState_FL.pdf

³Brad Broberg, “Everybody Loves a Park: Green Space Is a Premium When Building, Buying, or Selling,” National Association of Realtors, On Common Ground(2009):20-25.

⁴M. A. Barrett and Daphne Miller, “Parks and Health: Aligning Incentives to Create Innovations in Chronic Disease Prevention,” *Preventing Chronic Disease* (2014).



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