



Baldwin County Rail-Trail Design Plan

FOLEY – SUMMERDALE – ROBERTSDALE – LOXLEY – BAY MINETTE

A LEADERSHIP BALDWIN RAILS-TO-TRAILS INITIATIVE

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Introduction

Imagine stepping out your door and onto a trail that winds through the heart of Baldwin County — from bustling downtown Foley to the county seat of Bay Minette, connecting communities, neighbors, and generations along the way. That trail already exists in our imagination. Now it's time to build it.

The old Louisville & Nashville Railroad once stitched Baldwin County together, carrying timber, crops, and settlers along a corridor that helped build the towns we call home. Today, that same corridor holds the promise of something new: a rail-trail that honors our past while investing boldly in our future.

Who We Are

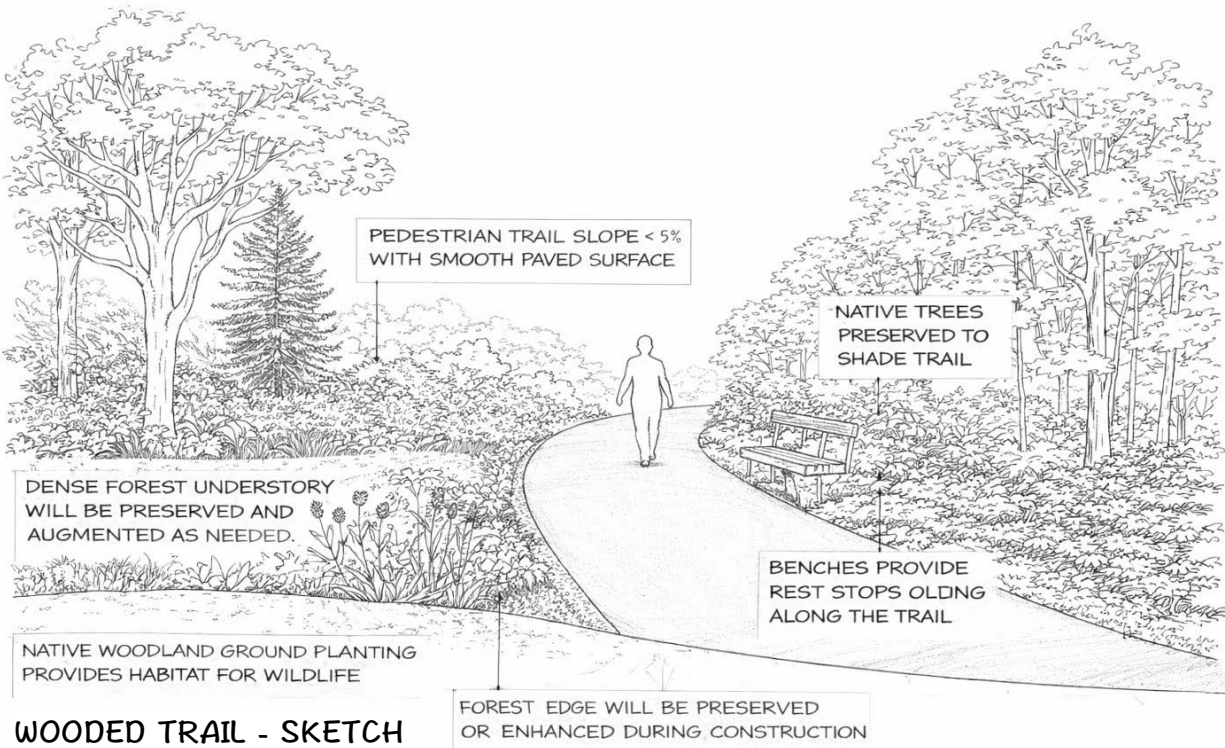
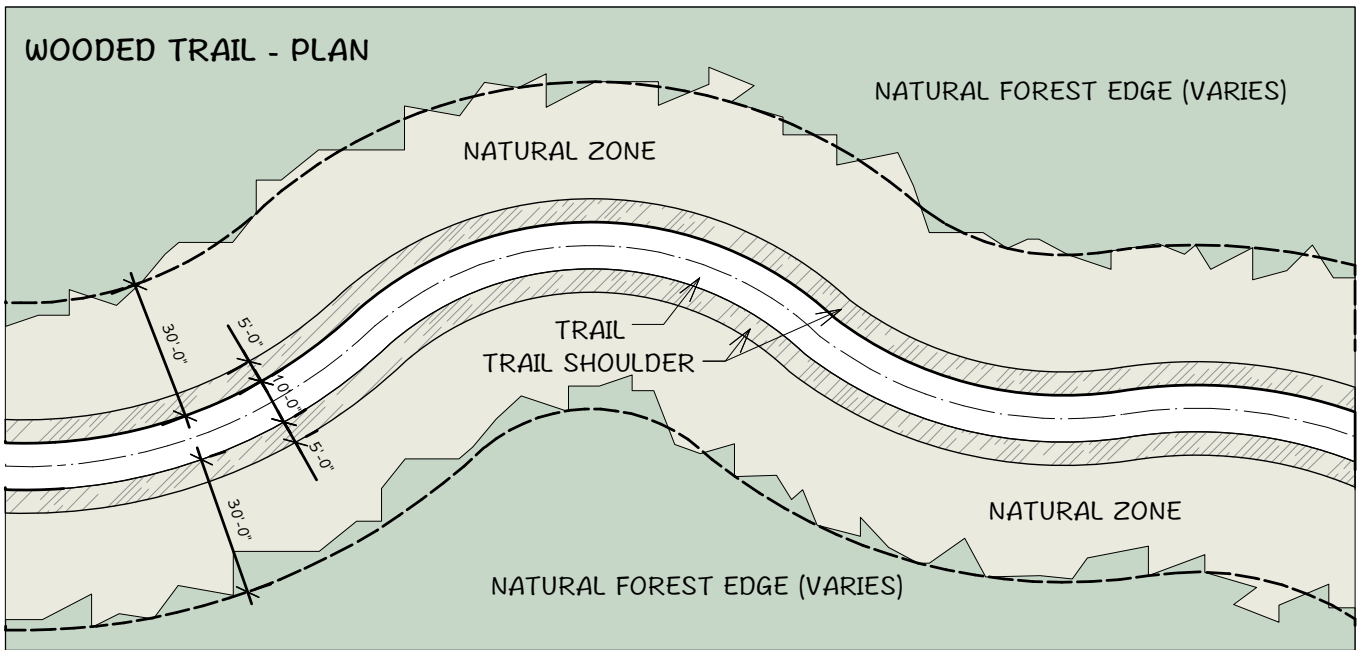
The Trail Ahead is a project of the 2026 Class of Leadership Baldwin County, a group of community leaders committed to shaping the future of the county we love. We believe that a connected, walkable, bikeable Baldwin County is within reach — and that the old L&N rail corridor is key to making it happen.

We are building a broad coalition to make this trail a reality, bringing together organizations like the Baldwin County Trailblazers and municipal bike-pedestrian committees from across the county. We know that trails like this don't get built by one person or one group — they get built by communities that decide, together, that the future is worth working for. We'd love for you to be part of ours.

The Design Plan

The old L&N railway bed crosses several municipalities and landscapes, from commercial corridors to farmland. This unified design plan is meant to serve as a blueprint for city and county government offices to utilize, creating a cohesive trail identity from start to finish and making it as easy as possible to build new sections of trail as resources become available.

We have identified six distinct trail types along the proposed route: wooded trail, back of business, street frontage, buffer zone, park zone, and scenic side trail. This design plan recommends building and landscaping standards for each zone, as well as pedestrian crossings, amenities, and trail surfaces.



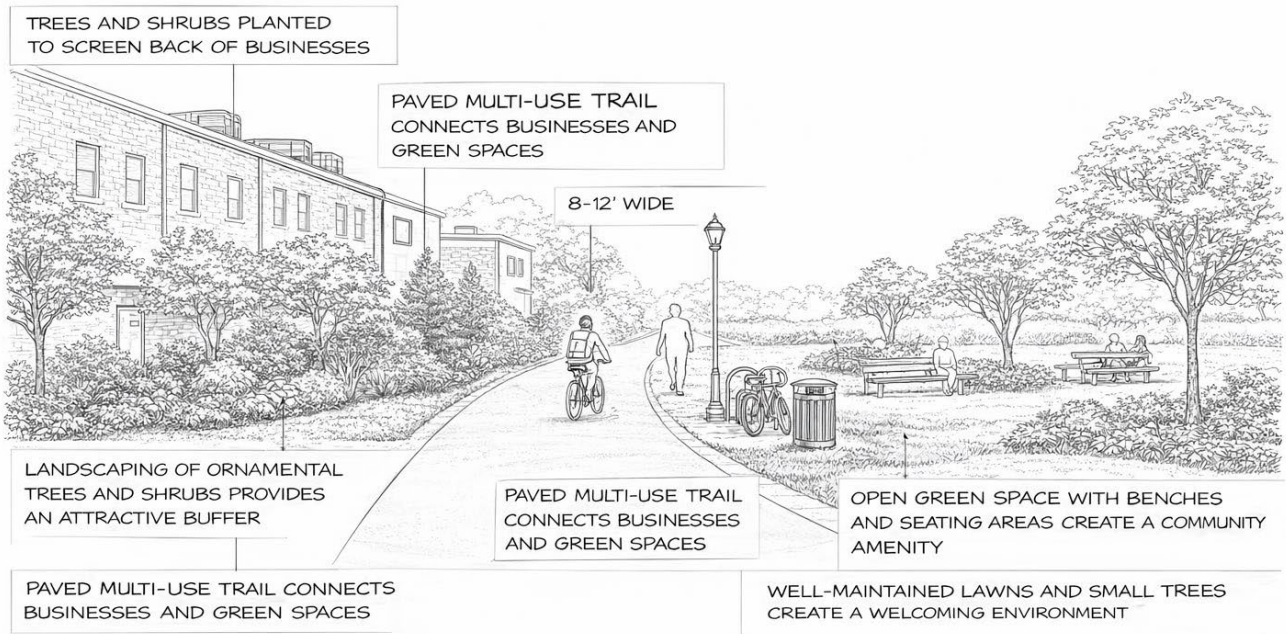
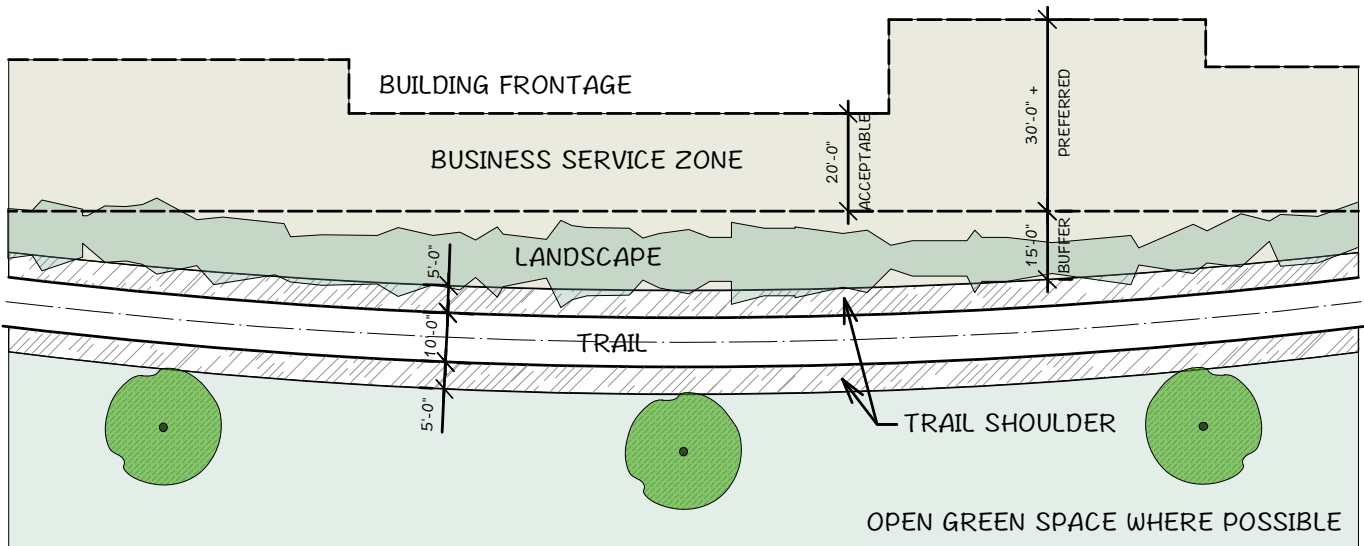
WT – Wooded Trail

KEY FEATURES

10' Wide Multi-Use Trail - Asphalt or Concrete Preferred, Well Packed Crushed Stone or Gravel Alternate



BACK OF BUSINESS TRAIL - PLAN



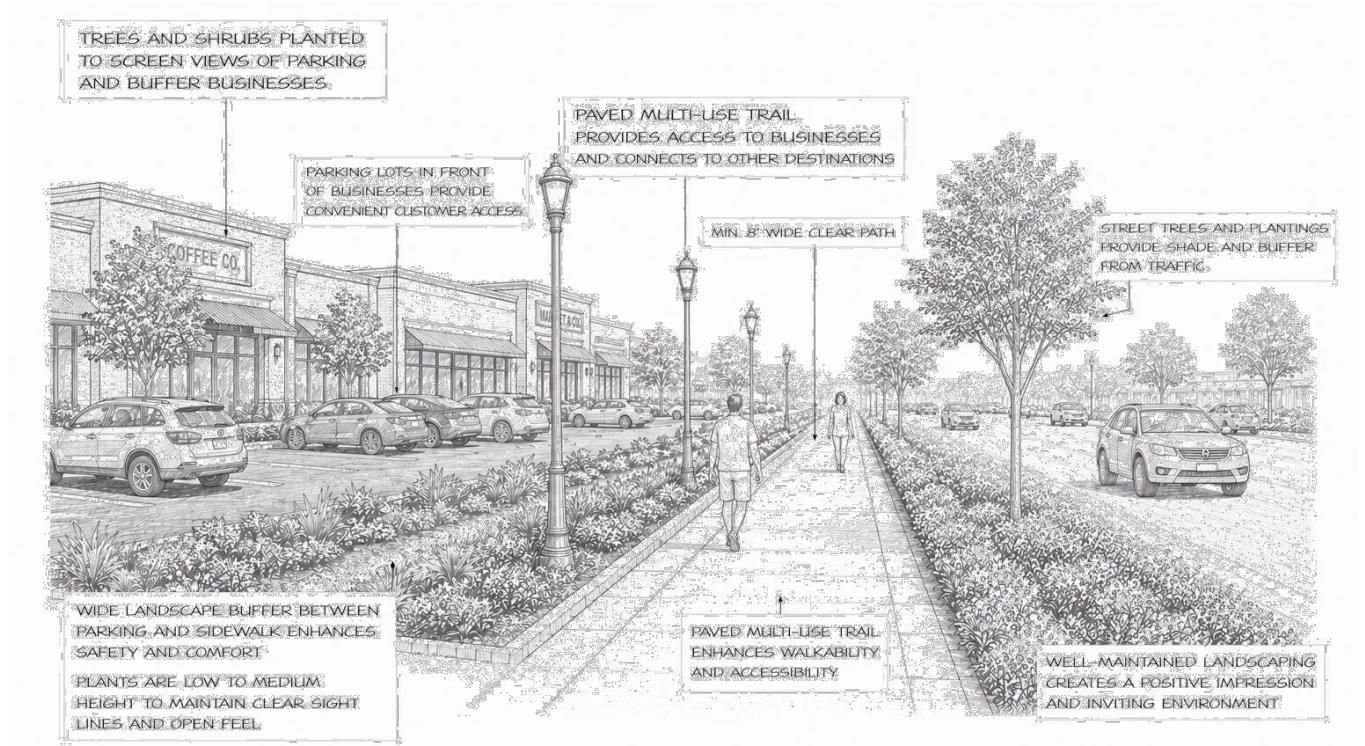
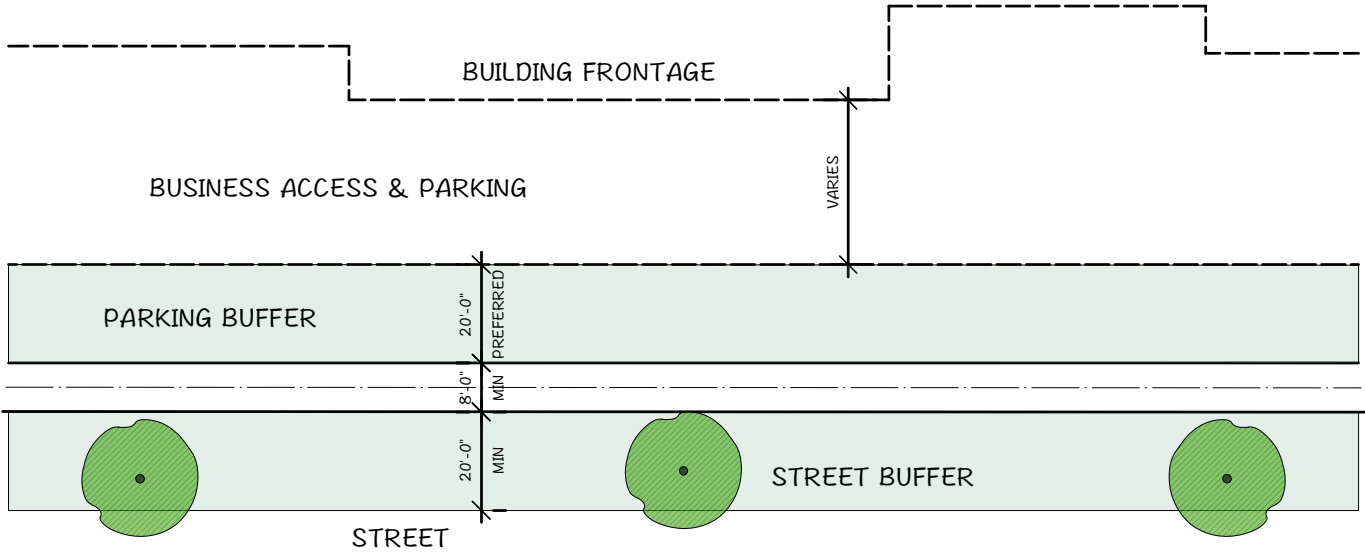
BACK OF BUSINESS TRAIL - SECTION

BB – Back of Business

KEY FEATURES

10' Wide Multi-Use Trail - Asphalt or Concrete Preferred, Well Packed Crushed Stone or Gravel Alternate

STREET FRONTAGE TRAIL - PLAN



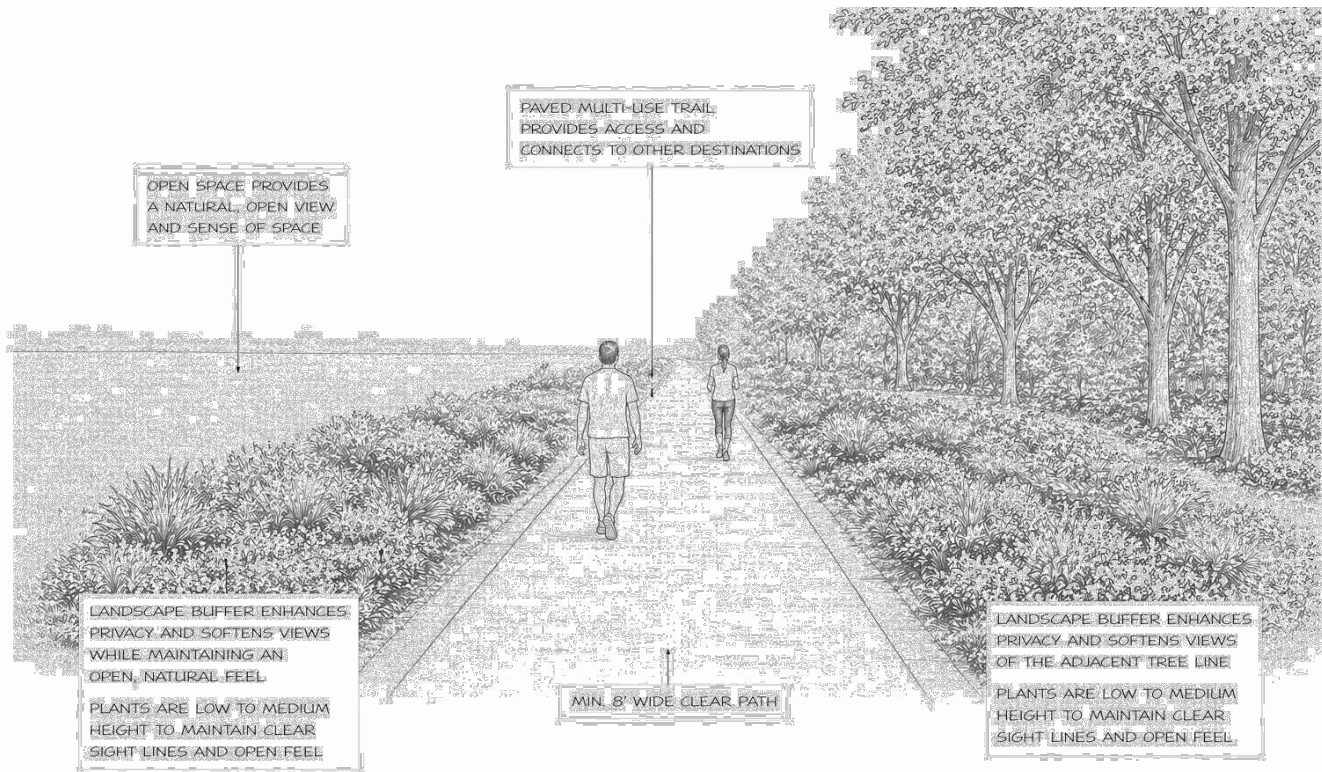
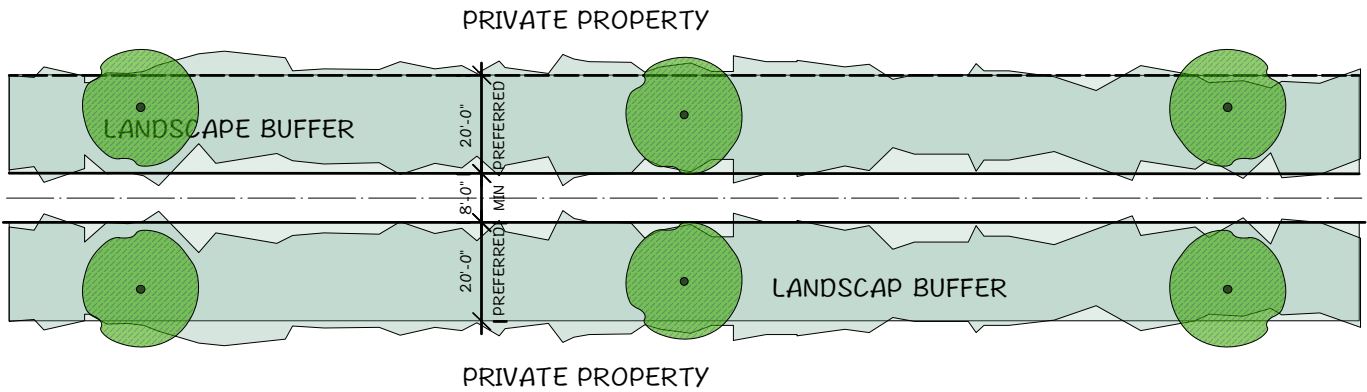
STREET FRONTAGE TRAIL - SECTION

SF – Street Frontage

KEY FEATURES

10' Wide Multi-Use Trail - Asphalt or Concrete Preferred, Well Packed Crushed Stone or Gravel Alternate

PRIVATE PROPERTY BUFFER TRAIL - PLAN

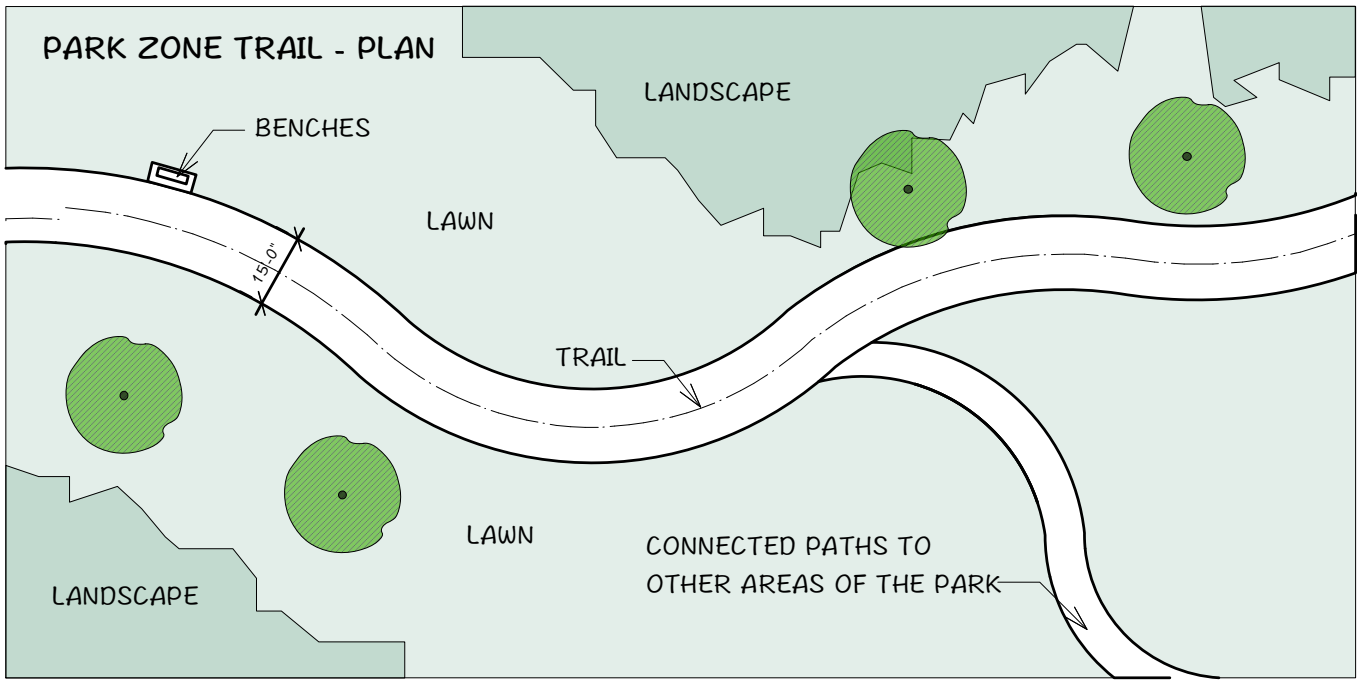


PRIVATE PROPERTY BUFFER TRAIL - SECTION

PP – Private Property

KEY FEATURES

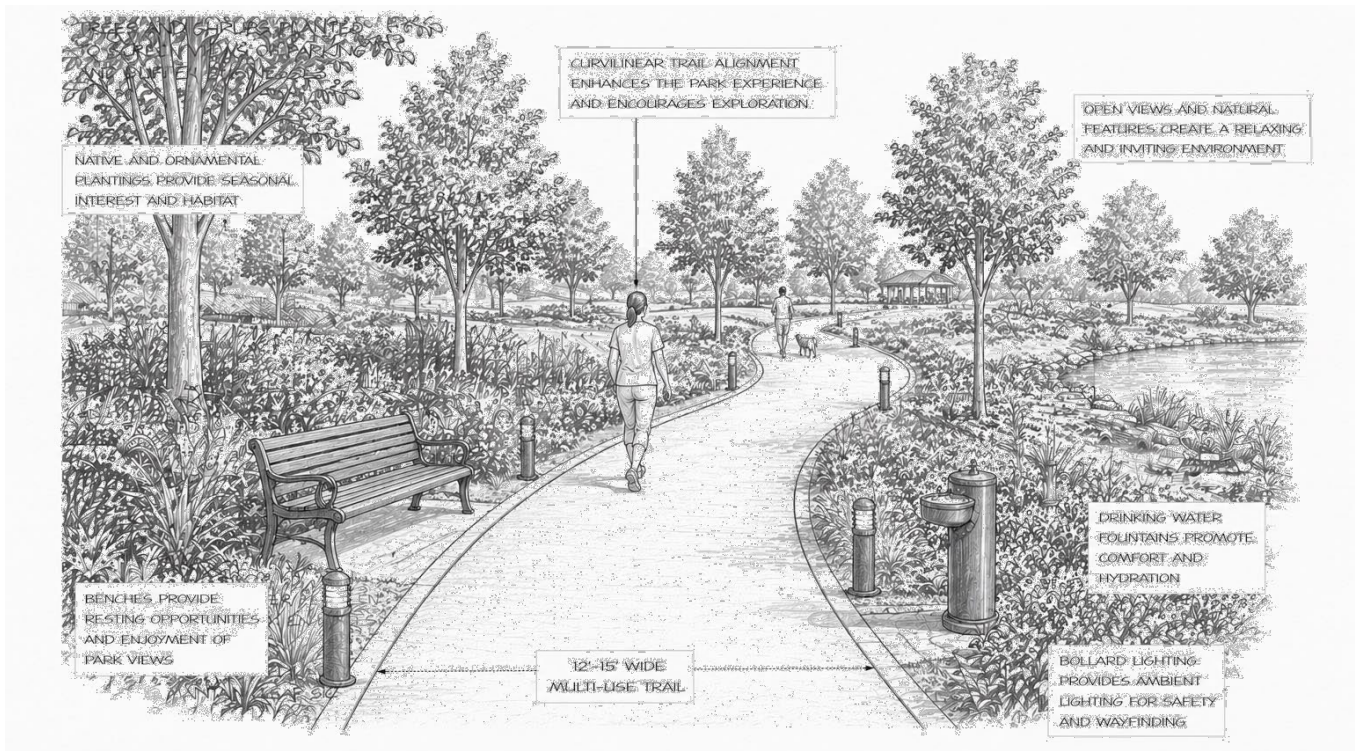
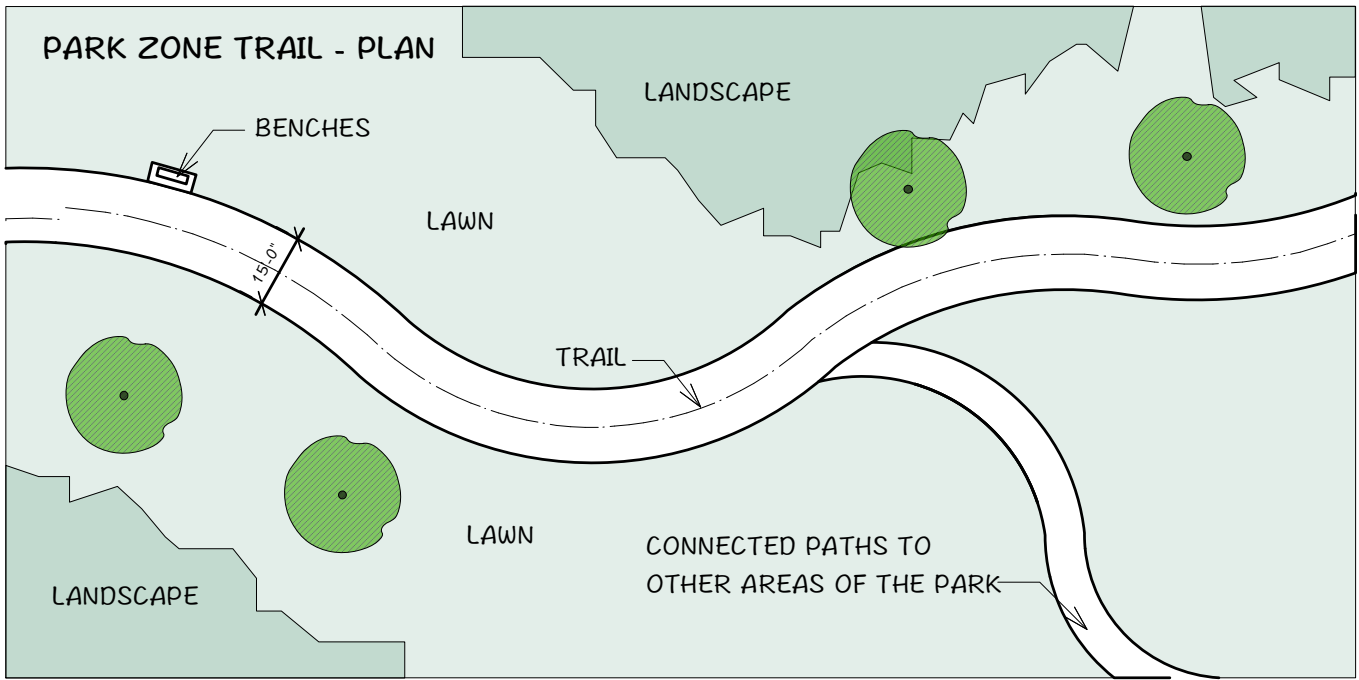
10' Wide Multi-Use Trail - Asphalt or Concrete Preferred, Well Packed Crushed Stone or Gravel Alternate



PZ – Park Zone

KEY FEATURES

10' Wide Multi-Use Trail - Asphalt or Concrete Preferred, Well Packed Crushed Stone or Gravel Alternate

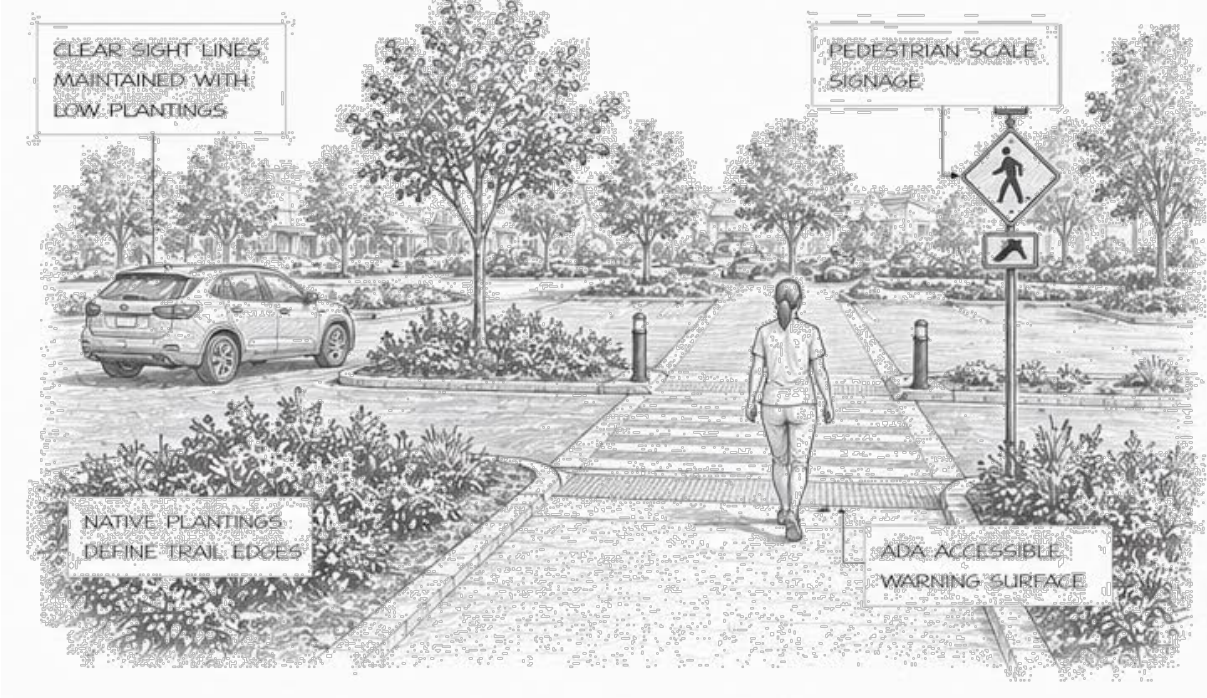


SS – Scenic Side Trail

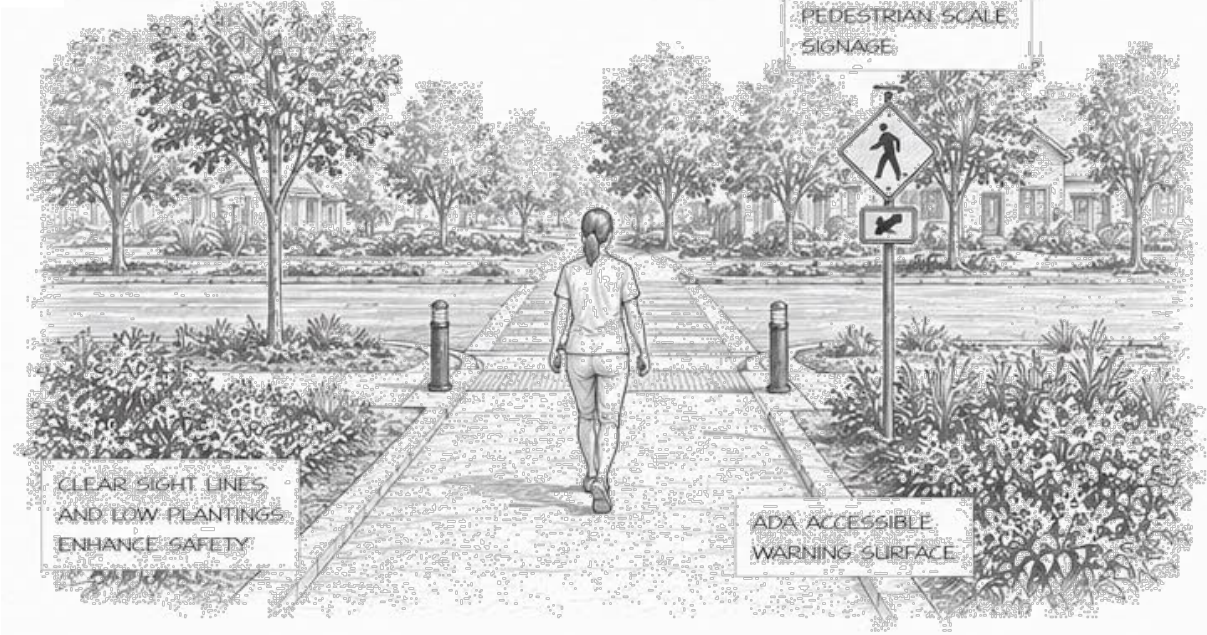
KEY FEATURES

10' Wide Multi-Use Trail - Asphalt or Concrete Preferred, Well Packed Crushed Stone or Gravel Alternate

PARKING LOT OR PRIVATE DRIVE CROSSING



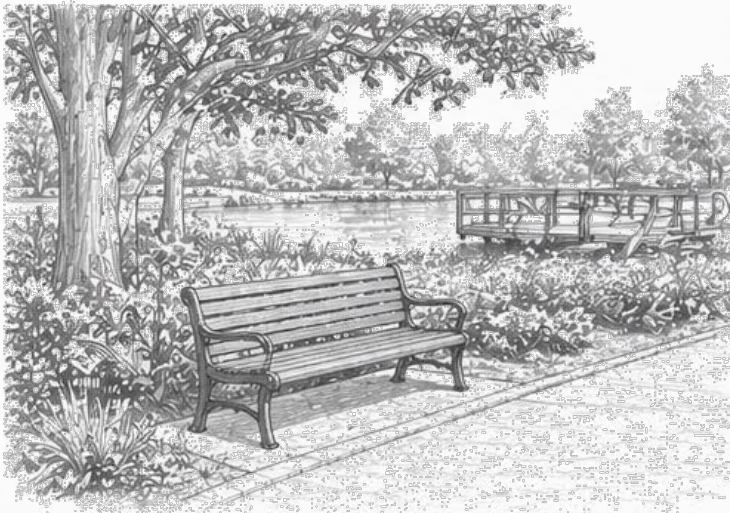
SMALL STREET CROSSING



Pedestrian Crossings

BENCHES

PROVIDE RESTING OPPORTUNITIES
AND ENJOYMENT OF PARK VIEWS



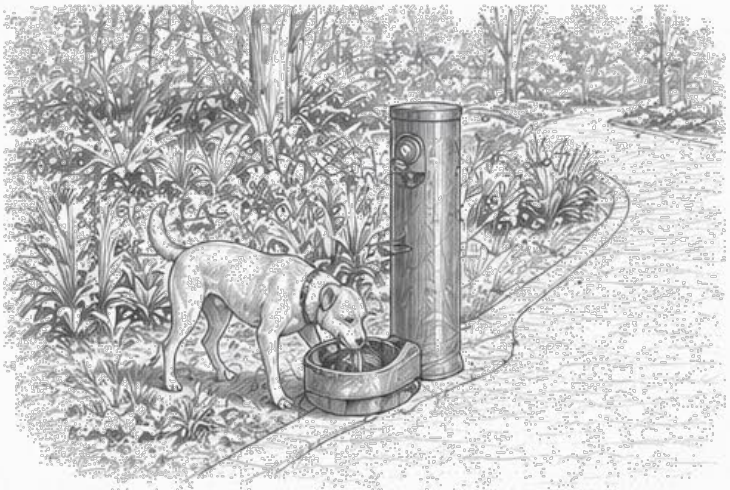
BIKE RACKS

ENCOURAGE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION
AND TRAIL ACCESS



PET DRINKING WATER FOUNTAIN

PROVIDES HYDRATION FOR PETS
AND SUPPORTS TRAIL COURTESY



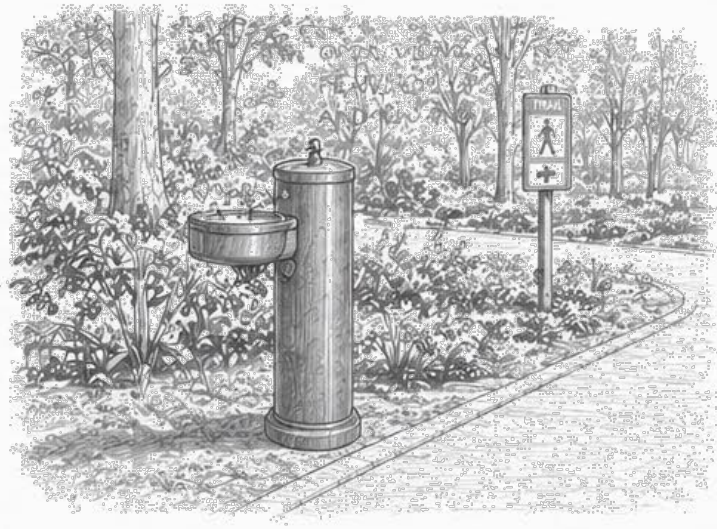
TRASH CANS

PROMOTE CLEAN TRAILS
AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

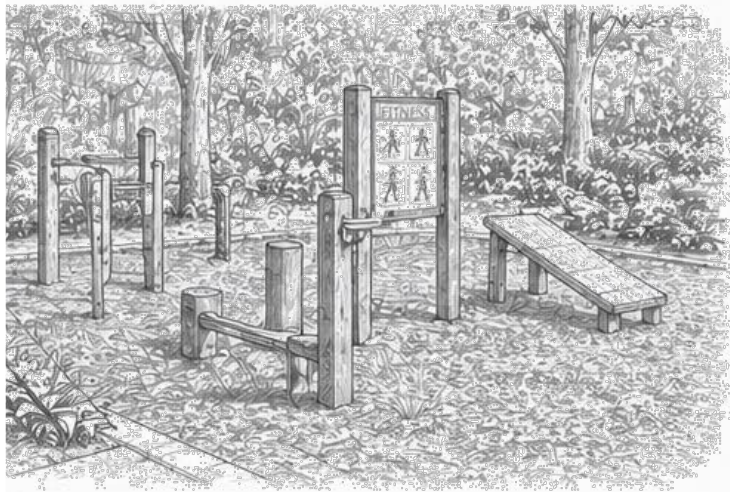


Trail Amenities

DRINKING WATER FOUNTAIN
PROVIDES HYDRATION FOR TRAIL USERS



TRAIL FITNESS STATION
SUPPORTS HEALTH AND WELLNESS
FOR ALL AGES



Trail Amenities

SUMMARY

Choose the trail surface that best fits your users, environment and budget. Consider user acceptance, accessibility, initial and maintenance costs, life expectancy and material availability.

Hard surfaces are more durable and accessible with lower maintenance, but cost more upfront. Soft surfaces cost less initially and blend with the natural setting, but require more maintenance and may not hold up under heavy use or wet conditions.

Start with the right surface for today, knowing that trails can be upgraded as funding allows.

HARD SURFACES

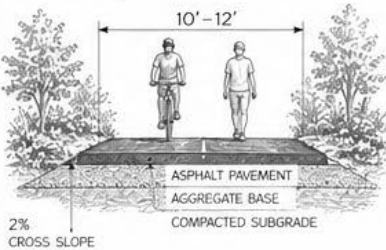
- Durable and accessible
- Withstand heavy use and varying weather
- Lower long-term maintenance
- Higher initial cost



TRAIL SURFACE TYPES – TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS

1. ASPHALT

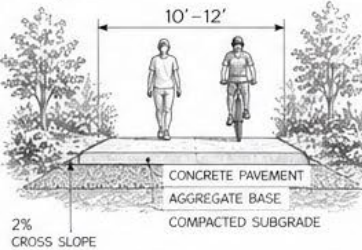
Best for: Bicyclists, commuters, inline skaters, pedestrians



- Life expectancy: 7–15 years
- Smooth, flexible surface
- Requires crack maintenance
- Not suitable for equestrians

2. CONCRETE

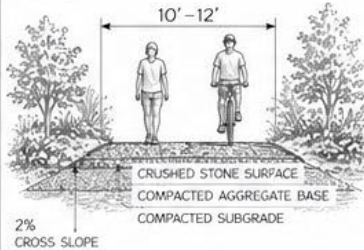
Best for: Urban areas, high use, flood-prone areas



- Life expectancy: 25+ years
- Very durable, handles climate extremes
- Hard on runners' lower limbs
- Consider adjacent soft tread for runners/equestrians

3. CRUSHED STONE

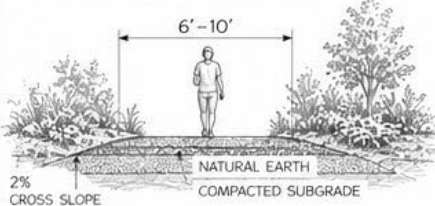
Best for: Multi-use trails in natural settings



- Durable and blends with landscape
- Widely available
- Accommodates most users (not ideal for inline skaters)

6. NATURAL EARTH

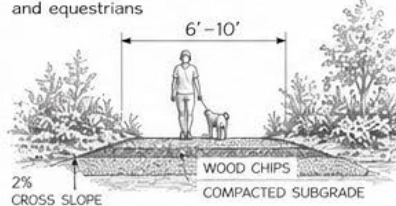
Best for: Low use trails, natural areas



- Very low cost
- Maintenance: fix drainage, repair erosion, remove vegetation
- Best for low use; can be built and maintained by volunteers

7. WOOD CHIPS

Best for: Parallel trails, runners and equestrians



- Blends with natural environment
- Good for runners and equestrians
- Not wheelchair accessible
- Requires frequent replenishment (replace every ~2 years)

Trail Surfaces

SOFT SURFACES

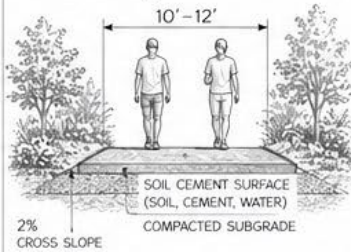
- Lower initial cost
- Blend with natural environment
- Higher maintenance
- Less durable under heavy use or severe weather



CONSIDERATIONS

4. SOIL CEMENT

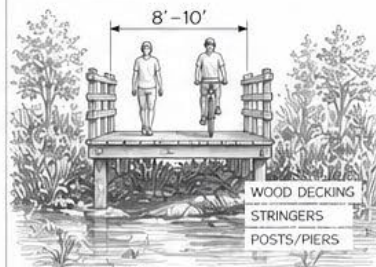
Best for: Cost-effective hard surface in natural settings



- Less expensive than asphalt
- Firm, stable surface
- Requires excellent drainage to prevent erosion

5. BOARDWALK

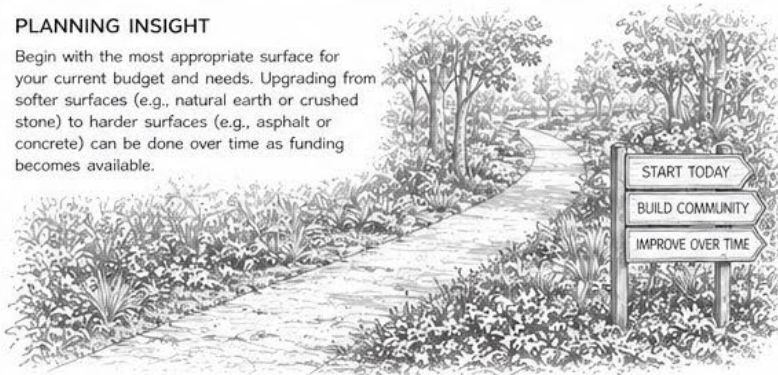
Best for: Wetlands, sensitive environments



- Minimizes impact to wetlands
- Allows drainage and water flow
- Can be slippery when wet
- High initial and maintenance cost

PLANNING INSIGHT

Begin with the most appropriate surface for your current budget and needs. Upgrading from softer surfaces (e.g., natural earth or crushed stone) to harder surfaces (e.g., asphalt or concrete) can be done over time as funding becomes available.



Trail Surfaces



[THETRAILAHAD.ORG](http://thetrailahead.org)

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