

(My Version of) The History of Trail Development In Elizabethtown, NY

Jeff Allott

Council Member, Town of Elizabethtown

Solace Cycles, Elizabethtown NY

www.solacecycles.com

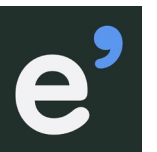
e'town



How did this Happen?

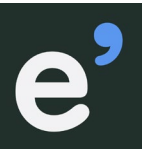
A Loose Timeline

- In the 80's and early 90's the Town Watershed property (Blueberry Hill) was selectively and carefully logged by a town Golf Course employee as a way to pull funds together for a bulldozer. In exchange the town would end up with a loose trail network to serve as an access point for multiple uses
- In 1994, the Otis Mountain Ski Hill came back to life and required a dedicated and faithful group of volunteers to clear and maintain the old ski hill and mechanicals. Once the heavy lifting was done, an accessible, connected, and willing group was available for other projects
- In the same timeframe, mountain biking was becoming popular and there were very few places that you could ride in our area.



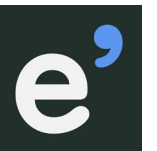
Loose Timeline

- Mixing all of the elements of the last slide, a small group of volunteers started connecting and making trails on the two properties (among a few others)
- Around 2005 bikes were getting more sophisticated and GPS tracking was coming of age - and interest grew in mapping of existing trails and the planning of new ones
- Using rough GPS data, an artistic map of Blueberry Hill Trails was developed and graciously donated by a town member. It was printed, and everyone was amazed (and some concerned!) by the extent of the inventory that we already had
- And that brought a lot of interest!



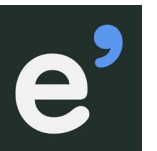
Loose Timeline

- Over the next decade several trail users joined the Town Board, in part to help define and protect the growing assets on Blueberry Hill
- We procured funding (thanks Northern Forest and Northern Borders!) and built a Trail Center and connector trails on another town parcel closer to the hamlet (2019-2025)
- A large group of Etown Trail Users got together and purchased an adjoining tract (Elizabethtown Mt Bike Ranch, EMBR) for visitor accommodations.
- During that time, we were also recognized by BETA as a worthwhile partner and welcomed into their community, putting us “on the map”
- Initiated a rebranding campaign (thanks NFC and Roost), that brings us to today



Why It's a good Idea

- Trails, Hamlet Connectors, and Rec Paths are an excellent way to bring vitality to a small rural town
- The “Foothill Towns” of the Adirondacks have much better terrain for trekking, biking, foraging and the like
- High Peaks area is over-saturated, while peripheral hamlets continue to struggle economically. This is a good way to spread the use and benefits further into the ADK Park



Takeaways

Takeaways

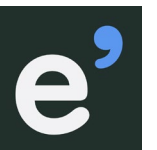
- Nothing happens overnight!
- Over 30 years, and several generations of leaning in

What would we do differently?

- Engage outside organizations earlier
- Develop a master plan earlier in the process

How to Start

- Develop an inventory of recreational assets/opportunities
- Determine/galvanize community interest
- Lean in!



Closing Thoughts

#RuralVibrancy
#e'town

- Its organic and one thing **will** lead to another, but it won't happen overnight.....
- Let's recognize, leverage, and market the strengths of our foothill communities as a way to redistribute park users and the benefits they bring.
- The gentler terrain beyond the High Peaks **are perfect** for multi-use trail systems
- Let's start a conversation around **Hamlet Connectors and incentivizing private landowners to open their property up for recreation!**

