An Assessment of Four Selected Communities Along the Appalachian Trail in Relation to Emile Benton Mackaye's Original Vision of Regional Planning

Jessica Ann Schottanes
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/masters_theses_2

Part of the Human Geography Commons, and the Urban, Community and Regional Planning Commons

Recommended Citation
Schottanes, Jessica Ann, "An Assessment of Four Selected Communities Along the Appalachian Trail in Relation to Emile Benton Mackaye's Original Vision of Regional Planning" (2021). Masters Theses. 1073. https://doi.org/10.7275/22483508.0 https://scholarworks.umass.edu/masters_theses_2/1073

This Open Access Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations and Theses at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
AN ASSESSMENT OF FOUR SELECTED COMMUNITIES ALONG THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN RELATION TO EMILE BENTON MACKAYE’S ORIGINAL VISION OF REGIONAL PLANNING

A Thesis Presented
By
JESSICA ANN SCHOTTANES

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment Of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

May 2021
Department of Geosciences
Geography
AN ASSESSMENT OF FOUR SELECTED COMMUNITIES ALONG THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN RELATION TO EMILE BENTON MACKAYE’S ORIGINAL VISION OF REGIONAL PLANNING

A Thesis Presented
By
Jessica Ann Schottanes

Approved as to style and content by:

________________________
Piper Gaubatz, Chair

________________________
Mark Hamin, Member

________________________
Qian Yu, Graduate Program Director, Geography

________________________
Stephen Burns, Department Head, Department of Geosciences
DEDICATION

For my pop-pop, Martin M. Schottanes.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my appreciation to the following people:

† To Professor Piper Gaubatz for guiding me throughout the challenging process of developing and defending a master’s thesis.

† To committee member Professor Mark Hamin for introducing me to Emile Benton MacKaye, this research would cease to exist without our conversation on the Appalachian Trail.

† To Professor Eve Vogel for suggesting postcards as part of my research methodology, I enjoyed sketching scenes from each trailside community and capturing their character in art form.

† To Julie Judkins and Professor Robert Bristow for further distributing the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey to the greater trailside network and co-authoring ‘Appalachian Trail Communities: Gateway Partners in Parks and Protected Area Management.’

† To my mom and dad, Karen and David Schottanes, for always inquiring about the progression of my writing.

† To my mom-mom, Marilyn Schottanes, for reminding me every day that it’s not a matter of having to, but instead getting to master a concept that I’m most passionate about.

† To the 132 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey participants for sharing their long-term vision for their community with me during a time of great uncertainty — your input will help guide the program as it enters a new decade.
ABSTRACT

AN ASSESSMENT OF FOUR SELECTED COMMUNITIES ALONG THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN RELATION TO EMILE BENTON MACKAYE’S ORIGINAL VISION OF REGIONAL PLANNING

MAY 2021

JESSICA ANN SCHOTTANES, B.S., SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

DUAL M.S. + M.R.P., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, AMHERST

Directed By: Piper Gaubatz

Planner, conservationist, forester, and geographer Emile Benton MacKaye envisioned a revolutionary, extensive foot trail that would promote the interaction between communities throughout the United States’ distinctive eastern region. His 1921 plan for the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) focused on balancing the basic requirements for life in and out of the urban context by developing an ‘indigenous’ environment and developmental mold (Bower 1962, 372). However, almost a century has passed, and MacKaye’s approach to the planning process, organization, environmental development, and the rural economy remains hidden beneath the mountain forest canopy extending from Maine to Georgia.

Four of the forty-nine designated communities in the A.T. Community™ program today were analyzed to determine if and which aspects of Benton MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning were achieved 100 years later. On-the-ground observations were collected through informal interactions with A.T. Community™ Supporters, unaffiliated businesses and organizations, and locals while traveling to each of the four A.T. regions, defined by the A.T. Conservancy (ATC). It was essential to understand if the designations transformed trailside neighborhoods into outdoor recreational and social hubs and shifted community perspectives toward the Trail and the ATC.
Although most people think of the A.T. purely in terms of the opportunities it provides for outdoor and wilderness experiences, it is also perceived as a critical focus for communities' economic growth and vitality. The research reveals that the program and its complimentary ‘Supporter’ system for local businesses are ineffective. The ATC branded these trail towns. Yet, no elements of MacKaye’s vision or community improvements have truly been recognized following A.T. Community™ designations within the last decade. Regardless of geographic, temporal, internal, and physical aspects, this outcome was consistent in all four case study communities (Monson-ME, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar-WV, Damascus-VA, and Hot Springs-NC).
Chapter 3 Four Designated Trailside Communities ................................................................. 44
Highlights ................................................................................................................................. 44
Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 44
Comparison Overview ............................................................................................................. 47
  ▶ Geographic Location .......................................................................................................... 47
  ▶ Community Profile ........................................................................................................... 47
  ▶ Planning, Conservation, + Engagement ........................................................................... 48
Significance of the Four Selected A.T. Gateway Communities ............................................... 50
  ▶ Monson, Maine .................................................................................................................... 50
  ▶ Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, West Virginia ................................................................................ 53
  ▶ Damascus, Virginia ............................................................................................................ 56
  ▶ Hot Springs, North Carolina .............................................................................................. 59

Chapter 4 Data Analysis ......................................................................................................... 62
Highlights ................................................................................................................................. 62
Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 62
  ▶ Base of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey .................................................................... 63
  ▶ Residents ............................................................................................................................ 64
  ▶ Employees .......................................................................................................................... 65
  ▶ Business Owners .............................................................................................................. 65
  ▶ Unaffiliated Businesses .................................................................................................... 67
  ▶ A.T. Community™ Supporters ......................................................................................... 67
  ▶ Revisioning the A.T. Community™ Program .................................................................... 68
Closed + Semi-Closed Questions ............................................................................................ 70
Overview ................................................................................................................................. 77
  ▶ Monson .............................................................................................................................. 78
  ▶ Harpers Ferry-Bolivar ....................................................................................................... 78
  ▶ Damascus ........................................................................................................................... 79
  ▶ Hot Springs ......................................................................................................................... 79
Open-Ended Questions .......................................................................................................... 80
  ▶ Unaffiliated Businesses .................................................................................................... 80
  ▶ A.T. Community™ Supporters ......................................................................................... 81
  ▶ Revisioning the A.T. Community™ Program .................................................................... 81
An Analysis of the Methodology ............................................................................................. 86
  ▶ Visual Communication + Outreach Efforts ...................................................................... 86
  ▶ Qualtrics® Survey ............................................................................................................. 88

Chapter 5 Conclusions .......................................................................................................... 89
Highlights ................................................................................................................................. 89
A Pathless Program .................................................................................................................. 89
Connecting-The-Communities ................................................................................................. 90
Developing a Framework for Achieving Mackaye’s Vision ...................................................... 90
  ▶ Change + Adaptation ........................................................................................................ 92
TABLES

Table 1 A Comparison of MacKaye's 1921 Vision to the ATC's 2010 Program .................. 24
Table 2 A Comparison of the Four Case Study Communities............................................. 46
Table 3 A Comparison of Survey Data from the Four Selected Communities............... 71
FIGURES

Figure 1 A Map of National Scenic and National Historic Trails in America Today ............. 3
Figure 2 Camp Fire Girls from the Ames Iowa Chapter .................................................. 5
Figure 3 The Main Home on the Hudson Guild Farm 500-Acre Estate ............................ 8
Figure 4 CCC Men Blazing a Section of the A.T. in Shenandoah National Park ............. 9
Figure 5 A Photograph of MacKaye and Avery ................................................................. 10
Figure 6 The Characteristics and Components of MacKaye’s 1921 Concept ..................... 11
Figure 7 A Comparison of MacKaye’s and Avery’s Trailways ......................................... 13
Figure 8 A Map of the A.T. and BMT in 2021 ................................................................ 14
Figure 9 The ATC Headquarters Today ........................................................................... 16
Figure 10 Designated A.T. Communities in Each State, as of March 2021 ....................... 17
Figure 11 A Bar Chart Displaying the Number of A.T. Communities in Each State .......... 18
Figure 12 A Line Graph Displaying the Decline in A.T. Community Designations .......... 19
Figure 13 The Characteristics and Components of the ATC’s Program ............................. 20
Figure 14 A Photograph of Monson Public Library’s Supporter Certificate ....................... 21
Figure 15 A Timeline of the A.T. and ATC ...................................................................... 23
Figure 16 An Analysis of Population Change in the Selected Case Communities ............. 27
Figure 17 Notes from Informal Interview on June 7th, 2019 with Julie Judkins .................. 29
Figure 18 A Representation of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey Flow ....................... 31
Figure 19 An Infographic for the Model A.T. Community™ Rating System ..................... 32
Figure 20 Introduction to the ATC’s ‘A.T. Community 2020 Survey’ ................................. 34
Figure 21 An Example of an Email to a Potential Participant ........................................... 35
Figure 22 An Example of a Reminder Email ..................................................................... 35
Figure 23 A Template for Phone Calls ............................................................................. 36
Figure 24 A Social Media Post, Developed for the Four Selected A.T. Communities ........ 37
Figure 25 A Documentation of Social Media Efforts ......................................................... 37
ABBREVIATIONS

_ATTRIB, Appalachian Trail
_ATTRIB, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
_ATTRIB, Appalachian Trailway News
_ATTRIB, Benton MacKaye Trail
_ATTRIB, Benton MacKaye Trail Association
_ATTRIB, Civilian Conservation Corps
_ATTRIB, Appalachian Trail Conference
_ATTRIB, National Historic Trail
_ATTRIB, National Scenic Trail
_ATTRIB, National Park Service
_ATTRIB, Regional Planning Association of America, RPAA
CHAPTER 1 MACKAYE’S APPALACHIAN TRAIL: A VISION 100 YEARS OVERDUE

Highlights

This master's thesis compares the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC)'s Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Community™ and Supporter programs to Emile Benton MacKaye's original regional planning vision by assessing four selected participating gateway communities.


Chapter 1 of this master's thesis presents the background of this research, explains the significance of Benton MacKaye’s lost vision, and summarizes the methodology approach.

This introduction begins with a description of key terms and concludes with an overview of research objectives and questions.

Introduction

In 1921, Emile ‘Benton’ MacKaye, a pioneer of regional planning, proposed his vision for an extensive trailway system with an underlying purpose to foster a cooperative spirit between recreational users and anticipated permanent trailside community members and farmers known as the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). As MacKaye became more fixated on his concept for a regional community connected by a footpath hidden in the Appalachian Mountains, the surrounding landscape’s external design was transforming as highways and national park system units emerged. Then, as the demand to complete the Trail's development for the public’s immediate use and enjoyment, MacKaye’s vision returned to its original form as a paper proposal. Rival, Myron Avery, strived to bring the Trail into physical existence and accomplished that in 1937. As a result, the A.T. surfaced as a spiritual and challenging trek. Today, many are eager to attempt to through- and section-hike it. While, in many ways, the A.T. venture achieves MacKaye’s vision of a
community of wanderers traveling across the landscape. Yet, many aspects of MacKaye’s original vision remain unachieved.

When the ATC launched the A.T. Community™ program in 2010, a formal network of trailside communities was established to catalyze a greater regional support system. As the research progressed, the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey became the primary methodology for soliciting constructive feedback from locals to reimagine the program with MacKaye’s sustainable economic development philosophies at the heart of its mission.

Objectives
This master’s thesis analyzes the extent to which the A.T. Community™ program achieves Benton MacKaye’s regional planning concept ten years since its inception. There are overlapping objectives between MacKaye’s 1921 vision and the program. The case studies contribute to understanding trailside communities alongside regional trail systems in the United States, specifically National Scenic Trails (NST). With MacKaye’s original blueprint for the A.T., each A.T. Community™’s long-term vision will inform a new design for the ATC for the next decade.

Furthermore, can the conservation and outdoor recreation visions of the early 20th century be adapted to 21st-century sustainable economic development priorities? To understand this, it’s essential first to comprehend:

- The extent to which the original Mackaye vision has/has not been realized
- The relationships between the original vision for the A.T. and current AT Community™ program priorities
The thinking and trends for the future based on the experience of key case study communities (Monson-ME, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar-WV, Damascus-VA, and Hot Springs-NC)

Definitions of a Regional Trail

A regional trail is an extensive hiking footpath that blazes through a region, multiple regions, or even numerous states (Pacific Crest Trail Association 2021). Typically, regional trails connect a diverse collection of natural landscapes. In the United States, National Historic Trails (NHTs) and NSTs are recognized as regional trekking trails that are at least 100 miles in length, excluding original routes of great significance, ideally continuous, and for the public’s use and enjoyment (See Figure 1) (National Park Service 2019) (The National Trails System Act 2019). Some National Recreation Trails and greenways are considered regional trails as well.

Figure 1 A Map of National Scenic and National Historic Trails in America Today (National Park Service 2018).
While the length and geographic situation primarily define this trailway category, the individuals who attempt to section- or through-hike the pathway substantially contributed to the trail journey phenomenon. While many hikers view extensive and strenuous treks as a physical challenge, others consider regional trails to be opportunities for spiritual and individual development (Bratton 2012) (American Trails 2018).

**America’s Regional Hiking Clubs + Trails**

Before regional trail developments, walking in nature was “a part of daily life” (Forest History Society 2021). With urban sprawl and industrialization, this mundane experience became luxury and “required time, effort, and often money” (Forest History Society 2021). Urban America began to recognize the importance of fresh air and physical exercise in the late 19th century, catalyzing the shift from walking to recreational hiking.

Early outdoor social organizations, such as the Alpine Club (est. 1863), Fresh Air Club (est. 1890), and the Appalachian Mountain Club (est. 1876), advocated for group outings into nature and the development of resources for participating pedestrians (Forest History Society 2021). Together members constructed, blazed, explored, and mapped trails in nearby mountain and forest landscapes and even established vernacular guides. Youth outdoor and education-based organizations, such as the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls, further popularized hiking, camping, and handcrafting activities. Young people discovered a new sense of self by connecting with the land and its wild creatures, troop leaders and peers, and the greater community and contributing to stewardship efforts and local projects (See Figure 2).
Today America’s oldest long-distance wilderness footpath dates back to 1909, when James Taylor conceived his vision for the Long Trail (L.T.) (Vermont Historical Society 2021). The ‘Triple Crown’ Jewels of Hiking, the A.T., Pacific Crest Trail (P.C.T.), and Continental Divide Trail (C.D.T.), followed the Green Mountain Club (GMC)’s plan to permanently connect communities to regions, spatially, socially, culturally, ecologically, and economically. But instead, these developments sparked a new type of hiking where users attempt to trek parts of the trail or its entirety in one tour over a span of weeks to months.

Definitions of Sustainable Economic Development

The purpose of sustainable economic development is to provide long-term "access to sustainable and secure livelihoods" for all populations inclusively (Barbier 1987, 103). The interconnected ecological, economic, and social goals comprise increasing diversity, equity, and participation, implementing climate resilience measures, and satisfying life
requirements on Earth. The United Nations (U.N.) defines 17 goals for sustainable development internationally. Goal eight emphasizes the importance of promoting economic growth by explicitly providing decent job opportunities to community members (United Nations 2020, 42). Sustainable economic development strategies preserve ecological amenities, improve food security, and decrease a municipality's susceptibility to catastrophes in the environment and society.

Furthermore, these ‘livelihood’ strategies increase community members' physical well-being and happiness and improve the overall fiscal health in the public sector (Donohue and Biggs 2015, 392–93). On the local level, urban cities, suburbs, and towns often thrive economically due to bolstered access to available resources and networks, including transportation, employment, and sustenance within an enclosed spatial extent. However, rural communities often struggle to progress due to a lack of development and intercommunal/regional support. Therefore, open space and recreation resources emerge as public amenities that rural trailside communities should utilize to foster tax revenue and increase their financial base.

**Trailside Communities and ‘Livelihood’ Assets**

Trailside communities thrive most upon the following two livelihood assets: natural and social. ‘Natural’ refers to land and water, while the social asset represents networking and human connections (Donohue and Biggs 2015, 392). While it’s important to also focus on financial, human, and physical forms of capital when developing a planning framework for sustainable economic development, the trail emerges as the main industry of its gateways, communities near the outdoor recreation resource. Regional trails and greenways are known for improving “the overall appeal of a community” and generating expenditures for tourist- and trail-oriented services from informational centers to lodging
(Howe, McMahon, and Propst 1997, 43). Users, therefore, experience both the natural/recreational resource and its community symbiotically.

These trails often “bolster property values” in suburban and urban areas, yet for rural communities, this may not be the case (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy 2003, 3).

Evolution of Benton MacKaye’s Appalachian Trail

Emile ‘Benton’ MacKaye was a man with many different hats and roles. He is best known as the father of the A.T. MacKaye claimed that he conceived his vision for the regional trail during a moment of reflection on top of a tree in Stratton Mountain, Vermont, during the summer of 1900 (Anderson 2002, 46). But it was not until some decades later that he could bring his vision to fruition.

Following a personal tragedy, MacKaye traveled to the Hudson Guild Farm (See Figure 3), a camp in northwestern New Jersey, during the summer of 1921 (Hudson Farm Foundation 2021). He discussed his innovative idea to solve the “problem of living” by creating a 1,700-mile network of mountain communities (Spann 1996, 27). A formal essay was prepared with friend/editor Charles Whitaker and radical community planner Clarence S. Stein (MacKaye 1921, 3) (Appalachian Trail Conference 2000, 11). The proposed trail network would create opportunities for “recreation, recuperation, and employment” (MacKaye 1921, 5). Also, he desired to redistribute the population and end the network of “smoky bee-hive cities” (MacKaye 1921, 4). Therefore, the trailway revealed an escape from civilization to the country, and MacKaye intended it to be multi-functional by nature. With a series of transient shelter camps, permanent food and farm camps, and community groups connected by the walking trail in mind, he hoped that its trail residents and users could easily transition to and from the neighboring camps, major metropolises, and peaks from the primarily passive trail.
MacKaye’s proposal was published in Whitaker’s *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (AIA) in October of 1921. Following the publication, MacKaye organized the Trail’s first conference between March 2nd and 3rd of 1925 in Washington, D.C., to discuss his pathless trail line idea (Appalachian Trail Conference 2000, 50). On the second day, the Appalachian Trail Conference (Conference) became a formal body with its attendees’ support. Its first goal was to create the extensive footpath in MacKaye’s 15-month project period.

MacKaye’s vision to mitigate economic problems by implementing a new deal and introduce a new perspective on wilderness civilization seemed to significantly conflict with Conference President Myron Avery’s ideas over time. When addressing the land acquisition and building process, his energy level as the lead organizer seemed to not align with the level necessary to engineer the trail from beginning to end successfully. Yet, the concept of “a footpath as a means to a metaphysical end, with social and economic
applications” energized him (Appalachian Trail Conference 2000, 11). He wanted the Trail to be shaped into a barbarian or wilderness utopia by the public.

Avery, however, understood the practical purpose of the A.T. and the importance of government allies and a workforce. Therefore, he and the Conference tasked Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews with the Trail's relocation in the new national park, Shenandoah (See Figure 4). His goal was to complete the task at hand and make the mountains accessible for outdoor recreation efficiently and timely.

![Figure 4 CCC Men Blazing a Section of the A.T. in Shenandoah National Park (T. Johnson and Potomac Appalachian Trail Club 2016).](image)

In contrast, MacKaye sought a higher form of “human evolution” in the wilderness environment and desired to promote self-sufficiency (Appalachian Trail Conference 2000, 11). It was never just a trail for MacKaye; it was a movement with the community feature at its core, linearly stitching together the built ‘rural’ and natural environments. With tangled roots in the Trail’s vision and conflicting actions by the Conference, he turned his
focus to the Wilderness Society and the regional planning practice of approaching, protecting, and envisioning landscapes and communities.

Figure 5 MacKaye (Left), the Original Architect of the Trail’s Concept and Program, and Avery (Right), the Physical Trail’s Developer in October of 1931, Photograph from the ATC (Kelly 2021).

Avery then became the main field organizer when Judge Perkins’s health took a turn in 1930 and remained chairman of the Conference until 1952. The construction of Avery’s A.T. was completed on August 14th, 1937, near his home mountain, Katahdin, in Maine. The route was 2,025 miles long at this time (Appalachian Trail Conference 2000, 12).

A Regionalist Vision for Reform Lost

Avery stated that “the Appalachian Trail will always be unfinished” (King 2018), and this statement doesn’t just hold for maintenance, but aspects of MacKaye’s regional development vision. MacKaye strived throughout his life to “resist this metropolitan blight and to re-create what he believed was a radically better world rooted in the American past” (Spann 1996, 19). His master plan involved using “the Trail as a device to work permanent change in social movement” and conserving human culture (Kates 2013,
It would start with the collaborative effort between agriculturalists, architects, engineers, foresters, and volunteers to achieve a shared goal, the Trail’s construction. Conceptually, the A.T. was an experiential ‘makerspace’ or workshop in Appalachia where “human, natural, and industrial resources” were allocated (See Figure 6). MacKaye viewed the problem as a human, geographic, and regional one rather than one localized in cities. His solution was to build community, embrace the “social aspects of employment,” and recognize the industry’s regional connection (Dalbey 2002, 48).

Figure 6: The Characteristics and Components of MacKaye’s 1921 Concept for the A.T., Developed in Canva.

MacKaye had the potential to “move from vision to actuality and lead through” regional planning (Dalbey 2002, 17), but “the loss of his direct involvement in the movement guaranteed that the original Trail idea would lose its more idealistic features” (Spann 1996, 30). He failed to reform city folk by developing an Appalachian Trail and its camp system to restructure the wilderness society and re-educate people on places and
functions within the greater regional community. However, the A.T. naturally functioned as a green barrier, hindering “the sprawl of East Coast metropolises” (Gavran 2017, 111).

300 Miles Lost

When Avery rerouted the A.T., he disregarded about 300 miles of MacKaye’s proposed trail as well as its incomplete wilderness segments, intended to find the middle ground between the path and the pathless (Kates 2013, 132). MacKaye’s main trailway extended northbound from Mount Washington in New Hampshire to the Cohutta Mountains in Georgia, with five major sections, branch extensions, and motorway connections to fifteen major cities, seven additional peaks/mountain ranges, and one park. In contrast, Avery’s began northbound in Maine at Mt. Katahdin and ended in Georgia at Mt. Oglethorpe. Both A.T. corridors with branched trail extensions passed through the following fourteen states north to south: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia (See Figure 7). Unfortunately, neither MacKaye’s nor Avery’s A.T. exists today entirely since the Trail’s southern terminal was relocated to Georgia’s Springer Mountain.
The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA), established in 1980, set out to trail “the general route MacKaye had originally laid out in the early 1920” in the Southeast (Dixon 2007). The Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), a footpath in honor of the A.T. visionary and regionalist, was completed in 2005 during the 25th Anniversary of the BMTA (See Figure 8) (Benton MacKaye Trail Association 2021).
From Trail Planning to Conservation Planning

The trail-building era concluded in 1937, yet the ATC’s trail- and conservation-planning efforts are never-ending. When the Trail became a NST in 1968, the A.T.’s primary objective became providing “for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities” (National Park Service 2019, 2). Methodology for further protecting the resource and managing its features and uses was defined in the 1981 Comprehensive Plan.
“It is not only the quality of the landscape and visible land uses which affect the Appalachian Trail experience, however. Noise pollution, degradation of air quality, and that intangible, the human community along the Trail, all affect the enjoyment of Trail users” (Appalachian Trail Project Office and National Park Service 1981, 25).

Based on this key planning document, people emerged as the Trail’s number one threat to users’ enjoyment, yet today A.T. Community™ members see it quite the opposite. Smelly hikers and tent camping are considered nuisances to trail town residents.

*From Conference to Conservancy*

Since its inception in 1925, the Conference has guided the A.T. in its mission, growth, structure, and maintenance. To further expand its capacity, manage the trailway resource, and guide users (Appalachian Trail Conference 2000, 11), the Conference published 66 volumes of the Appalachian Trailway News (ATN) journal from May of 1939 until June of 2005. Originally based in Washington, D.C., the Conference relocated to a permanent space in Harpers Ferry, W.V. in August of 1972 (See Figure 9)(Appalachian Trail Conference 2000, 50–51)(Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021b), while general meetings continued in major cities along the Trail. When the Conference transformed into a non-profit organization, the A.T. Conservancy (ATC or Conservancy), in 2005 to preserve the federally protected through-trail for future use and enjoyment, the ATN also became A.T. Journeys that July.
Today the ATC co-manages the 2,190-mile greenway with the National Park Service (NPS) and partners with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) as well as volunteers and state/federal agencies (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021a) (National Park Service 2015, 51). Thirty-one trail maintaining clubs exist today across the four regions: seven in New England, twelve in Mid-Atlantic, seven in Virginian, and five in Southern (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021d).

Shifting Perspectives from the Trail + its Hikers to its Communities

The A.T. Community™ Program

In 2006, the ATC implemented the A.T. Community™ program model within two distinctive gateway communities along the A.T., Hot Springs-NC and Boiling Springs-PA. The ATC conducted public forums to define each community’s “partnership opportunities and priorities” (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021c). By manifesting MacKaye’s idea for a network of small recreational communities “designed to serve those seeking revitalization” (Spann 1996, 28), the ATC aimed to promote sustainable economic development on the

Figure 9 The ATC Headquarters Today (Schottanes 2019).
East Coast by requiring each community to organize an annual project, participate in trail-wide and regional summits, and endorse environmental stewardship. The ATC also provides official signage for each approved town or county and sponsors them on social media.

Figure 10 Designated A.T. Communities in Each State, as of March 2021.
Since its establishment in 2010, the program currently consists of forty-nine trailside communities in twelve of the fourteen states that the regional trail passes through (See Figure 10). According to the ATC’s ‘A.T. Community™ List’ and ‘Master Successes’ document, 49% of communities were designated in 2010 and 2011, with Franklin-NC being the first celebrated on March 23rd, 2010. 27% are county/area designations, and Virginian towns and counties contribute to 33% of the total A.T. Community™ population today (See Figure 11). It’s important to note that Harpers Ferry-Bolivar is the only dual A.T. Community™ shared between two adjacent places, and there are no designations in states Connecticut and Maryland. Designations have significantly decreased since the program’s high point in 2012 (See Figure 12).
The program (See Figure 13), the first of its kind, set a precedent for other regional trail associations to follow. Of the thirty established NHTs and NSTs, four regional trail organizations and associations have parallel programs to the ATC’s: Continental Divide Trail Coalition, Florida Trail Association, North Country Trail Association, and Pacific Crest Trail Association. It transformed the definition of an ‘A.T. Community’ from “a broad term including all those with an interest in or relationship to the Appalachian Trail: hikers, volunteers, landowners, federal and state agency personnel, local officials, and citizens of the towns through which the Trail passes” into a specific one related to trailside town administrators, stakeholders, business owners, employees, and residents (Appalachian Trail Project Office and National Park Service 1981).
The A.T. Community™ Supporter Program

The Supporter program, launched in 2012, inherently trailed behind the A.T. Community™ program. Local businesses and organizations in designated trail towns, counties, and areas have the opportunity to become recognized by the ATC as official ‘Supporters’ of their A.T. Community™. Each community has an Advisory Committee responsible for approving and sometimes even submitting applications into the complementary program to the ATC on behalf of candidates. Once the ATC processes and endorses a submission, the Advisory Committee bestows the applicant with a certificate granting the business/organization with the Supporter title (See Figure 14).
Supporters pledge to advocate for the ATC as well as their A.T. Community™, Advisory Committee, or local club for a minimum of 5 years and, in return, benefit from potential regional and national recognition efforts by the ATC and receive hand-outs and an official affiliation logo for their business/organization:

- National Recognition on the ATC’s Website, Official Blog, and Social Media
- National Recognition in A.T. Journeys, the Official Magazine of the ATC
- National and Regional Recognition in ATC’s Online Newsletters, such as A.T. Comms
- ATC Maps and Brochures for Customers and Visitors
- A.T. Community™ Supporter Storefront Decal

**Regional and Trail Wide A.T. Community™ Summits**

In 2015, the ATC hosted a trail wide summit conference for the leaders and representatives of all A.T. Communities to mark the program’s 5th anniversary. The ATC initiated a conversation with Trail advocates to gather key insights into the experiences of trail users.
and visitors in each designated community, as well as local trail protection efforts and the successes and challenges of the program. During the two- and a half-day event, community participants collaborated to create a new vision for the program, which included:

Valuing the trail as a community asset, local governments take the trail experience and viewshed into consideration in their economic and land use planning. In these ways, ATC, AT Communities, and trail clubs work together to realize Benton MacKaye’s vision for renewal of the human spirit and conservation at the landscape level (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2016, 18).

Since then, the ATC has hosted summits for the New England region in 2017 and Mid-Atlantic and Virginia-Southern regions in 2018. Participants networked and connected in person with the ATC.
Figure 15 A Timeline Summarizing Significant Events Leading to the Establishment of the A.T. Community™ and Supporter Programs.
MacKaye’s Corridor Communities Today

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MacKaye’s 1921 Proposal for the A.T.</th>
<th>ATC’s 2010 A.T. Community™ Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage users and community members to practice self-sufficiency</td>
<td>Recognize communities that protect, support, and service the A.T. and its hikers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigate economic problems by creating opportunities for &quot;recreation, recuperation, and employment&quot; (MacKaye 1921, 5)</td>
<td>Enhance economic development in designated communities by harnessing tourism and outdoor recreation catalysts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redistribute the population and further end the network of “smoky bee-hive cities” with a regional trail of outdoor communities (MacKaye 1921, 4)</td>
<td>Create a regional network of designated trailside communities and local business supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable easy transportation to and from the neighboring shelter, food, farm, and community camps</td>
<td>Promote the A.T. as both a valuable resource and asset; Engage trail users, stewards, and community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach a higher form of “human evolution” in the wilderness (Appalachian Trail Conference 2000, 11)</td>
<td>Assist with the conservation planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above compares the overall missions as well as some of the goals and objectives of MacKaye’s regional development vision and the ATC’s formal community initiative. When the ATC approves and designates a community into the 2020 A.T. Community™ program, the community signs a contract to “cater to the volume of hikers that spend time in [town ] with them… as well as provide public facilities to ensure their stay is more efficient and enjoyable” (Potomac Appalachian Trail Club 2018).

Overview of Research Objectives + Questions

To What Extent Do the A.T. Community™ and Supporter Programs Achieve Aspects of MacKaye’s Original Vision of Regional Planning?
This research serves as an approach for better understanding MacKaye’s greater greenway plan, the ATC’s organizational mission and its strategies to fulfill that mission, and the goals and objectives of the A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs to better address the needs of host communities, modify the ATC’s vision to fit within MacKaye’s and inform a new program design that focuses more on the places along the Trail, local folk, and their livelihoods. Sub-research questions included:

- How practical are the programs’ defined short-term and long-term benefits?
- To what extent does the ATC’s recognition efforts enhance participating trailside communities?
- Do temporary trail residents, ‘through-hikers,’ benefit more from the programs’ initiatives?
- Does the A.T. Community™ program affect the economic climate of its designated communities?
- Is there a correlation between the number of Supporters in a designated community and seasonal hiker tourism?
- Is there a correlation between the location along the Trail and a community’s fiscal health?
CHAPTER 2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY, + LIMITATIONS

Highlights

 تمامی نقاط این درس به بررسی بازارهای آکادمیک و پیگیری در طیف عمیقی و در سایر محیط‌های زندگی و امکانات و محدودیت‌ها می‌پردازد.

 تمامی نقاط جمع آوری اطلاعات و استراتژی‌های جمع‌آوری اطلاعات به صورت پیوسته و مشابه با دانشگاه مقدار و تغییر با دانشگاه آزمایشگاه و هم‌آفرینی با ظهور کووید-19.

 تمامی نقاط شرکت‌کنندگان شامل یک عضو محلی و نام‌گذاری‌های خاص و رعایت‌گران بازارهای آکادمیک و پیگیری و تنظیم و آموزش و کار با استادیون و انجمن‌ها و کمیته‌های استاندار حاضر در چهار انتخاب شده که در این پژوهش مورد بررسی قرار داشتند: منسون، هارپرز فیری-بولیور، داماسک و هات سپن.

 تمامی نقاط تحقیق فقط به روندی تعدادی از پیشنهادات واقعی و توجه به تغییرات و دانشگاه‌های آزمایشگاهی و استادیون و انجمن‌ها و کمیته‌های استاندار حاضر در چهار انتخاب شده که در این پژوهش مورد بررسی قرار داشتند: منسون، هارپرز فیری-بولیور، داماسک و هات سپن.

 پیشگیری تحقیق

 پیشگیری

 یک مصاحبه با دانشگاه آزمایشگاهی، امهرست استاد ماکس همین در راستای مکسی و آکادمیک و در طیف عمیقی و در سایر محیط‌های زندگی و امکانات و محدودیت‌ها می‌پردازد.

 یک مصاحبه با دانشگاه آزمایشگاهی، امهرست استاد ماکس همین در راستای مکسی و آکادمیک و در طیف عمیقی و در سایر محیط‌های زندگی و امکانات و محدودیت‌ها می‌پردازد.

 یک مصاحبه با دانشگاه آزمایشگاهی، امهرست استاد ماکس همین در راستای مکسی و آکادمیک و در طیف عمیقی و در سایر محیط‌های زندگی و امکانات و محدودیت‌ها می‌پردازد.

 این مصاحبه با دانشگاه آزمایشگاهی، امهرست استاد ماکس همین در راستای مکسی و آکادمیک و در طیف عمیقی و در سایر محیط‌های زندگی و امکانات و محدودیت‌ها می‌پردازد.

 این مصاحبه با دانشگاه آزمایشگاهی، امهرست استاد ماکس همین در راستای مکسی و آکادمیک و در طیف عمیقی و در سایر محیط‌های زندگی و امکانات و محدودیت‌ها می‌پردازد.

 این مصاحبه با دانشگاه آزمایشگاهی، امهرست استاد ماکس همین در راستای مکسی و آکادمیک و در طیف عمیقی و در سایر محیط‌های زندگی و امکانات و محدودیت‌ها می‌پردازد.

 این مصاحبه با دانشگاه آزمایشگاهی، امهرست استاد ماکس همین در راستای مکسی و آکادمیک و در طیف عمیقی و در سایر محیط‌های زندگی و امکانات و محدودیت‌ها می‌پردازد.
Community Context

Demographic data specific to each population from the U.S. Census Bureau via Wikipedia was collected (See Figure 16). Archives for local history, businesses, architectural plans, comprehensive plans, and photographs also emerged as essential primary sources for completing background research on the four proposed case study sites before conducting ground observations.

![Figure 16 An Analysis of Population Change in Monson, Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs Since their Establishments, Gathered from Wikipedia's Historical Populations.](image)

Research Objectives

This research's main goal was to analyze the primary functions and overall effectiveness of the A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs in achieving aspects of MacKaye's original vision and promoting sustainable economic development in each of the four A.T. regions (New England, Mid-Atlantic, Virginian, and Southern).
The search for answers began by conducting an informal interview with program architect Julie Judkins in June of 2019 to better understand the application process, community engagement, and next steps for the ATC (See Figure 17). Then, insight into the communities' experiences as trailside gateways and how their internal and external structures have changed since their establishment and A.T. Community™ designation to the present day was gathered while traveling to each of the four proposed case study communities (Monson-ME, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar-WV, Damascus-VA, and Hot Springs-NC). Observations and interactions during the site visits were considered when evaluating each case study’s character.

Toward the end of the two-week road trip along the A.T., a visit to the A.T. Visitor Center and ATC Headquarters in Harpers Ferry was essential to analyze its outstanding hiker profile collection and further interact with employees. Therefore, a greater understanding of the ATC’s purpose, growth, goals, challenges, and implementation measures was grasped.
2020 A.T. Community™ Survey

The creation and distribution of a Qualtrics® survey was the main methodology for analyzing and assessing the A.T. Community™ program’s effectiveness in fostering local and regional connectivity and sustainable economic development. By soliciting input from participants on matters such as the program’s strengths and weaknesses, each community’s primary concerns and challenges that come along with their trailside community reputation were defined.
A participant’s relationship(s) to each municipality in terms of employment, residence, and business ownership determined the flow of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey (See Figure 18). The purpose of this survey was to analyze the profile of each case study, gather basic demographics, and better understand the public’s long-term vision for their community. The survey also tasked participants with evaluating the benefits of the program related to tourism and the health of local businesses and how the program has transformed the community’s environment, economy, society, and the public’s perspective on the current certification program. The mixed open-, closed-, and semi-closed-ended questionnaire also approached the participants’ overall engagement with the designation program. Committee members and research partners pretested the survey flow in Qualtrics® before deployment.
The A.T. Community™ Model Rating System

A model rating system was created to investigate how this initiative could increase engagement between the ATC and with communities participating in the A.T. Community™ program, foster a regional support system and a business association for Supporters, promote environmental stewardship, and formally integrate designations into local and regional planning and design processes. All survey participants were presented with Figure 19 and asked to discuss the mock rating system’s pros and cons. Feedback was essential to determine whether or not a similar approach would benefit or harm designated communities if implemented in the future. As Judkins stated, not all designations will have the capacity to participate in a rating system.
Figure 19 An Infographic for the Model A.T. Community™ Rating System, Developed for the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey in Canva.
The ATC’s Survey

After collaborating with Judkins, the ATC simultaneously employed an identical instrument in SurveyMonkey® and distributed it to the entire A.T. Community™ network, excluding Monson, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs (See Figure 20). With the help of research partner, Professor Robert Bristow from Westfield State University, datasets were merged together for the ‘2020 Appalachian Trail Community™ Results’ newsletter and ‘Appalachian Trail Communities: Gateway Partners in Parks and Protected Area Management,’ an in-progress chapter in the upcoming edited book, Tourism Transformations in Protected Area Gateway Communities. Methodologies were distinct between the two instruments — the ATC published an introduction to the research and invited members of the greater A.T. Community™ to join the conversation in their summer 2020 newsletter, A.T. Comms (See Appendix A).

The ATC collected 57 total responses, and three of those participants were from the Town of Damascus. After cross-referencing IP addresses, 15 additional participants were from one of the four selected A.T. Communities: Monson, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs. While these communities were oversampled and contributed to 77% of the merged sample, the research team was able to gain a greater sense of how all A.T. Communities view the program. For more information on this project, Tourism Transformations in Protected Area Gateway Communities is expected to be published during the summer of 2021.
A.T. Community 2020 Survey

Thesis summary
What’s your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Community™? Jessica Schottanes, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), want to know how you support your community’s trailside designation! This 10-minute survey will echo the 2010 mission of the A.T. Community™ program and gather input on the program’s next steps. How can the ATC and the program better support your town’s unique character and assist with economic development? Responses from the 2020 Appalachian Trail Community™ Survey may be used in the Master’s Thesis research in Geography that assesses whether the program achieves Benton MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning. All survey results will be shared with the ATC for use in future planning initiatives.
Jessica’s research will dive into four communities. If you are a community member, business owner, or employee in Damascus, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Hot Springs, or Monson, please fill out this separate survey: tinyurl.com/2020ATCommunitySurvey (and not this one provided in Survey Monkey). Thank you for providing your important feedback!

Figure 20 Introduction to the ATC’s ‘A.T. Community 2020 Survey.’

Visual Communication + Outreach Efforts

Phase I: Connecting with Local Businesses + A.T. Community™ Supporters
In July 2019, a master contact list was created for the four selected A.T. Communities. This list included the phone numbers, emails, and mailing addresses of Phase I’s targeted population, collected from municipal websites.

Over 200 community stakeholders, business owners, and employees were contacted by phone and email and asked to spread the word of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey to their neighbors in mid-July (See Figure 21). A reminder email was sent to addresses in mid-September and near the survey’s closing date (See Figure 22). Figure 23 displays the script used to guide phone call conversations.
2020 A.T. Community™ Survey

Jessica Schottanes <jschottanes@umass.edu>

What’s your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Community™? Jessica Schottanes, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), want to know how you support your community’s trailside designation! This 15-minute survey will echo the 2010 mission of the A.T. Community™ program and gather input on the program’s next steps. How can the ATC and the program better support your town’s unique character and assist with economic development?

This survey is confidential and will not collect identifying information about specific individuals, businesses, or organizations. Participants should not disclose their identity or business name if they do not wish to have it known. Schottanes will use responses from the 2020 Appalachian Trail Community™ Survey in her Master’s Thesis in Geography that assesses whether the program achieves Benton MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning. All survey results will be shared with the ATC for use in future planning initiatives.

To begin the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey, visit http://tinyurl.com/2020ATCommunitySurvey. Thank you for your participation.

Figure 21 An Example of an Email to a Potential Participant.

2020 A.T. Community™ Survey | Upcoming Closing Date

Jessica Schottanes <jschottanes@umass.edu>

to hotspringsartgallery

What’s your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail Community™? Please join the conversation at tinyurl.com/2020ATCommunitySurvey.

Share your ideas to enhance your community and the trailside designation program!

The 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey will be closing on Friday, September 18th. Thank you for your feedback, and please invite your neighbors!

Figure 22 An Example of a Reminder Email.
Hello, my name is Jessica Schottanes, and I’m a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and I want to know how you support your community's trailside designation! Would you be interested in sharing your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail (AT) Community and participating in a digital survey?

This 15-minute survey will echo the 2010 mission of the AT Community program and gather input on the program’s next steps. This survey is confidential and will not collect identifying information about specific individuals, businesses, or organizations. We also invite your employees among other AT Community residents to participate in the research.

Response to Yes: Great! What is the best email address to reach you? Thank you so much for your time! You will receive an email with the link to the survey shortly. Have a great day!

Response to No: Thank you for your time and consideration! Have a great day!

**Figure 23** A Template for Phone Calls.

Note that voicemails were also left for potential survey participants.

Phase II: Embracing Social Media During COVID-19

Monson, Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs published blurbs on their municipal websites and social media accounts encouraging locals to communicate with their long-term vision for their A.T. Community™ and offer feedback before the survey’s anticipated closing date on Friday, September 18th (See Figure 24 and Figure 25). Damascus and the Hot Springs, NC Welcome Center and Tourism Association also published the survey information in the towns’ local e-newsletters.
Figure 24 A Social Media Post, Developed for the Four Selected A.T. Communities.

Figure 25 A Documentation of Social Media Efforts.
Phase III: Delivering Hand-Crafted Postcards to Stakeholders

Based on photographs taken during the road trip along the A.T., scenes in each of the four selected communities were sketched on trace paper. After editing each perspective in Adobe Photoshop, a template was developed for the postcards in Canva, a design platform. While the postcards’ fronts were unique to each place, the backs were uniform (See Figure 30). Once approved by committee members, 200 postcards were ordered based on the number of local businesses and organizations in each community: 50 for Monson (Figure 26), 100 for Harpers Ferry-Bolivar (Figure 27), 25 for Damascus (Figure 28), and 25 for Hot Springs (Figure 29).

Once received on August 30th, postcards were customized with stamps and the hand-written mailing addresses of Supporter businesses and organizations, unaffiliated local establishments, and community stakeholders. Although postcards were dropped off at the local United States Postal Service (USPS) office during the first week of September 2019, postal delays due to COVID-19 were taken into account. Therefore, the survey deadline was extended by one week.
Monson, what’s your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail Community™?

Please join the conversation at tinyurl.com/2020ATCommunitySurvey

Survey Closes September 18

Figure 26 The Front of a Postcard, Hand-Crafted for Monson.

Harpers Ferry–Bolivar, what’s your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail Community™?

Please join the conversation at tinyurl.com/2020ATCommunitySurvey

Survey Closes September 18

Figure 27 The Front of a Postcard, Hand-Crafted for Harpers Ferry–Bolivar.
Figure 28 The Front of Postcard, Hand-Crafted for Damascus.

Hot Springs, what's your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail Community™?

Please join the conversation at tinyurl.com/2020ATCommunitySurvey

Survey Closes September 18

Figure 29 The Front of a Postcard, Hand-Crafted for Hot Springs.
Limitations of the Research

This assessment focused on small communities whose municipal boundaries directly intersect the A.T. By excluding the A.T. CommunityTM program’s county and area designations, which do not directly intersect with the Trail, there was ultimately a lack of variation in the sample regarding scale and proximity. A sample that encompassed a broader range of communities, or a larger number of communities, may have yielded different results related to program engagement and sustainable economic development.

Several questions could be explored with a broader sample of communities. How many designated A.T. Communities does the Trail pass through? And what role does proximity to the A.T. play in communities’ capacities to complete annual projects and programming? Furthermore, how does this proximity to the A.T. affect their identities as trail towns? Should these outlying communities even be considered trail towns? What is the average distance of A.T. Communities from one another?
Another set of questions could be asked related to regional variations in participation in the A.T. Community™ program. Why do the State of Virginia and the Virginian region have the most designations? Is it related to the length of the Trail in this state in comparison to the other thirteen? In other words, because Virginia is the state with the longest stretch of A.T., is this why more communities applied to join the network? Or is there an underlying reason related to the Trail’s internal design or the ATC’s involvement? Are there more Trail advocates in Virginia, or do these communities have more capacity to take on such a role? With more research and a larger, more diverse sample of A.T. Communities, these questions could be answered to provide more insight into the qualifications of an A.T. Community™.

Limitations of the Methodology

It was important to gather input from the administrators in the four selected trailside communities. Yet, in-person qualitative interviews with town administrators, managers, and mayors, as well as panners and commission members, were not conducted during site visits in July of 2019. While the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey solicited feedback from locals, business owners, and employees, community stakeholders were overlooked as an important population. Suppose interviews were carried out or a block was added to the instrument’s flow for former and present trail town leaders. In that case, there may be a greater understanding of the ways in which the program impacted each community’s character and functionality. An expanded version of the research might also ask how often the ATC interacts and collaborates with towns and Advisory Committees? How do former mayors and managers who submitted their town’s application to the ATC perceive the A.T. Community™ program today? Would leaders view a rating system and greater involvement from the ATC in the same light as survey participants? How does an A.T. Visitor
Center's development impact a community's level of engagement and economic development?
CHAPTER 3  FOUR DESIGNATED TRAILSIDE COMMUNITIES

Highlights

- Chapter 3 assesses and compares four A.T. Community™ designations by geographic/spatial and community characteristics as well as planning efforts.
- The historical and cultural backgrounds of Monson, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs, as well as their A.T. Community™ profiles, are further analyzed.

Introduction

A small number of case study communities seemed ideal with the projected timeline to conduct fieldwork and analyze collected data. To effectively assess and compare the designations in each of the four A.T. regions (New England, Mid-Atlantic, Virginian, and Southern), Monson, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs were selected. The overall strategy focused on geographic distribution, community character, trail-community relationships, and overall planning and design efforts (See Table 2). Below is a list of criteria that drove the selection process:

Geographic Location

- ATC Region
- Location of the Trail in the Community
- Proximity to Other Outdoor Recreational Resources, such as NPS Units and National Trails
- Proximity to the Nearest Metropolis

Community Profile

- A.T. Community™ Rank
- Date of Approval
- Date of Designation
- Type of Designation
Type of Community
Size of Community
Population
Number of Local Unaffiliated Businesses and Organizations
Number of A.T. Community™ Supporter Businesses and Organizations
Reputation as a Destination for Through-Hikers

Planning, Conservation, + Engagement

Community Plans + Ordinances
Annual A.T. Community™ Project
Environmental Stewardship + Education Efforts
Participation in A.T. Community™ Summits

While counties account for 27% of the network’s communities, this type of designation was not considered for this research. To create a roadmap for the program and ATC’s future, it was important to understand trailside communities at the local level rather than the regional level. How does the Trail connect towns within a region rather than regions connect within a landscape?
### Table 2 A Comparison of the Four Case Study Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPER'S FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location of the Trail in the Community</strong></td>
<td>Passes by a series of lakes and ponds in Town Lake Helen, Dougherty Pond, Spectacle Ponds, Bell Pond, and Lily Pond</td>
<td>Parallel to Shenandoah St. and passes through Lower Harper's Ferry and across the Goodloe Byron Memorial Footbridge</td>
<td>Follows Douglas Drive into the center of Town Along East Laurel Ave. and through Damascus Town Park.</td>
<td>Follows the French Broad River toward Bridge St. and into Town Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximity to Other Outdoor Recreational Resources, such as National Park Service units and National Trails</strong></td>
<td>8.5 miles to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument</td>
<td>Home to Harper's Ferry National Historic Park</td>
<td>Home to the Following National Trails: Crooked Road Music Trail, Daniel Boone Heritage Trail, Iron Mountain Trail, U.S. Bicycle Route 76, Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, and Virginia Creeper Trail</td>
<td>63 miles to Great Smoky Mountains National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximity to the Nearest Large City</strong></td>
<td>13.5 miles to Portland</td>
<td>60 miles to Washington D.C.</td>
<td>140 miles to Knoxville</td>
<td>35 miles to Asheville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.T. Community Rank</strong></td>
<td>3rd Designated</td>
<td>7th Designated</td>
<td>8th Designated</td>
<td>2nd Designated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of Approval</strong></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>March 19th, 2011</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of Designation</strong></td>
<td>July 31st, 2015</td>
<td>May 2nd, 2011</td>
<td>May 15th, 2011</td>
<td>April 24th, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Designation</strong></td>
<td>One Town</td>
<td>Shared between One Corporation and One Town</td>
<td>One Town</td>
<td>One Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Community</strong></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of Community</strong></td>
<td>471 square miles</td>
<td>Harper's Ferry: 61.6 square miles Bolivar: 233.4 square miles</td>
<td>0.87 square miles</td>
<td>9.18 square miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>654</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Walk-In Business</strong></td>
<td>Thirty-Nine</td>
<td>Harper's Ferry: Fourteen Bolivar: Thirty-Six</td>
<td>Twenty</td>
<td>Thirty-Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of AT Community Supporters</strong></td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Harper's Ferry: Fourteen Bolivar: Two</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reputation as a Designation For Thru-Hikers</strong></td>
<td>Known For Its A.T. Visitor Center &amp; Shows Hiker Hostel and as the Beginning/End of 100 Mile Wilderness</td>
<td>Known For Its A.T. Visitor Center &amp; the ATC's Headquarters and as the Most Photographed Place on the Trail</td>
<td>Known as Trail Town U.S.A. &amp; the Friendliest Town on the Trail and For Its Trails Days Festival</td>
<td>Known For Its TrailFest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are some preliminary assessments of the four communities based on the above comparison in Table 2.

Comparison Overview

Monson is likely a ‘dormant’ or inactive A.T. Community™, while Damascus and Hot Springs seem to be conducting business as usual since their projects date way back before the program even existed. In contrast, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar was likely guided directly by the ATC when developing the Flip Flop Festival and ‘Tiger on the Trail’ program with federal partner Harpers Ferry National Historic Park. Thus, this dual community ultimately has an advantage because its home to the ATC.

Geographic Location

Geographic location was an important consideration in choosing each case study town. Thus, the four towns were chosen not only for their positions along the Trail, representing each of the four officially designated A.T. regions but also their locations in relation to the Trail and the nearest large city.

Today the A.T. continues into Damascus and Hot Springs’s town centers, while the trail route passes by local historical, cultural, and geographic landmarks within Monson and Harpers Ferry. Damascus and Harpers Ferry relate in the sense that the Trail intersects with parkland: Damascus on the municipal level (Damascus Town Park) and Harpers Ferry on the federal level (Harpers Ferry National Historic Park).

Based on the major cities defined in MacKaye’s earlier maps of the A.T., Hot Springs is the closest of the four communities to a large metropolis (Asheville). Monson and Damascus are four times further away from a city than Hot Springs and twice the distance of Harpers Ferry-Bolivar to Washington D.C.
Community Profile

Understanding the size, population, and economic composition of the towns is important for analyzing their connections to the A.T.

Monson has the most businesses and organizations, yet only one Supporter business/organization is in town. In contrast, 50% of Harpers Ferry’s, 20% of Damascus’s, and 5% of Bolivar’s total businesses are affiliated with the ATC. Note that Bolivar is the smallest in square mileage but is densely populated with both residents and businesses.

Planning, Conservation, + Engagement

Aspects of planning, local conservation projects, and engagement with the A.T. vary considerably between the towns and offer a glimpse into the wide range of ways the A.T. Communities intersect with the Trail.

Monson seems to be the least active A.T. Community™ of the four selected, based on its lack of projects, engagement efforts, and summit participation, while Harpers Ferry and Bolivar emerge as the towns most involved in this research because of the location of the ATC Headquarters.

In contrast, Damascus’s planning and design efforts don’t go unnoticed. ‘Trail Town U.S.A.,’ therefore seems to be well on its way to being a successful A.T. Community™, especially with its active role in summits and the upcoming development of a new A.T. Visitor Center in its downtown. Parallel to Harpers Ferry, there are opportunities in conservation, environmental stewardship, and education.

Hot Springs, a model for the ATC program, became one of the first approved communities in 2009, designating it as an example for other trailside communities to follow. However, there are no designated Supporters in town, and representatives have only attended one
summit in 2015. Other than TrailFest, which was implemented fifteen years before the program’s establishment, Hot Springs and its Advisory Committee have not engaged in new projects or initiatives within the past decade.

![Map of Four Selected Communities Along the Appalachian Trail](image)

**Figure 31** The Case Study Communities Along the A.T., Developed in QGIS (Foster 2021; Robinson 2020).

Figure 31 displays the four trailside communities and the different stretches of the Trail from one end to another that they represent.
Significance of the Four Selected A.T. Gateway Communities

Monson, Maine

Monson Marks the Beginning/End of the 100-Mile Wilderness Section of the A.T.

Figure 32 Photographs from Left to Right: Original A.T. Signage at the Monson General Store, Lake Hebron, Appalachian Trail Visitor Center & Monson Historical Society, and Hiram the Hiker’s Doppelgänger at Shaw’s Hiker Hostel (Schottanes 2019).

Historical + Cultural Background

Incorporated in February of 1822, Monson, Maine, held its first community meeting to establish a government administration the following April (Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. & Museum 2021) (Monson Historical Society 2021a). At this time, there were only ninety residents.

Fifty years later, the town transformed into a booming hub for slate-quarrying after locals discovered the resource in 1870. Following the arrival of new and immigrant workers, the population continued to increase as the Monson Railroad began operations in 1883, running black slate, postage, and even passengers to nearby Monson Junction (See Figure 33) (Monson, Maine 2021). The Monson #3 steam locomotive replaced the previous motive powerhouse in 1913 and operated until 1943 (Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. & Museum 2021). Monson #4, parallel to #3, was built in 1918. While the narrow gauge line in
Monson was demolished in 1943, #4 was decommissioned in 2015, almost 100 years later after its development. From the Maine Slate Company to the Sheldon Slate Company, formerly Portland-Monson Slate Company, mining and transportation efforts helped the community built a name for itself in the industry.

**Figure 33** A Historical Image of Monson Station (Monson Historical Society 2021b).

The Trail quickly became integrated into the community’s dynamics as the original route intersected with Monson’s core downtown. Modifications to the route shifted its location away from the center and toward the western part of town.

Today Monson marks the beginning or end of the 100-Mile Wilderness section of the A.T. and emerges as the last town before hikers reach Mount Katahdin’s peak. However, it wasn’t until the mid-1970s that foot traffic increased significantly, making Shaw’s Hiker Hostel one of the most visited lodging locations along the Trail by through- and section-hikers to date.
A.T. Community™ Profile

In the fall of 2011, Former Town Manager, Julie Anderson, described why Monson should be selected as an A.T. Community™ and presented letters from the community in support. Anderson explained that the “Appalachian Trail is a big part of our [The Town’s] economics” and how the capitalization of local natural and recreation resources would benefit the greater community.

Shaw’s Hiker Hostel described, “The hiker population is Monson’s business” and how the business “exists solely because of hiker traffic through Monson... the last town before the wilderness.” Furthermore, one account explained how 40% of their business in the spring, summer, and early autumn “come from the hiker community. Another said to service approximately “500-700 hikers per season.”

Monson, the first and “last resupplying leg” for through-hikers, became the first certified A.T. Community™ in the State of Maine and the twenty-third trail wide during the summer of 2012. The Town’s only A.T. Community™ partner to date is the Monson General Store.

Figure 34 Monson’s Community Profile (Data from the ATC and U.S. Census Bureau, Imagery from U.S. Department of Agriculture 2018 and Robinson 2020, Cartography by J. Schottanes).
Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, West Virginia

The Network's Only Dual A.T. Community

Figure 35 Photographs Left to Right: Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Potomac River, Lewis Anthony Library, Bolivar Heights (Schottanes 2019).

Historical + Cultural Background

In December of 1825, Bolivar became an official town named in honor of “South American freedom fighter Simon Bolivar” (Bolivar, WV 2021). Most of its community members were farmers pre-Civil War; however, many left as Bolivar Heights transformed into a burning battlefield. After the War, textile and paper mills emerged while farming and merchant trades returned. World War I, specifically, boosted its local economy as the town manufactured “leather and harnesses for the calvary” (Bolivar, WV 2021). Bolivar’s population has continued to grow steadily since wartime efforts.

The town, Shenandoah Falls at Mr. Harper's Ferry or Shenandoah Falls, was created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1763 after Robert Harper began operating “a ferry across the Potomac River in 1761” (Corporation of Harpers Ferry 2021). In 1851, the town became the Corporation of Harpers Ferry; however, it became a casualty of the Civil War parallel to Bolivar. When Storer College, a historically black institution, opened on Camp Hill in 1867, nineteen students enrolled (Roy 2013). Then, as the campus expanded, more students
arrived. Eventually, most of the community became a part of the NPS’ Harpers Ferry National Historic Park in 1944.

Today Storer College is home to the NPS’ Harpers Ferry Center for media services and the Stephen T. Mather Training Center. Close by is the Headquarters and Visitor Center in the Harpers Ferry’s Historic District. Traditionally, ATC employees photograph hikers in front of the building with a polaroid camera to mark their final journey’s halfway point. However, this may also be the starting point for those who choose to ‘flip-flop’ along the Trail to avoid foot traffic and contribute to conservation efforts. The ATC has continued to maintain and add to its inventory of hiker photographs and their trail names since 1979 (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2011).

A.T. Community™ Profile

Community representative, Joe Anderson, explained in Harpers Ferry-Bolivar’s 2011 A.T. Community™ Application that “a working relationship exists and is developing between the” ATC, NPS, and towns to highlight local opportunities on the Trail and address hiker needs. The primary goal of this designation was to “increase awareness of and interest in trail usage, trail stewardship, and efforts focused on” their improvements.

This designation is incredibly unique today because of the alliance between the two adjacent towns, Bolivar and Harpers Ferry. Because the communities share the title, sixteen local businesses and organizations currently participate in the Supporter program: fourteen from Harpers Ferry and two from Bolivar.
Harpers Ferry is Home to the ATC Headquarters

Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

Approved in 2011 and Designated as an A.T. Community™ on May 2, 2011

Population of 233

Unaffiliated Businesses 14

A.T. Community™ Supporters 14

A Total Area of 0.6 Square Miles

Figure 36 Harpers Ferry’s Community Profile (Data from the ATC and U.S. Census Bureau, Imagery from U.S. Department of Agriculture 2018 and Robinson 2020, Cartography by J. Schottanes).

Bolivar, West Virginia

Approved in 2011 and Designated as an A.T. Community™ on May 2, 2011

Population of 1,234

Unaffiliated Businesses 36

A.T. Community™ Supporters 2

A Total Area of 0.43 Square Miles (275 Acres)

Figure 37 Bolivar’s Community Profile (Data from the ATC and U.S. Census Bureau, Imagery from U.S. Department of Agriculture 2018 and Robinson 2020, Cartography by J. Schottanes).
Historic + Cultural Background

Damascus’s roots in trailblazing have existed since the early 1760s. Daniel Boone’s path led to the footing of the ‘Mock’s [Grist] Mill’ community, which later became Damascus in 1886. Confederate Brigadier General John D. Imboden intended on manufacturing steel in the town but then turned to the timber industry due to a lack of iron deposits (Town of Damascus 2021). In 1887, rail lines began extending to the Damascus Depot for the commercial freight of lumber. In 1906, the Hassinger Lumber Company expanded into the Damascus area from Pennsylvania, bringing over four hundred employees within its first decade.

After the boom, the USFS was established, and the resource was now being protected instead of exploited. More workers came to Damascus, drafted by the CCC in the 1930s to assist with park planning. However, after the completion of the Trail, among other
outdoor recreation resources, others relocated to the town and entered the factory workforce during wartime.

Earl Schaeffer, the A.T.’s first recognized through-hiker, recalled reaching Damascus in his 1948 journal and described it as a “very nice town, surrounded by mtns.” (Shaffer 1948). Damascus has remained a small, rural community but has added to its trail collection since then. The A.T., Crooked Road Music Trail, Daniel Boone Heritage Trail, Iron Mountain Trail, U.S. Bicycle Route 76, Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, and Virginia Creeper Trail cross paths within its boundaries. Damascus, therefore, branded itself as ‘Trail Town USA,’ and trail users nicknamed it as the ‘Friendliest Town on the Trail’ (Town of Damascus 2021).

A.T. Community™ Profile

Former Mayor, Jack McCrady, submitted Damascus’s A.T. Community™ application to the ATC on December 6th, 2010, with the hope of commemorating the town’s longstanding relationship with the A.T through this designation on the upcoming 25th anniversary of Trail Days. McCrady further addresses how ecotourism “brought the town out of the economic slump of the late 1980s.” The success of the first Trail Days celebration in May of 1986 inspired Damascus to host another in 1987 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Trail’s completion. Today, the three-day festival involves a hiker parade, exhibits and vendors, both local and from across the nation, live music and an auction, group hiking and biking, and, lastly, a community and hiker-wide camping event in the town designated open space known as ‘Tent City.’ It’s “huge…for this town and especially crucial to its economy” annually as it attracts thousands of visitors and hikers (Epps and News Channel 11 2020). According to the town’s 2020-2021 Budget Amendment Summary, Trail Days sources $60,000 for Damascus (Town of Damascus 2020).
Today the town has five designated ATC business partnerships: Briar Patch Antiques, Damascus Branch Public Library, Eula’s Hair Styling, Hikers Inn, and Mt. Rogers Outfitters (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021e).

Figure 39 Damascus’s Community Profile (Data from the ATC and U.S. Census Bureau, Imagery from U.S. Department of Agriculture 2018 and Robinson 2020, Cartography by J. Schottanes).
Hot Springs, North Carolina

Hot Springs Was a Model A.T. Community™ in 2006

Figure 40 Photographs from Left to Right: A.T. Marker in Town Center, Spring Creek, Hot Springs Welcome Center, North-East Entrance into Hot Springs (Schottanes 2019).

Historical + Cultural Background

Hot Springs, formerly known as Warm Springs, was named for its mineral-rich waters. William Neilson purchased the resource in 1791 and began accommodating tourists who traveled to bathe in the springs over 100 degrees in temperature in hopes to benefit from its perceived ‘healing powers’ (Hot Springs, NC Welcome Center & Tourism Association 2021a). James Patton, then, became its new owner in 1831 and built the Warm Springs Hotel to attract more visitors and host grand events. With a change in ownership once again in 1862, the development of a rail line in 1882, and the establishment of the Mountain Park Hotel in 1886, Warm Springs prospered, and even more, after the finding of an even hotter spring, which designated a new town identity. For thirty years, the community profited from its water resources and resort industries.

Unfortunately, World War I and the organization of an internment camp in Hot Springs impacted Hot Springs’s economy as well as its identity as a destination (Hot Springs, NC Welcome Center & Tourism Association 2021a). Nearly forgotten, the A.T. gave the
community a new purpose, which caused its population to soar until 1940. Today the Trail passes through its center and over the French Broad River.

Hot Springs, now recognized gateway community to the City of Asheville and Great Smoky National Park, hosted its first ‘TrailFest’ to celebrate the outdoors in April 1995 (Hot Springs, NC Welcome Center & Tourism Association 2021b).

A.T. Community™ Profile

The ATC selected Hot Springs as one of the model communities for the primitive A.T. Community™ program in 2006 (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021f). A survey instrument was distributed to community members during the annual TrailFest celebration in the spring and the Bluff Mountain Festival in the summer. Of the 124 total participants, 48% informed the ATC that the A.T.’s most positive impact on Hot Springs was related to economic development, stemming from tourism (Peppel 2007). At this time, the initiative to create a trail town designation program was not so much on the community’s radar. Rather, locals considered the ATC’s active role in land-use and recreation planning most important, based on November 2006 results.

Because of its role early on with the initiative, Hot Springs, by default, became the second A.T. Community™ in the program in 2010. Nowadays, volunteers at the Welcome Center greet through-hikers and point them in the direction of the Public Library, a designation for safe gear storage and information on nearby amenities.

There are currently no Supporters in Hot Springs.
Figure 41 Hot Springs’s Community Profile (Data from the ATC and U.S. Census Bureau, Imagery from U.S. Department of Agriculture 2018 and Robinson 2020, Cartography by J. Schottanes).
CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS

Highlights

- Chapter 4 analyzes the characteristics of the targeted participants in this research (residents, employees, and business owners) as well as the findings from the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey.

- From July 13th to September 25th, 2019, 132 responses were collected, and 93 participants of the total sample size finished the Qualtrics® survey.

- The block ‘Revisioning the A.T. Community™ Program’ solicited open-ended responses to uncover the answer to the research question, ‘How do the A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs achieve aspects of MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning?’

Introduction

In total, the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey comprised of 30 questions: seven open-ended, thirteen close-ended, and ten semi-closed-ended. Recorded responses were categorized by community, connection (relationship to community), and business/organization affiliation (affiliated Supporter vs. local unaffiliated), resulting in 44 potential flows. The base consisted of three questions to determine which community the participant was connected to (Monson, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Damascus, or Hot Springs) and their role(s) (resident, employee, business/organization owner). The block for residents presented two questions designed to build a correlation between residency length and perception, while the block for employees asks only one question to grasp why professionals were drawn to the rural community.

In contrast, the survey displayed five questions to business/organization owners because of the importance of sustainable economic development to this research and the underlying question, ‘How does the A.T. boost the business climate of these rural trailside towns?’ The participants, then, were prompted to respond to a set of questions based on their businesses or organizations’ relationship to the ATC. Overall awareness of the Supporter program was a significant focus in the block intended for local undesignated
establishments, while the interdependence between the ATC and Supporters emerged as a theme in the Supporter block, which entailed one open-, two closed-, and three semi-closed-ended questions.

All respondents were tasked with evaluating the A.T. Community™ program, sharing their long-term vision for their town, and suggesting any additional comments at the end of the survey. This block was most important to the thesis research for it’s a facilitator for revisioning the ATC programs and assessing the success of MacKaye’s A.T. movement 100 years later. Of the ten questions, there were five open-, four closed-, and one semi-close-ended.

Below are the results of the close- and semi-close-ended questions. Each bar graph displays the number of total responses for each multiple-choice.

Base of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey

What’s your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Community™? Jessica Schottanes, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), want to know how you support your community’s trailside designation! This 15-minute survey will echo the 2010 mission of the A.T. Community™ program and gather input on the program’s next steps. How can the ATC and the program better support your town’s unique character and assist with economic development? This survey is confidential and will not collect identifying information about specific individuals, businesses, or organizations. Participants should not disclose their identity or business name if they do not wish to have it known. Schottanes will use responses from the 2020 Appalachian Trail Community™ Survey in her Master’s Thesis in Geography that assesses whether the program achieves Benton MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning. All survey results will be shared with the ATC for use in future planning initiatives. Thank you for your participation.
Residents

How many years have you lived in (A.T. Community™)?

- Born and Raised: 3
- 0-2 Years: 12
- 3-6 Years: 12
- 7-9 Years: 8
- Over 10 Years, But Not Originally From: 3
- Other: 4

Why did you move to (A.T. Community™)? Select All that Apply

- Ideal Geographic Location: 30
- Proximity to My Home: 5
- Proximity to the AT & Other Recreational Amenities: 32
- Unique Character: 45
- Experience While Thru-Hiking the AT: 4
- Other: 28
Employees

Why did you choose to work in (A.T. Community™)? Select All That Apply

- Ideal Geographic Location: 18
- Proximity to My Home: 16
- Proximity to the A.T. + Other Recreational Amenities: 2.0
- Unique Character: 2.4
- Experience While Thru-Hiking the A.T.: 6
- Other: 15

Business Owners

How would you classify your business or organization in (A.T. Community™)?

- Accommodation Service: 10
- Outdoor Adventure + Recreation Service: 7
- Arts + Entertainment Service: 1
- Educational Facility: 1
- Professional Service: 1
- Restaurant, Cafe, Farm Stand, or Bar: 4
- Retail Store: 4
- Other: 10

Why did you choose to operate a business in (A.T. Community™)? Select All That Apply

- Ideal Customer Base: 17
- Ideal Geographic Location: 19
- Interaction with A.T. Hikers: 9
- Proximity to My Home: 17
- Proximity to the A.T. + Other Recreational Amenities: 15
- Unique Character: 2.0
- Experience While Thru-Hiking the A.T.: 6
- Other: 6
Do you hire additional employees during the peak trail season?

- Yes: 8
- Sometimes: 9
- No: 21

Approximately what percentage of your customer base are A.T. hikers?

- 100: 1
- 75: 2
- 50: 12
- 25: 1
- 0: 5

Is your business or organization a recognized A.T. Community™ Supporter through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC)?

- Yes: 9
- No: 29

How does your business or organization support the Appalachian Trail, ATC, local maintenance club, and/or A.T. Community™? Select All That Apply

- Offer Discounts to Trail Users: 4
- Provide Long-term Shuttle Services: 3
- Educate Tourists about the A.T.: 3
- Support + Participate in the ATC Lodging Give Back Program: 2
- Provide Hikers with Free Internet + Access to Educational Resources: 2
- Promote Local Maintenance Organizations, Hiking Clubs, + Environmental Stewardship Programs: 4
- Provide Mail Drop Services for Thru-Hikers: 4
- Organize, Contribute, or Participate in Community Events or Initiatives: 7
- Other: 3
Unaffiliated Businesses

Are you aware of the A.T. Community™ Supporter program?

Yes: 6
No: 23

A.T. Community™ Supporters

How long has your business or organization been partnered with the ATC program?

0 - 3 years: 4
4 - 7 years: 5
8 - 10 years: 5

Does your A.T. Community™ have an Advisory Committee?

Yes: 4
No: 3
I Don't Know: 2

How often does your business or organization interact or collaborate with (A.T. Community™)’s A.T. Community™ Advisory Committee?

Daily: 4
Weekly: 4
Monthly: 4
Yearly: 4
Other: 4
I Don't Know: 1
Revisioning the A.T. Community™ Program

Which of the following A.T. Community™ Supporter benefits have significantly contributed to the growth and vitality of your business or organization? Select All That Apply

- National Recognition on the ATC’s Website, Official Blog + Social Media
- National Recognition in A.T. Journeys
- Regional Recognition in the ATC’s Online Newsletters
- Supporter Storefront Decal
- ATC Maps and Brochures for Customers + Visitors
- Other
- No Significant Contribution

Revisioning the A.T. Community™ Program

Since A.T. Community™ became an A.T. Community™, what changes in conservation practices have you seen? Select All That Apply

- Adjust Zoning to Protect Wetlands + Floodplains
- Creation of Farmers Market
- Development of Local School Programs in Environmental Education
- Development of Trail Resources in the Community Excluding the A.T.
- Implement Agricultural or Conservation Restrictions on Private Land
- Protection of Agricultural Land
- Protection of Forests
- Protection of Watersheds
- Purchase of Land for Open Space
- Other
- None

Revisioning the A.T. Community™ Program

Has A.T. Community™’s designation as an A.T. Community™ positively contributed to economic development?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- I Don’t Know

68
Below is a model rating system for the A.T. Community™ program aimed to encourage designated trailside communities to network with one another on a regional scale, embrace their roles as guardians of the A.T., and establish the sustainable economic development initiatives set forth by Benton MacKaye in his 1921 proposal for the extensive footpath.
Closed + Semi-Closed Questions

Of the 90 participants who consented to the study and completed 100% of the survey, only 2 accessed the instrument via a QR Code from social media or a delivered postcard. Harpers Ferry and Bolivar participants accounted for 44% of this total sample size (n= 90). 49% of participants were residents of one of the four selected case study communities, and 42% are long-term locals (over ten years). 51% of people were connected to their community by employment: 26% local business/organization owners and 26% employees.

Table 3 visualizes the survey responses collected in each of the four case studies, Monson, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs, further and creates a more detailed account of community profiles and perspectives. While this methodology focused on gathering insight into if and/or how the ATC’s Supporter program impacts the broader trailside business climate, the Supporters sample within each designation is insufficient to make comparisons.
Table 3 A Comparison of Survey Data from the Four Selected Communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your relationship to (A.T. Community™)? Select All That Apply</th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPERS FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>6/19</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Owner</td>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4/40</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1/40</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident + Business Owner</td>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2/40</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident + Employee</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4/40</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Owner + Employee</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/40</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident + Business Owner + Employee</td>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7/40</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Residents: How many years have you lived in (A.T. Community™)?

| Born and Raised | 0/8 | 0% | 0/94 | 0% | 2/14 | 14% | 1/6 | 16% |
| 0-2 Years | 1/8 | 13% | 3/94 | 3% | 1/14 | 7% | 4/6 | 25% |
| 3-6 Years | 0/8 | 0% | 8/94 | 2% | 4/14 | 2.9% | 1/6 | 6% |
| 7-9 Years | 0/8 | 0% | 9/94 | 9% | 5/14 | 36% | 1/6 | 19% |
| Over 10 Years, But Not Originally From | 5/8 | 63% | 17/94 | 50% | 2/14 | 14% | 6/6 | 30% |
| Other | 2/8 | 25% | 1/94 | 3% | 0/14 | 0% | 1/6 | 6% |

Residents: Why did you move to (A.T. Community™)? Select All That Apply

| Ideal Geographic Location | 1/8 | 13% | 2/94 | 2% | 2/14 | 14% | 1/6 | 16% |
| Proximity to My Home | 1/8 | 13% | 9/94 | 9% | 1/14 | 7% | 0/6 | 0% |
| Proximity to the A.T. + Other Recreational Amenities | 1/8 | 13% | 2/94 | 2% | 2/14 | 14% | 1/6 | 16% |
| Unique Character | 3/8 | 38% | 22/94 | 2.2% | 10/14 | 70% | 1/6 | 69% |
| Experience While Through-Hiking the A.T. | 0/8 | 0% | 2/94 | 2% | 1/14 | 7% | 1/6 | 6% |
| Other | 6/8 | 63% | 14/94 | 14% | 4/14 | 2.9% | 5/6 | 90% |
### 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey Comparison Continued

**Employees: Why did you choose to work in (A.T. Community™)? Select All That Apply**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal Geographic Location</th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPER FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0/9 0%</td>
<td>4/19 27%</td>
<td>0/9 0%</td>
<td>8/18 78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to My Home</td>
<td>1/9 33%</td>
<td>5/19 33%</td>
<td>1/9 33%</td>
<td>7/10 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to the A.T. + Other Recreational Amenities</td>
<td>1/9 33%</td>
<td>6/19 40%</td>
<td>0/9 0%</td>
<td>7/10 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique Character</td>
<td>1/9 33%</td>
<td>5/19 47%</td>
<td>7/9 76%</td>
<td>9/10 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience While Through Hiking the A.T.</td>
<td>0/9 0%</td>
<td>3/19 20%</td>
<td>1/9 10%</td>
<td>2/10 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2/9 67%</td>
<td>8/19 53%</td>
<td>4/9 36%</td>
<td>1/11 9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Business Owners: How would you classify your business or organization in (A.T. Community™)?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Service</th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPER FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0/6 0%</td>
<td>2/11 18%</td>
<td>5/12 42%</td>
<td>4/9 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Adventure + Recreation Service</td>
<td>0/6 0%</td>
<td>1/11 9%</td>
<td>0/12 0%</td>
<td>4/9 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts + Entertainment Service</td>
<td>1/6 17%</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>0/12 0%</td>
<td>0/9 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Facility</td>
<td>0/6 0%</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>0/12 0%</td>
<td>1/9 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Service</td>
<td>0/6 0%</td>
<td>1/11 9%</td>
<td>0/12 0%</td>
<td>0/9 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant, Cafe, Farm Stand, or Bar</td>
<td>3/6 33%</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>1/12 8%</td>
<td>1/9 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Store</td>
<td>0/6 0%</td>
<td>1/11 9%</td>
<td>2/12 17%</td>
<td>1/9 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0/6 0%</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>1/12 8%</td>
<td>0/9 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey Comparison Continued

Business Owners: Why did you choose to operate a business in (A.T. Community™)? Select All That Apply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPER'S FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Customer Base</td>
<td>6/14</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>6/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Geographic Location</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>7/1</td>
<td>7/12</td>
<td>5/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with A.T. Hikers</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>1/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to My Home</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>7/1</td>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>6/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to the A.T. + Other Recreational Amenities</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>6/12</td>
<td>5/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique Character</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>5/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience While Through-Hiking the A.T.</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>0/12</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business Owners: Do you hire additional employees during the peak trail season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPER'S FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>3/12</td>
<td>1/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>4/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>6/12</td>
<td>7/12</td>
<td>4/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business Owners: Approximately what percentage of your customer base are A.T. hikers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPER'S FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>0/12</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>0/12</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>0/12</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>5/11</td>
<td>8/12</td>
<td>4/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>5/11</td>
<td>8/12</td>
<td>4/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don't Know</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>0/12</td>
<td>1/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business Owners: Is your business or organization a recognized A.T. Community™ Supporter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPER'S FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>5/11</td>
<td>3/12</td>
<td>2/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6/11</td>
<td>7/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unaffiliated Business: Are you aware of the A.T. Community™ Supporter program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MONSON, ME</th>
<th>HARPER'S FERRY, BOLIVAR, WV</th>
<th>DAMASCUS, VA</th>
<th>HOT SPRINGS, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>1/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6/10</td>
<td>6/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporter Business: How long has your business or organization been partnered with the ATC program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/5</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 Years</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporter Business: Does your ATC Community™ have an Advisory Committee?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporter Business: How often does your business interact/collaborate with its Advisory Committee?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey Comparison Continued

Supporter Business: How does your business support the A.T., ATC, local maintenance club, and/or A.T. Community™? Select All That Apply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offer Discounts to Trail Users</th>
<th>0/0</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>0/15</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>0/2</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>0/2</th>
<th>0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide Long-term Shuttle Services</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate Tourists about the A.T.</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Participate in the ATC Lodging give Back Program</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Hikers with Free Internet + Access to Educational Resources</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote Local Maintenance Organizations, Hiking Clubs, + Environmental Stewardship Programs</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Mail Drop Services for Through-Hikers</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize, Contribute, or Participate in A.T. Community Events or Initiatives</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supporter Business: Which Supporter benefits have significantly contributed to the growth + vitality of your business? Select All That Apply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Recognition on the ATC’s Website, Official Blog, + Social Media</th>
<th>0/0</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>0/15</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>0/2</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>0/2</th>
<th>0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Recognition in A.T. Journeys</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Recognition in the ATC’s Online Newsletters</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporter Storefront Recall</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC Maps and Brochures For Customers + Visitors</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Significant Contribution</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey Comparison Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>Monson, ME</th>
<th>Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, WV</th>
<th>Damascus, VA</th>
<th>Hot Springs, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjust Zoning to Protect Wetlands + Floodplains</td>
<td>1/8 9%</td>
<td>2/40 5%</td>
<td>1/9 5%</td>
<td>0/10 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Farmers Market</td>
<td>1/8 9%</td>
<td>6/40 15%</td>
<td>3/19 10%</td>
<td>1/20 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Local School Programs in Environmental Education</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>7/40 18%</td>
<td>0/19 0%</td>
<td>5/10 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Trail Resources in the Community Excluding the A.T.</td>
<td>2/1 15%</td>
<td>14/40 35%</td>
<td>8/19 42%</td>
<td>5/10 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement Agricultural or Conservation Restrictions on Private Land</td>
<td>1/8 9%</td>
<td>1/40 3%</td>
<td>0/19 0%</td>
<td>0/10 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Agricultural Land</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>9/40 23%</td>
<td>0/19 0%</td>
<td>1/30 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Forests</td>
<td>2/1 15%</td>
<td>6/40 15%</td>
<td>1/19 5%</td>
<td>6/10 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Watersheds</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>5/40 13%</td>
<td>1/19 5%</td>
<td>4/20 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of Land for Open Space</td>
<td>2/1 15%</td>
<td>4/40 10%</td>
<td>0/19 0%</td>
<td>0/10 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1/8 9%</td>
<td>1/40 3%</td>
<td>1/19 5%</td>
<td>1/30 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2/11 15%</td>
<td>4/40 10%</td>
<td>4/19 21%</td>
<td>9/10 75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Has (A.T. Community™)'s designation as an A.T. Community positively contributed to economic development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Monson, ME</th>
<th>Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, WV</th>
<th>Damascus, VA</th>
<th>Hot Springs, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7/10 64%</td>
<td>14/40 35%</td>
<td>9/19 26%</td>
<td>7/10 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>11/40 28%</td>
<td>5/19 26%</td>
<td>6/10 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>0/40 0%</td>
<td>0/19 0%</td>
<td>1/10 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don't Know</td>
<td>9/11 27%</td>
<td>97/40 38%</td>
<td>97/19 26%</td>
<td>6/10 30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you view the A.T. Community™ program as a threat to (A.T. Community™)'s unique character?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Monson, ME</th>
<th>Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, WV</th>
<th>Damascus, VA</th>
<th>Hot Springs, NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0/11 0%</td>
<td>9/40 23%</td>
<td>8/19 26%</td>
<td>2/20 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>1/11 9%</td>
<td>1/40 3%</td>
<td>0/19 0%</td>
<td>1/20 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10/11 91%</td>
<td>36/40 90%</td>
<td>18/19 53%</td>
<td>15/10 75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview

Since their A.T. Community™ designations, the most apparent changes in conservation practices in Harpers Ferry-Bolivar and Damascus were related to the development of trail resources. In addition to this transformation, Hot Springs participants saw an increase in forest protection and the development of environmental education programs in its local school system. Among its distributed responses, 18% of Monson’s sample saw no changes. However, Monson did see a positive change in its economic development. In contrast, participants from Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs were ultimately unsure of the program’s economic impacts, yet some thought perhaps. All four communities stated that they would benefit if the ATC became more involved in events and if a rating system was initiated. Ultimately, participants do not view this program as a threat to their community. Most likely, this is contributed to a greater lack of awareness, collaboration, and physical change.
The quantitative data below, derived from the closed and semi-closed questions, delineates the demographic and community profiles of Damascus, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Hot Springs, and Monson further.

**Monson**

The majority of the Monson sample (n=11) were long-term residents who lived in town for over ten years but were not originally from the community. 45% worked in town, while 55% specifically owned a local business or organization. 50% claimed that 0% of their customer base was hikers, while 33% were ultimately unsure. 67% of business and organization owners do not hire additional employees during the peak trail season. There were no Supporters in this sample, and all business/organization owners did not know about the Supporter program.

64% stated that the designation program positively contributed to local economic development. However, most respondents said that Monson would benefit from greater ATC involvement and a rating system.

**Harpers Ferry-Bolivar**

53% of the forty-count sample from Harpers Ferry and Bolivar were strictly residents and had no other connections to the shared community. 18% lived, worked, and owned a business/organization, while 10% were only employees. Participants chose to operate a business because they considered Harpers Ferry-Bolivar to have an ideal customer base and geographic location close to home.

The seasonality of hiking did not influence 55% of business/organization owners to hire more help. 91% claimed that hikers only represented 0-25% of total patrons. Furthermore, 55% of the business/organization participants were not Supporters. Yet, half of this group were
aware of the program that designates local companies, which is significantly more than
the unaffiliated business populations in the three other selected communities. 60% of
Supporter businesses were not considerably affected by the program. Tourism from the
Harpers Ferry National Historic Park seems to contribute more to local businesses' growth
and vitality, both affiliated and unaffiliated with the ATC.

Damascus

42% of the total nineteen participants from Damascus lived and worked in the town as well
as owned a local business. 32% surveyed only lived in town, while 21% exclusively owned
and operated a local business or organization. 17% of participants owned Supporter
businesses or organizations partnered with the ATC for eight to ten years. Of the 83% of
respondents with unaffiliated businesses, 80% were unaware of the Supporter program.
Most moved to Damascus and chose to operate a business in town because of its unique
character.

Hot Springs

20 Hot Springs community members participated in the survey. Of the 80% resident base,
38% also worked and owned a local business in town. 69% moved to Hot Springs because
of its unique character, while 56% considered its geographic location ideal. 63% are long-
term residents, while 25% have only recently relocated to Hot Springs in the past zero to
two years.

20% either were connected town by employment. Most chose to establish and operate a
business in town due to proximity to home and ideal customer base. 67% of owners
classified their business/organization as an accommodation or outdoor adventure and
recreation service. Only 11% hire additional workers during the peak trail season due to the low percentage of hiker patrons (0-25%).

22% of local business/organization owners identified as A.T. Community™ Supporters. 86% of the local businesses and organizations unaffiliated with the ATC said to be unaware of the Supporter program.

Open-Ended Questions
Unlike the close- and semi-close-ended questions, participants of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey were not required to respond to the seven open-ended prompts. For this analysis, all 132 recorded responses were taken into account, both in progress and finished.

Unaffiliated Businesses

While 79% of local business owners were ultimately unaware of the Supporter program, one perceived it to be exclusive to only A.T. hiker associations. Another participant suggested that the ‘benefits’ were not reciprocated with the amount of time dedicated to supporting the ATC, clubs, and hikers. Therefore, businesses’ lack of knowledge and understanding of the program and incentive seem to explain low participation numbers.
A.T. Community™ Supporters

How has the A.T. Community™ Supporter program impacted your business or organization?

One of the five total participants who answered the above question realized that their business was not a certified Supporter after reviewing some of the questions in this block. Another explained how the organization and its local Friends group benefited “tremendously from a long-term working relationship” with the ATC, especially when addressing the organization of events and funding projects. 24% of businesses/organizations owners identified as Supporters in this study, and only half chose to explain the program’s effect on their company. Most likely, the Supporter program did not affect the routines and patrons, both regular and seasonal, of the affiliated businesses. This population is only 10% of the survey’s total sample size, which also explains the poor responses.

Revisioning the A.T. Community™ Program

How has (A.T. Community™)’s designation as an A.T. Community™ positively contributed to economic development?

37% of participants thought their community’s designation positively contributed to its town’s business climate/economic development. 58% were unsure of the financial benefits connected to the ATC’s program: 32% responded ‘I Don’t Know’ and 26% chose ‘Maybe.’ Twenty-seven people further explained how the program improved or increased the economic growth of their A.T. Community™. One reflected how “hikers and tourists see
the designation as recognition that this community supports visitors” and further suggested that progress occurs when community members embrace the designation. A.T. Community™ banners and Supporter decals welcome hikers and visitors to the town and are the community’s way of respecting and thanking them for their business. Others pointed toward the ATC’s conscious effort to enhance ecosystem services as well as resources for through-, section, and day-hikers. A Monson resident put in plain words that “anything associated with the A.T is inherently positive for growth,” and a Harpers Ferry-Bolivar local considered the community’s ‘Flip Flop Festival’ celebrating outdoor recreation and promoting flip-flop through-hikes as a great catalyst for economic development. Overall, survey respondents perceive the designation as a way to reach a national audience, increase the customer base of these small-town businesses, and encourage visitors to return and explore a different part of the community, unique to its history and culture and separate from the Trail. They explain how the communities along the A.T. are the transient homes of the backpackers and peak baggers and the families of those who choose to trek the Trail.

What are the pros and cons of the model A.T. Community™ rating system?

Forty-nine respondents evaluated the infographic for the model A.T. Community™ rating system. Below is a list of positive feedback regarding the system’s concept and overall structure:

- “Community involvement is always welcomed, and this system sets some goals for the ATC and community.”
- “…sometimes a reward system works! Why not?”
It’s an “opportunity for a community to be recognized for successful efforts.”

- It “establishes a pathway for continued growth and development” and could “keep local creative juices flowing and people engaged.

- It revolves “around creating a positive community image and inclusion.”

- The rating system doesn’t restrict creativity or push for “uniformity across all trail communities.”

- This would naturally foster “a symbiotic relationship” between the ATC and community members.

Here are some constructive comments toward the model rating system:

- “This looks like something that someone who sits at a desk all day came up with to justify their paycheck.”

- “There’s some danger of detracting from the trail experience by packaging or branding the A.T.”

- “I really do not think the ATC has any idea what will benefit Damascus until the ATC has put their boots on the ground with those of us who are promoting the ATC. We will just have to figure it out as we go.”

- “Small town budgets may not have the flexibility or funding to do required activities.”

- “It appears to be a bit of a cookie-cutter approach,” and I’m unsure “if it is flexible enough to adequately address the real differences between varied trail town realities.”

- “It would be difficult for some to accept because it places so much emphasis on the AT, and there are other wonderful reasons to visit Monson.”
“It would need buy-in from the town government and residents and people willing to step forward and spearhead — organize, fund, evangelize — programs that support the Trail.”

“It seems like the kind of program that the ATC has a history of internalizing and never actualizing.”

Many participants required more context on the program itself to respond to this question. While some focused more on the infographic’s design and the labels for the stages (See Figure), others paid attention to the system’s broader mission. Overall, community members expressed how this mock system may give locals and leaders an incentive to become more engaged. However, to create a more accessible, inclusive, and equitable system that provokes a positive change within an A.T. Community™, it seems that the rating needs to be driven by the ecological, economic, and social goals and accomplishments of program participants. The number of Supporters within a community seems arbitrary, and tourists and hikers should not be at the heart of the system.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the A.T. Community™ program?

Of the forty-six respondents, 39% explained that they were unaware of the program and unable to answer due to a lack of knowledge. One person even claimed that this was the first time they’ve heard of an A.T. Community™. In contrast, the 61% familiar with the program initiative discussed its strengths and weaknesses.

Here are some perceived strengths:
The program gives “positive attention to a beautiful place with a wonderful historic trail connecting us to the epitome of hiking in the outdoors.”

“It has brought together a working committee with an eye on the trail and outdoor-related economic development.”

It not only promotes a sense of community locally, but it connects communities with other A.T. Communities

Below is a list of concerns and observed weaknesses:

“I don’t see what it adds for residents.”

“I’d guess that most residents are not even aware of this program.”

It’s “almost entirely a volunteer process.”

As the A.T. Community™ program enters a new decade, what is your long-term vision for (A.T. Community™) as a designated A.T. Community™?

“A small town does I’m not sure that I have one in view of the current pandemic, and the check that it has created.

I’d like my community to remain small, yet inviting

Fifty participants responded to the above question. Here are some of their visions:

“I really would like to see more programs — regularly occurring and well-publicized ones— in town that invite both locals and visitors to participate” on the Trail.

“I would like to see a more active interplay between the hikers and the community beyond the hostels and restaurants.”

The town should play a large part in the maintenance of the trail, and the role of hikers should be exploratory.

I hope that the community’s “old mountain feel” is preserved.

“I don’t want our towns to become a seasonal campground with hikers just passing through.”
In total, there were 38 additional comments, ideas, or suggestions. The majority of comments were either no, keep up the good work, or thank you for taking this on. However, here are some statements that stood out:

- I think that the community would appreciate seeing ATC leaders more engaged.
- The Canal Towns Partnership (CTP) does a better job at bringing community representatives together regularly.
- Please “care about the town, not just the economics of the [hiking] season.”
- I love how the ATC gets local kids and those from nearby cities out on the Trail.
- Reach out to town leaders more.

An Analysis of the Methodology

Visual Communication + Outreach Efforts

- Phase I: Connecting with Local Businesses + A.T. Community™ Supporters
  Two hundred and two total emails were delivered to potential participants from July to September 2020: 55% introducing the research, 49% giving notice to the survey’s upcoming closing date, and 6% connecting the municipalities regarding social media announcements.

One Supporter responded, “I completed the survey and forwarded your letter to the Town Manager so he can share it with other business owners. I am sending this to a
couple of business owners I have emails for. Cool survey and right to the point.” Another wrote, “Finally did the survey. Good luck!”

While three of the four selected communities were easy to get in touch with by email and phone and quickly accommodated my blurb requests, it was difficult to connect with the Town of Hot Springs’s administration.

Phase II: Embracing Social Media During COVID-19

The most active forums included Facebook© and Instagram©, and it seemed that community members liked the opportunity to join the conversation. Six announcement posts were published on the case study communities’ accounts in mid-July: five on Facebook© and one on Instagram©. Four reminder posts were published in mid-September on Facebook©. There were thirty-six likes, four shares, and two comments on the ten posts combined. Damascus’s Instagram© account received about 64% of the total likes. The sketch of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area’s Deep Gap Shelter in Damascus seemed to get 42% of post viewers’ attention. At the same time, a social media user commented on how the illustration of Hot Springs’s town center was great. Therefore, it’s clear how the reminder post with a sketch of each community’s character captivated 55% of viewers and was shared with friends four times.

Phase III: Delivering Hand-Crafted Postcards to Stakeholders

30% accessed the forum in mid-to-late July following the distribution of the A.T. Comm newsletter and the implementation of Phase I and II of the outreach methodology, while 55% began the survey in September just as hand-crafted postcards were being delivered to Supporters and stakeholders. Therefore, Phase III seemed to yield the most participants of all visual communication and outreach efforts during this process.
On average, participants completed the online survey in a total of 15 minutes, as anticipated and explained in its introduction. 70% finished all potential blocks in the survey flow, while 19% completed less than half of the survey’s questions. 3% had 65% progress. 3% completed 90% of the total survey. The majority of people (81%) completed more than half of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey, demonstrating this method’s success in soliciting input from the four selected trailside towns.
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

Highlights

- Chapter 5 discusses regional awareness and connectivity, a new strategy for approaching MacKaye’s radical community plan in 2021, and COVID-19’s role in future economic development.

- The A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs achieve little of MacKaye’s original regional planning vision as they have no teeth.

- The ATC’s next steps include revising its mission to fit within MacKaye’s Conference instead of appropriating his radical vision to the ATC’s guardian mold.

A Pathless Program

The A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs achieve aspects of MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning only by developing the beginnings of a regional support network, recognizing a need for a focus on sustainable economic development, and ‘requiring’ annual projects. However, just like MacKaye’s A.T., this program is pathless, which means that there is potential to initiate lost planning ideologies and visualize change once again!

Here are other outcomes from this research:

- The programs’ defined short-term and long-term benefits are not practical. Participants from Monson, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Damascus, and Hot Springs have not seen a positive impact on their community’s economy since their designation in a period of eight to ten years.

- There is not enough data to understand the extent to which the ATC’s recognition efforts enhance participating trailside communities.

- Temporary trail residents, ‘through-hikers,’ seemed to benefit more from the programs’ initiatives.
There is no correlation between the number of Supporter businesses and organizations in a designated community and seasonal hiker tourism. All four A.T. Communities had a low percentage of hiker customers.

There is no correlation between the location along the Trail and a community’s fiscal health. The Supporter program did not significantly impact the growth or vitality of affiliated business participants.

Connecting-The-Communities

It’s evident from this research that the A.T. significantly contributes to the identity of its mountainside communities, specifically those rural. Yet, in 1921, MacKaye recognized a much greater picture — these gateways would fundamentally give character and life to the footpath through its users and connected neighbors. In 2021, MacKaye’s deep-rooted concept for regional connectivity, social change, and sustainable economic development through regional planning is 100 years overdue. A program, specifically for A.T. Communities, is a step in the right direction, but there is much more to this development than branding and recognition.

 Developing a Framework for Achieving MacKaye’s Vision

In the ‘Trail Years: A History of the Appalachian Trail Conference’ 75th Anniversary Issue of the Appalachian Trailway News, Robert A. Rubin questioned, “When ATC’s centennial rolls around in 2025, what challenges will the Trail be facing?” from land acquisition and management to membership and education as well as the ATC’s internal role in the future. Specifically, the Conference understood the importance of participating in a continuous, all-inclusive planning and design process to fight urban sprawl, protect the resource and surrounding hinterlands, and expand its user base.
MacKaye’s trail, however, was not designed for the privileged and “never just about hiking” (Marra 2020b). Instead, it was progressive, radical, and ultimately a movement to connect communities and people. Yet, Avery’s A.T., ‘apolitical,’ fostered exclusion and displacement because of its roots in passive outdoor recreation and specifically hiking.

Today the “A.T. is not racially or ethnically diverse. It is not accessible to people from low-income communities. It is not always a safe place for women. And, it is not relevant to many people we consider to be part of the next generation” (Marra 2020a).

MacKaye and his regional planner friends foresaw the evils of the A.T.’s publicized hiking trail identity. Still, his movement was replaced by Avery with a development with no political strings attached and no pathless and rugged wilderness expanse.

To develop a framework for finally bringing MacKaye’s regional plan to fruition, it is highly recommended that the ATC adds regional planners to their team of organization developers, administrators, financial advisors, publicists, and conservationists. The ATC should set a new focus on the needs of its trailside communities because it’s time to move from supporting at a social distance and back to the basics behind MacKaye’s blueprint: craftsmanship, cooperation, education, and trade.

The conservation and outdoor recreation visions of the early 20th century can be adapted to 21st-century sustainable economic development priorities. MacKaye’s trailway concept for a permanent reform was well ahead of its time and well-aligned with today’s sensibilities toward ecology, economy, engagement, and equity in America. Therefore, this is not a nostalgic revival of the past but the evolution of a previous unfilled and overdue dream for humanity.
Change + Adaptation

Monson and Damascus were communities with resource-extraction-based economies and a workforce of immigrant miners and migrant loggers, while Harpers Ferry-Bolivar and Hot Springs seemed to embrace a tourism economic sector before World War I. Harpers Ferry was a college community attracting educators and students, and Hot Springs was a resort town supported by its natural waters and visitor services. In general, A.T. Communities adapted to local environmental conditions and, in particular, shifting resources and developments.

But at the time of MacKaye’s 1921 proposal, local boosters and reformers realized "a social and economic declension" in New England and Appalachian mountain communities and ironically feared its spread (Gregg 2010, 5). Because these rural towns "remained largely detached from expanding regional markets, even as road networks and rail lines bisected their ranges" (Gregg 2010, 1), modernist outsiders exaggerated that their traditional and 'backward' way of life belonged to an earlier time and was unsustainable. Even by the mid-1920s, radio broadcasting infrastructure was limited to northern Appalachia (See Figure 42). However, this disconnection would leave the communities vulnerable to the expansion of government and their ambition for a greater forest and park system.
Figure 42 A Glimpse of Radio Broadcasting Infrastructures on the East Coast in 1924 (The George F. Cram Company 1924).

The mountain culture would shift with the progression of telecommunications and land use planning efforts. Casually, local, state, and federal officials restructured the
unprecedented mountain landscape and developed “a new, largely recreational, forest commons” (Gregg 2010, 220). In doing so, private land was acquired, leaving many displaced. Some relocated their farms nearby, while others, specifically young adults (K. Johnson 2006, 11), moved to a metropolitan for excitement and new employment opportunities (See Figure 43). Federal conservation planners envisioned a playground on the east coast, dominated by the tourist industry and free of small, subsistent farms, but regionalist planners, like MacKaye, planned for the opposite, specifically an interconnected camp paradigm beginning with shelters and farming and food resource developments and ending with use specific compounds (Dalbey 2002, 54–55).

![Figure 43] 1890, 1930, and 1960 Population Estimates in America (Thompson and Whelpton).

Trail town residents were forced “to participate in the life of their modernizing country” to accommodate automobilists and hikers (Wallace Jr. 2016). Yet, toward the end of the 20th
century, it was evident to locals that “backpackers don’t buy things,” and outdoor recreation-based enterprises proved not to be as profitable as land-use planners anticipated in the early 1930s (Gregg 2010, 217).

Today, there is still a cultural, economic, and physical divide between metropolitan and rural A.T. Community™ populations and even more digitally in the 21st century. MacKaye’s ideal trail town embodied “independence, challenge, and rugged survival” in the wilderness (Gregg 2010, 3), a sustainable dual-compound lifestyle planned at both human non-industrial and larger industrial scales. MacKaye had already witnessed a substantial economic change in the region over the prior century. He wrote, “many an Appalachian hilltown has fewer families today than a hundred years ago. It has been wrecked through forest mining; it can be restored through forest culture” regionally (Dalbey 2002, 56). Today, forest conservation has wrecked that early vision. But developing a community based on cooperation among people and between the land and people is still applicable in rural America. It connects with today’s growing interest in sustainable communities and development. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to foster MacKaye’s people industry, with consumption, employment, leisure, and production all occurring in one location (Dalbey 2002, 54): designated A.T. Communities. MacKaye’s vision of farm and food camps resonates well with today’s community-supported agriculture and local farmer’s markets.

Based on MacKaye’s background in geography, he understood that land-use, transportation, production management, and settlement pattern issues were regional planning problems and recognized that collaboration and connectivity are the social solutions implemented around a footpath development (Dalbey 2002, 48). Recreation communities today draw in retirement age people, but a multi-tiered community structure may lead to a new population and clustering pattern that is one toward a greater, less
crowded sustainable future! The ATC has the potential to rearticulate the relationships between individual isolated, A.T. Communities and governance in the future.

COVID-19

The ATC employed the ‘COVID-19 Impact Survey for Appalachian Communities and Service Providers’ during the spring of 2020 and developed the ‘Appalachian Trail Community™, Businesses, & Service Providers COVID-19 Impact Report’ in response. This report aimed to analyze how the pandemic impacted the rural towns along the Trail and its ‘guardian’ groups and identify the needs of this targeted population during this time (See Appendix A).

Based on the results, 49% of the participants were connected to an A.T. Community™. Participants expressed how financial losses, virus spread, and the local community were the most concerning when COVID-19 impacts came to mind. 49% of businesses closed their doors to the public by order or recommendation between March and April, and on average, business respondents said to have lost 70% of their annual income.

While this master’s thesis did not aim to further document the perceptions of A.T. Community™ members on the pandemic, it’s important to broaden the focus beyond businesses and providers and consider how COVID-19 impacts the missions of the ATC and these programs, as well as trail planning and management, moving forward, based on the given feedback. Below are some excerpts of shared responses to open-ended questions presented in the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey:

 Aç Through-hikers are now “the minority of the tourist populations who come to our town… they were the majority of party patrons” before COVID-19.

 Aç “There is a fair number of people in the community and on the trail” who currently view the ATC negatively.
"I believe that’s related to what they see as a corporate rollover when the ATC advised people to get off the trail due to COVID."

"COVID has hit our volunteer participation and our activities a great deal."

"In view of the current pandemic and the chaos that it has created,” I’m not sure that I have a long-term vision for my community.

Locals and employees were also impacted when the ATC requested through-hikers to cancel or postpone their trek until 2022 and paused the 2,000-miler recognition program (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2020). The NPS responded to the ATC’s petition for the temporary closure of the Trail by releasing the Superintendent’s Compendium of Orders that restricts the use of shelters and privies, among other public features in parkland (National Park Service and Janssen 2021).

As long as COVID-19 continues to spread throughout the nation, not only are A.T. Communities at risk but the program itself. Most designated communities are rural, and this pandemic may just be an outbreak that ends the community aspect of MacKaye’s vision north to south. The 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey participants who visioned death upon their communities may just be right unless the ATC steps in!

Next Steps for the ATC

The A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs ultimately have no teeth, meaning that they are ineffective at meeting the needs of local trailside communities and businesses. In other words, these initiatives are ‘paper programs.’ The concept is appealing, yet it lacks structure in its application and disregards the planning aspects of MacKaye’s 1921 vision. Many participants of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey were unaware of the program itself. Locals, stakeholders, business/organization owners, and employees exist within these designated A.T. Communities all year long and are the recommended beneficiaries of this program initiative. In the ATC’s 2012 A.T. Community™ Logic Model, the program’s
expected outputs included five to ten new designations, networking events, and workshops/webinars each year. However, efforts to raise internal/external awareness, increase a community’s capabilities and build an extensive regional network had little to no impact because of the following reasons:

- The Trail has always been historically and culturally integrated into its gateway communities since the trail-building era.
- Most participants in this study seemed to already understand the modern challenges of the A.T. from hiker amenities to trail maintenance and conservation, without prior knowledge of the programs.
- There is no formal platform for designated communities and Supporters to actively collaborate and lean on each other for support.
- 78% of affiliated businesses and organizations are involved in A.T. Community™ events and initiatives, yet 67% stated that the Supporter program has not significantly contributed to growth and vitality.
- 66% of the 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey participants felt that their designated community would benefit if the ATC became more involved in community events, which implies that there is not enough interaction between the ATC and A.T. Communities.
- Only one A.T. Community, Franklin-NC, has renewed its partnership with the ATC. Therefore, it is assumed that many communities are ‘dormant’ and not engaged with the program.
- There is not enough evidence to support that either program catalyzed sustainable economic development within the past ten years. 38% were unsure if the A.T. Community™ program positively contributed to economic development in their community, and 46% believed that the A.T. Community™ Supporter
program has not significantly contributed to the growth and vitality of their business or organization.

- 43% said that their A.T. Community™ did not have an Advisory Committee.
- The ATC approached the program with a "This is what A.T. Communities are selling" attitude (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2016, 14), and the only planning efforts executed were related to designation ceremonies.

Reclaiming a Lost Role

The ATC strives to "ensure a bright future for the" A.T. by advocating, managing and protecting the Trail (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021a)(Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021g). Based on the 2021-24 Strategic Plan, the ATC further aims to bolster funding and infrastructure, create a more climate-resilient A.T., engage new people and partners, enhance communication and outreach efforts, protect the A.T. experience, and strengthen shared stewardship. While embracing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) principles and redefining A.T. Community™ roles and responsibilities emerge as great steps toward restructuring the non-profit organization, planning “for a second century of cooperative management” may put the ATC at even more of a disadvantage in terms of planning and power of the NST (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2021g). After collaborating with the NPS and USFS as well as state, corporate, and non-profit organizational partners and volunteer clubs during the A.T.’s first century, there now seem to be too many actors involved with management/protection. Yet, in MacKaye’s plan, experts, volunteers, and community members’ roles were well articulated, especially when it came to trail and camp construction processes.

Experts now have a more dominant role in the Trail's development. The NPS is largely responsible for the NST's planning studies and documents while the USFS maintains the Trail's wilderness. It's understandable that because the Trail crosses paths with federal, state, and
municipal land and parks and protected areas, the power hierarchy is blurred. But the ATC was the original guardian of the Trail, and it is recommended that its lost governance role is reclaimed through the A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs.

Next is a set of suggestions for the ATC to further develop a framework for achieving MacKaye’s overdue vision and implement regional planning initiatives to connect and better support the communities along or near the Trail socially and economically through the employment of the A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs.

Within One Year

- Develop a Master Plan for the A.T. Community™ program to revise its goals and objectives to fit with MacKaye’s vision and ultimately prevent the emergence of ‘dormant’ communities
- Allow county/area designations to complete their 5-year program partnership and begin to only designate single or dual communities
- Update the A.T. Community™ application process to better understand the significance, operations, and needs of each town
- Document and monitor the number of A.T. Community™ Supporters and unaffiliated organizations out-of-business due to COVID-19
- Investigate other funding sources to support planning and design initiatives in A.T. Communities
- Update the 2014 map of approved and designated A.T. Communities featured on the ATC’s website
- Connect with the BMTA and add the BMT to both the printed maps and the interactive map of the A.T.
- Utilize the five pivotal sections identified by MacKaye to classify A.T. Communities for a better distribution of designations
Recruit potential A.T. Communities and Supporters in Connecticut and Maryland to have all 14 trailside states participating in the ATC's initiative


Create an inventory of A.T. Communities and Supporters to be displayed in the three visitor centers along the Trail (Boiling Springs, Harpers Ferry, and Monson)

Continue telling the stories of A.T. Communities and highlighting destinations and Supporter businesses in A.T. Journeys

Feature A.T. Communities on myATstory, parallel to Damascus

Employ four full-time A.T. Community™ Coordinators, assigned to each ATC region
  - Note that the ‘Virginian’ region may need additional assistance due to the large number of designated communities located in that trail stretch buffer

Within Five Years

Implement ‘MacKaye’s Makerspaces’ in each of the four selected A.T. Communities: Damascus, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Hot Springs, and Monson to catalyze a return to a pioneer lifestyle

Introduce the A.T. Community™ Rating System that promotes cooperation, emulation, and trust (Spann 1996, 29)

Within Ten Years

Release an A.T. Community™ passport for the 20th anniversary of the program

Construct visitor centers in Damascus (planned for 2018) and Hot Springs

Develop a regional planning branch in the ATC’s organization
Future Research

A more extensive study on area and county A.T. Community™ designations is recommended. In addition, it is essential to gather feedback from A.T. Community™ administrations. How does community leaders' and stakeholders' long-term vision differ from locals, business owners, and employees? Most importantly, how does the A.T. Community™ network view the ATC, and what are the non-profit organization's strengths and weaknesses? Questions like these will help determine the ATC's role and how the non-profit organization will address the programs in the next 100 years. The ATC may have led the trail town designation program movement. Yet, its regional trail association successors seem to have taken the innovation further with trail town handbooks and passport programs. The A.T. Community™ program is no longer a model today, but it has the potential to be one once again in the future!
BIBLIOGRAPHY


——. 2016b. “Appalachian Trail Community™ Supporter Application.”

103


Minter, Ben A. “Wilderness and the Wise Province: Benton MacKaye’s Pragmatic Vision.”


APPENDICES

Appendix A

❖ Appalachian Trail Community™ Application, Pages 112-123
❖ Appalachian Trail Community™ Supporter Application, Pages 124-125
❖ A.T. Communities Article in the Winter 2020 Issue of A.T. Journeys, Pages 126-129
❖ COVID-19 Impact Report, Pages 130-140

Appendix B

❖ Summer 2020 A.T. Comms Newsletter, Pages 141-146
❖ 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey, Pages 147-161
❖ 2020 Appalachian Trail Community™ Survey Results, Pages 162-166
The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail – ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.
The Appalachian Trail Conservancy

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail – ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

The ATC traces its roots to the vision of Benton MacKaye, a regional planner who convened an Appalachian Trail "conference" in 1925 in Washington, D.C. This initial gathering of hikers, foresters, and public officials laid the groundwork not only for the creation of the Trail, but also for an organization to build, manage, and protect it. Today, through the efforts of volunteers, clubs, and agency partners, the A.T. extends more than 2,180 miles from Maine to Georgia within a protected 250,000 acre greenway. ATC was instrumental in the passage of federal legislation that designated the A.T. as America’s first national scenic trail in 1968.

In order to coordinate the efforts of 31 member clubs and their volunteers, numerous federal and state agencies, and over 40,000 members, ATC employs approximately 55 regular staff and numerous seasonal program employees. With a main office and official Trail visitor center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, ATC remains singularly focused on the A.T. with regional offices in North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire.

Program Background

From the beginning, Benton MacKaye’s vision of an Appalachian Trail proposed to develop opportunities for recreation, recuperation and employment. “The project is one for a series of recreational communities throughout the Appalachian chain… to be connected by a walking trail,” he stated in his 1921 article “The Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning.” MacKaye was among the first of his time to propose land preservation for recreation and conservation purposes, understanding that the “secluded forests, pastoral lands and water courses” are “playgrounds of the people.”

Towns, counties, and communities along the Appalachian Trail’s corridor are considered an asset by A.T. hikers and many of these towns act as good friends and neighbors to the Trail. With millions of visitors coming to the Trail every year, it is no wonder that outfitters, restaurants, and businesses catering to outdoor recreation call A.T. communities home.

Designation as an Appalachian Trail Community™ and participation in the program is designed to act as a catalyst for enhancing economic development, engaging community citizens as Trail visitors and stewards, aiding local municipalities and regional areas with conservation planning and helping local community members see the Trail as a resource and asset. The program also serves to highlight and recognize those communities who are taking steps to ensure the ongoing protection of their natural, cultural, and recreational resources, including the A.T. Preserving and enhancing a charming, memorable community destination will contribute to the long-term economic health of A.T. towns and make an A.T. hike even more desirable.
## Benefits for Communities and Towns

**Overlooking the James River, Virginia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHORT TERM BENEFITS</th>
<th>LONG TERM BENEFITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National designation network and communication</td>
<td>Increased community viability and economic health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition and visibility through signage, media, the ATC’s website and publications</td>
<td>Increased community environmental stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced partnerships with public land agencies and volunteers</td>
<td>Increased sense of place and cultural sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher eligibility for ATC place-based education and service-learning programs</td>
<td>Trail-friendly promotion through ATC-assisted marketing techniques</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Details of Community Benefits

### WEB DEVELOPMENT
- Community webpage that reflects what the community has brought to the program, including listing of local events
- Local articles and press releases highlighted in the ATC’s newsroom
- Subscription to e-news providing highlights of community successes and network to designated communities in the program
- Social networking outreach with the ATC’s Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram followers

### MEDIA SUPPORT
- Press releases, access to Appalachian Trail media list, Public Service Announcements, proclamation, etc.
- Recognition in publications such as *A.T. Journeys* magazine, the A.T. Databook and Thru-Hikers’ Companion

### PROGRAM TOOLKIT
- Toolkit providing detailed information and resources for planning your designation celebration

### PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY
- Teachers interested in ATC education and service-learning programs from designated communities receive priority over other applicants
- Local businesses that support the A.T. are eligible to apply for recognition as A.T. Community Supporters

### LOGO USAGE
- Access to Appalachian Trail Community™ under signed licensing and usage agreement
- Incorporating national network brand to community

### SIGNAGE
- Two 18" by 24" full color metal aluminum street entrance signs; two 6" window decals (suggested placement in town hall or chamber).
Appendix A

Appalachian Trail Community™ Application

The application page is to be filled out by a town official (mayor, manager, etc.), and lead volunteer liaison/A.T. maintaining club affiliate.

Any town in close proximity of the A.T. corridor may apply for A.T. Community designation and must commit to meet at least two of the criteria below, with creation of an advisory committee being required. A letter of support from the local maintaining A.T. Club is also a requirement for selection.

These criteria provide structure for the program and provide an awareness and appreciation among the community of the Appalachian Trail and its special resources.

-----------------------------
CRITERIA FOR SELECTION
-----------------------------

1) Community support is evidenced by creation of an advisory committee
   Suggested candidates for this committee would be representatives of the county or community (elected officials, etc.), representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, tourism development association, business association or equivalent, local hiking and A.T. maintaining club, etc.

2) Hosting an annual A.T. volunteer project, event or celebration
   The ATC regional offices can provide ideas and suggestions

3) A.T. related educational or service learning program or project
   Teacher participation in ATC education programs qualifies.

4) Language for the protection of the A.T. is included in land-use plans, planning tools, ordinances, or guidelines; or there is demonstrated support to amend, change, or add such plans.

Before beginning the process of applying for designation, please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at (828) 254-3708 or email atcommunity@appalachiantrail.org.

1) Town, City, Community Name:

2) Contact information of town representative:
   Name:
   Title:
   Address:
   City, State, Zip:
   Phone:
   Email Address:

3) Contact information of lead volunteer:
   Name:
   Title:
   Address:
   City, State, Zip:
   Phone:
   Email Address:

4) Criteria for consideration. Please select at least two criteria and add descriptions as requested.
   A. Advisory committee: Please list members, members’ emails and affiliation.

   B. Annual project or celebration: Describe event and list the lead volunteer liaison with email and contact information.

   C. A.T. educational or service-learning project: Describe the event and list lead volunteer liaison with email and contact information.

   D. Language for the protection of the A.T. is included in land-use plans, planning tools, ordinances or guidelines; or there is demonstrated support to amend, change or add such plans. Attach any necessary documents, state the support for these tools, and list who is the lead contact for this initiative.
Appendix A

Appalachian Trail Community™ Application

CRITERIA (two of the four criteria should be met)

1) **Advisory committee**
   Please list committee members, along with their contact info (email preferred), and who they represent from the community. Briefly describe the committee’s structure.

2) **Annual project or celebration**
   Projects or events may include promoting or sponsoring a volunteer workshop/workday, assuring information about the Appalachian Trail and the ATC is available at ongoing community events, etc. Describe the event and list the lead volunteer liaison with contact information.
APPALACHIAN TRAIL COMMUNITY™ APPLICATION

CRITERIA (two of the four criteria should be met)

3) A.T. educational or service learning project
   Describe the event and list the lead volunteer liaison with contact information.

4) Language for the protection of the A.T. is included in land-use plans, planning tools, ordinances or guidelines; or there is demonstrated support to amend, change, or add such plans.
   Attach any necessary documents, state the support for these tools, and list who is the lead contact for this initiative.
APPALACHIAN TRAIL COMMUNITY™ APPLICATION

PROCESS FOR SELECTION

Once the application has been received by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, its local Regional Partnership Committee will evaluate the request. The committees meet every spring and fall, so approval will be recognized in April or November.

Email or mail completed applications to your regional ATC office no later than September 1 or March 1.

New England Regional Office
158 Sweetwater Drive
White River Junction, VT 05001
802-281-5890
E-mail: atc-nero@appalachiantrail.org

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
4 East First Street
Boiling Springs, PA 17007
717-258-5771 Fax: 717-258-1442
E-mail: atc-maro@appalachiantrail.org

Central & SW Virginia Regional Office
5162 Valleypointe Parkway
Roanoke, VA 24019
540-904-4393 Fax: 540-904-4368
E-mail: atc-varo@appalachiantrail.org

Southern Regional Office
160 Zillicoa St
Asheville, NC 28801
828-254-3708 Fax: 828-254-3754
E-mail: atc-soro@appalachiantrail.org

5) Describe why your town should be selected as an Appalachian Trail Community™. What can this program do for your community? What can your town do for the Appalachian Trail?

6) What does your community hope to gain from the A.T. Community program? You may choose more than one answer.

- Being a part of the national designation network
- Increased recognition & visibility through signage, media, etc.
- Increased cultural sustainability
- Increased community viability and economic health
- Getting more teachers involved in place-based service learning
- Enhanced partnerships with volunteers
- Increased environmental stewardship among community
- Enhanced partnerships with public land agencies
- Increased sense of place
- Increased connections between our community and the A.T.
- Recognition of community as a recreation destination
- Increased visitation to our community
Appendix A

Appalachian Trail Community™ Application

7) What can your town do for the Appalachian Trail?
   You may choose more than one answer.
   - Increase knowledge of A.T. as a community asset
   - Protect resources within the Trail corridor through planning: zoning regulations, smart growth, etc.
   - Increase proper use of the A.T. and community familiarity with Leave No Trace practices
   - Community awareness of the local A.T. sections and access points
   - Support teachers who bring the A.T. to their students
   - Build membership for local A.T. club and ATC
   - Increase availability of information regarding the A.T. and its relationship to the community
   - Include A.T. in community marketing info – brochures, websites, etc.
   - Increase partnerships and dialogue among land managers, volunteers, and town leadership
   - Other (please specify):

8) What is your community’s stage of action for each of the following?
   Please check one answer for each row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not interested, not sure, N/A</th>
<th>Thinking about it</th>
<th>Definitely getting ready to do this</th>
<th>Started taking specific actions</th>
<th>Already doing this – just refining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have strong partnerships with public land agencies (local or federal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We offer clear communication about the A.T. to wider audiences via our website, signage, newsletters, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have committed volunteer leadership for the A.T. in our community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New A.T. volunteers have recently stepped up to lead community efforts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info about the A.T. is included in our community brochures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info about the A.T. can be easily found on our community website(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community events have a clear focus on trails and outdoor recreation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We offer community-led hikes on the A.T.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have regular programs or events for protection of the A.T.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We regularly partner with the ATC on programs or events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We regularly donate to the ATC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A

Appalachian Trail Community™ Application

9) Please describe your partnerships with public land agencies and with volunteers.

10) What cultural and/or historical information is available about your community?

11) What recreation opportunities, major ongoing festivals, and events does your community offer?
12) How available are the following hiker services in your community? Please check one answer for each row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Not Available</th>
<th>Limited Availability</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Widely Available</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outfitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATMs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery/re-supply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuttle from A.T. to town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuttle to points north and south along the A.T.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy/medical service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library/computer/internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor or welcome center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Restroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounts for hikers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage for hikers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transportation or shuttle to the airport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car rental or taxi services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.T. Souvenirs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage about the A.T.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiosks about the A.T.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info about the role of the A.T. in your community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13) Please describe any of the hiker services mentioned above. Include the types of signage, kiosks, and information locally available regarding the A.T. and any other relevant information. You are also encouraged to send in pictures if possible with your additional information.

14) Please describe the locations AND state of the access points of the A.T. Where are the closest trailheads, and what improvements might be needed?

15) ATC frequently hosts workshops and conferences. Please list facilities in your community that can host a group of 40 people or more. Also include information about any community centers.
Appendix A

Appalachian Trail Community™ Application

You’re almost finished! Please attach any further letters of support and documentation to augment your application. A letter of support is required from the local A.T.-maintaining club. If your town has a comprehensive planning and zoning ordinance, a downtown beautification plan, or a strategic marketing plan, please attach those as well.

If you have any questions about this application or the designation process, please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at (828) 254-3708 or by email at ATcommunity@appalachiantrail.org.

What’s Next?
The Process After You Have Been Selected

Once your town has been selected as an A.T. Community™, there will be an event celebrating the official designation. The ATC will work with appropriate A.T. Advisory Committee representatives to coordinate the event. Approximately 3 or more months are needed for planning the event.

Upon designation, two signs will be provided to the town by the ATC. It is recommended that these signs be placed in highly visible locations, such as at the entrances to town, for hikers and town visitors alike. Additional signs will be available for purchase by the community.

The ATC will also coordinate with the lead volunteer on developing the ATC webpage for your community that will highlight the community’s relationship to the A.T., other attractions in the area, and local businesses that provide services to hikers.

Local businesses will be eligible and encouraged to become official A.T. Community Supporters. These businesses and organizations help support the A.T., the local maintaining club, the ATC and/or your A.T. Community by providing hiker services, offering discounts, participating in community events, and more. Learn more and download the Community Supporter application here.
About

A key tenet of the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Community™ program is to encourage the “local flavor” of each Community and to use the power of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) to spotlight that unique character. As part of that effort, ATC wants to highlight non-profits, organizations, and businesses that provide support to the hiking community, the Appalachian Trail, the local maintaining club and/or the ATC by recognizing participating entities as official A.T. Community Supporters.

Help us promote public awareness about the significant resources and economic opportunities the Appalachian National Scenic Trail brings to A.T. Communities. Your voice on behalf of the Trail helps to broaden its foundation of support, which will leverage and strengthen our ability to protect it…together.

Benefits

The following benefits are offered by the ATC to designated A.T. Community™ Supporters for participation:

- Hotlink from A.T. Community webpage
- Recognition in regional e-newsletters, social media, etc.
- E-subscription to A.T. Journeys (ATJ), our quarterly magazine
- Discount on ads in ATJ
- Appalachian Trail Community™ Supporter storefront decal
- Press release template for A.T. Community Committee to release locally
- A.T. maps and ATC membership information to give out to customers/visitors
- Connection to local Trail club with opportunities for stewardship and outreach
- Local and national visibility as a supporter of the Appalachian Trail

Start application on next page

Examples of Support

- Organizing, supporting, or participating in A.T. Community events and initiatives
- Discounts for hikers on lodging, food or other services
- Providing shuttle service for an extended period (over one year)
- Free internet service or access to books for hikers
- Support for the local A.T. maintaining club
- Participating in ATC’s Lodging Giveback program, or providing a percentage of profits back to ATC for volunteer programs
- Support for teachers who bring the A.T. to their students
- Promotion of the local hiking club, the ATC, or A.T.-related events
- Providing information about the A.T. for tourists and hikers (or assisting in the development of such information)
- Providing mail drop service

Questions? Contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at (828) 254-3708 or e-mail atcommunity@appalachiantrail.org.
APPLICATION FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORTER

Process for Application

1. Turn in the following application to your A.T. Community Advisory Committee. If you need assistance finding contacts for your local committee, contact atcommunity@appalachiantrail.org.

2. Once your local advisory committee has approved the application, it will be forwarded to the regional ATC office. Upon receipt, the ATC will prepare a recognition packet for the advisory committee to award and coordinate other benefits associated with designation as an A.T. Community Supporter.

3) Business/Organization Name: ________________________________
   Mailing Address: ____________________________________________
   City: __________________________ State: _______________ Zip: _________

2) Contact info (email and phone required)
   First Name: __________________________ Last Name: ________________
   Phone: __________________________ Email: _______________________

3) How is your business/organization supporting the A.T., local maintaining club, the ATC and/or the A.T. Community? What benefits are you providing?

4) We would also like to support the A.T. and the ATC by providing space in our storefront for:
   [ ] ATC Membership information
   [ ] A.T. Maps
   [ ] Info about the local A.T. maintaining club
   [ ] Info about events in our A.T. Community, such as Family Hiking Day, Trail festivals, and volunteer opportunities

6) Link we would like included on the ATC website: ________________________________

By signing below I pledge that ____________________ (business name), will continue to follow the above stated support and benefits to the A.T./hikers/ATC for at least one year. Logo and participation should not be used for political or other purposes not supported by the ATC, and must adhere to non-discrimination principles.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: __________

Questions? Contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at (828) 254-3708 or e-mail atcommunity@appalachiantrail.org.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

For A.T. Community Advisory Committee
Address for Community Supporter recognition packet (if different from above)
★ WARWICK / New York ★

TUCKED INTO THE FOOTHILLS OF SOUTHERN NEW YORK — ONLY 50 MILES FROM MANHATTAN’S SKYLINE — THE TOWN OF WARWICK OFFERS STUNNING VISTAS, BEAUTIFUL WATERFALLS, AND ENDLESS OPTIONS FOR FUN AND RELAXATION.

By Jessica Schottanes
The rural town of Warwick, established in 1789, was named in honor of the historic "Warwick" farm that extensively covered the early landscape. The very large town emerged as an agricultural destination with an abundance of open space. Following the development of the Warwick Valley Railroad, the King's Highway, and the Appalachian Trail, the well-known town with three villages of Warwick, Greenwood Lake, and Florida became an excellent attraction for passing travelers. The Hamlets of Sterling Forest, Amity, Pine Island, Bellvale, and Edenville also dot the landscape. In 2013, Warwick became an official A.T. Community.

DISCOVERING WARWICK ...

DAY HIKING

Warwick
The first section of the A.T., located in Warwick, was open to the public in 1933, and emerges as a moderate hiking path that is approximately 4.8 miles long. On this historic section route, dogs are allowed on a leash and families can enjoy a short, lovely day hike.

Fitzgerald Falls
This is just off Lakes Road between Greenwood Lake and Monroe, a quarter-mile north of Greenwood Lake Middle School. This is a short, quarter-mile-out-and-back trek to the spectacular twin waterfalls right on the A.T. with a slight hill climb about halfway.

Route 17A to Eastern Pinnacles
A great first hike for families, though the rocky Eastern Pinnacles can be slippery when wet. Start at any of the gravel parking lots where Route 17A crests Bellevale Mountain and locate the A.T. trailhead. It's near the very last parking lot on the right. If you are coming from Warwick, Cross Rt. 17A carefully and proceed north. Or start across from Bellevale Farms Creamery and follow the blue-blazed trail to the white blazes of the A.T., where you turn left. The hike is just over two miles out and back.

A.T. South from Bellevale Farms Creamery
Park at the gravel lot across Route 17A from Bellevale Farms Creamery. Locate the kiosk and follow the trail immediately behind the kiosk — it’s blue-blazed — and in five minutes it will lead you to the white-blazed A.T. Turn right and follow the white blazes southbound about two miles to scenic views overlooking Greenwood Lake. This is a nice four-mile hike out and back.
INDULGE YOUR APPETITE
A short trek from the Appalachian Trail atop Mount Peter, visitors can enjoy a top-notch ice cream cone at Bellvale Farms Creamery — nationally recognized for its homemade ice cream. Eddie’s Roadhouse, a local tavern nestled right in the heart of the Warwick Village center and historic district, is known for its craft beer and cuisine. Not only is the dining atmosphere cozy, but the owner and his friendly staff are always excited to connect with A.T. hikers and listen to their adventures.

Buy fresh veggies at the Warwick Farmers Market. Open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Sunday from Mother’s Day until late November or the Village of Florida Farmers Market, which is open on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. beginning in June. Both markets feature regional farms and farm kitchens.

Enjoy a pint where George Washington once drank grog in 1789 at Baird’s Tavern on Main Street in the heart of the village of Warwick. The recently-renovated tavern features three rooms including a game room where guests can take games off the wall and take part in friendly competition.

TAKE IN LOCAL CULTURE
Listen to a free concert on Railroad Green in Warwick or in Greenwood Lake at Thomas P. Moran Park. The concerts offer an eclectic mix of performers from rock to jazz to country and everything in between. Shop in our three villages. Warwick, Florida, and Greenwood Lake each offer specialty shops, salons, lodging, museums, art festivals and dining to suit every taste. Special events are held throughout the year including the world-famous Applefest in October.

Pursue some literature at the Albert Wilser Public Library — the recipient of the Library Journal’s “Best Small Library in America” award in 2015 for its innovative architectural design, artistic landscape with sculptures and birdhouses, and sustainability initiatives. The River Birch Path near the library’s interpretive walking path is the recommended spot to enjoy a book in natural surroundings.

In the summer season, you are sure to find many thru-hikers setting up camp not far from A.T. trailhead at the Warwick Drive-In Theater. As movie-goers patiently wait in line, a band of smiling individuals with their backpacking gear can often be found near the entrance. Imagine viewing a movie ten feet away and beneath the stars in the night sky.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE
Get out and enjoy the land as the town and three villages have set aside thousands of acres of parkland for residents and visitors to explore. You can paddle on Glenmere, Greenwood, or Whalom lakes, play skateboard or skateboard at the local parks, or play golf at Warwick County Park. Go boating, swimming, jet or water skiing, fishing, ice-skating, ice-fishing, and snow sledding on Greenwood Lake year-round.

STAY A WHILE
The Warwick Valley Bed and Breakfast is located within Warwick Village and is just a few steps away from the restaurants, cafes, and local businesses in the historic district. This B&B is known for its farm-to-table breakfasts and 1900s charm. Or try out the Inn at Stony Creek, built in 1840 — a revitalized farmhouse that is situated on a nine-acre countryside landscape in Warwick. Each distinctive guestroom, completed with antiques, is named in honor of a significant event, publication, landscape, or person from the 1840s decade. This B&B not only delivers a delicious breakfast, but also serves as a special occasion destination spot for weddings, elopements, vow renewals, and romantic getaways.

Jessica Schottine, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is pursuing a dual Master’s Degree in Geography and Regional Planning and aspires to design and plan for America’s national parks, monuments, and historically and culturally significant landscapes and resources.

Find out more and plan your trip at: Wildnerness.org/warwick and twosumwarrwick.org

Learn more about all 48 A.T. Communities at: appalachiantrail.org/A.TCommunities

BACK TO ISSUE
ACHIEVING AN ORIGINAL VISION
MACKAYE’S GRANDER WILDERNESS CIVILIZATION BLUEPRINT

In 1921, Benton MacKaye, a pioneer of regional planning, proposed his vision for an extensive trailway system — with an underlying purpose to foster a cooperative spirit between recreational users and anticipated permanent trailside community members and farmers — known as the Appalachian Trail. As MacKaye became more focused on his concept for a regional community connected by a footpath hidden in the Appalachian Mountains, the external design of the surrounding landscape was transforming as highways and national parks system units emerged. As the demand to complete the Trail’s development for the public’s immediate use and enjoyment increased, MacKaye’s vision returned to its original form as a proposal on paper. Myron Avery then worked to bring the Trail into physical existence in 1937. Over time, the A.T. surfaced into a spiritual and challenging task in which many are eager to attempt to thru hike sections, hike, and day hike. While in many ways the A.T. venture today encourages a community of wanderers traveling across the landscape, one regret that fits into MacKaye’s original vision is the culture and communities that surround the Trail today.

When the Appalachian Trail Conservancy launched the A.T. Community Program in 2010, a formal network of Trail-side communities and a regional support system was established. Designated communities interact with one another through summits and workshops, and the business climate in these municipalities seems to improve with recognition through social media and signage. Much about these towns and communities that surround the Trail and are part of the A.T. Community Program fits nicely into MacKaye’s grander wilderness civilization blueprint.
Appendix A

Appalachian Trail Community™, Businesses, & Service Providers
COVID-19 Impact Report

Click here to view the map of Confirmed COVID-19 cases along the A.T.

This report summarizes how the COVID-19 crisis has impacted communities along the Appalachian Trail (A.T.), with a focus on service providers and businesses. The data collected from hundreds of interviews and survey responses summarized in this report informs our advocacy decisions, programmatic recommendations, and our efforts to pursue short and long-term recovery opportunities.
Background

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is best known as an iconic hiking destination, connecting many of the Eastern United States’ most beloved public lands. Across 14 states, it also connects dozens of adjacent communities large and small, supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs who provide services to the millions of visitors who hike on the A.T. each year. These Appalachian towns and businesses are an integral part of the Trail’s unique culture and history. Hostels, restaurants, outfitters, and other businesses are a treasured part of the A.T. experience, and in many cases more memorable than the hiking journey itself.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is the non-profit tasked with overseeing the management and maintenance of the Trail to ensure its longevity as an international treasure for future generations. The ATC formally recognizes gateway communities as vital partners through its A.T. Community™ program. Beyond the ~50 officially designated A.T. Communities™, dozens of other communities and hundreds of businesses form a vast informal network of hiker support services.

Key Objectives:
- Document and analyze COVID-19 impacts to local, small, and rural businesses in communities near the A.T.
- Identify critical needs for support
- Work with local leaders to determine the best course of action, while advocating for the alignment of state and federal funds to meet local needs
- Strengthen our network so resources can be shared as they become available
- Assist communities along the A.T. in becoming safe, financially secure, and poised to thrive once outdoor recreation tourism resumes

COVID-19 Response

As COVID-19 became a reality in the U.S., many people viewed a long hike on the A.T. and other national parks as the perfect place to practice social distancing recommendations. However, it quickly became apparent that, by traveling from town to town, long distance hikers could unknowingly bring the disease to rural communities in addition to putting themselves at risk. We started to see thousands flocking to our national parks, like the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, creating crowded parking areas and recreation facilities. To manage and protect visitors, staff, land managers, communities, and the Trail’s health, the ATC requested those planning a long-distance hike to postpone or cancel, and, more significantly, requested all Trail users stay home.

While these recommendations were made with the health and safety of the A.T.’s neighbors in mind, we were acutely aware of the economic repercussions that would affect the businesses along the Trail. In hopes of supporting and advocating on behalf of trailside communities, the ATC quickly drafted a survey for A.T. Community™ partners and service providers to track and measure the impacts of the pandemic. Seasonal ridgerunners who had recently been pulled from their field-based work in the south were re-assigned to survey business owners by phone.
Appendix A

COVID-19 Response - continued

ATC’s First Step
The ATC responds to the WHO’s advice, declares and organization-wide telecommuting policy, and closes the Harpers Ferry Visitor Center.

Stay Off the Trail
The ATC updates its advice to include all hikers and encourages everyone to stay off the Trail.

1 March 11, 2020
2 March 13, 2020
3 March 17, 2020
4 March 23, 2020
5 April 1, 2020

Global Pandemic
The World Health Organization officially declares COVID-19 a Global Pandemic.

Postpone Hikes
The ATC asks long-distance hikers to postpone or cancel their hikes. Seasonal ridges are removed from the field to begin working remotely.

Request to Close Trail
The ATC writes a letter to the Department of Interior and Agriculture, among others, to request the official closure of the A.T. with the support of 29 A.T. Volunteer Clubs.

Scope of Analysis
Over 1,400 service providers and small businesses were contacted by email or phone. Of the total responses, 93 surveys were filled out online and 228 were completed over the phone with ATC staff.

Responses were collected from March 24 to April 16, 2020. This was a period of rapid change as local, state, and federal governments issued a variety of recommendations, shelter-in-place, and closure orders.

Survey Results
The majority of the businesses near the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.) are experiencing negative economic impacts or severe financial losses due to the restrictions and mandates caused by the COVID-19 global health pandemic.

Status of Business During COVID-19

Survey responses by state
Georgia = 29
North Carolina = 47
Tennessee = 24
Virginia = 68
West Virginia = 6
Maryland = 3
Pennsylvania = 32
New Jersey = 5
New York = 14
Connecticut = 6
Massachusetts = 19
Vermont = 26
New Hampshire = 22
Maine = 20

Out of 321 surveys, 157 (49.9%) businesses were closed while 46 (14.3%) respondents indicated a partial closure of their services.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY
799 Washington Street, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807
Phone: 304.535.2200 | Fax: 304.535.2867 | www.appalachiantrail.org

132
Appendix A

Thematic Analysis and Approach

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and survey questions. Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, summarized, and reconstructed to capture the concepts within the data set.

The “COVID-19 Impact Survey for Appalachian Trail Communities and Service Providers,” was emailed to over 1,000 service providers and A.T. Communities™ on March 25th and April 1st, 2020. Two ATC staff placed phone calls to those service providers without an email address on file, providing the interview based on survey questions and filled out questionnaires on behalf of the business. Financial impact was divided into two categories, dollars lost and percent lost for 2020.

When collecting and analyzing this data: It was assumed that businesses were familiar with the ATC, the pandemic would have a financial impact, and estimates of the impact could change in response to official guidance. Below are some examples of the questions asked on the Survey to help compile data for this report.

- What is the status of your business?
- What types of services does your business provide?
- Where is your business located and are you located in a designated A.T. Community™?
- How has COVID-19 impacted the income of your business?
- What is your estimated income loss or percentage of lost income?
- What are your concerns about the impact of COVID-19?

“Small towns and rural areas are at a special risk of the pandemic spreading and affecting them. I don’t want my area where there are many elderly to be at increased risk and bringing strangers from other areas in would be irresponsible. This issue is becoming divisive in the trail community which is very sad to see. We love hikers and what we do, but can’t risk our family’s health.”

-Tennessee Service Provider

“Lack of government action in our community, combined with COVID-19 virus fears, has put us in an impossible situation...with lack of action from Georgia’s state government, we had to make some extremely difficult decisions on our own regarding our service to our customers that have drastically impacted our revenue. Georgia’s governor has failed the small business community in the North Georgia mountains.”

-Georgia Service Provider
Types of Businesses

The responses were collected from a variety of small businesses, local organizations, and A.T. communities connected to the A.T. to varying degrees. Those who were surveyed include over forty (40) A.T. Gateway Communities recognized in the Appalachian Trail CommunityTM program. These towns and cities are considered assets by all that use the A.T., and many of these towns act as good friends and neighbors to the Trail. We received responses from service providers offering hikers some or many of the following:

Services Offered

Themes

Based on the responses collected through the survey, eight (8) themes were identified as categorized below:

1. Concern of financial losses and/or the closure of their business.

   **Theme #1:**
   “Awful. We’ve have to close our doors. We are really taking it on the chin. We have spent years building up this business and are risking our livelihoods and our children’s futures for this. We are not sure if we will survive this. Many businesses along the trail will go under from this. I hope that years from now we will be able to look back on this and say that it was all worth it. Right now, I’m not so sure.”

2. Concerns about COVID-19 coming to their community and/or concern around the spread of the virus in general.

   **Theme #2:**
   “We are closed due to precautions for the CoronaVirus. We do not want to be a part of spreading the virus. We have no idea how to predict how long we will be closed. We will wait for the ATC and CDC to say it’s safe to reopen.”
3. Concerns about the impact on the social, cultural, and health aspects of the A.T. community or their local community.

**Theme #3:**
“Very torn over what to do. So many businesses are shutting down that hikers who are left on trail are in a tight spot. We want to protect our town but also see the need to help the hikers.”

4. Government or official recommendations being a contributing factor behind changes in their operations.

**Theme #4:**
“Our Governor has said a month or longer. We are a 75 year old family run business. This is devastating for us. We make a lot of our income from thru-hikers and day trippers.”


**Theme #5:**
“We are one of the more stable hotels right now due to housing GA Power employees while they are up here working. Have had GA Power employees for the past 2 weeks and will have them for at least the next 2 weeks as they are considered essential employees.”


**Theme #6:**
“Hardly at all thank God.”

7. Personal health concerns specific to their family or household.

**Theme #7:**
“Had rented to someone from New York City for a week, but they checked out Sunday. We were nervous the whole time they were staying. Once they checked out we decided to close for at least 2 months. We are not going to go in to clean for at least 6 days to help ensure our safety.”

8. New/re-opened businesses without a financial foundation.

**Theme #8:**
“We are a brand new business that just opened in Oct of 2019. This epidemic is affecting us more than businesses that are more mature. Most all non-essentials products have come to a screeching halt. We have read that stimulus package support for businesses will require two years worth of business financials. We wonder where we will fit into this process as we don’t even have 1 full year of financial data to provide.”

The analysis of these themed categories reveals a high percentage (81%) of respondents harboring concerns over the financial losses and/or the possible closure of their business. This concern is depicted in the graph below, along with the percentages of other concerns expressed within each of the eight identified themes.
**Themes - continued**

**Concerns by Category**

- 81% concern of financial losses and/or the closure of their business.
- 36% concern about COVID-19 coming to their community and/or concern around the spread of the virus.
- 28.7% concern for the A.T. community or local community.
- 17% government or official recommendations being a factor behind changes in their operations.
- 11% too soon to evaluate the economic impact of COVID-19.
- 7% no concern about the impact of COVID-19.
- 7% personal concern, specific to their family or household.
- 1% new/re-opened businesses without a financial foundation.

**Financial Impact Results**

The majority of survey respondents in this report indicated that their business was closed due to the impacts of COVID-19. We found that closed, open, and partially open businesses suffered financially or anticipated that they would suffer as the cyclical nature of the hiking season reached their place of business. The analysis of the eight themed categories revealed 256 (81%) of respondents harboring concerns over financial losses and/or the possible closure of their business. The second-most recorded consideration, reaching 115 (36.8%), expressed concerns about COVID-19 coming into their community and the general spread of the virus. Financial loss, or the threat thereof, was by far the greatest recorded concern from those who completed the survey.

Via the survey data, **respondents estimated their financial losses for 2020 with a median loss of $30,000 per establishment**. The responses often indicated that they had no way of knowing what duration of time the COVID-19 impacts would affect them. Estimates for loss of income were based on varying timeframes, with some businesses initially estimating closures of just two weeks, and others projecting as long as 18 months. Respondents indicated the percentage of their annual business they have lost, or anticipated losing throughout 2020, with an **average of 69.6% income lost per establishment**.
Appendix A

Where do we go from here?

This global health pandemic will likely be devastating to rural economies with a slow recovery period. Communities along the A.T. rely heavily on recreation tourism compared to those in urban communities.

ATC is using this data to share impacts to small businesses and rural economies so that we can advocate on behalf of our gateway communities. Below there is an appendix full of resources for small businesses and rural economies in need of immediate or future support. ATC will be sharing this impact report widely, with Congressional and State representatives. Lastly, we continue to be open to ongoing suggestions for support. Please email atcCommunities@appalachiantrail.org with your ideas.

Appendix: Resources

General Support:
Health Resource and Services Administration: Rural Community Programs
• The Community-Based Division (CBD) grant programs provide funding to increase access to care in rural communities and to address their unique health care challenges.

USDA: Community Development Resources
• Rural information center providing access to information for community development in a variety of subject areas.

Useful Community Development: Community Improvement Concept and Specifics
• For people who aren't community development professionals, the site provides definitions and basic concepts, tells you plainly what usually works and what doesn't, and explains the jargon professionals use so you can understand and apply their advice.

Rural Health Information Hub: Your First Stop for Rural Health Information
• Discover the latest funding and opportunities to support rural health. Information about applying for grants to support rural health projects including frequently asked questions.

New models, business practices, and campaign examples:
Virginia's Blue Ridge: Worth the Wait
• A directory of ways to enjoy Virginia's Blue Ridge through virtual visitation, online shopping, and curbside pickup plus a listing of local campaigns and fundraisers.

Giles County, VA: 50% More Voucher
• Giles County and the Towns of Pembroke, Pearisburg, Narrows, Rich Creek and Glen Lyn are promoting and selling gift certificates which can be purchased for $20 and redeemed at a face value of $50 in local dining and lodging businesses.
Appendix: Resources - continued

Local Business Recovery Fund
- Grants available to small businesses and sole proprietorships in the arts/entertainment/recreation, accommodation and food services, retail trade, and manufacturing sectors in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

Abingdon, VA: We’ll Be Waiting For You
- VTC has put together a three-phase short-term brand strategy that will get us through this crisis. Phase I, support and adaptation, has just launched: meet travelers where they are by offering beautiful, scenic visuals.

Resources for Small Businesses:

General Support
U.S. Small Business Administration: Small Business Guidance & Loan Resources
- A federal agency with resources for small business owners and entrepreneurs that oversees the implementation of programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) as outlined by the CARES ACT. Check back often as additional funding for programs such as PPP is secured.
- Small Business Development Centers. Note: Please make an effort to contact these organizations via email or phone before proceeding to a physical location. Many organizations are providing teleworking options for staff and while support is still available, some business may be conducted virtually.
- University of Georgia SBDC
- Tennessee SBDC
- Virginia SBDC
- West Virginia SBDC
- Maryland SBDC
- Pennsylvania SBDC
- New Jersey SBDC
- New York SBDC
- Connecticut SBDC
- Massachusetts SBDC
- Vermont SBDC
- New Hampshire SBDC
- Maine SBDC

Center for Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship: Loan and Grants Searchable Database
- (CASE) at Duke’s Fuqua School of Business has built a comprehensive, searchable database that includes grants, loans, and other cash equivalents to support entrepreneurs, nonprofits, and businesses globally. You can upload grant and loan opportunities as well.

The Conservation Fund: Ideas and Solutions for Gateway and Rural Communities
- A collection of resources for communities tied to tourism and outdoor recreation.
Appendix: Resources - continued

The Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC): Resources for Women-Owned Businesses in Response to COVID-19

- Across the country, as the nation responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, WBENC-Certified WBEs are helping in big ways and small, by innovating, scaling up to meet demand, partnering to expand capabilities, and donating to help communities and frontline workers in need.

Tory Burch Foundation

- Transformed into a resource hub for women-led small businesses during the COVID-19 crisis.

The American Hotel and Lodging Association: COVID-19 Resource Center

- An organization for members of the hotel and lodging industry that provides resources and support.

Destination International: Covid-19 Response and Recovery Hub

- Destinations International’s number one goal is to give our members the tools they need, which includes accurate and up-to-date information as it pertains to the effects of coronavirus on the travel, tourism and meetings industry.

Hello Alice

- COVID-19 business resource center with real-world funding, resources, and support for small business owners impacted by the pandemic.

Grants

GrantStation.com

- Resource for finding grants from foundations, federal, and state government sources (press red bar at the top of the page to access COVID-19 funding opportunities and resources)

Grants.gov

- Grants learning center explains basics about the grant lifecycle and management, policies, eligibility, and terms. Federal grant search tool.

NonprofitReady.org

- Free nonprofit training including grant writing, fundraising, and nonprofit finance.

NonprofitGuides.org

- Free grant writing tools for nonprofit organizations including grant writing guides, links to grantors, and FAQs.

USA Grant Applications

- Training materials on how and where to apply for funding. Includes information on business grants geared towards small businesses, women owned businesses, minority grants, and business grants for veterans.

Red Backpack Fund

- Grants of $5,000 each to female entrepreneurs in the U.S. to help alleviate the immediate needs and support the long-term recovery of those impacted by COVID-19.
Appendix: Resources - continued

Loans
Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loan:
• Make sure to only check the boxes for COVID-19 and economic distress
Economic Development Administration Revolving Loan Fund: programs organized by state
(scroll down for the search by state) full of existing loan programs for small businesses
• EDA provides Economic Adjustment Assistance (PDF) grants to eligible recipients to
capitalize or recapitalize lending programs that service businesses that cannot otherwise
obtain traditional bank financing

Labor Laws and Employer Responsibilities
The Center for American Progress
• Article: Rural Americans Are Vulnerable to the Coronavirus
• Insights about how different minority groups and labor groups are impacted by
COVID-19.
U.S. Department of Labor
• OSHA Responsibilities and guidance for preparing workplaces for coronavirus.
COVID-19 Impacts

A lot has changed since the last newsletter hit your inboxes. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly every aspect of our lives, including the Appalachian Trail.

As of this newsletter, the Trail is open in all 14 states, but some restrictions on camping and volunteer maintenance remain. Please refer to appalachiantrail.org for the latest updates.

On June 10, staff of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy hosted a Zoom call for A.T. Communities, service providers, and other partners to provide an update on the evolving status of the A.T.

ATC President & CEO Sandra Marra recognized the hardships many businesses have endured in light of the pandemic, and assured attendees that ATC is viewed as a leader in early and science-based guidance on closures amid the pandemic. She added that visitor use will remain very important as people have more flexibility to discover trails and get outside. Over the long term, Marra plans to leverage this appreciation and elevation in gaining recognition among federal lawmakers and the National Park Service.

Some concern was raised over divisions in the Trail community due to COVID-related closures. But Marra reminded attendees of the rivalry between Benton MacKaye and Myron Avery in the A.T.’s beginnings. She said, “The Trail has withstood much greater things in the past. We’ve made it through wars. We’ll come out well.”
ATC's COVID-19 Impact Report

This report summarizes how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted communities along the A.T., with a focus on service providers and businesses. The data collected from hundreds of interviews and survey responses summarized in this report informs ATC’s advocacy decisions, programmatic recommendations, and our efforts to pursue short and long-term recovery opportunities.

Click here for the full report.

Broadening Diversity Through JEDI Initiatives

On a June 10 Zoom call with A.T. Communities, service providers, and other partners, several questions were raised regarding ATC’s actions on broadening diversity along the Trail. ATC President & CEO Sandra Marra reiterated the organization is in a learning phase but “dug the hole for our foundation” six years ago by including a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) focus in the organization’s strategic plan.

Earlier in June, Marra released the following statement (abridged from the full statement):

"The A.T. is not racially or ethnically diverse. ... We feel justice comes in the form of action. We believe action can make meaningful change. We are committing to making the A.T. and the broader Trail community a space that is inclusive, open, and safe for all.”

As ATC continues its ongoing learning of JEDI work and practice, NextGen Advisory Council members offer a quarterly web forum for ATC, clubs, and A.T. Community partners to join and share dialogue around best JEDI practices. The next forum will take place on August 6th at 6:30 pm. We’ll hear from the Dartmouth Outing Club about how they approach JEDI within their club, with discussion to follow. Register HERE for the Forum.

Heart, Healing & Hospitality

This recent report, titled “Heart, Healing & Hospitality: How trails contribute to four-season economies and more vibrant communities,” presents community case studies from the Midwest and Appalachia. The report shows that trails can contribute to the healing process following natural disasters and in other times of emergency. Read about how trails heal, embody heart, and function as spines that both support and connect our places.
National Park Service Connected Conservation
Webinar Features A.T. Communities

On May 20, ATC’s Julie Judkins, Katie Hess of Pennsylvania’s South Mountain Partnership, and Kayla Carter of the Northeast Tennessee Regional Economic Partnership presented a webinar as part of the NPS’s Connected Conservation Webinar Series. They discussed how their organizations and partnerships are engaging with communities to support the Appalachian Trail and broader landscape conservation.

The hour-long webinar can be viewed here.

Wild East Action Fund Opens In July - Stay Tuned!

The Wild East Action Fund, now in its third year, provides financial support to land protection and capacity building projects that support conservation work within the Appalachian Trail landscape. Stay tuned for a detailed announcement about the Wild East Action Fund. We will begin accepting proposals later this month.

A total of $500,000 will be available for qualified land protection projects. For capacity building projects, grants ranging from $10,000 to $50,000 will be awarded. If you have specific questions between now and the request for proposals, please contact Anne Sentz at asentz@appalachiantrail.org.

"We Need To Talk"

On Juneteenth, more than 1,400 people listened to "We Need to Talk," a powerful conversation among eight Black American conservationists. Listen to the 90-minute conversation on YouTube and explore the intersection between race, history and the outdoors. The conversation was hosted by the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office.
Senate Passes Great American Outdoors Act; Bill Moves to House for Consideration

With a vote of 73–25 in favor, the U.S. Senate passed the Great American Outdoors Act on June 17, bringing it one step closer to becoming one of the most sweeping conservation bills in decades. It now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

The Act provides full, permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and creates a Restoration Fund to address the deferred maintenance needs in national parks, forests, and other public lands.

The Great American Outdoors Act is the top legislative priority for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) in the 116th Congress, as it will directly address millions of dollars needed to properly protect and maintain the A.T. For more information about this Act and how it can help preserve the A.T., visit appalachiantrail.org/gaoa.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline Canceled; Supreme Court Ruling Would Have Permitted Trail Crossing

Duke Energy and Dominion Energy on July 5 announced the cancellation of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline due to delays and rising costs. Lawsuits, mainly from environmentalists aimed at stopping the pipeline’s construction, nearly doubled the anticipated costs, and more lawsuits were expected.

On June 15, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of United States Forest Service v. Cowpasture River Preservation Association, overturning the ruling made by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2019. In a 7-2 decision, the court held that because the Department of the Interior’s decision to assign responsibility over the Appalachian Trail to the National Park Service did not transform the land over which the Trail passes into land within the National Park System, the Forest Service had the authority to issue the special use permit for the construction of the pipeline.
A.T. Community Survey & Meet Jess Schottanes

Meet Jessica A. Schottanes, a Dual Master of Regional Planning and Master of Science in Geography candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Jessica’s thesis research is on A.T. Communities. (More on that below)

When Jess is not researching the gateway communities along the Trail, she converts vans into adventure campers at Ready.Set.Van. and backpacks in New England and New York.

Jess, a former Student Conservation Association (SCA) and American Conservation Experience (ACE) intern, aspires to design and plan for America’s national parks, monuments, and other historically or culturally significant landscapes/resources after graduate school. Her research interests include historic landscape and preservation planning, environmental law and policy, Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs), and public lands.

Most people think of the A.T. purely in terms of the opportunities it provides for outdoor and wilderness experiences. However, this regional trail also helps secure the economic vitality of its rural gateway communities. Jess’s thesis, ‘An Assessment of Four Selected Communities Along the Appalachian Trail in Relation to Emile Benton MacKaye’s Original Vision of Regional Planning,’ explores how the ATC’s A.T. Community™ and Supporter programs achieve aspects of MacKaye’s grander wilderness civilization blueprint in Damascus, VA; Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, WV; Hot Springs, NC; and Monson, Maine.

How You Can Help

While Jessica’s research is focused on these four communities, the ATC is conducting a parallel survey for the other designated communities within the network.

If you are a community member, business owner, or employee in Damascus, Harpers Ferry-Bolivar, Hot Springs, or Monson, please fill out this survey: tinyurl.com/2020ATCommunitySurvey

If you are a community member, business owner, or employee in any other A.T. Community™, please fill out this survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020ATCommunity

Thank you for participating! Stay tuned for Jess and the ATC to deliver the results!
Fun Bits & Upcoming Events

Who doesn’t love fun? Read on to learn about opportunities for learning, assistance, and upcoming events! For information on more Trail-related events, visit appalachiantrail.org/home/community/events.

A.T. Community Zoom: Business & Organization Innovations

ATC will host a live Zoom session on Wednesday, August 12th from 3:00-4:00 p.m. for A.T. Communities. We’ll highlight four businesses & organizations along the Trail that will share their adaptability and creativity during COVID-19.

• Elizabeth Tual, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Devils Backbone
• Kayla Carter, Outdoor Development Manager, North East Tennessee Regional Economic Partnership
• Cora Gnegy, Tourism Marketing Director for Giles County, VA
• Alanna Burns, Director of Education and Outreach for Harlem Valley Homestead

To register, watch your inbox or click here to join the meeting.

We Are The A.T.: Home Hiking Series

In partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Northeast Tennessee Outdoor Coalition created a webinar series celebrating the outdoor economies of some awesome stops along the Appalachian Trail in TN and VA. The series highlights Damascus, Unicoi, and Roan Mountain.

• The aim is to build more partnerships and encourage more investments in the outdoor recreation economy in the region.

• If your community would like to be involved in the series, please reach out to Kayla Carter, NeTREP Outdoor Development Manager, by emailing her at kaylaenortheasttn.com.

A.T. Leadership Academy 2020

Intended for leaders within A.T. Clubs, A.T. Communities, affinity groups and key partners, the A.T. Volunteer Leadership Academy will be held online and will bring focus to operational best-practices for volunteer management, safe field operations, and fundamentals in A.T. Cooperative Management. This online learning workshop is in place of the biennial Volunteer Leadership Meeting.

Click here to learn more about the online meeting and to register intent to participate.

Please send us your events to post on Wild East and the ATC main event pages! Email jjudkins@appalachiantrail.org

The Harpers Ferry footbridge is OPEN!

SUMMER 2020
2020 A.T. Community™ Survey

Introduction & Consent

What’s your long-term vision for your Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Community™? Jessica Schottanes, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), want to know how you support your community’s trailside designation! This 15-minute survey will echo the 2010 mission of the A.T. Community™ program and gather input on the program’s next steps. How can the ATC and the program better support your town’s unique character and assist with economic development?

This survey is confidential and will not collect identifying
information about specific individuals, businesses, or organizations. Participants should not disclose their identity or business name if they do not wish to have it known. Schottanes will use responses from the 2020 Appalachian Trail Community™ Survey in her Master’s Thesis in Geography that assesses whether the program achieves Benton MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning. All survey results will be shared with the ATC for use in future planning initiatives. Thank you for your participation.

☐ I consent, begin the survey
☐ I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

**A.T. Community™**

Which A.T. Community™ are you connected to?

☐ Monson, Maine
☐ Harpers Ferry–Bolivar, West Virginia
☐ Damascus, Virginia
☐ Hot Springs, North Carolina

**Relationship to A.T. Community™**
What is your relationship to ${e://Field/Community}? Select All That Apply

☐ I live in ${e://Field/Community}
☐ I work in ${e://Field/Community}
☐ I own a business in ${e://Field/Community}

**Employee**

Why did you choose to work in ${e://Field/Community}? Select All That Apply

☐ Ideal Geographic Location
☐ Proximity to My Home
☐ Proximity to the Appalachian Trail and Other Recreational Amenities
☐ ${e://Field/Community}’s Unique Character
☐ Experience While Thru-Hiking the A.T.
☐ Other

**Resident**

How many years have you lived in ${e://Field/Community}?

☐ Born and Raised
☐ 0–2 Years
○ 3–6 Years
○ 7–9 Years
○ Over 10 Years, But Not Originally From $\{e://Field/Community\}$
○ Other

Why did you move to $\{e://Field/Community\}$? Select All That Apply

☐ Ideal Geographic Location
☐ Proximity to My Home
☐ Proximity to the Appalachian Trail and Other Recreational Amenities
☐ $\{e://Field/Community\}$'s Unique Character
☐ Experience While Thru-Hiking the A.T.
○ Other

Business Owner

How would you classify your business or organization in $\{e://Field/Community\}$?

○ Accommodation Service (Hotel, Motel, Hostel, or Campground)
○ Outdoor Adventure and Recreation Service
○ Arts & Entertainment Service
○ Educational Facility
Professional Service (Law, Medicine, etc.)
Restaurant, Cafe, Farm Stand, or Bar
Retail Store
Other

Why did you choose to operate a business in ${e://Field/Community}$? Select All That Apply

- Ideal Customer Base
- Ideal Geographic Location
- Interaction with A.T. Hikers
- Proximity to My Home
- Proximity to the Appalachian Trail and Other Recreational Amenities
- ${e://Field/Community}$’s Unique Character
- Experience While Thru-Hiking the A.T.
- Other

Do you hire additional employees during the peak trail season?

- Yes
Approximately what percentage of your customer base are A.T. hikers?

- 0%
- 25%
- 50%
- 75%
- 100%
- I Don't Know

Is your business or organization a recognized A.T. Community™ Supporter through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC)?

- Yes
- No

**Uaffiliated Business**

Are you aware of the A.T. Community™ Supporter program?
A.T. Community™ Supporter Program

What factors affected your decision to choose not to participate in the A.T. Community™ Supporter program?

A.T. Community™ Supporter

How long has your business or organization been partnered with the ATC program?

- 0–3 years
- 4–7 years
- 8–10 years

Does your A.T. Community™ have an Advisory Committee?
Appendix B

How often does your business or organization interact or collaborate with $\{e://Field/Community\}$'s A.T. Community™ Advisory Committee?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- Other
- I Don't Know

How does your business or organization support the Appalachian Trail, ATC, local maintenance club, and/or A.T. Community™? Select All That Apply

- Offer Discounts to Trail Users (Day, Section, and Thru)
- Provide Long-term Shuttle Services
- Educate Tourists about the A.T.'s Original Vision, Development, and Opportunities
- Support and Participate in the ATC Lodging Give Back Program
☐ Provide Hikers with Free Internet and Access to Educational Resources
☐ Promote Local Maintenance Organizations, Hiking Clubs, and Environmental Stewardship Programs
☐ Provide Mail Drop Services for Thru-Hikers
☐ Organize, Contribute, or Participate in $\{\text{Field}/\text{Community}\}$’s A.T. Community™ Events or Initiatives
☐ [Other]

Which of the following A.T. Community™ Supporter benefits have significantly contributed to the growth and vitality of your business or organization? Select All That Apply

☐ National Recognition on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Website, Official Blog, and Social Media
☐ National Recognition in the A.T. Journeys Magazine
☐ Regional Recognition in ATC’s Online Newsletters
☐ Appalachian Trail Community™ Supporter Storefront Decal
☐ Appalachian Trail Conservancy Maps and Brochures for Customers and Visitors
☐ [Other]

☐ The A.T. Community™ Supporter program has not significantly contributed to the growth and vitality of my business or organization
How has the A.T. Community™ Supporter program impacted your business or organization?

Long-Term Vision for A.T. Community™

Since $\{e://Field/Community\}$ became an A.T. Community™, what changes in conservation practices have you seen? Select All That Apply

☐ Adjust Zoning to Protect Wetlands and Floodplains
☐ Creation of Farmers Market
☐ Development of Local School Programs in Environmental Education
☐ Development of Trail Resources in the Community Excluding the A.T.
☐ Implement Agricultural or Conservation Restrictions on Private Land
☐ Protection of Agricultural Land
☐ Protection of Forests
☐ Protection of Watersheds
☐ Purchase of Land for Open Space
☐ Other
☐ None
Has ${e://Field/Community}’s designation as an A.T. Community™ positively contributed to economic development?

☐ Yes
☐ Maybe
☐ No
☐ I Don’t Know

How has ${e://Field/Community}’s designation as an A.T. Community™ positively contributed to economic development?


Do you view the A.T. Community™ program as a threat to ${e://Field/Community}’s unique character?
Yes, $\{e://Field/Community\}$'s identity as an outdoor recreation hub attracts visitors rather than the town's distinct history and culture

Maybe

No, the A.T. Community™ program promotes $\{e://Field/Community\}$'s charm

Would $\{e://Field/Community\}$ benefit if the ATC became more involved in community events such as trail clean-ups and celebrations?

Yes

Maybe

No

I Don't Know

Below is a model rating system for the A.T. Community™ program aimed to encourage designated trailside communities to network with one another on regional scale, embrace their roles as guardians of the A.T., and establish the sustainable economic development initiatives set forth by Benton MacKaye in his 1921 proposal for the extensive footpath.
THE LEVELS OF A.T. GUARDIANSHIPS FOR DESIGNATED TRAILSIDE COMMUNITIES

Model A.T. Community™ Rating System
For achieving Benton MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning

The A.T. Community™ program offers trailside communities an opportunity to gain national recognition, showcase their economic climate vitality, foster a sense of identity, and raise awareness of the community’s support in protecting the spirit, culture, history, and geography of the A.T. for future generations.

STAGE 1: CERTIFIED EXPLORER
Your community is accepted into the A.T. Community™ program and has fulfilled the required A.T. Project.

STAGE 2: SCOUT
Your community has at least 2 A.T. Community™ Supporters and implements the required large-scale action project, along with at least one small-scale initiative to promote sustainable economic development.

STAGE 3: TRAILBLAZER
Your community has at least 4 A.T. Community™ Supporters and implements the required large-scale action project, along with at least two small-scale initiatives to promote sustainable economic development.

STAGE 4: RANGER
Your community has six or more A.T. Community™ Supporters and implements the required large-scale action project, along with at least three small-scale initiatives to promote sustainable economic development.

PARTICIPATION IN ANNUAL ATC CONFERENCE, WORKSHOPS, OR REGIONAL TRAININGS
INTEGRATION OF A.T. COMMUNITY™ DESIGNATION INTO THE PLANNING PROCESS

LEVEL OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
LEVEL OF RECREATIONAL & ECO-TOURISM

Annual Awards

A.T. COMMUNITY™ SUPPORTER LEADERSHIP AWARD
A.T. COMMUNITY™ OF THE YEAR AWARD
BENTON MACKAYE AWARD

Appalachian Trail Community
Would $e://Field/Community$ benefit from the above model set to recognize and reward achievements in planning, environmental stewardship, and outreach?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- I Don’t Know

What are the pros and cons of the model A.T. Community™ rating system?

What are the strengths and weakness of the A.T. Community™ program?
As the A.T. Community™ program enters a new decade, what is your long-term vision for ${e://Field/Community} as a designated A.T. Community™?

End

Do you have any additional comments, ideas, or suggestions?
How can the Appalachian Trail Conservancy better support the unique character of each A.T. Community™ and foster growing local outdoor recreation economies? This preliminary report summarizes the impact of the A.T. Community™ program over the past decade, based on responses to two surveys distributed to residents, business owners, and employees in designated trailside communities.
2020 Appalachian Trail Community™ Survey Results

Land acknowledgement

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail runs through the traditional lands of numerous native tribes who still live on and help protect the land. Many popular destinations along the Trail are sacred sites.

History

The Appalachian Trail Community™ program is designed to recognize and support communities that promote and protect the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). The program started as a pilot in 2009 to assist communities with sustainable economic development through tourism and outdoor recreation, while preserving and protecting the A.T. There are currently almost 50 A.T. Communities™, which serve as assets for everyone who uses the A.T. by providing food, supplies, history lessons, recreation and volunteer opportunities, and so much more.

The 2020 A.T. Community™ Survey, developed by Jessica Schottanes, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, provided an avenue for residents, business owners, and employees from Damascus, VA; Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, WV; Hot Springs, NC; and Monson, ME to share their long-term vision for the A.T. Community™ program. The results of the survey provide valuable insight into how community members perceive the A.T. Community™ program, and will inform the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) next steps. Schottanes plans to analyze the responses further in her master’s thesis on how the initiative achieves A.T. founder Benton MacKaye’s original vision of regional planning.

The ATC distributed a parallel survey to Schottanes to reach other communities along the Trail. Combined, Schottanes and the ATC collected close to 200 total responses from the regional A.T. Community™ network!

Impacts: Community-Building & Sustainability

The core strengths of the A.T. Community™ program are intangible. The designation serves to intertwine a town’s identity with the Trail to create a positive community image for residents and visitors alike. Community members feel recognized for their efforts to provide services to hikers. They act as stewards of the Trail, and welcome with open arms...
all regional visitors, day-hikers, and those who are interested in experiencing trailside towns. In many A.T. Communities⁷⁷, there’s now more emphasis on how outdoor recreation contributes to the economy, greater awareness for how hikers and businesses serve one another, and an increased sense of community pride.

The chart below shows the tangible impacts of the A.T. Community⁷⁷ designation, gathered from the ATC’s survey. Since joining the program, many municipalities have added formal protections to their forests, rivers, and other public lands; created farmers markets; and implemented new environmental education programs. The most popular initiative has been developing local trails not affiliated with the A.T. trails, which provide additional recreational opportunities for both locals and visitors. Some responses indicated that communities had already implemented such changes before becoming an official A.T. Community⁷⁷.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjust Zoning to Protect Wetlands and Floodplains</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Farmers Market</td>
<td>22.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Local School Programs in Environmental Education</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Trail Resources in the Community Excluding the A.T.</td>
<td>49.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement Agricultural or Conservation Restrictions on Private Land</td>
<td>8.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Agricultural Land</td>
<td>7.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Forests</td>
<td>14.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Watersheds</td>
<td>24.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of Land for Open Space</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Know</td>
<td>19.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>17.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents: 57</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants provided a plethora of suggestions for how to strengthen the A.T. partnership. Many envision connecting more with other designated A.T. Communities to learn from each others’ successes and create a stronger support system. Several participants cited a need for more local volunteers to take on leadership roles in organizing events such as trail clean-ups, hiking days, and educational programming, among other projects.

“I believe hikers and tourists see the designation as recognition that this community supports the visitors. We have a large banner on the side of our building, which is the first non-shelter hikers see when they enter town from the south and the last building they see when they leave town headed south. They're savvy enough to know our businesses want their money, but the designation is a way of saying thank you and we respect you.”
Impacts: Economic Strength

Over half of respondents from the ATC’s survey feel the A.T. Community™ program has contributed positively to economic development, and many recognized an increase in business visitation. In contrast, almost 45% of respondents from this survey were unsure how the program directly benefits their community’s economic climate.

Has designation as an A.T. Community™ positively contributed to your community’s economic development?

Answered: 57  Skipped: 0

Local organizations and businesses in A.T. Communities have the opportunity to become designated as official A.T. Community™ Supporters by the ATC. These organizations support the A.T. by providing shuttles, discounts, supplies, books, and other services to hikers; promoting their local hiking clubs; and assisting with volunteer trail work and other public services. Many businesses appreciate the additional seasonal foot traffic from thru-hikers, and benefit from the increased regional visitation following their community’s designation. The chart below shows which Supporter benefits have contributed most to organizations’ growth, according to the ATC’s survey. Supporters most appreciate the publicity and pride that comes from recognition by the ATC, both online and physically in their storefront. One participant noted how the A.T. Community™ storefront decal communicates to hikers that they are welcome and respected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Recognition on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Website, Official Blog, and Social Media</td>
<td>46.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Recognition in the A.T. Journeys Magazine</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Recognition in ATC’s Online Newsletters</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian Trail Community™ Supporter Storefront Decal</td>
<td>53.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian Trail Conservancy Maps and Brochures for Customers and Visitors</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The A.T. Community™ Supporter program has not significantly contributed to the growth and vitality of my business or organization</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 15
Next Steps from the ATC

In conveying their long term visions for the A.T. Community™ program, participants voiced a need for more collaboration between communities along the Trail. With more regular communication, community stakeholders can learn best practices from each others’ events, outreach, and stewardship efforts. Most participants also felt the ATC could work more closely with communities to coordinate events hosted by local hiking clubs, reinvigorate community pride through designation anniversary celebrations, and further expand the network of A.T. Community™ Supporters.

Would your community benefit if the ATC became more involved in community events such as trail clean-ups and celebrations?

Answered: 57    Skipped: 0

The ATC can also help recognized communities reach a greater audience by sharing their stories on social media, in A.T. Journeys, and online newsletters. These personal stories, interpreted by local historians, volunteers, and community members, could inspire more hikers to go off-trail and fall in love with each community’s unique character. By broadening recognition efforts, more tourists and visitors could be drawn to these gateway towns and their Supporter businesses/organizations. The ATC and Schottanes anticipate that these highlights will create a buzz about the A.T. Community™ program and keep supporters in the loop on community events, Supporters, and the program’s progression. Within the next decade, the A.T. Community™ program could strengthen the bridge between the ATC, A.T. users, and advocates and trailside communities, both remotely and in-person.

We are always open to suggestions for how to provide support to our A.T. Communities. Please email acommunities@appalachiantrail.org with your ideas. More findings and recommendations to come from Schottanes soon!