

GARDINER NEEDS TRAILS



Riverbend Trails at Gardiner Park Proposal

Prepared for: Gardiner Town Board

Prepared by: Town of Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee in collaboration with Gardiner Trail Alliance, with support from Climate Smart Gardiner, Gardiner Open Space Commission, Gardiner Town Board, Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Open Space Institute, Shawangunk Singletrack Coalition, Shawangunk Bicycle Association, Hudson Valley Trailworks and Fats in the Cats

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Objective

The main purpose of this document is to present a clear and effective plan to The Town Board of Gardiner in hopes of gaining approval so that we may move forward with phased construction, grant seeking, fundraising and continued planning of Riverbend Trails at Gardiner Park.

Introduction

There has never been a better time to build trails in Gardiner. Local interest is at a very high level, with over 90% of the 2020 Parks & Recreation Survey respondents in favor of new trails. Grant funding opportunities for such projects abound. Please read on to find many more reasons to vote 'Yes' for Riverbend Trails.

The project outlined below will satisfy numerous Town objectives as stated in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan:

Town of Gardiner Goals

The Town of Gardiner's 1992 Comprehensive Plan, Updated in 2004, states that the Town should strive to:

- *"improve public access to recreation areas via publicly owned lands" (Goal B-5), and*
- *"reserve open mountain areas and much of the river valleys for public enjoyment" (Goal B-2).*

The Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee is tasked with helping the Town to achieve these goals.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the town *"identify and develop access opportunities available from town properties"*. The stated criteria for success in this objective would be *"new access sites created"* (p. 63).

The Comprehensive Plan also recommends that the Town of Gardiner's leaders should:

- *Create a long-term parks plan as part of the Town's Open Space Plan.*
- *Identify ways of building links with its existing parks and public lands and their surrounding residential areas. Such links could include trails, bicycle paths...linking these areas with the center of the Gardiner hamlet. Creation of such a plan would position the Town to pursue grants to make the necessary improvements under such funding sources as the New York State Department of Transportation's Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). (pg 54-55)*

Proposal

In Gardiner's 2004 Comprehensive Plan, the town identified six major areas within the Town to be considered for development into public parks or recreation areas. Nearly twenty years after the most recent Comprehensive Plan, the time is ripe for one of these areas to fulfill its potential as a recreational park for the people of Gardiner and beyond.

The largest of these six sites is the parcel referred to in the Comprehensive Plan as Gardiner Park, an area of 87 acres, with significant Wallkill River frontage, forested hills, open meadows, a winding stream & panoramic views of the Shawangunk Ridge. The people of Gardiner should all be invited to enjoy this land, which really belongs to them already.

It is in this spirit that Gardiner Parks and Recreation proposes that the Town, with the help of local volunteers, develop and construct a recreational trail system on the land referred to as Gardiner Park, at the end of Steve's Lane, beyond the Transfer Station.

It is further proposed that this Town-owned land be designated as a Park, to protect it for future generations.

Multiple Use Trail System Features

1. Single track walking, running & biking trails along the perimeter of property and riverside, throughout the woods, and among DEC buffer plantings.
2. River access path (eventually ADA compliant), wide enough to accommodate maintenance and emergency vehicles, as required of a municipal public recreation or transportation area.
3. Fishing Access from the riverbank.
4. Parking Lot to prevent on-street parking
5. Educational signage identifying native species, etc.
6. Panoramic viewpoint atop capped landfill, eventually with an informative sign/kiosk with facts about the Shawangunks, and boulder or benches to sit on

Summary of Benefits

1. Fulfill Stated Town Comprehensive Plan Goals
2. Provide What Local Taxpayers Want, and Answer the Call for New Trails
3. Allow Public Access to Nature
4. Promote a Healthy Community
5. Connect to the Rail Trail & Empire State Trail
6. Connect to Hamlet
7. Reduce Trespassing on Private Property
8. Unite Elected Town Government & Volunteer Committees
9. Keep Recreation Local
10. Provide Safe Recreation
11. Protect River Ecosystems
12. Promote Sustainable Tourism
13. Create Educational Opportunities

The Trails

Main Trail

This trail is essentially an upgrade of the existing river access route. It provides the most direct access to the Walkkill River, and once completed, will be wide enough for maintenance and emergency vehicles, as well as walkers, runners, & cyclists.

The main trail allowed necessary vehicle access during planting for the NYS DEC Trees for Tribes planting project, and is also the access route used by the Highway Dept. for mowing the meadows near the river. Upgrading this trail for year round use by visitors of all ability levels, and maintenance vehicles, is a high priority, and will require investment. Parks & Rec is working with Gardiner Trail Alliance to pursue grant funding to make the Main Trail accessible to all, per ADA requirements for public parks and trails.

Single Track Trails

Gardiner Parks and Rec has flagged several prospective trails in the wooded area south of the capped landfill. The majority of these trails are intended for single-track mountain biking, as there is demand for these trails, and currently none exist locally. Such trails can be hiked, although they are not designed to provide the most direct route between two points. Rather, they follow the contours in the land to provide challenging and easy options for various levels of riding. Some single-track trails may include built features like raised berms in turns, and plank bridges across wet areas. These features will be constructed by members of local bike trail advocacy groups such as Fats in the Cats & Gardiner Trail Alliance, according to IMBA (International Mountain Biking Association) standards. The trail building work will be accomplished by skilled volunteers.

Concerns have been raised regarding the mingling of cyclists and hikers on these narrow trails. One solution would be to designate certain trails for hiking/running and others for biking only. Trails would be clearly marked to note such designations.

Perimeter Trail

A multi-use perimeter trail is being considered. This trail would be wider, to accommodate higher traffic for walking, running & biking.

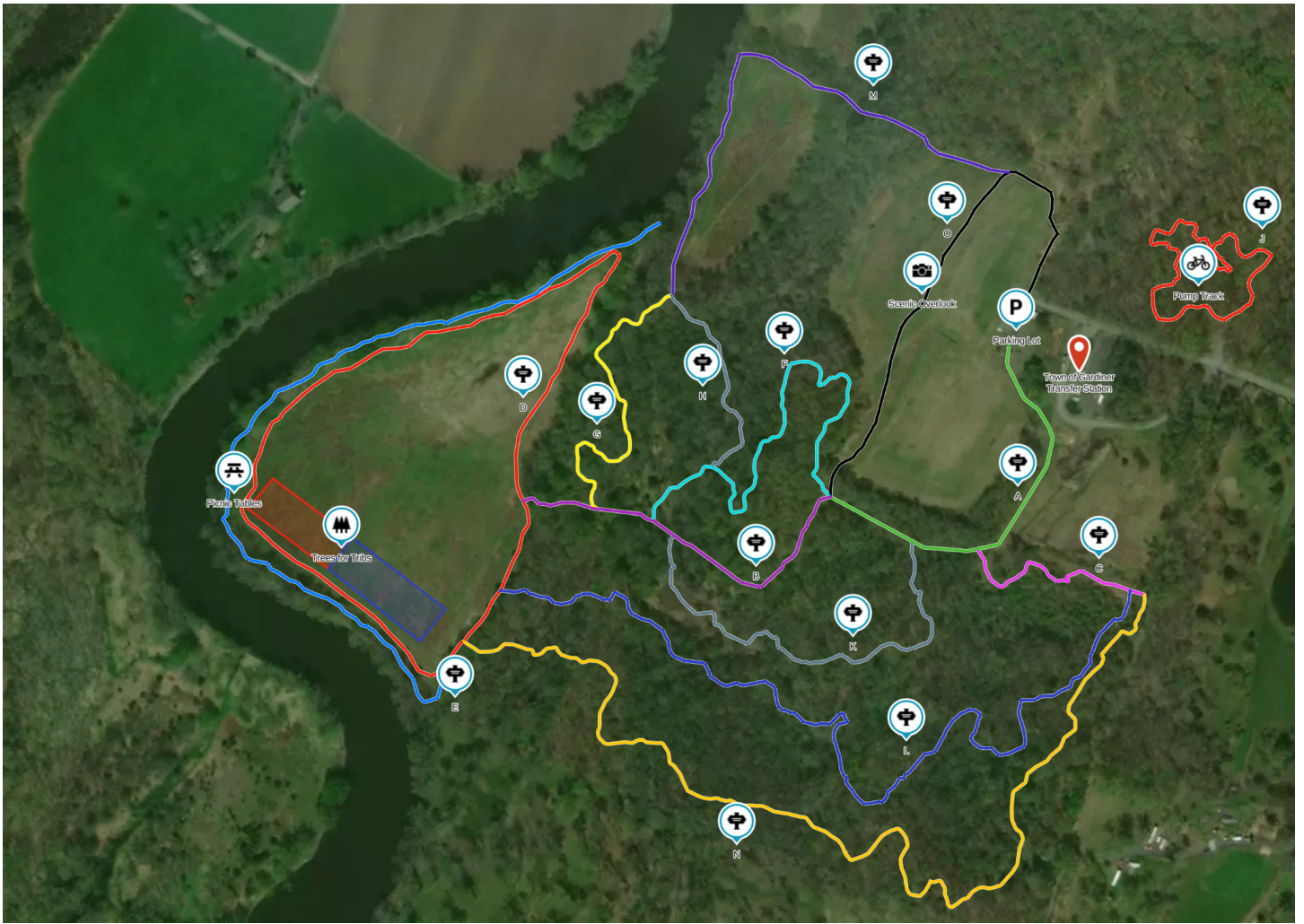
This trail will initially be constructed as a single track, possibly to be widened in years to come, as necessary, depending on usage.

The map below shows the remaining single track trails that have been flagged on the property. They have been mapped using the trail app Gaia GPS. The trails will be rated by difficulty as well, once they are completed and given a final assessment.

Pump Track

A warm-up loop is proposed near the T turnaround at the end of Steve's Lane. This will be a fun area for all levels of mountain bikers to practice riding various terrain features. The local trail-building company, Hudson Valley Trailworks, has offered to construct this feature.

Trail Map



Benefits in Detail

“Trails and greenways are often seen narrowly when it comes to their benefits. People tend to focus on the recreational or environmental aspects of trails and greenways, failing to see the big picture—the total package of benefits that a trail or greenway can provide to communities, including public health, economic and transportation benefits, and even the effect on community pride and identity.

When seen as a whole, the evidence about the far-reaching benefits of trails and greenways is compelling, especially given the minimal public investment involved compared to other undertakings with the same community goals.”

railstotrails.org

1. Fulfill Numerous Town Goals

Trails at this location will help the town move closer to achieving its stated Comprehensive Plan goals. Many of the individual Comprehensive Plan goals apply directly to projects like Riverbend Trails. The Town should:

“Continue to develop a town parks system for the enjoyment of Gardiner residents”. (Goal D-7)

“maintain the rural character of the landscape by preserving significant large parcels of undeveloped land and/or agricultural land.” (Goal A-1)

The Riverbend Trails project will help achieve the goals stated in the Comprehensive Plan, particularly those which pertain to parks, open space, and community access.

2. Provide What Local Taxpayers Want, and Answer the Call for New Trails

Local Residents have expressed their support for Trails at this location in response to the 2020 survey conducted by the Parks & Rec Committee. The vast majority of respondents, 90%, were in favor of the creation of trails on this parcel of town-owned land.

Additionally, selecting from a list of 26 recreational activities, the top two choices survey respondents were most interested in were ‘Hiking/Running Trails’ (85%) and ‘Biking Trails’ (71%).

83% of respondents would not be opposed to ‘having \$10 of (their) yearly taxes designated to help with supplies and repairs to maintain hiking and biking trails’.

86% said they felt the town should help offset the costs of creating a trailhead parking lot at the Transfer Station.

Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee looks forward to helping the Town provide what Gardiner residents have said they want.

3. Allow Public Access to Nature

Community members will have access to this town property for hiking, mountain biking, snow shoeing, cross-country skiing, fishing, and other outdoor non-motorized recreational activities. This will help the Town to fulfill two prominent Comprehensive Plan goals:

Reserve open mountain areas and much of the river valleys for public enjoyment. (Goal B-2)
Improve public access to recreation areas via publicly owned lands. (Goal B-5)

4. Promote the Health of the Community

The need for outdoor recreation opportunities has become increasingly clear during the pandemic, and the trails in this proposal would offer residents and visitors alike an ideal way to enjoy local natural beauty, get healthy exercise, and connect with others who share these interests.

“Trails by their very nature, promote social, racial, gender, and economic equity. They are almost always free to use, are available 24/7/365, and provide transportation alternatives, no matter what mode of travel you use.” <https://www.americantrails.org/trails-are-inclusive>

“Thing is, once we had some purpose-built singletrack around town, it brought others out. Runners, hikers, families walking the kids and the dogs, even bird watchers, started wandering around in the woods. And city leaders notice when their constituents are recreating outside because that contributes to quality of life and better health...it also turned a couple of unused areas into places where the community felt safely connected to nature. Something else surprising happens, according to Michelle Barker, director of chapter and regional development for the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA). “[Trails] can quickly become the hub for active people of all backgrounds and bring together those who might not have anything in common but bikes,” she said. “I’ve also seen people become cyclists and mountain bikers because they had trails near their homes, creating a population that cares about healthy outdoor activities.”

<https://www.singletracks.com/trail-advocacy/6-ways-mountain-bikes-winning-big-changing-world/>

5. Tie Into Rail Trail & Empire State Trail

Riverbend Trails will be accessible from the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail via Steve’s Lane, making it a short side trip for those utilizing the Rail Trail, (less than 1 mile away). For the safety of cyclists and pedestrians, the committee recommends that at minimum, a bike and pedestrian lane be painted onto Steve’s Lane, similar to the Empire State Trail on Henry W. Dubois Road in New Paltz.

An ideal resolution to the concerns for pedestrian safety on Steve’s Lane would be a Connector Trail to extend across the neighboring property to the Rail Trail. Such a trail would eliminate the immediate need for a bike lane on Steve’s Lane by allowing trail users to avoid the road entirely. This idea is supported by the Comprehensive Plan, which states that the town should:

“Create a circulation system offering autos, pedestrians, bicyclists and others a variety of connections between Gardiner’s hamlets and between the hamlets and the regional transportation system. (Goal A-2.)

“Provide a diversity of transportation routes and modes throughout the Town to minimize auto traffic congestion associated with population increases.” (Goal D-3)

Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee has been in contact with Gardiner Open Space Commission, Walkkill Valley Land Trust & Open Space Institute to seek their expertise in handling such matters as conservation easements and land acquisition.

6. Connect to Hamlet

The Walkkill Valley Rail Trail provides a direct link between Riverbend Trails and the Hamlet of Gardiner. This connection contributes to more than one of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan goals, by allowing the use of alternate means of transportation. Riverbend Trails will be less than 2 miles from the village of Gardiner via Steve’s Lane (or permitted access across private property) & the Rail Trail. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the Town:

...identify ways of building links with its existing parks and public lands and their surrounding residential areas. Such links could include trails, bicycle paths, and (in the case of Majestic Park, the Rail Trail and Gardiner Park) a sidewalk system linking these areas with the center of the Gardiner hamlet. (p.54-55)

7. Reduce Trespassing on Private Property

An organized trail system with public access will encourage local outdoor enthusiasts to use this location, rather than potentially trespassing on private property for lack of a better alternative. This, too, addresses one of the recommendations made in the Comprehensive Plan Update 2004.

“Improve opportunities for public access to recreation-related open space and waterways to enhance recreation opportunities and reduce trespassing on private lands” (p.30)

As has occurred over time with the development of the Rail Trail system, trespassing on this property by hunters and recreational vehicle riders will naturally decrease as attendance by trail users increases. Signs will be posted at entrances, stating that hunting on Town Land is not permitted, and that the Park is for use by non-motorized vehicles only.

8. Unite Elected Town Government & Volunteer Committees

This is a shared project that will offer benefits to all Gardiner Residents. This project presents an exciting opportunity for multiple Gardiner committees and commissions to help the Town Board create a lasting monument to teamwork and cooperation, in the form of Riverbend Trails at Gardiner Park. Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee has reached out to Climate Smart Gardiner, Gardiner Open Space Commission, Environmental Conservation Commission, Walkkill Valley Land Trust and Open Space Institute to assist in planning, and obtaining access to connecting parcels.

The committee has met with Climate Smart Gardiner at the proposed trail site, and hiked/snow-shoed some of the proposed trails with them. The groups have discussed the potential coexistence of the network of trails and a possible solar array atop the capped landfill. While there is hope that the proposed projects could complement each other, serious concerns certainly exist, particularly the potential cutting of wooded areas to accommodate solar panels and the loss of the panoramic viewpoint of the Shawangunk Ridge at the top of the capped landfill. Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee recognizes the value of clean energy initiatives for the town, and hopes that a more suitable

location for a solar installation can be found within the town, perhaps atop some of the industrial buildings along Steve's Lane, or on municipal buildings like the Firehouse, Gardiner Library & Pole Barn.

Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee approves wholeheartedly of the Trees for Tribes grant project. Members of the Trails Subcommittee of Gardiner Parks & Rec have walked the site with CSG & NYSDEC to discuss the trail route and plantings along the Walkkill River.

Riverbend Trails has the potential to become a focal point for community activity, offering benefits to the town in many ways. Opening this land for public access and recreation in a thoughtful and coordinated way will help build Gardiner's reputation as a community that works together and cares about providing quality outdoor experiences for its residents.

9. Keep Recreation Local

There are currently no public singletrack mountain biking trails in Gardiner. Several of the mapped trails in this proposal will be designed as singletrack for our local community to enjoy, without the need to travel outside the town. This would help the Town satisfy another of its stated goals:

"continue to develop a town parks system for the enjoyment of Gardiner residents." (pgs E-6 & 54, listed as D-6 on page 54).

The Town should seek to use publicly owned lands as a means for public access to important recreation areas and recreational waterways for non-motorized uses. The existing recreational opportunities in the Town can be substantially enhanced by formalizing access through properties owned by the Town and other government agencies. (pg. 30)

The addition of mountain bike trails to the Gardiner's Parks will provide benefits to the community that extend beyond the actual trails. As stated on the Mountain Bike Atlantic website:

Research has found this growth in biking to be an opportunity for local communities, whether bikers are doing day rides, group rides, or a sanctioned race or everything in between. They all have a direct and indirect impact on the community and its economic development. As the outdoor activity is known to cultivate social benefits for residents, it also plays a role in diversifying local economies...<https://mtbatlantic.com/blog/singletracks-impact-on-community-quality-of-life-and-economic-development/>

One successful regional example of singletrack bike trails is Lippman Park, in the Town of Wawarsing. Lippman Park is one of very few singletrack mountain bike parks in the surrounding area, and has, as such, become a destination for the growing subset of mountain bikers who favor this type of trail.

10. Provide Safe Recreation

Riverbend Trails would provide Gardiner residents with a safe location for outdoor pursuits, and would contribute to the health and well-being of our community. New trails are in demand.

*"The popularity of mountain biking has grown substantially over the last 30 years and can be classified as one of the fastest-growing outdoor recreation activities worldwide"
(MTBAtlantic.com)*

Building properly designed singletrack mountain bike trails into the Riverbend Trails plan from the outset will avoid the safety and liability issues that could arise if park users attempt to build their own trails on town property, as has already occurred at Mohonk. The creation of trails at this site will help the Town satisfy Goal B-5 of the Comprehensive Plan:

to 'Improve public access to recreation areas via publicly owned lands.'

11. Protect the River Ecosystem

The Comprehensive Plan update 2004 calls for the Town to:

"Improve protection of the Shawangunk Kill, The Walkill River and other water waterways in the Town" (p. 29).

The plan to build trails at Gardiner Park was an important factor in approval of the Trees for Tribes grant. Riverbend Trails will provide visibility for the DEC's work, and bring local awareness to the town's and the state's efforts to help improve the health of our local environment. The integration of trails among these plantings will showcase and enhance both projects.

Once established, the strategically placed native trees and shrubs will create a buffer to help protect the riverbank from erosion, and support a healthier ecosystem. Riverbend Trails construction & maintenance will include ongoing efforts to minimize invasive plant species on the property, such as the large swath of Mugwort currently growing in the meadow at the river's edge.

12. Promote Sustainable Tourism

While the main impetus for this project is the benefit for local residents, trails at this site will likely also attract visitors looking for quality outdoor experiences. Like it or not, tourism is a real part of Gardiner's economy. Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee envisions a phased approach to build-out of the trails, expanding in the coming years as vistorship increases.

In terms of tourism, mountain biking can boost local community economies and can spark interest in future economic and social development opportunities... Without local clubs and volunteers many trails would not exist. A common thread among attractive mountain biking trail systems are communities that have strong trail networks, a vibrant local community with trail building and advocacy skills, and a solid local bike culture. In part, investing in local trail groups/clubs will not only enhance quality of life for residents (riders and non-riders), but can have an economic impact on the broader community.

<https://mtbatlantic.com/blog/singletracks-impact-on-community-quality-of-life-and-economic-development/>

13. Create Educational Opportunities

This site could eventually be an ideal location for local school field trips, or informative naturalist-led hikes for locals and visitors, as it will provide access to the Walkill River and wooded trails. Gardiner Parks & Rec looks forward to incorporating educational signage along the trails that lead down to the Walkill, and at the scenic viewpoint atop the capped landfill.

Costs

There are certain costs associated with the Riverbend Trails project, even though the trail-building labor will be performed by volunteers from local trail advocacy groups.

Grant funding will be pursued, which could potentially cover many of the expenses, but items which might incur costs include the following:

1. Construction of a new Parking Lot or Reconfiguration of the Transfer Station Gates
2. Main Trail Surface & Grading
3. Signage
4. Maintenance
5. Land Access - access to additional property, with the assistance of OSI or other land preservation organizations, potentially using funds from subdivision fees, which are intended for investment in Parks and Recreation. (Chapter 188, Article IV, 188-22, Gardiner Municipal Code)

1. Parking Lot

While a new 60' x 80' parking lot has previously been discussed with the Town Board, another parking solution already exists. There is a substantial cleared, level space currently within the Transfer Station that could quite easily be used for trail access parking. This is the open area beyond the dog kennel building. Initially, this area could be utilized for parking while the Transfer Station is open. Ideally, the existing entry gate would be repositioned to allow park users to access the parking even while the Transfer Station is closed. This plan will require two additional gates, one across the exit road, and one at the entrance to the actual transfer station area. Park users would drive straight past the Transfer Station and dog kennel, and park beyond the kennel building. Well-placed boulders would prevent anyone from driving up onto the capped landfill.

Utilizing this existing area for parking would eliminate the need to cut trees to create a whole new parking area, as was originally discussed.

The existing parking area is closer to the trails, and would not require access across the privately owned parcel that separates the originally proposed parking from the rest of the Town property.

Using existing parking could save approximately \$7000 originally estimated for the new parking. The purchase of the two additional gates for the Transfer Station would likely run in the hundreds, not thousands.

If the original parking plan were selected instead, Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee would need to coordinate with the Town Highway Dept. to clear the area of trees at the north end of the T turnaround on Steve's Lane, and ensure proper funding for time and materials. The phased construction documents would need to be updated with the parking specifications. Increased costs could impact the Highway Department's budget and could add significant delays to the project.

2. Trail Surfacing

With the exception of the main trail, which will be surfaced with crushed stone or similar water-permeable material, the trails will not need much in the way of surface material. Generally, the forest floor will be the trails' surface.

3. Signage

- Trailhead Parking entrance
- Trail markers painted on trees, signs posted for trail names, with indications of the trails' uses, indications for trails that may require one-way travel for safety reasons.
- Informational kiosk at the parking area/trailhead with map and trail names, descriptors, and Gardiner Park info (hours, trail etiquette, sponsors, etc.)
- Possibly a sign at the peak of the capped landfill, with some description of the Shawangunk Range.

4. Maintenance

By working with Gardiner Trail Alliance as well as other volunteer trail advocacy groups such as Fats in the Cats, Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee will be able to host scheduled “work days” where volunteers gather to maintain and improve the trails. Maintenance tasks include raking, removing debris, leaf blowing, and trimming branches. The Gardiner Highway Department mows the lower field near the Walkkill River twice a year. Volunteers will weed-whack between mowings to keep the path passable and minimize tick habitat.

5. Land Access

Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee has sought the input of local land stewardship groups, OSC, WVLT & OSI, to potentially assist in negotiating conservation easements to gain Rail Trail access across privately owned lands adjacent to the proposed trail site.

Upon approval of the Riverbend Trails Proposal, Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee will begin the process of securing a route across neighboring lands. Without project approval, continuing too far into such a process seems premature.

Project Funding

Grants

Trails are on the rise nationwide, and grant opportunities abound for shovel-ready projects. Grant funding will allow for the upgrade of the main access trail to bring it up to ADA standards.

Gardiner Parks & Rec is working closely with Gardiner Trail Alliance. In order to capitalize on the available grants, and to help bring this plan to fruition, GTA is in the process of forming a 501(c)3 non-profit.

NYSDEC has already completed the first phase of the planting project Trees for Tribes, applied for by Climate Smart Gardiner, which covers a large area right next to the trails, and whose application was bolstered by the prospect of the trails project.

The Town of Gardiner is eligible for Hudson Greenway grants. Trails-specific grant opportunities currently exist, with the next application deadline fast approaching in September 2021. Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee can utilize the Town of Gardiner's standing as a Greenway Community.

Subdivision Fees

"Payments in lieu of the reservation of parkland" collected upon approval of new residential subdivisions *"are to be deposited into a dedicated separate fund to be used by the Town exclusively for park, playground or other recreational purposes"* (Chapter 188, Article IV, 188-22, Gardiner Municipal Code).

Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee proposes that the Riverbend Trails at Gardiner Park would constitute an appropriate use for such funds, should they be needed to supplement grant funding.

Fundraising

While municipal committees are unable to raise funds for projects, local advocacy groups have no such constraints. Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee has partnered with local trails advocacy group Gardiner Trail Alliance to assist with planning and supplemental fundraising.

Conclusion

It is one of the responsibilities of the Parks and Recreation Committee to identify recreation opportunities within the town. Gardiner Parks and Recreation Committee believes that this project exemplifies the sort of amenities the Town of Gardiner should be providing for its residents.

There is no downside to approving this project. The initial singletrack trails can be built at no cost to the town. Sufficient parking already exists at the Transfer Station, so no additional parking needs to be immediately created. With the addition of two simple gates, and the relocation of the existing gate, a separate entrance for Riverbend Trails can be created.

Local Bike trail advocacy groups have already committed to helping with trail maintenance. The twice-yearly mowing performed by the Town Highway Department will be made less problematic by improved access via the main trail.

What now?

Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee would very much like to see a vote on this project as soon as possible. A few thoughts on possible outcomes:

A 'NO' vote would be much more than a personal disappointment to those who have put their time and efforts into the project. Even more importantly, it would disregard the will of 90% of the Parks & Recreation survey respondents, Gardiner residents who support new trails at this location. Voting against Riverbend Trails would constitute a huge missed opportunity to improve the Town of Gardiner.

Further delaying or declining to put this project to a vote would leave the project in an unacceptable limbo. Fundraising would falter with no clear objective for which to raise funds. Without Town Board approval, grant opportunities would slip by, leaving Gardiner behind while other communities receive funding to build their own trails. Fall is an ideal time of year for initial trail work to happen. Missing this window would significantly delay how quickly we can reach early phase milestones.

A 'YES' vote to proceed with Riverbend Trails will clear the way for Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee to work with the Town Board and various Town committees to create a trail system of lasting benefit to all. Town Board approval will allow the project to kick into a higher gear. Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee, in partnership with Gardiner Trail Alliance, is ready to apply for grants and hammer out the remaining details to bring the trails to life.

Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee hopes that the Town Board will fully consider all aspects of this proposal, and vote YES to allow planning, grant applications, and initial construction phases of Riverbend Trails to proceed.

Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee greatly appreciates the feedback and input from the Town Board members, who have helped get the proposal to this point. We look forward to working with the Town Board as this project continues to take shape.

Additional Recommendations

Extend the Reach of Trails with Conservation Easements, Land Purchases or Donations

Parks and Recreation has identified an opportunity to more than double the area of public land available at this site. Two parcels of land adjoining the parcel would improve the access to the proposed trails and provide more space for trails and public enjoyment. The Town should explore the possibility of acquiring these parcels of land, or access to these parcels via conservation easements, adjacent to Gardiner Park.

The primary parcels in question are

- **SBL 93.2-2-8** (<1acre) located on the right side of Steve's Lane at the entrance to the Transfer Station.
- **SBL 93.4-2-1.200 & SBL: 93.4-2-1.110** approximately 100 acres in total, which borders the Gardiner Park parcel to the East & South, and extends from the Walkkill River to the Walkkill Valley Rail Trail. This parcel is currently listed for sale.



Gardiner Parks & Rec Committee has reached out to the Walkkill Valley Land Trust and Open Space Institute to request their future assistance or advice with regard to gaining access to these parcels via right of way, conservation easements, donation, or purchase.

Gardiner Trail Alliance is on the lookout for land the Town could help to preserve via conservation easements. The two parcels mentioned above would greatly enhance and improve the proposed project, by enlarging it, of course, but also by connecting it to the Rail Trail, and improving access from the proposed parking area.

Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee is aware of a proposed major development on these later two properties, and the presence of walking and biking trails within that development. If the development were to move forward, Gardiner Parks & Recreation Committee would like to see those trails connect to the Rail Trail and to Riverbend Trails. In the meantime, since such a development will likely take some time to make it through the review process, perhaps the Town could request a green corridor with a bike and pedestrian trail connecting Riverbend Trails to the Rail Trail. The landowner in such a situation could be eligible for substantial tax benefits.