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Use of urban greenways: insights from Indianapolis

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Abstract

Planners in many urban areas are working to develop systems of greenways – linear open spaces along natural or artificial corridors, such as riverfronts, streams, ridgelines, abandoned railroad right-of-ways, canals, or scenic roads. Many greenways include trails for active recreational use, including walking, running, bicycling, and skating. Previous studies of greenways have classified local trails as those with the majority of users living within five miles of the trail. These studies suggest that levels of trail use depend on location and trail characteristics, but specific factors that determine variations in patterns of use are not well understood. This paper reports the results of counts and surveys of users on three linked greenway trails in Indianapolis, IN. Methods for counting and surveying users are described. It is shown that use of trails is significant, but that intensity and patterns of use vary considerably by trail segment. Results are compared with the findings of previous studies, and the need to refine definitions of local trails to account for trails that serve primarily neighborhoods is noted. Differentiation among local trails, trail segments in neighborhoods, and trail activity type is necessary to design

local trails, trail segments in neighborhoods, and trail activity type is necessary to design market segmentation strategies for trail development.



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Keywords

Urban greenway; Trail use

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† This paper is based on a technical report, “Indianapolis Greenways Use and Management Project” Data Report, prepared in 1996 by the Graduate Planning Workshop Team, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis, for INDY Parks Greenways, Indianapolis Greenways Development Committee, and White River Greenways Foundation, Inc. [Baukert et al., 1996. Indianapolis Greenways Use and Management Project Data Report. Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana.].

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