



## SAFETY

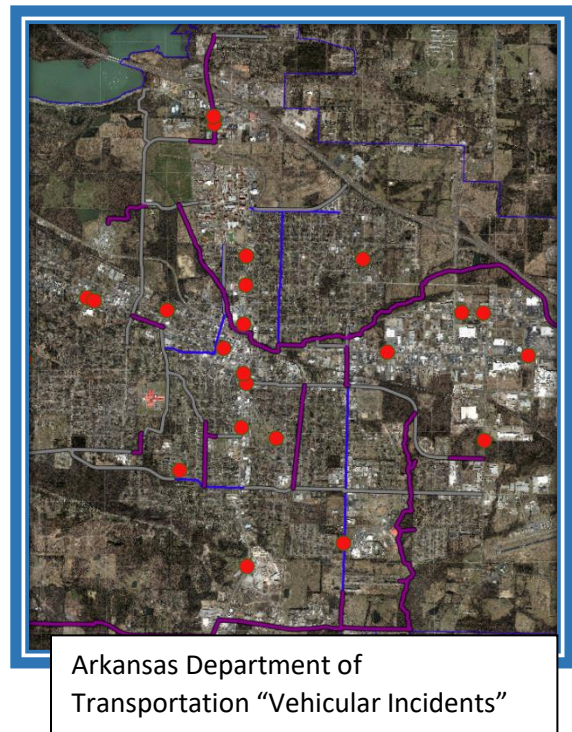
Our Russellville Connected Trail System intends to provide safe, equitable transportation options for micro-mobility users like pedestrians and cyclists. There is a serious lack of sidewalks in the city resulting in users who walk on the road clearly proving dangerous to the lives and safety of our citizens. The project will provide safety enhancements including accessible routes to work, school, shopping, and recreation to increase user comfort, reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, enhance connections within the community and promote a sense of belonging.

The primary route will be the combination of a ten (10) foot shared-use greenway trail and ten (10) foot sidepaths primarily running north and south. In addition a cross trail moving east and west that will connect existing facilities throughout Russellville that include five (5) and six (6) foot sidewalks, shared road facilities, and eight (8) to ten (10) foot sidepaths. These facilities will be geared towards people of all ages and abilities and will increase the quality of life for residents, visitors, and the community as a whole.

People who walk or bike suffer disproportionately from serious injuries and fatalities, as recent reports indicate that pedestrian deaths are up 5 percent in the first half of 2022, when crashes occur compared to people within vehicles. The routes proposed are intended to provide a safe and efficient means for non-roadway users – decreasing the risk of incidents for both pedestrians and micro-mobility users. This project nearly doubles the miles of trails within the community and will provide options for citizens to select safe, alternate, active forms of transportation. A study completed by the Walton Foundation in Northwest Arkansas showed that there is a 24 percent increase in average bicycle usage and a 10 percent increase in pedestrian usage among those who choose active transportation, which will provide a reduction in emissions that contribute to climate change.

There will be portions of the route where shared-use greenway trails and sidepaths intersect with roadways and high traffic areas. Two crossings have been identified as being high risk for conflict. Underpasses at these two locations are being proposed – both crossings are along Prairie Creek along North Arkansas (Highway 7) and Weir Road (Highway 124). At all other crossing locations, safe and ADA accessible crosswalks are planned at these vehicular conflict areas with High Visibility Crosswalks, Yield to Pedestrians signage, and User-Activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB).

It is also anticipated that the use of High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) beacons will be utilized at two locations along Parkway Drive due to the volume of vehicular traffic. This type of pedestrian hybrid beacon allows protected crossings that stop road traffic as needed. Beacons promote safer access to neighborhoods and shopping along the





route. Lighting is included along the route providing a safer means for travel during low-visibility hours.

Preventing vehicle crashes that involve pedestrians and particularly minors is a safety focus of the Russellville Connected Trail System. The Arkansas Department of Transportation compiled “Crash Data” involving vehicular and pedestrian incidents for the project area. There were 45 crashes involving pedestrians with varying levels of severity during the 10-year study period. 69 percent of crashes were not at intersections, 22 percent were at 4-way intersections, and 9 percent were at T-intersections. 61 percent of incidents were serious or with possible injuries, 26 percent of incidents included suspected minors, and 13 percent of the incidents were with no apparent injuries.

The City Engineer, City Planner, and additional committee members walked undeveloped portions of the trail to assess construction issues. They also focused on areas where pedestrian and vehicle conflicts could occur. The Citizen Advisory Committee will review plans as they continue to development all the way till completion. An aspect of review will be to consider the route from the perspective of vulnerable users and will be discussing ways to promote safety and comfort for users aged 8 to 80. The walk audit tour will be a great opportunity to include the community in the process in addition to an educational tool that will ensure the route moves users safely along the corridor. Staff have evaluated the route, however, additional input from that perspective will ensure that the route is safe for everyone!

BBC Researching and Consulting analyzed safety benefits and calculated the monetary value of reducing crashes along the proposed route. BBC estimates that an approximate annual value of \$448,000 will be saved from reduced injury and no-injury crashes. Appendix 7 provides additional detail on this analysis.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Access to active transportation options will generate numerous environmental benefits for the community. Greenways protect important habitat and provide corridors for people and wildlife, advancing environmental sustainability by reducing air pollution and improving water quality. Active transportation options using the Russellville Connected Trail System would provide users, particularly low income residents who lack adequate transportation options, new opportunities to participate in the economy and within the community.

Additional Environmental Sustainability comes from partnering with the Russellville School District. Our collaboration improves the outdoor educational spaces that feature wetlands – allowing students access to study, as well as the opportunity to propose additional future projects, ensuring a commitment to the protection of these sensitive areas, and further providing benefits for the community and its environmental health for years to come.





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First and foremost, the Russellville Connected Trail System will mitigate vehicle emissions by offering alternative modes of transportation and alleviating traffic congestion problems. Non-motorized transportation systems help improve air quality and fight against the effects of climate change.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Russellville has experienced some fluctuations in air quality over the years, particularly in relation to ozone and particulate matter. The primary sources of air pollution in the area include transportation, industry, and natural sources such as dust and wildfires. Measures have been implemented to improve air quality, such as regulating industrial emissions and promoting clean energy sources, however, residents can also help by reducing their personal vehicle use and adopting sustainable practices. A study conducted in Minnesota found that the construction of a new trail system led to a 27 percent reduction in car trips. A study by the University of Colorado, Denver found that cities with extensive trail networks had lower rates of vehicle miles traveled per capita compared to cities with less developed trail networks. Overall, the construction of a new connected trail system can offer alternative transportation options and promote active lifestyles, which can lead to a reduction in vehicle use and related emissions.

Vehicular transport in Russellville is currently the primary option and is a significant environmental concern. Russellville has experienced consistent growth, and with new development proposed there is a likelihood for exponential growth on the horizon. With this growth, vehicles and congestion will continue to affect the area's environmental quality. This project's timing is crucial as it enables us to preserve and safeguard functioning wetlands and prevent additional deterioration. The Russellville Connected Trail System embodies the "Build Back Better" initiative's core and is a priority under the infrastructure law.

A study done in 2022 by the Arkansas Department of Transportation showed that many of the state and city roads that intersect with the primary route of the Russellville Connected Trail System have daily traffic estimates ranging from 1,000 to 24,000 vehicles. Reducing this environmental impact will help create a sustainable system for a growing city.

There are plans to establish a gateway trailhead at the entrance of the Historic District, in line with the Updated Downtown Russellville Master Plan – Five Year update completed in 2015, along the Prairie Creek corridor section of the route in the heavily developed commercial area. This trailhead will function as a model project for promoting the sustainable use of streamside areas and repairing riparian zones. Users can immerse themselves in a more natural environment with park amenities, native vegetation, and an observation area. Moreover, the project will offer educational

opportunities as it connects residents and visitors with a greener mode of transportation and recreational facility.





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The proposed amenities for City Park include an additional trailhead upstream of the Historic Downtown location along Prairie Creek. This will offer more access to the stream and create new opportunities for riparian repair. As part of this project, partnerships with the Master Gardeners are planned to adopt a visible section of the trail and plant native vegetation, providing another opportunity for observing the stream in a more natural setting. Another amenity being considered is the opportunity along the corridor to include wifi and solar charging stations that will benefit all users of the system.



It is a well-known fact that areas with less tree coverage, such as roads, tend to have higher temperatures compared to greenways or areas with more tree cover. This is because trees provide shade and evapotranspiration, which can help to reduce the urban heat island effect. In Russellville, many streets will have higher temperatures due to a lack of street trees compared to the greenways due to the shade and cooling effects provided by the trees. Planting trees and the creation of green spaces in urban areas mitigate the impacts of heat and improve the overall quality of life for residents. 42 percent of respondents on the amenity survey indicated that planting trees must be included.

Throughout the planning process, environmental justice and racial equity have been key components of the project. Significant portions of the trail will pass through neighborhoods with Black and Brown populations, many of which have historically seen less infrastructure investment than other areas of the city. The EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool was employed to visualize and overlay the future trail area on different demographic data to capture how marginalized groups will benefit from the trail's construction.

Appendix 14 shows the location of the city limits, the area surrounding the proposed trail alignment, and the demographic data mapped. The demographic data from the American Community Survey 2016 - 2020 5-year estimates, shown at the census tract level, is displayed on each map. After analyzing various demographic factors, the maps revealed significant overlap between many of these variables. Areas with large minority populations, specifically Black and Brown, also coincided with Areas of Persistent Poverty and are typically associated with those whose primary mode of transportation is walking. The Russellville Connected Trail System will add infrastructure in this part of the city, providing a much-needed alternative for people living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition to creating a new transportation option for cyclists and pedestrians, the Russellville Connected Trail System will also serve as a vital link connecting historically marginalized neighborhoods in the community to multiple city parks. This will not only promote physical activity and recreation but also improve air quality and public health in these areas. By providing an alternative mode of transportation, the trail system can help reduce vehicle emissions, which are a major source of air pollution and respiratory problems. In addition, increased access to



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green spaces and outdoor activities can have positive effects on mental health and overall well-being. Thus, the Russellville Connected Trail System has the potential to create a more equitable and healthier community for all residents. By better allowing all city residents to have easy access to parks and green spaces, and equitably linking historically disadvantaged communities to eliminate barriers, the project will help remove disparities throughout the city.

### QUALITY OF LIFE

Increasing the quality of life for Russellville residents through access, connectivity, health benefits, job opportunities, and pride for the community is an integral part of the Russellville Connected Trail System project. 41 percent of residents will be located within one-half mile of these new facilities. These transportation options and facilities will provide residents with equitable and easier access to vital community services and amenities, significantly affecting our community's physical, mental, social, and economic well-being.

The average reduction of vehicles when a new connected trail system is constructed can vary depending on several factors such as the location, design, accessibility, and availability of other transportation options in the area. However, studies have shown that the construction of new connected trail systems can lead to a decrease in the number of vehicles on the road. For example, a study conducted by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in the United States found that the presence of a trail system within a half-mile radius of a residence was associated with a 10 percent increase in the likelihood of walking and a 13 percent increase in the likelihood of cycling for transportation.

The Russellville Connected Trail System is a high priority for the community – the City Council encourages and promotes equitable walkability and connectivity within the community. This trail proposal will connect the community, not only to work, education, and shopping, but also will connect the community to the 11 different parks, including the future Whitewater Park expansion at Lock and Dam. A future proposed connection to the City of Dardanelle across the Dardanelle Dam on the Arkansas River will also allow both communities to thrive increasing the quality of life in both communities. Feasibility studies for both are included in Appendix 10. The proposed expansion of our City Park with new equipment being proposed and constructed as a part of this grant application is another aspect that will benefit citizens for years to come. The City has recently upgraded the splash pad facility to a 5,800 square foot play area, added a 7,600 square foot accessible playground and with additional updates “City Park” will become a destination for many citizens in, or visiting our community.

Existing bike and pedestrian infrastructure are located in the western portion of the city. The city is taking advantage of this opportunity to expand those resources to areas identified as Areas of Persistent Poverty with 90 percent of the trail alignment located in those census tracts and 100 percent of the trail alignment being located within Historically Disadvantaged areas of the community. Completion of this project creates a crucial link for the eastern portions of the community, providing more equitable access to vital services and opportunities. Full economic and community participation is almost an impossibility for those without access to a personal automobile. The Russellville Connected Trail System will provide tangible and significant benefits to those community residents and stakeholders by increasing personal mobility with a safe, accessible transportation alternative.



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Aesthetics play a vital role in the Quality of Life and will be beneficial to those using the trail. Trees will be planted, as 42 percent of those surveyed stated that trees are a must, and will improve the aesthetics of the trail. Trees provide shade, which will provide relief to those using the trail system, and can also help to reduce the urban heat island effect, as mentioned above. Planting trees and the creation of green spaces in urban areas mitigate the impacts of heat and improve the overall quality of life for residents.

Increased mobility options can improve access to job opportunities and other workforce-related services, improving many residents' quality of life. Revitalizing previously underserved city areas with bike and pedestrian infrastructure will increase community pride and city aesthetics. Investments made in parks and greenway infrastructure have been shown to improve local economies, property values, and attract and retain businesses. The impacts of a project like the Russellville Connected Trail System will help the community be more cohesive, social, and livable.

Arkansas ranks high in obesity rates among students and adults. Nationally, Arkansas is typically among the top three worst states in obesity. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **44 percent** of students and **72 percent** of adults in Pope County are overweight or obese. About **33 percent** of adults in Pope County are physically inactive. To combat health and morbidity problems in Russellville and the entire micropolitan area this project will provide easier access to recreational exercise and amenities. Integrating bike and pedestrian infrastructure and connections to community amenities will increase physical activity, helping prevent obesity-related health impacts. The quality of life benefits from this project may influence the economic well-being of users by reducing health care costs due to lack of physical activity.

### MOBILITY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

The purpose of the Russellville Connected Trail System is to construct approximately 13 miles of a new multi-use trail system to connect the existing 14.3 miles of trails that are already in the community. This system will increase mobility and offer alternate transportation options to citizens who do not have access to a vehicle. It will also create enhanced outdoor activity for micromobility users like pedestrians and cyclists.

The design of the proposed Russellville Connected Trail System prioritizes accessibility for people of all ages and physical abilities, ensuring that all residents and visitors can enjoy its benefits. The trail system will include a range of enhanced amenities, safety measures, and ADA-accessible features to make it easier and safer for everyone to navigate. For instance, there are proposed access points for beaver viewing that are ADA-compliant, providing individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to experience the natural beauty of the area. These access points are designed to provide a comfortable and enjoyable viewing experience while ensuring safety and accessibility. Overall, the trail system aims to be an inclusive space where everyone can participate in outdoor recreation and enjoy the beauty of Russellville's natural surroundings. The inclusion of ADA-accessible features ensures that the trail system is a welcoming and accessible space for all.

The proposed trail system is intended to connect the largely underserved north and east sections of the city, providing improved transportation options to areas that have been historically



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disadvantaged and designated as areas of persistent poverty. This will offer residents in these areas easy and affordable access to jobs, schools, parks, shopping, entertainment, and other critical services, thus promoting economic development and social inclusion. In addition, the trail system will provide greater connectivity to 11 parks, eight schools, two retail centers, six major employers, the Industrial Park, Arkansas Tech University, and St. Mary's Regional Medical Center. By linking these important destinations, the trail system will enhance mobility and reduce transportation barriers for residents of Russellville, improving overall quality of life and creating a more equitable and connected community.

The City of Russellville measures 28.3 square miles. The two major corridors through the City are Highway 7, which runs north and south and Route 64, which runs east and west. Pedestrians and cyclists traveling from the more rural northern portion of the City are challenged with crossing Highway 7 to access jobs, shopping, schools, and services. In addition, the lack of pedestrian routes creates a safety hazard for those who do not have access to a vehicle. Removing physical barriers and creating safe avenues for pedestrians and cyclists to travel throughout the City will enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens and visitors.

The main focus of this project is to eliminate physical barriers that currently limit pedestrian access throughout the city. This will be accomplished by constructing a pedestrian bridge over I-40, two underpasses along major thoroughfares, and an at-grade railroad crossing. Additionally, the project will include enhancements to ensure that the trail system is accessible to people of all physical abilities, in compliance with ADA guidelines. By implementing these measures, the trail system will provide safe and affordable travel options for all residents and visitors, facilitating greater connectivity and improving overall mobility throughout Russellville.

The Trail System, as proposed, will add 5 trailheads that will provide areas of rest, relaxation, and connectivity, along with amenities that may include bike rentals, WIFI, playgrounds, seating, and bike repair stations throughout the trail. A Citizen Advisory Committee was created, and a Community Survey was developed to identify gaps in our Plan and learn the amenities our citizens most want to see from our proposed Trail System.

### ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Economic Competitiveness is one of the key advantages of this project as this trail system will spur future investment in our community. When developers are considering moving their businesses to a community one of the questions they ask is, what will my employees do outside of work? Is there something that will attract employees to move to this area, and ultimately stay with my company? If I invest in this community will there be a return on my investment – and the Russellville Connected Trail System is a key component of attracting and retaining existing businesses within the community.

Russellville is the heart of the River Valley. We are centrally located close to Mt. Nebo, Buffalo River National Park, and Lake Dardanelle where many people enjoy being able to play. Building a connected trail system that also provides access to enjoy time in town is essential to the competitiveness of this community. The City of Russellville would not be able to create the impact this project will surely make if it were not for the potential of being awarded the RAISE grant. This project is key to making the difference of improving our disconnected trail system



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into a connected one, allowing us to better serve our city, and thus our communities, all of which are historically disadvantaged. There are several examples throughout the United States and abroad where trail systems boost the local economy by encouraging tourism (we have a huge bicycle community with the monument trails on Mt. Nebo), attracting businesses, increasing property values, combating environmental issues, and generating revenue.

The proposed route for the Russellville Connected Trail System is poised to provide a valuable transportation option for pedestrians and cyclists, facilitating greater connectivity between areas north of the interstate and key destinations such as shopping centers, employment hubs, and educational institutions. In addition to improving access to these critical facilities, the trail system will provide a safe and accessible means of travel for those who do not drive, lack access to a motor vehicle, or choose to use active transportation options. By promoting greater mobility and accessibility, the trail system has the potential to spur economic development and enhance quality of life for residents of Russellville. Furthermore, the trail system will provide opportunities for recreational activities and access to natural spaces, such as Lake Dardanelle, offering additional benefits to the community.

Russellville's prime location on Lake Dardanelle and the Dardanelle Dam presents unique opportunities for tourism, which the city is actively seeking to leverage. A key component of this effort is the proposal of a Whitewater Park at Lock and Dam Park, which will be easily accessible through the Russellville Connected Trail System. In a future phase, the trail system will also connect to the City of Dardanelle, enabling greater connectivity and breaking down the barrier of the Arkansas River.



In addition to promoting tourism, the construction of multi-use trail systems has a host of other benefits. By facilitating greater connectivity between services and opportunities, these trails promote economic and community participation for all citizens, helping to promote greater wealth and improve quality of life. Ultimately, the Russellville Connected Trail System has the potential to create significant value for both residents and visitors alike, offering unique opportunities for recreation, transportation, and economic development.

### STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

The City of Russellville aims to improve its transportation infrastructure by implementing a multi-use trail system that connects various areas throughout the city. By doing so, the city can reduce the amount of traffic on main streets, which will help prolong the life of those streets and reduce maintenance costs. Additionally, this will help ensure that the city's transportation network is in a state of good repair, providing safe and accessible options for all residents and visitors.



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Within the last four years, the City of Russellville has made many improvements to the pedestrian facilities. Many sidewalks have been repaired and/or enlarged from 4ft to 10ft in width. Projects such as South Inglewood Avenue, West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and East 4<sup>th</sup> Street have all been converted to 10 foot multi-use trails.

Proposed improvements include installing User-Activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) or High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) beacons at strategic points within the trail system at un-signalized intersections or mid-block crossings. A priority of the project and the city is to upgrade and modify existing signalized intersections to include push button pedestrian signals.

To improve pedestrian accessibility and meet current ADA standards, the City of Russellville is actively replacing degraded sidewalks throughout the city and budgeting 15 percent of pavement preservation for sidewalk and trail maintenance and repair. The proposed routes in the Russellville Connected Trails System will also be constructed with ADA standards in mind, and existing trails and sidewalks along the corridors will be evaluated to address any accessibility concerns.

The City Council places a high priority on maintaining the trail system and is committed to a collaborative effort between the Public Works Department and Recreation and Parks Department.

To ensure the longevity of the trail pavement, the Russellville Public Works Department will handle transportation and pavement maintenance. As part of their recurring pavement assessments, they will also monitor trail pavement conditions at the same time they assess roadway infrastructure. By extending the pavement life cycle through monitoring and maintenance, the city is taking steps to prolong the life expectancy of its facilities.

In addition, the city has purchased a light duty bucket truck specifically for maintaining the existing trail lights while minimizing potential damage to the trail itself. This is part of an ongoing maintenance program designed to keep the trail system in good repair and accessible to all. The Recreation and Parks Department will be responsible for maintaining and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the trail system through landscaping, regular mowing, and upkeep of trail amenities such as benches, picnic tables, and signage.

### PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

The success of the Russellville Connected Trail System depends on collaboration and partnerships with various stakeholders to ensure it serves the community to the fullest. By working with partners, stakeholders, and the community, the City of Russellville can ensure the trail system is designed and constructed in a way that meets the needs of all users.

A community Citizen Advisory Committee was formed, which consists of various members of the community representing the Chamber of Commerce, Arkansas Tech University, Russellville School District, Russellville Police Department, St. Mary's Regional Medical Facility, Local Industry, Community Organizations, the Cycling Community, and city staff. This committee will help to ensure that meaningful engagement with residents is maintained and help to steer the alignment by participating in a walk audit of the trail alignment as we are surveying out the trail.



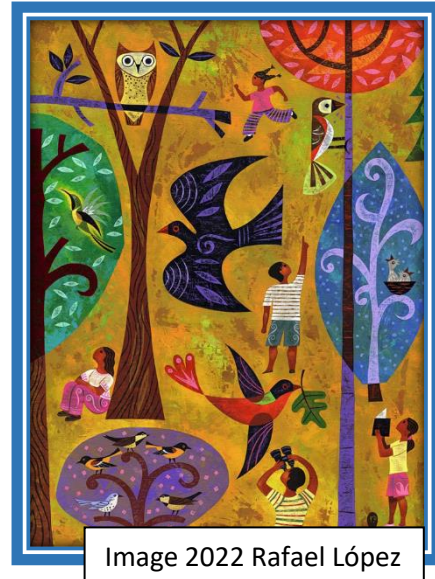
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Staff have evaluated 90 percent of the alignment in the field, but will rely on the institutional knowledge of the advisory committee to meet the needs of the community.

A Visual Preference survey was conducted over a 10-day period and received 1,209 responses. The feedback received from this survey will help in determining the amenities to be included in the Russellville Connected Trail System and improvements to be made in City Park. Further details about public engagement are provided in Appendix 15. This survey has spurred two initiatives that will continue to be a part of the project, thanks to the valuable input of the respondents.

The initial project is centered on a Mural Wall that will serve to conceal dumpster and trash containers at City Mall. The collaboration with the River Valley Arts Center has taken inspiration from Rafael Lopez and has the potential to become a massive community art project. Students from Russellville School District will be invited to compete in drawing the mural, with the Citizen Advisory Committee selecting finalists and the community ultimately choosing the final winner through a survey of the top five options. This project will not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of the area but also foster a sense of community pride and belonging.



The second initiative aims to enhance City Park and make it a more attractive and engaging place for the community. The proposed improvements are inspired by the Gathering Place in Tulsa and include a park naming contest to give the park a new name. Citizens will be invited to submit names, and the Citizen Advisory Committee will select the finalists. The final name will be chosen through a community survey of the top five options. These initiatives have the potential to create a significant and lasting impact in our community.

The Russellville Connected Trail System has garnered significant support from our community partners, who have joined us in our efforts to bring this project to fruition. We are proud to have received 31 Letters of Support from a diverse array of stakeholders, including local businesses, civic organizations, and community leaders.

These letters serve as a testament to the importance of this project for our community and the role it will play in promoting economic development, enhancing public health and wellness, and strengthening community connections. The letters highlight the many benefits of the trail system, including increased accessibility to local amenities, enhanced pedestrian and cyclist safety, and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

We are grateful for the support of our community partners, and we look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the success of the Russellville Connected Trail System. Through our collaborative efforts, we are confident that we can create a trail system that will serve as a valuable asset for our community for years to come. (Appendix 9)

## INNOVATION



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The proposed Russellville Connected Trail System is designed with an array of innovative connectivity and project delivery techniques, aimed at providing a better experience for both our citizens and visitors. The project prioritizes accessibility and safety, and as such, will employ traffic calming techniques, including High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk beacons and Rectangular Rapid Flashing beacons.

Moreover, the trailheads will provide an opportunity to offer Wi-Fi technology and charging stations for electronic devices. Our Community Survey participants have shown interest in renting electronic bikes and e-scooters along the Trail, with 28 percent of responders requesting this amenity. In the event that the Grant is awarded, the City will investigate the feasibility and development of an e-bike share program, which would make alternate modes of transportation more affordable throughout the community. To make this project environmentally sustainable, streamside use and riparian repair will be made sustainable, providing visitors and citizens with educational opportunities and the ability to interact with native vegetation, observation areas, and park amenities.

The Russellville Connected Trail System aims to be inclusive and accessible to all members of the community, including those who may be experiencing homelessness. To this end, the project proposes to install charging stations along the trail system powered by solar energy, with the support of local sponsors. These stations will be strategically located at key points along the trail system to ensure accessibility to all users, including the homeless population.

City Corporation, Russellville's water and wastewater provider, has been operating in the City for many years, and the City has established strong relationships with Entergy Arkansas, Optimum, and Summit Utilities. These partnerships will be essential in the development of the Russellville Connected Trail System. A "dig once" policy will be enforced to ensure that all necessary utility relocations are coordinated effectively.