



MARKET RESEARCH: EQUITY OF ACCESS TO TRAILS

STUDY BY OPINIONWORKS
FOR THE CIRCUIT TRAILS JEDI TASK FORCE





Camden



Cobbs Creek



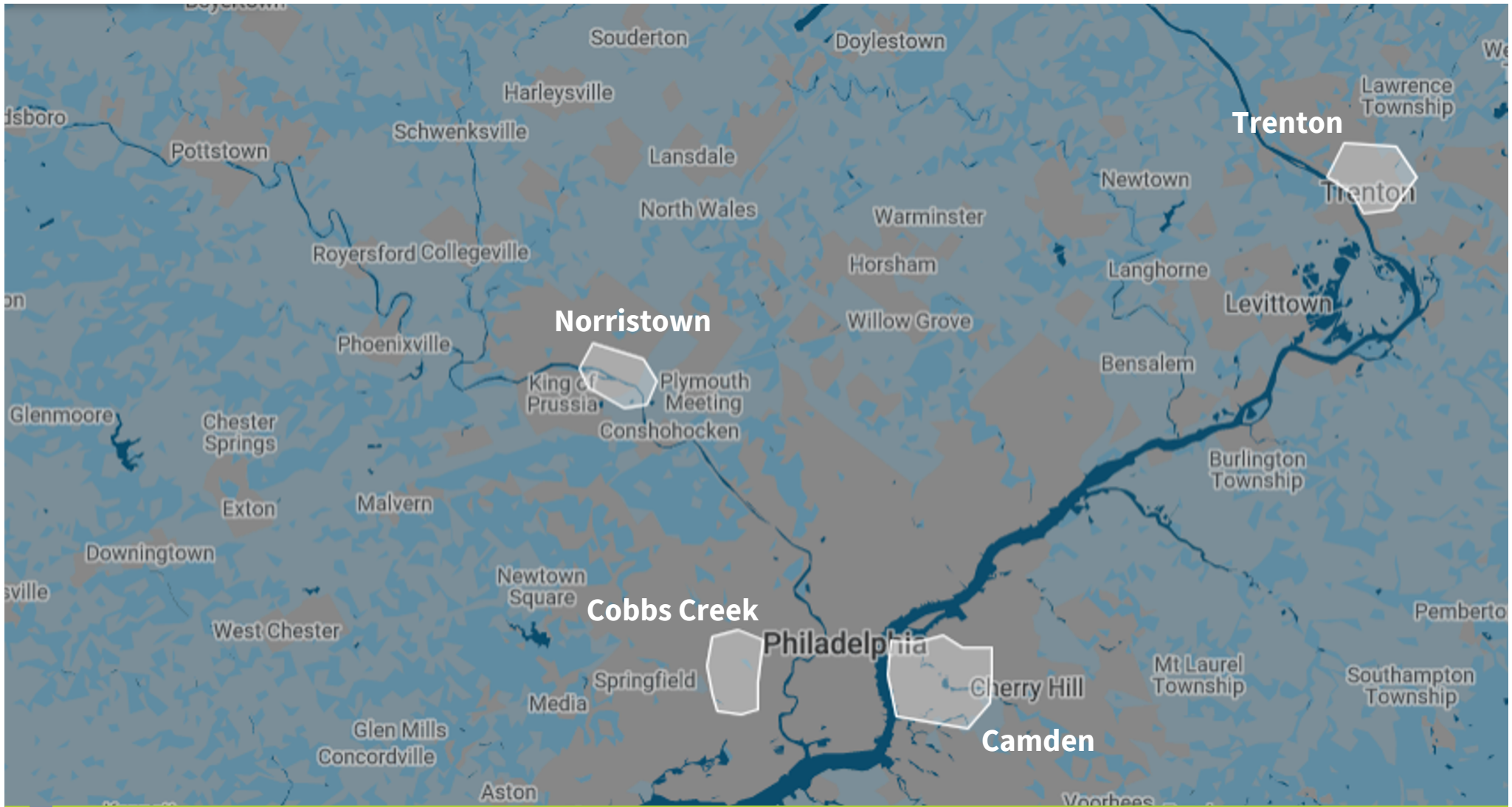
Norristown



Trenton

Purpose of Study

- What are the **needs, interests, and apprehensions** of people living near trails in underserved neighborhoods?
- **Who** is using the trails, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?
- How can trail organizations **engage, motivate, and welcome** these residents onto the trails?
- How can results in focus communities be **generalized** for a broader population of potential trail users across the region?



Market Research: Equity of Access to Trails

● Research Methodology

- Focus communities were selected based on specific criteria:
 - A Circuit Trail runs through underserved neighborhoods
 - A trail organization or public sector trail owner engaged in building inclusive trails
 - Community stakeholders interested in using the trail to advance community objectives.
 - A diversity of demographic conditions so the project can be useful beyond the focus communities



● Research Methodology

- The study was completed in four phases:
 1. Community Stakeholder Meetings
1 per focus community
 2. Trail Survey: Intercept Survey of Trail Users
237 trail users
 3. Community Survey: Survey of Neighborhoods Surrounding the Trails
718 residents within 10 blocks of the trails
 4. Focus Groups among Residents of color
8 focus groups/2 per community



1 Study Results

What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live Near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

Three Archetypes

The Besieged

Directly impacted by violence, tend to see the outdoors as a place of threat and danger.

Life offers them very little respite.

The Juggling

Essential workers, gig workers, students, parents.

The day is never long enough to get everything done. Stealing time to relax.

The Empowered

Their community may be challenging, but they have found a way to feel safe.

Often community - engaged, with capacity to give.



1 Study Results

1 What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live Near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

The Besieged

“Just making it out of the trenches. I just want to make it out of the hood, get my mom out of the hood, make sure me and my little brother ain't got to die here. That's it. ... I mean, to think that I'm still here. I mean, I lose a lot of friends that I grew up with. I lost a friend today It's so normal now.... I just grateful that it ain't me or my little brother, for real. So we could get out of here, that's all you got to do is get out of there. It's a war right now.”

– Donnell, 21, Southwest Philadelphia

1 Study Results

1 What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live Near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

The Juggling

“[In addition to hosting the podcast,] I have two jobs. One of the jobs I do, I actually go Wednesday, Thursday and Friday... And also, I'm a recovery coach, so I work from home...offering wellness tips. People call me, and I provide encouragement. Some people, they're afraid of success. Me, I embrace the opportunity, I embrace the challenge. I'm afraid of failure. I'm afraid of not living out my potential. That causes depression.”

-Eric, 30, Trenton

1 Study Results

1 What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live Near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

The Empowered

“My mother was a Girl Scout, and she had five girls so she might as well have started a troop, which she did, right? Yeah. So I just followed her because we had so much fun.”

-Lynn, mother of three, Southwest Philadelphia



1 Study Results

What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live Near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

For many, a trails are not inviting, they are a **potential threat** or a demand on **limited time**.

Residents badly need to find respite in the outdoors, but a trail may offer **just the opposite**.

Three Archetypes

The Besieged	The Juggling	The Empowered
Directly impacted by violence, tend to see the outdoors as a place of threat and danger. Life offers them very little respite.	Essential workers, gig workers, students, parents. The day is never long enough to get everything done. Stealing time to relax.	Their community may be challenging, but they have found a way to feel safe. Often community-engaged, with capacity to give.

1 Study Results

What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live Near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

Three Primary Barriers

COVID-19 Anxiety	Public Safety Concerns	Unwelcoming Outdoor Spaces
Almost half of participants said they spend less time outdoors now than before the pandemic.	Some participants were actively worried about being caught in street violence.	Many people felt that their neighborhood was neglected.
Participants worried about encountering others outside.	Increased police presence near trails was also a source of anxiety	Others were surprised to learn about the trail and felt like it had been kept a secret.

Study Results

1 What are the needs, interests, and apprehensions of people who live Near trails that pass through underserved neighborhoods?

Some residents expressed **sadness or anger** that they no longer felt welcome in gentrifying areas.

The Empowered archetype **rejected** the idea that they were not welcome.

Three Primary Barriers

COVID-19 Anxiety

Almost half of participants said they spend less time outdoors now than before the pandemic.

Participants worried about encountering others outside.

Public Safety Concerns

Some participants were actively worried about being caught in street violence.

Increased police presence near trails was also a source of anxiety

Unwelcoming Outdoor Spaces

Many people felt that their neighborhood was neglected.

Others were surprised to learn about the trail and felt like it had been kept a secret.

● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Despite profound concerns about COVID, personal safety, and neighborhood neglect –

people **want** to get outdoors.



● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Despite profound concerns about COVID, personal safety, and neighborhood neglect –

people **want** to get outdoors.

rejuvenating

soothing

centering

peaceful

refreshing

“Being outdoors in parks or on trails makes me feel happier.”

● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Fewer than two-thirds of residents were aware that there is a trail close to where they live.

When the specific trail name is mentioned, awareness of the trail increases.



● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

The presence of water increases feelings of peace –

Especially among the **besieged** archetype

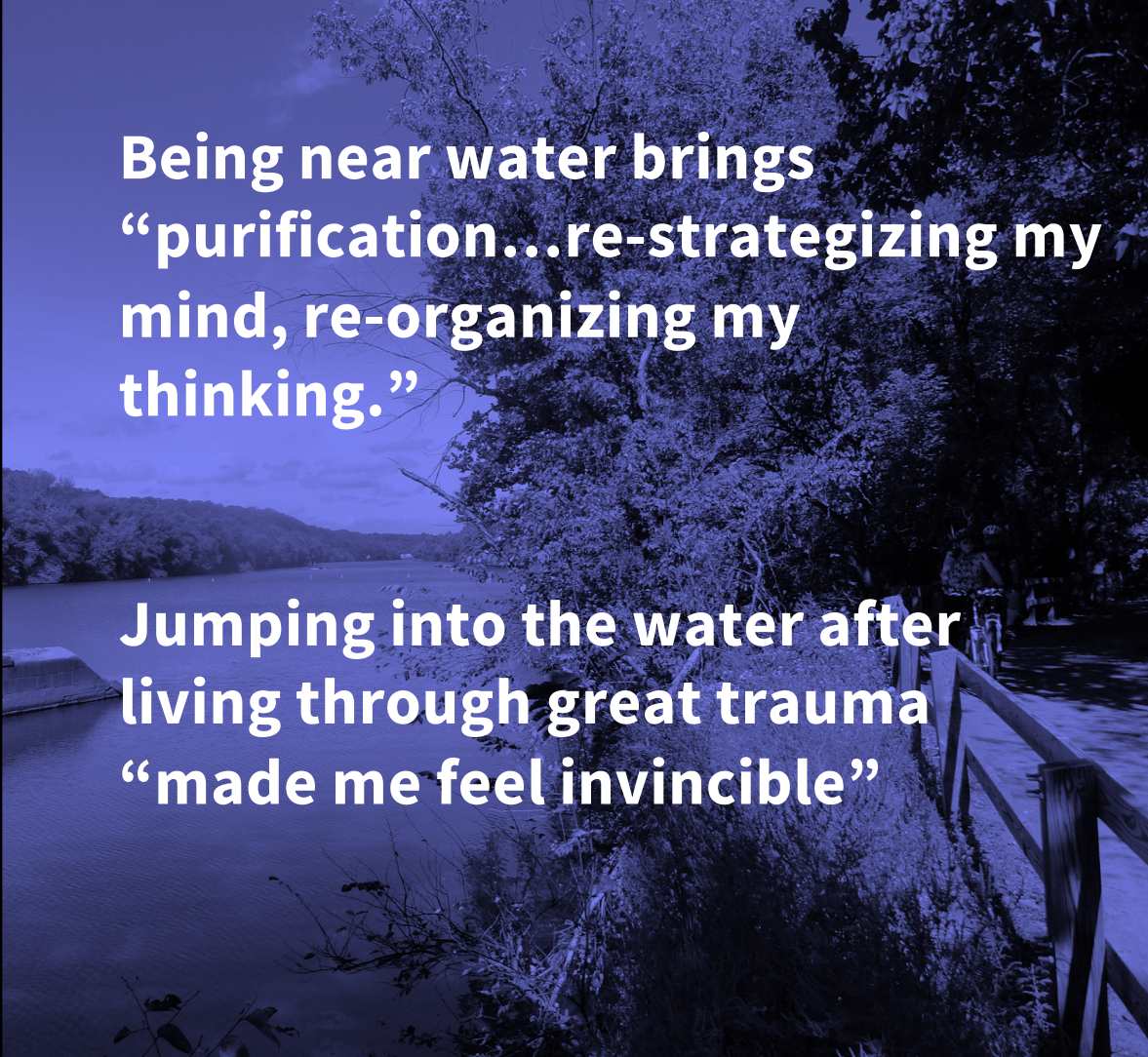


● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

The presence of water increases feelings of peace –

Especially among the **besieged** archetype



Being near water brings
“purification...re-strategizing my
mind, re-organizing my
thinking.”

Jumping into the water after
living through great trauma
“made me feel invincible”

● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

However, connection to water is limited.

One-quarter of participants **could not picture** the waterway in their neighborhood.



● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

Demographics change the narrative

“When I am in the parks or on the trails around here, I see other people like me.”

White respondents: 76% agree

Respondents of color: 45% agree



Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently,
and do trail users differ from
nearby residents?

Demographics change the
narrative

Percentage of People of Color

	Trail Users (Intercept Study)	Neighborhoods (Census Data)
Camden	74%	69%
Trenton	79%	55%
Cobbs Creek	54%	84%
Norristown	16%	47%

Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently, and do trail users differ from nearby residents?

How are people connecting to the outdoors?



65%

Walking on trails



40%



Relaxing in parks



25%

Biking or running



● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently,
and do trail users differ from
nearby residents?

Most potential users are looking for a place to just BE

What would you like to use the trail for today?

78%
Exercise

61%
Recreation

10%
Transportation



● Study Results

2 Who is using the trails currently,
and do trail users differ from
nearby residents?

Most potential users are looking for a place to just BE

What amenities would draw you to a trail?

food trucks

places to sit and enjoy the natural setting

music festivals //

Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Imagine the trail that would welcome and attract you.

What amenities would it have?

What programs would it offer?

What would it look and feel like?



● Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

Security

Greening

Imagine the trail that would welcome and attract you.

Physical Infrastructure

What amenities would it have?

Programming and Welcome

What programs would it offer?

Outreach

What would it look and feel like?



Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?



WABA Trail Rangers

Security

1. An appropriate security presence

- Trail ambassadors
- Call boxes

Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?



Island Line Rail Trail

Greening

1. A green oasis

- Creative design
- Colorful and natural

Study Results

- 3** What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?



D&L Trail Picnic Pavilion

Physical Infrastructure

1. Places to Gather and Relax
 - Picnic and barbecue spots
 - Playgrounds
 - Benches and other places to sit
2. Trail Maintenance and Amenities
 - Lighting
 - Parking at trailheads
 - Restrooms, bike share, boat rentals, etc.
3. Signage
 - Wayfinding from neighborhoods to trails
 - Circuit signage
 - Signage to trail destinations



Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?



Atlanta Beltline

Programming and Welcome

1. An invitation to have fun
 - Offering events and activities
 - Festivals and music that tie to local culture
 - Pop-up shops, local vendors, etc.
2. Overt Welcome
 - Public art that shows people of color
 - Black Lives Matter signage
 - Feeling seen and respected
3. Organized Group Activities
 - For fellowship and for safety
 - Explore interests – birdwatching, nature hikes
 - Exercise groups, yoga

Study Results

- 3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?



The Circuit Trails

Outreach

1. Show people enjoying the trail
 - Images of people who look like them
 - Images of real people from the neighborhood
2. Leverage Local Social Media and Traditional Door-to-Door
 - Engage local influencers to get on the trail
 - Leverage social media
 - Door-to-door flyers, mail, and conversations

● Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

10 Actions to take

1. Establish an appropriate security presence
2. Create a green oasis
3. Develop places to gather and relax
4. Focus on trail maintenance and amenities
5. Install signage
6. Invite folks to have fun
7. Extend an overt Welcome
8. Host organized group activities
9. Show people enjoying the trail
10. Leverage social media and traditional door-to-door



● Study Results

3 What can trail advocates and other interested stakeholders do to engage, motivate, and welcome nearby residents in these neighborhoods onto the trails?

11th Action:
A long-term focus

11. A community-supported trail

This research indicates that there is the potential to engage neighborhood residents to care for their own section of trail, to help maintain and design it to their liking.



● Study Results

4 How can the results in several focus communities be generalized onto a much broader population of potential trail users across the region?

The results revealed universal human values

Major take-aways

The trail is a place to be, not always a place to be in motion.

Immerse residents in a close-to-home natural experience.

Build a connected trail system.

Exude a sense of welcome.

Don't assume people who live near the trail know about the trail.