

# Community Engagement & Economic Opportunity Overview

Over nine months, **more than 1,200 residents and stakeholders** provided input through a community survey, stakeholder roundtables, public forums, and leadership interviews. The overall sentiment: the Saluda Grade Trail has broad community support, with **97% of survey respondents selecting positive outcomes**. Growth is welcome, but it must be intentional, balanced, and managed.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

### Who We Heard From

1,019

Survey Responses

600+

Written Comments

Average age: 58 · 59% lived in region 10+ years  
87% live in the four corridor counties  
44% live in towns where the trail directly intersects  
Broad geographic reach across corridor towns and surrounding counties

### What Matters Most



## TOP THEMES FROM WRITTEN COMMENTS

Parking & Amenities

Right-Sized Growth

Local-First Businesses

Coordination & Communication

Visible Progress

Heritage & Identity

Environmental Priorities

Safety Concerns

### Stakeholder Roundtables

7

Roundtables

60+

Participants

Local residents, business owners, municipality representatives, and community stakeholders

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

Operational models from comparable trails  
Partnership frameworks  
Infrastructure readiness  
Demonstrating visible progress

## SITE VISIT FINDINGS

### Shared Strengths

- Trail adjacent to existing commercial cores
- Parking, civic partners, and business mix already positioned
- Visitor experiences beyond trail activities
- Active leadership with demonstrated investment

### Shared Gaps

- Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity limited or absent
- Key intersections already present congestion challenges
- ADA parking and accessible access limited
- Outdoor recreation retail and trail amenities missing

### Shared Vision

- Small-scale, locally owned business growth
- Intercept and distribute visitors before downtown cores
- Protect character while absorbing new activity
- Dedicated funding tied to trail corridor investment

# Regional Roadmap to Community Prosperity

## We listened. We validated. We developed.

Community input shaped three interconnected plans designed to move the corridor from engagement to action. Each plan addresses specific themes raised by residents, business owners, and local leadership, and together they provide a coordinated framework for trail-driven growth that builds community wealth and protects community character.

PLAN 1

### Community Engagement Plan

A framework for sustaining community voice, building partnerships, and activating trail programming that reflects local identity and values.

*Addresses community inputs around coordination, communication, heritage programming, and visible progress*

- Coordination & Engagement
- Partnerships & Communication
- Community Programming

PLAN 2

### Economic Development Plan

A strategic framework for capturing trail-generated economic value through managed growth, community assets, and local business activation.

*Addresses community inputs around balanced growth, parking, local businesses, and right-sized development*

- Market Analysis
- Community Assets
- Economic & Experiential Drivers
- Trail Activation Zones

PLAN 3

### Destination Marketing Plan

A brand and communications strategy that positions the corridor through heritage storytelling, targeted audiences, and coordinated outreach.

*Addresses community inputs around heritage, identity, storytelling, and trail brand development*

- Brand
- Messaging Framework
- Audience
- Channels

**Over 1,200 voices shaped these plans.** What follows is not a top-down strategy. It is a community-informed roadmap, built from the priorities, concerns, and aspirations of the people who live and work along this corridor.