

Sidewalks and Bike Trails--Grade 6-8 First Place

By Michelle Li, Grade 7, MA

Communities all around the world need to change. Make itself greener, more active, and healthier. Beijing needs to make its community less polluted. Other communities might need other things to keep their community more green, more active, and more healthy. In the Wayland Community, sidewalks can make our community go green, go active and go healthy. I go to a lot extra co-curricular activities and as I go through the different towns, I always notice that people are walking around on sidewalks and going to different shops. In Wayland, I almost never see people walking around in Wayland. That's because we don't have much sidewalks and if there are, they always stop somewhere and we have to cross the street to another. It is not safe. That is why we need sidewalks.

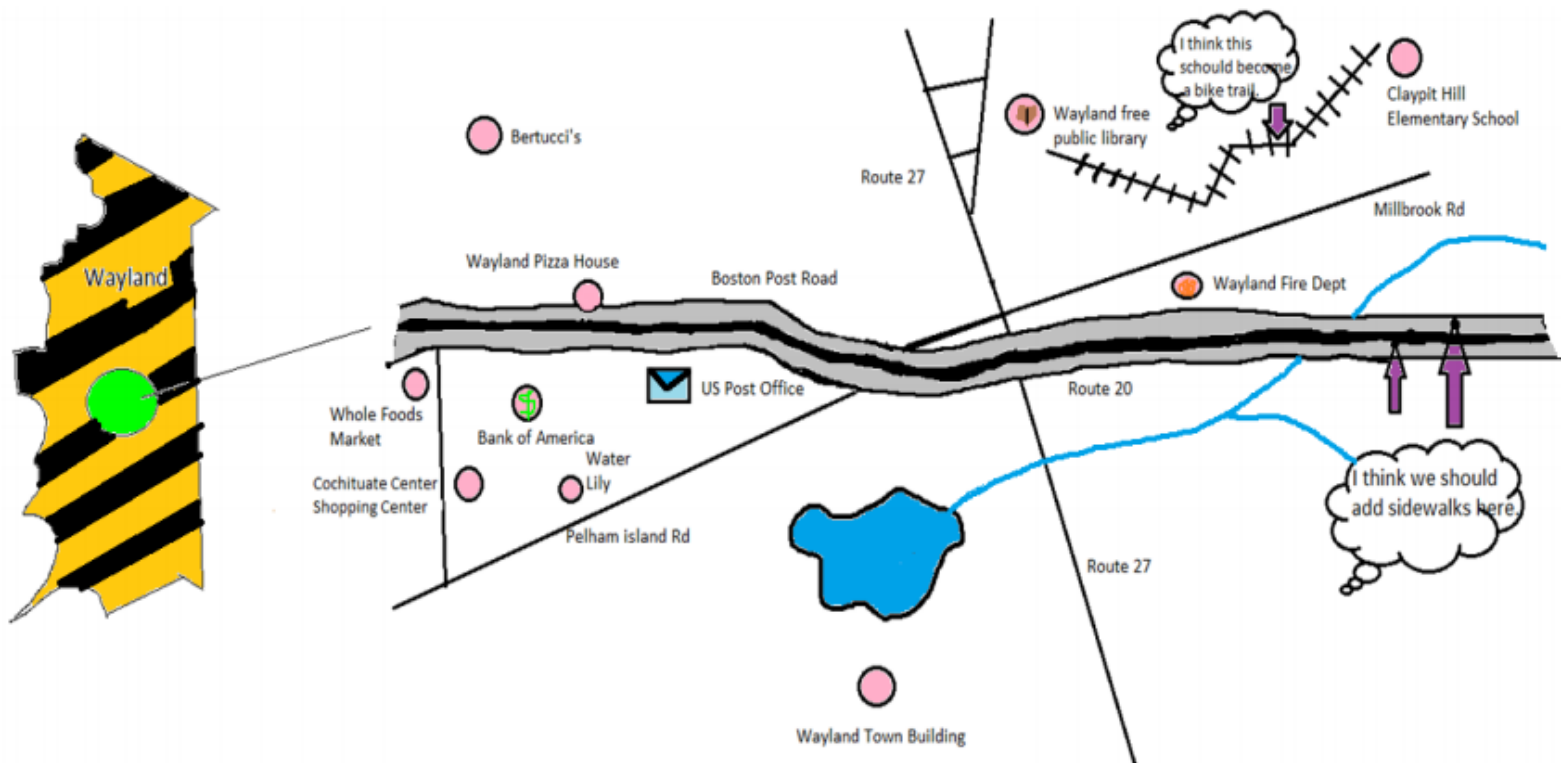
To build sidewalks, we could set up fundraisers. Girls scouts sell girl scout cookies. The money that we get from selling them goes to the cookie mom and she gives most of it to the lady who gave her the cookies, but the rest goes to the troop leader. We could get people to buy stuff so we can give the community money. Then we can raise enough money to build the sidewalks. The fundraiser would last for about a month and we would get as many people to be in it as possible. Once we raised enough money, then we can go online or go through the yellow pages and see if there are any cement companies available. Once that is decided we can build the sidewalks and make Wayland a safer place.

Sidewalks can green the community, make the community more active, and make the community healthier. If we added sidewalks to our community, it would help the environment be more green. If we used sidewalks for running, jogging, biking and even walking, we wouldn't use our cars as much and to power up our cars, we need gas and gas, doesn't do the environment any good. So if sidewalks were built then we wouldn't use as much gas anymore. Which won't pollute the air as much. Sidewalks will make our community more active. Instead of sitting in our car, we are running, jogging, biking and walking. You need the energy to do those things which makes you active. In our cars, we aren't really communicating with the people around us and using sidewalks, we can bond with the community and make it more active.

Lastly, sidewalks are a great way to become more fit and healthy. Sidewalks make you run, jog, bike and walk. This makes you get healthier because it strengthens your muscles and deals with other things within your body. Such as depression or anxiety. Jogging, running, biking and walking are ways of exercise. Exercising keeps the body moving and intact. Whereas sitting on your bottom and driving keeps the body lazy and nonintact. Sidewalks are really a great way to help liven the community. It can help our community be more active, more green, and more healthy.

But the only problem is that making sidewalks cost a lot of money. You need construction workers to build the sidewalks with cement and that takes a lot of time, effort and lots of money. So, is there another way to make sidewalks so that the people of the Wayland community can be more green, more active and more healthy but not spend so much money? Yes, there is, as a matter of fact. The answer is abandoned railroad. Along and inside of Wayland are miles of abandoned railroad trails. These tracks were built in the 1868 and lasted until 1971 when the trails were stopped for good. These railroad tracks lay untouched and unused. Instead of building new sidewalk and spending all

that money, why can't we just fix up the tracks? We can. Parent volunteers could help pull out weeds in the track, clear the areas around it and remove the railroad ties. A lot of things need to be done to make sure the tracks are safe for children to bike and walk. I think this is a safer way to travel because the abandoned railroad tracks are not along the streets. They are hidden inside woods and trees so kids won't get hurt. This project would be best to do in the summer when adults have a lot of spare time to do some outdoor work.



Shown above: Representation of the new sidewalks in Wayland

If you do not think this activity is feasible, it is. According to Larry Kiernan, the friends of Wayland rail trails received permission from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation in August of 2013. They have been working to clear the tracks to make them bike trails. Kiernan told Patch via email that Wayland can now work with DCR to build a linear park that crosses Wayland, that will connect several neighborhoods together and also to elementary school: Claypit Hill School, the Wayland public library, the town center and Sudbury River. So now many elementary school students will be able to walk or bike to their school. Volunteers around Wayland helped the friends of Wayland rail trails work on the trails. They are continuing to work on these trails. I think more of my community should help out so we can get it. This project is using something that has been untouched for years and remodeling it to help the Wayland community. It is reusing and recycling tracks that have been abandoned for over 20 years now. Instead of rebuilding sidewalks with new materials, we are reusing stuff to make the environment more green.

Making the abandoned railroad tracks into sidewalks is also being more active because the community is working together to fix up something. Together as community we can become actively involved in your work and strengthen friendships with each other. You also need energy to work on

a difficult project. Energy needed to move things and pull weeds. Energy to keep going and never give up on your work. This is being active.

And last but not least, this activity is healthy for you. During the building process, you could make friends and tighten bonds with each other. This creates healthy relationships with each other and makes you happier which is healthy for your body. Also a little change in your day is actually good for your body. Instead of staying home and watching TV, you are working. No matter which kind of sidewalks are the best for the Wayland community, we can try our best in volunteering for the railroad project and help gain bonds and relationships and we can raise enough money to build sidewalks out of cement. But either way, these two activities will make the Wayland community, GO GREEN, GO ACTIVE, AND GO HEALTHY!