Developing an Accessible Trail in LaSalette Park

Project Importance & Goals

Importance:

- According to the 2015 US Census, ~40 million Americans have a disability (12.6% of the civilian non-institutionalized population).[1]
- Accessible trails widen the circle: ADA compliant trails and recreational areas broaden the population that can enjoy the outdoors. Trails must comply with the "American Standard Specifications for making Buildings and Facilities Accessible to, and Usable by, the Physically Handicapped".[2]
- Trails located within 10 minutes of where the citizens live is a goal set by the National Recreation and Park Service.

Goals:

- To develop a trail in Central Connecticut (Bloomfield, CT) that will provide accessibility to users of varying physical abilities.
- To plan and map the accessible trail between existing accessible parking to community gardens using smart phone mapping technology and slope data.

Additional Benefits to the Community

- ***Supports Citizens' Hobbies = Happier Community***: In a statewide survey based on 2,026 responses from the general population, the most popular outdoor land-based activity was walking/hiking, with 86% of households and 65% of individuals reporting participation in the year.[3]
- ***Promotes Health:*** According to the Department of Environmental Conservation, immersing oneself in nautre can be most beneficial to one's health as it boosts the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces stress, improves mood.[4]
- ***Community Engagement:*** 58% of Connecticut residents participate in outdoor recreation each year and interest in outdoor nature based recreation is on the rise.[5]

Key Components of an Accessible Path[6]

- According to the United States Access Board, an accessible trail must have "walking surfaces with a running slope not steeper than 1:20, doorways, ramps, curb ramps excluding the flared sides, elevators, and platform lifts" along with clear width of 36'' for turning.
- Specifically in accordance with chapter 403.3 in Accessible Routes: "The running slope of walking surfaces shall not be steeper than 1:20. The cross slope of walking surfaces shall not be steeper than 1:48.

Literature Cited:

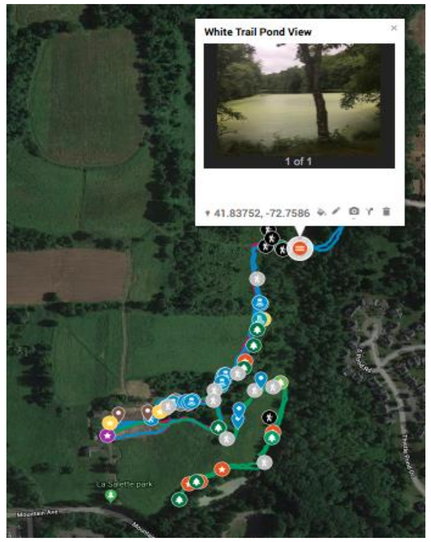
1. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/27/7-facts-about-americans-with-disabilities/
2. https://www.americantrails.org/images/documents/TN-trail-ada.pdf
3. Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. (2017). Connecticut Statewide. Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2017-2022.
4. https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/90720.html
5. 2018 Connecticut Outdoor Recreation Economy State Report
6. https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-aba-standards/aba-standards/chapter-4-accessible-routes

Site Context

Our work focused on developing the accessible trail (orange line).

- ***Why at LaSalette Park?*** "Because LaSalette Park is right across from our campus, we feel a kinship with it and are delighted to partner with Ironwood Community Partners and the town to make use of this historic property," --Michael O'Brien, Duncaster Retirement Community CEO
- ***Central CT:*** LaSalette Trail connects Penwood Park with Filley Park in Bloomfield, CT.
- ***Existing Structures:*** Connects accessible parking & community gardens.

Trail Mapping Methods



Used Track Kit smartphone GPS to map site features (site context, water, soil, vegetation and cultural resources).


Areas where the path may split were marked with tags for future clearance.


The team recorded ground height using a laser measuring tool, as well as the distance between two waypoints to calculate slope of areas in need of immense work.


Some areas of the trail were cut through to avoid high steepage. These locations dense with greenery were cut down using loppers and other gardening tools.


Trail Features Noted

Interesting Vegetation:

Identifying specific areas of vegetation will help determine position for sitting areas.

- Mulberry
  - Noting any vines covering trees
- Butternut
- Tulip Tree
- Catalpa Tree
- Easter Seeder Juniper

Water:

Located and identified where future observation decks could potentially be placed.


LaSalette Pond

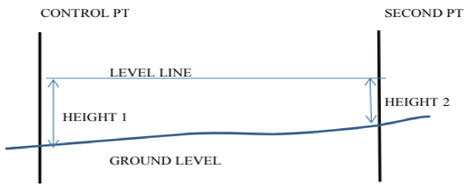

Duncaster Pond

Field Drainage/Water Crossings:

Swales will need to be considered for relocation or filling due to its obstruction to the path's evenness.

Slope:

Slope in concerning areas was approximated:



1. Control point's height was measured.
2. Distance was measured between control point and the second point.
3. Using a laser, a line connecting the two points was creating. This allowed a height of the second point.
4. The differences in heights of the points along with the laser line distance were applied to calculate slope.

Human and Cultural Resources

Ruminants of a historic dairy farm are now used for a community garden.


Silo foundation used as planter for flowers


Posts from old cattle feeder

Conclusions

- The trail will not only promote outdoor walking but because the new accessible trail completes a loop with the LaSalette Trail, it adds recreational options such as cross country skiing, snowshoeing, biking and access to birding habitat.
- The project is ongoing, expected to finish and be in use by fall of 2019.

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