

INTRODUCTION: TRAIL TOWN POTENTIAL

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Tri-Cities Area has Trail Town Potential!

Trail Towns have become an economic development and community revitalization stimulus for many cities across the United States. Communities such as:

- Damascus Virginia, known primarily for the Virginia Creeper Trail but which also serves as a trail town for Appalachian Trail, Trans-America National Bicycle Trail, the Iron Mountain Trail, the Daniel Boone Heritage Trail, the Crooked Road Musical Heritage Trail and Virginia's Birding & Wildlife Trail.
- West Newton Pennsylvania, a small trail town community along the Great Allegheny Passage offering a trailside Bed & Breakfast, a bike shop, a canoe outfitter, a bike-themed café, and a new visitor center, replica of the former train station, designed to connect trail users with the historic downtown. Simeral Square, a riverfront park that opened in June, is a project by Downtown West Newton Inc., the local main street group that includes "a streetscape design, brick walkways, small stage, spectators lawn and benches" serves as another attraction bringing people off the trail and into the community.



West Newton replica train station
Visitor Center

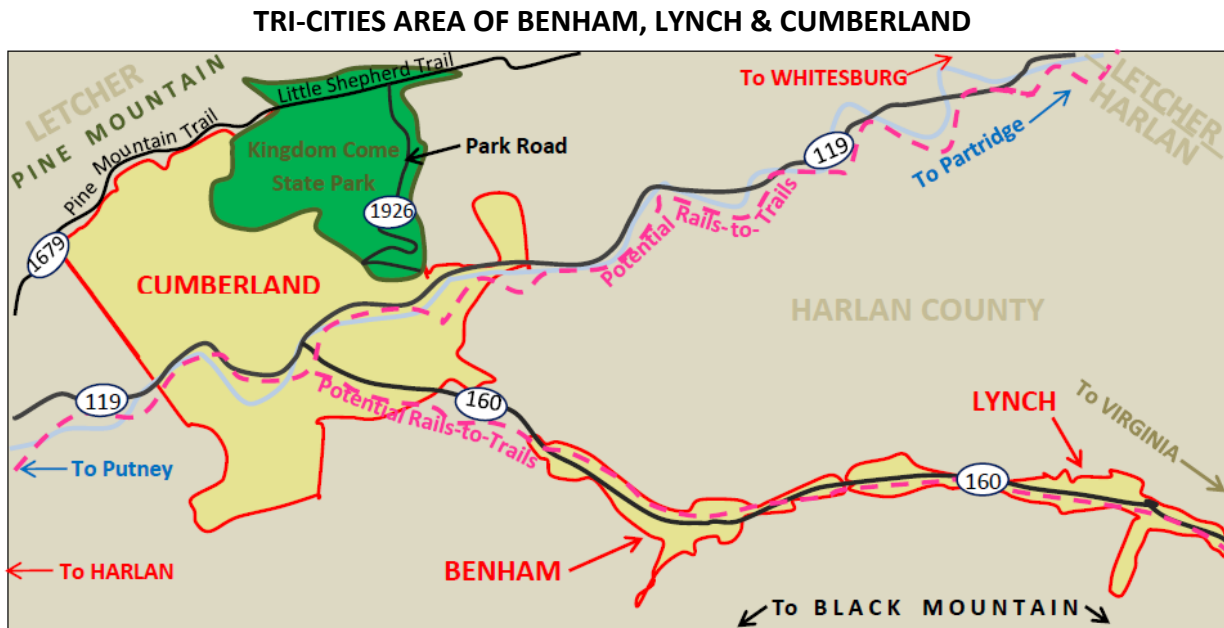
- Another success story is the trail town of Gilbert, West Virginia. With a population of just over 400 residents in 2000, they could barely keep their grocery store open, let alone attract visitors. But today, they now offer over 130 lodging rooms, numerous restaurants, a cinema, four pharmacies, a regional ambulance service, two car washes, a large campground and a number of repair shops. Plus, the local grocery store has had a major expansion. All this occurred due to the opening of a trailhead for a 100 mile trail system within the community. See Appendix A for more on Gilbert and other Trail Town Success Stories.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

As stated in the RFP, "this project, entitled Kingdom Come Trail Study, entails providing the feasibility study and plan for a hiking/mountain bicycling/equestrian trail connecting Kingdom Come State Park with local communities. The resulting trail system will be a **component of a network of interconnecting trails** that will connect Eastern Kentucky communities, state parks, federal recreation properties and forest lands". The study area is centered on **Cumberland** in Harlan County KY and the **Kingdom Come State Park** in the Heart of Coal Country but extends west to Putney, east to Partridge in Letcher County, and includes the communities of Benham and Lynch as well as the highest point in Kentucky, Black Mountain. "The primary purpose of

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this project is to create additional jobs and stimulate economic growth and development through adventure tourism-related opportunities” within and surrounding the Tri-Cities area of Harlan County.



END GOAL

The Tri-Cities area, which encompasses the communities of Cumberland, Benham, & Lynch, has the potential to reach and very possibly surpass the success of other notable trail town communities by:

1. Developing a trail connecting the Little Shepherd Trail and Kingdom Come State Park to Cumberland Kentucky,
2. Expanding existing and potential trails into Benham, Lynch, Partridge & Putney,
3. Marketing all of the trails in the Tri-City area, and
4. Strategically positioning themselves as the “Tri-Cities Trail Town of Kentucky” offering “hundreds of miles of trails”.

This study is about **developing a trail or trails connecting Kingdom Come State Park to Cumberland Kentucky** but will have greater economic impact potential by implementing all four goals listed above.