

# **BERRIEN COUNTY TRAILS MASTER PLAN**

## **VISION, PURPOSE & GOALS**

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### **VISION**

The Friends of the Berrien County Trails envisions a future in which walking, paddling, and bicycling opportunities are easily accessible throughout Berrien County for people of all ages and abilities. Trails link people to destinations and services and connect where we live, work, and play.

Berrien County has numerous natural and community assets that uniquely position it to become a national leader in trail development and achieve benefits such as improved personal wellbeing and community health, reduced traffic congestion, better resident and talent attraction, and enhanced quality of life.

The Berrien County Trails Master Plan will provide the tools to achieve this vision, engaging a broad group of stakeholders in a process that will build community consensus on future project priorities and investments. This plan will support the case for integration of trails as foundational to future overall transportation and recreation planning activities.

### **PURPOSE & GOALS**

The purpose of the Berrien County Trails Master Plan is to be a guide for future trail planning and implementation throughout Berrien County. It is our intent that the Trails Master Plan serves as a comprehensive plan for non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities linking the assets and communities in Berrien County, along with providing connectivity throughout the region.

The Friends of Berrien County Trails have identified a bold vision for the future of trails in Berrien County that, in conjunction with the supporting goals and objectives, will provide the foundation for all physical and policy recommendations in the Plan. As a means of supporting the vision, goals have been developed along the following key themes:

- Connectivity
- Accessibility
- Economic Impact
- Collaboration
- Maintenance
- Safety
- Culture
- Quality of Place/Talent Attraction
- Equity

The Trails Master Plan includes a comprehensive list of existing and planned trail facilities compiled through the assistance of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, along with outreach to the various local governmental jurisdictions. Additionally, the plan identifies significant destination locations that serve as demand generators, including Parks, Schools, Medical Facilities, Employment Centers, and Visitor Destinations. A component of the Trails Master Plan includes a gaps analysis to help governmental jurisdictions in the planning of future facility development, and to coordinate interjurisdictional connectivity.

Finally, this plan is intended to identify needs, resources, and strategies that encourage and enhance bicycle and pedestrian travel and recreational use. This plan will help municipalities and trail organizations to seek and secure resources and funding to advance a connected trail system for the county.