Developing an Accessible Trail in LaSalette Park

**Importance:**
- According to the 2015 US Census, ~40 million Americans have a disability (12.6% of the civilian non-institutionalized population).  
- 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”.  
- 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.

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

**Key Components of an Accessible Path**
- 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.

**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-use activity was walking/hiking, with 86% of households and 65% of individuals reporting participation in the year.
- **Promotes Health:** According to the Department of Environmental Conservation, immersing oneself in nature can be most beneficial to one’s health as it boosts the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces stress, improves mood.
- **Community Engagement:** 58% of Connecticut residents participate in outdoor recreation each year and interest in outdoor nature based recreation is on the rise.

**Project Importance & Goals**

**Site Context**
- **Why at LaSalette Park?** “Because LaSalette Park is right across from our campus, we feel a kindship 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**
- 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.

**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.

**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 created.

**Human and Cultural Resources**
- Ruminants of a historic dairy farm are now used for a community garden.

**Crossings:**
- Defined by the four levels:
  - Level Line
  - Height 1
  - Height 2
  - Ground Level

**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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