

**Crime Comparison
City of Austin***

Jan - Jun 1996	Uniform crime report	Hike/bike trails & Townlake beach	% of total	*Parks and playgrounds	% of total
Murder	18				
Rape	121			5	0.041
Robbery	669	1	0.001	9	0.013
Aggravated assault	1169			17	0.015
Burglary	3423			6	0.002
Theft	13492	6	0	108	0.008
Auto Theft	1672			15	0.009
Total	20564		0	160	0.008

1995	Uniform crime report	Hike/bike trails & Townlake beach	% of total	*Parks and playgrounds	% of total
Murder	46			3	0.065
Rape	308	2	0.006	8	0.026
Robbery	1336	13	0.01	10	0.007
Aggravated assault	2360			18	0.008
Burglary	7521			12	0.002
Theft	27434	20	0.001	202	0.007
Auto Theft	3581	3	0.001	21	0.006
Total	42586	38	0.001	274	0.006

* Numbers were generated by Ann Wall of the Austin Police Department (480-2955)

** Totals include unfounded cases

The American Greenways Program

Fact Sheet No. 4

Crime And Vandalism

Issue: Do recreational trails and other types of greenways cause crime, vandalism and other disturbances? What evidence is there to support or to alleviate the concerns of adjacent land owners?

Facts: There is little evidence to support the fear that greenway trails will produce disturbance to private landowners. In fact the evidence is to the contrary.

- A 1980 study by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources compared landowners attitudes on a pair of proposed trails with landowner attitudes along a pair of similar trails already established. On the proposed trails 75% of landowners thought that if a trail was constructed it would mean more vandalism and other crimes. By contrast, virtually no landowners along the two constructed trails (0% and 6%, respectively), agreed with the statement "trail-users steal". (Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, 1980)
- A 1987 study of Seattle's Burke-Gilman Trail found little or no crime or vandalism experienced by adjacent property owners. The study surveyed property owners, realtors, and police officers. According to the realtors, property "near" the trail is significantly easier to market and sells for an average of 6% more than similar properties located elsewhere. Nearly two-thirds of adjacent landowners believed that the trail "increased the quality of life in the neighborhood", and not a single resident thought the trail should be closed. (Evaluation of the Burk Gilman Trail's effect on Property Values and Crime, Seattle, WA Engineering Dept., 1987)
- A former opponent of the Burke-Gilman trail (whose home is on the trail) stated that the "trail is much more positive than I expected. I was involved in citizens groups opposed to the trail. I now feel that the trail is very positive; [there are] fewer problems than before the trail was built; [there was] more litter and beer cans and vagrants [before it was built]." Not a single resident surveyed said that present conditions were worse than prior to construction of the trail.
- A 1992 study by the National Park Service of the impacts of rail-trails on nearby property owners found that "a majority of landowners reported no increase in problems since the trails opened. That living near trails was better than they had expected it to be, and that living near the trails was better than living near unused railroad lines before the trails were opened". Impact of Rail-Trails, National Park Service, 1992).
- Comments from adjacent landowners interviewed for the NPS study included the following:

"Vandalism, robbery and safety concerns I originally had were unfounded." - (Landowner on California's Lafayette/Moraga Trail)

"I was very opposed to the idea at first, fearing that it would be used by motorcyclists, but I am very pleased with the trail - it provides a safe alternative to using the highway for joggers and bicyclists, and it gives me a safe and comfortable place for my walks." - (Adjacent landowner on Florida's St. Mark's Trail)

"We are a small town and most everyone uses the trail at one time or another. The city of Durango has no bad comments to make on the trail; they all like it very much." - (Public Official on Iowa's Heritage Trail)

- * A 1988 survey of greenways in several states has found that such parks typically have not experienced serious problems regarding...vandalism, crime, trespass, [or] invasion of privacy...Prior to developing park facilities, these concerns were strongly voiced in opposition to proposed trails. After park development, however, it was found that fears did not materialize...concerns expressed by the neighbors opposed...have not proven to be a post-development problem in any of the parks surveyed. ("A Feasibility Study for Proposed Linear Park," Oregon Department of Transportation, Parks and Recreation Division, May 1988.)
- * A 1990 study by the Appalachian Trail Conference of crimes on the Appalachian Trail found that despite use by 3-4 million persons per year, that there were only 0.05 per 100,000 or 1 in 2 million. This means you are more likely to be struck by lightning or victimized in your home than as a hiker on the Appalachian Trail. (Source: Appalachian Trail Conference, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia)

This Fact Sheet is one of a series produced by the American Greenways Program. For more information contact:

The American Greenways Program
1800 North Kent Street, Suite 1120
Arlington, VA 22209
Phone (703) 525-6300 Fax (703) 525-4610