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INTRODUCTION

PROJECT SCOPE:
Recreation, natural and cultural resource protection, tourism, and community livability are promoted by designs for Gitchi-Gami Trail by a University-DNR-community partnership using design, computer technology, and community participation.

This work augments the Department of Natural Resource’s state trail work with communities to create a whole systems approach to integrating state trails in communities and their landscapes. Site specific designs that address such elements as trail head facilities (parking lots, trail orientation), trail connections to natural and cultural sites, design of community trail systems that connect to the state trail, and in some cases, the state trail corridor itself are provided.

State recreational trails are very popular because they create opportunities for Minnesotans to experience the natural environment, add to the livability of communities, and contribute considerably to the tourism economy. Valuable in and of themselves, state trails can leverage even more value if the larger context of natural resource systems, cultural amenities, future development patterns, and community form are considered and linked to trail corridors. This project extends and enhances the traditional DNR Trails and Waterways Division corridor-based trail planning on the Gitchi Gami Trail. High-quality recreational experiences, alignment alternatives, natural system protection strategies, community aspirations, and concerns, linkages to cultural and natural amenities, impact of current and future development patterns, the needs of a variety of trail users, specific site designs, and local trail designs were studied. The Gitchi-Gami Trail was selected based on timeliness, community interest, opportunities to enhance and create amenities, and the need to remove trail development challenges.

A project team from the Center for Changing Landscapes, an interdisciplinary center of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA) and the College of Natural Resources (CNR) of the University of Minnesota, the Trails and Waterways Division of the Department of Natural Resources, users groups, other state agencies such as MNDOT, and local community groups worked together on selected sites on the Gitchi-Gami Trail.

The DNR led work with communities and trail groups to ensure local and user input on recreational, tourism, and community issues. The Center for Changing Landscapes provided both technical and design expertise. CNR project team members used existing data, satellite imaging and sophisticated computer technology including neural network modeling methodology to project current land use trends and model land transformations that predict future land use scenarios. CALA project team members created design scenarios for the Gitchi-Gami State Trail, local trails that connect to the state trail, amenities that can be visited from the trail, and the trail communities. The work was presented in public meetings for discussion, feedback, and final presentations.

The project has several products. Maps provide information about the ecology of the trail environment. Designs were created that can be used by communities to implement work that informs future development patterns and makes connections to the state trail by enhancing local landscapes and community form.
BEAVER BAY COMMUNITY:
DESIGN FRAMEWORK

TRAILHEAD DESIGN

TRAIL ALIGNMENT

LOCAL TRAIL CONNECTIONS

SCENIC BYWAY

LANDSCAPE INTERPRETATION

CULTURAL / HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

LINKING EXISTING AMENITIES

LAKE ACCESS AND VIEWING