

Guest column:

Jon Wiley

Anderson Twp. already wins with new trail

There is a new gathering place in our town, and it offers a lesson in what makes good communities. It is a 2.5-mile long gathering place called the Five Mile Trail, and Anderson Township's official ribbon-cutting for the trail is today. Even before today, you couldn't by it without seeing people using it.



Technically, Five Mile Trail is considered part of the transportation system, but it's really much more than that. Pedestrian-friendly trails

like this one become rallying points for communities. In fact, community trails like this get used as much for recreation, exercise and enhancing quality of life as transportation. They are huge for joggers and kids riding bikes. The Five Mile Trail threads through woods and climbs hilly terrain but is designed to be accessible for everyone within this residential community.

Part of this trail runs along Five Mile Road, giving the trail its name, but the unique part of this trail is the secluded corridor. The hilly, wooded terrain was part of the beauty and part of the challenge in creating the trail. The hills were a big design challenge, but they help to minimize the view of houses, and for most of the trail you'll feel as if you are in the woods. We were pleased the design won a transportation improvement award from the American Society of Highway Engi-



Provided photo

An aerial view of the new Five Mile Trail shows how it was designed to be close, but not too close, to houses.

neers, but the real reward is seeing how people of the community have rallied to the trail.

Longer trails like the Loveland Trail are terrific for a day's outing, but people want a place close to home where they can go out for a short ride with the family any day of the week. It's a place where they will see neighbors out for a walk or ride. That helps knit communities together.

The economics of such trails make sense, too. When people are making one of the biggest investments of their lives – buying a

home – they understand the value of trails. Homes with trails close by are more highly valued; when people build new homes, many choose to build near trails.

Our region has many vacant rail lines and unused roadway corridors that could be transformed into beautiful trails to enhance our communities.

Jon Wiley, a professional engineer with KZF Design Inc., was part of the team that planned and designed Five Mile Trail. He lives in Anderson Township.