



NEWS RELEASE

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Media Contact:

Erica Schneider, Policy & Planning Manager, Parks & Trails New York (518-218-6539, eschneider@ptny.org)

FOUR NEW COMMUNITIES TO WORK TOWARDS COVETED 'TRAIL TOWN' STATUS

The City of Little Falls, City of Amsterdam, Village of Schuylerville and Town of Fort Edward to join the innovative Empire State Trail-based economic development program

ALBANY, NY – The Empire State Trail Town program recognizes and supports New York's exceptional trailside communities that have—through a competitive application process—demonstrated a singular commitment to leveraging the full economic potential of the Empire State Trail. The popular program, now entering its third year, is designed to build capacity and guide communities through the process of identifying ways they can capitalize on their location along the longest single-state, multi-use trail in the nation—the Empire State Trail. The goals of the ten-month program are twofold: to increase opportunities for residents to access high-quality recreational opportunities and to create trail-friendly destinations where visitors want to stay, explore, and spend.

Throughout the year, PTNY will assist the selected communities, with developing a network of local partners committed to the Trail Town initiative. Additional assistance will include public workshops to educate business owners, community leaders, and others about the needs of trail users, trail use research and assessment of current conditions, and promotion of the selected communities as must-visit destinations along the Empire State Trail. The year will culminate with a final set of recommendations for each community to use as a road map to guide future Trail Town work.

This year, PTNY has selected two communities along the Erie Canalway Trail already well known for their trail hospitality: the City of Little Falls and the City of Amsterdam. The friendly, scenic city of Little Falls is a vibrant cultural gem that sparkles among the whitewater rapids of the Mohawk River. As it pursues ambitious plans to further enhance the connection between the city's business districts and the trail, Little Falls is poised to become a must-stop destination along the Canalway Trail.

The City of Amsterdam's industrial past is the perfect backdrop for trail users to get acquainted with the history, culture, art, and natural beauty of the Mohawk Valley. With bustling trailside businesses on the south side, a gorgeous pedestrian bridge across the Mohawk River, and a burgeoning trail network on the north side, PTNY is excited to work with Amsterdam to further enhance trail connectivity.

For the first time, PTNY and the NYS Canal Corporation have expanded the scope of the program to include communities along the Champlain Canalway Trail, the north-south leg of the Empire State Trail running north from Albany to the Canadian border. The charming Village of Schuylerville on the Champlain Canal features a vibrant, trail-adjacent downtown, and unique Revolutionary War history. The newly opened Champlain Canal Region Gateway Visitor's Center has the potential to be a regional hub for recreational visitors.

The Town of Fort Edward, also along the Champlain Canalway Trail, combines rich history with unique proximity and access. The trail directly serves the downtown business district, and the community features rail access to the Empire State Trail, augmenting its role as the trail gateway to the Lake George area and the southern Adirondacks.

Since the completion of the Empire State Trail in 2020, the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails have only grown in popularity, attracting visitors from all over the nation and the world. Trail use figures from 2022 estimate that the Canalway Trail system now draws over 3.5 million visits per year. And with these visits comes a massive economic impact, especially from visitors who stay overnight in trail communities. A 2014 economic impact study of the Erie Canalway Trail reveals that the trail generates over \$250 million in annual economic impact. The Trail Town program will help communities leverage the trail for sustainable economic development through strategies that entice people off the trail and into these communities.

By being selected to participate in the Empire State Trail Town program, Amsterdam, Little Falls, Schuylerville, and Fort Edward are joining a network of communities along the Empire State Trail that recognize the value of the trail as both an enhancement to quality of life for residents and driver of economic growth.

To learn more about Empire State Trail Towns, visit ptny.org/ESTT

"The Empire State Trail, ranked as the number one best rail trail in the country by *Outside Magazine*, is a massive economic driver for New York's vibrant canalway communities, drawing visitors from around the country and the world," said **Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York**. "We look forward to working with the selected communities to help leverage this exceptional trail by developing and implementing strategies like improving trail-to-town connectivity, enhancing the services and amenities that trail users seek, and promoting a culture of stewardship, hospitality, and inclusivity.

"Through the Empire State Trail Town program, the Canal Corporation is thrilled to assist Little Falls, Amsterdam, Schuylerville, and Fort Edward as they work to revitalize their communities

and foster connections that will increase visitation and create long-term economic and quality of life benefits for their residents,” said **New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton**. “We look forward to this partnership and all of the new opportunities it will bring to New York’s residents and visitors, so they can enjoy the Empire State Trail and our state’s vibrant canal communities for generations to come.”

“We couldn’t be more thrilled to be selected as a participant in achieving ‘Trail Town’ status,” said the **City of Little Falls Mayor, Deborah Kaufman**. “In Little Falls, we are so incredibly proud of our city’s scenic beauty and historic heritage. The Erie Canalway Trail is an integral part of our community pride, attracting visitors from all over and richly benefiting our city both economically and socially.”

"The City of Amsterdam is thrilled to have been selected as an Empire State Trail Town! Since its inception, businesses in our City have benefitted and established wonderful longstanding relationships with so many users of the Trail. Now is an excellent time to put together a more formal program that makes our City an even more inviting stop for the folks who use this amazing recreational pathway. We can't wait to get started!" said **Michael Cinquanti, Mayor of the City of Amsterdam**.

As Mayor of Schuylerville, I am thrilled to announce our village's participation in the Empire State Trail Town Program. This initiative, developed by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation, highlights the transformative power of the Empire State Trail as an economic engine for communities like ours,” said **Daniel Carpenter, Mayor of the Village of Schuylerville**. “Our involvement signifies a commitment to enhancing the trail experience for both residents and visitors, fostering a vibrant, trail-friendly destination. We eagerly look forward to collaborating with PTNY, leveraging their support and expertise to realize our vision of a welcoming, dynamic Schuylerville that capitalizes on the unique opportunities the trail presents.”

"The Town of Fort Edward and Promote Fort Edward are excited and enthusiastic about working together to achieve our common goal of creating the best possible Trail Town experience for residents and visitors alike. With help from Parks & Trails New York and dedicated community volunteers, we are confident that we can cultivate a welcoming and inclusive Trail Town destination that will attract visitors from around the world, while at the same time improving the community for those that are already here," said **Kyle Cozzens, Executive Director of Promote Fort Edward**.

About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York is the state’s leading advocate for parks and trails. Since 1998, PTNY has been working in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation to help canal communities plan, develop and promote the Canalway Trail. PTNY organizes Cycle the Erie Canal, an eight-day bicycle tour along the historic Erie Canal that attracts more than 650 participants each year. The organization also publishes the popular guidebook, *Cycling the Erie*

Canal: A Guide to 360 miles of Adventure and History along the Erie Canalway Trail. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

About the New York State Canal System

The New York State Canal Corporation runs the New York State Canal System, which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. In 2017, the Canal Corporation celebrated the 200th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal, which occurred in the city of Rome on July 4, 1817. The Canal System includes the Canalway Trail, a network of approximately 400 miles of multi-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trail follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System as well as adjacent abandoned rail corridors. Together, the canals and trail create a world-class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic, and unique New York resource. To learn more about the New York State Canal and Canalway Trail System or to obtain a free map, please call 1-800-4CANAL4 or visit the Canal Corporation's website at www.canals.ny.gov.

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