

## Library Reference 11.10.10

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## Creekwalk Trail

### Onondaga Creekwalk

A work in progress, the Creekwalk already boasts a reputation of having the most attractive stretch of trail in the City of Syracuse. Providing a serene yet urban setting, the trail is currently complete from the historic Franklin Square district to just north of the Syracuse Inner Harbor, in close proximity to the Carousel Center.

The Creekwalk extends both north and south from the Syracuse Inner Harbor. Heading north toward Onondaga Lake, a paved pathway follows the western shoreline of the Inner Harbor and Barge Canal for almost ¾ mile. This segment of the Creekwalk offers opportunities for all sorts of recreational activity, including in-line skating and bicycling, fishing along the shoreline, or enjoying a public concert at the Inner Harbor Amphitheater. The northern trail offers exciting new access to views of the historic Barge Canal and the changing Syracuse Lakefront Area.

Perhaps the most beautifully landscaped trail section in Syracuse, the Franklin Square Creekwalk section to the south of the Harbor traverses for approximately ¾ mile past a mix of historic structures, new offices and residential buildings.

Extensions to the existing Onondaga Creekwalk are currently being designed and prepared for construction. To the south, the Creekwalk will extend from Franklin Square to Armory Square in Downtown. To the north, the Creekwalk will extend to the mouth of Onondaga Lake. Due to some difficult logistical challenges of rediscovering a waterway in an urbanized area, the project will be constructed in phases over the course of the next two years. The City of Syracuse began the right-of-way acquisition portion of the project in January of 2005.

Once expanded, the Onondaga Creekwalk will measure 2.2 miles and average 13 feet wide. It will connect to the progressing [Loop the Lake Trail](#), as well as to the Erie Canalway Trail, scheduled to connect Canal communities from Albany to Buffalo along the 524-mile [New York State Canal System](#). The Syracuse section of the Canalway Trail will actually connect 15 miles of trails in Onondaga County.

#### Phase I -

##### Connecting Armory Square to Onondaga Lake

To the south, the Creekwalk will be extended from Franklin Square to Armory Square in Downtown. To the north, the Creekwalk will be extended to the mouth of Onondaga Lake. Construction will start in fall 2009, and be completed by the end of 2011.

Once expanded, the Onondaga Creekwalk will measure 2.2 miles with an average width of 13 feet. It is planned to connect to the proposed Onondaga County [Loop the Lake Trail](#), as well as to the Erie Canalway Trail. The Syracuse section of the Canalway Trail will actually connect 15 miles of trails in Onondaga County.

**Linking Section - There currently is a temporary trail extension between the two existing segments of the Onondaga Creekwalk, from Maltbie St to Kirkpatrick St. A permanent section will be constructed on the west bank of Onondaga Creek from Spencer St. to Kirkpatrick St. It will go through the Syracuse Parks Department Main Office property. This link is approximately 0.1 mile between the existing sections.**

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**Northern Extension - This segment will extend the Creekwalk north approximately one-half mile, from its current terminus just north of Bear Street to the southern Onondaga Lake shoreline. This trail will start at the existing trail along the west side of the Barge Canal, travel north up to Hiawatha Blvd, where it will cross over the Barge Canal to east side. The trail will then proceed north along the east side of the Barge Canal. At an undetermined future date, it will connect to both the Carousel Center and the planned 12-mile Loop the Lake Trail (being planned by Onondaga County). For now, it will dead end at the lake. Design character will follow that established in the Inner Harbor, as a natural landscape element.**

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**Southern Extension - This segment will continue the walkway south from its point of departure at**

**Franklin Square toward Downtown Syracuse. This 0.6-mile segment will travel alongside Onondaga Creek to Armory Square. The Creekwalk will travel past the historic Art Deco Niagara Mohawk building, offer views and connections with several downtown streets, and terminate at the popular Armory Square mixed-use district.**

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**The City of Syracuse has partnered with Onondaga County to incorporate green infrastructures, including porous asphalt pavement for parking areas and some portions of the trail, flexible porous pavement, porous concrete pavement, vegetated swales, and rain gardens. These initiatives will help decrease the storm water runoff that flows into the Onondaga Creek (and ultimately Onondaga Lake), which benefits the environment.**

#### PROJECT BENEFITS

The importance of this multi-use trail system, including the Syracuse Creekwalk, Onondaga Lake Trail, NYS Canalway Trail, and various smaller feeder trails, is recognized by our municipal officials, various community groups, private development interests, and planning and economic development organizations. Benefits derived from further development the Onondaga Creekwalk trail include, but are not limited to:

- Provision of a transportation network which may be efficiently used as an alternative to the automobile. This trail system will ensure accessibility by the disabled and to bikers, in-line skaters, skateboarders and walkers.
- Provision of urban trails and pedestrian linkages serving a large population within our metropolitan center, with connections to our job centers, neighborhoods, park spaces and waterfronts.
- Recognition, conservation and celebration of our waterways. Onondaga Creek and Onondaga Lake have been long neglected. Focus is now being redirected back towards the water and the recreational, environmental and economic benefits attributed to them.
- Realization of quality of life issues in the revitalization of our community, recognizing an increased public value placed on recreation, parks, and public open space, as evidenced by Syracuse TNT sector neighborhood planning goals and the FOCUS Greater Syracuse Vision Fair.
- Extension of an existing recognized trail system, and the provision of linkages to larger state-wide trail systems such as the NYS Canalway Trail as well as local trails such as the Onondaga Lake Circumferential Trail and various neighborhood feeder trails. A feasibility study for Phase II of the extension of the Creekwalk south to Kirk Park was completed in February, 2008

#### PROJECT FUNDING DETAILS

Based upon the proposed alignment, it is estimated that constructing the trail between Armory Square and Onondaga Lake will cost approximately \$6.5 million plus costs associated with construction inspection (typically approximately 10% of the construction cost).

An almost equally important consideration in the design of the walkway is the safety and aesthetic appeal of the trail system. Design elements such as elevated and at-grade walkways, ADA compliant ramps, lighting, railings, fencing, landscape development, signage, pedestrian street crossings, benches, bollards, overlooks, and other amenities are all included in the above project estimates, and are all necessary for a quality urban trail system that people will feel comfortable using.

It has been recognized by several entities working to progress trail systems in our community and statewide, that construction of this section of the Syracuse Creekwalk will be one of the most challenging sections of the entire 500-plus mile NYS Canalway Trail. However, its ultimate public benefit is unquestionable.

#### SYRACUSE CREEKWALK PHASES II AND III (FUTURE PHASES)

The feasibility study for the Creekwalk Phase II (Extension from Armory Square south to Kirk Park) was completed in February, 2008. This project has not yet received funding for the design phase. Phase III, which is only a concept at this time, would extend the Creekwalk to the southern border of the City, at Dorwin Ave.

There are two existing sections of the Creekwalk along Onondaga Creek, in the City of Syracuse. One section is in Franklin Square and the other is at the Inner Harbor. There is a temporary trail connecting these two sections. **This project will extend the existing Creekwalk both to the north and to the south, and make a permanent link between the two existing trails.**