

Alex Area Stewards have defined 13 key destiny drivers that will work to strengthen community vitality for the region. Over the coming weeks you will read about each destiny driver and its importance to the region. If you find a destiny driver that ignites your passion for the future, call the stewardship committee at 763-4545 and become a part of shaping the destiny of our region.

Destiny Driver – “Every Community in on the Central Lakes Trail in Douglas County will have a quality trail head by 2011.”

We are very fortunate to have abundant recreational opportunities and environmental assets. These natural assets help make our region a great place to live, and also serve as an economic engine by attracting visitors and tourists to our area. In fact, in the recent community perception survey, we found that nearly 95% of residents say that natural resources are important to them in choosing a place to live, and 86% feel that an influx of summer visitors is good for our area.

The availability and close proximity of our recreational opportunities is interwoven into the lifestyle and character of our residents, businesses and governmental entities. Protecting and enhancing these assets through continued maintenance and vigilance has served the area well.

One of the wonderful assets we have is the Central Lakes Trail. This paved gem runs 55 miles from Osakis West to Fergus Falls, and is a superb asset for residents of the region, as well as for visitors. It is an excellent trail for walking, running, bicycling, in-line skating, roller skiing, wheelchairs, snowmobilers in the winter, etc. How fortunate we are to have this trail run through our region!

The Douglas County Public Works Department spent countless hours and resources working with local volunteers and the Minnesota Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources in making this trail a reality. The project took 12 years to complete and involved many partners, including the National Rails to Trails Conservancy, the Bikes Belong Coalition, local Chambers of Commerce and service clubs, townships and city governments, private foundations, individual volunteers, and businesses all along the trail.

The stewardship group appreciates all of the hard work that these individuals put into the Central Lakes Trail, and recognizes the trail as an important asset for the region. It is for this reason that the stewardship initiative made as one of their destiny drivers that “Every community on the Central Lakes Trail in Douglas County will have a quality trail head by 2011”.

The goal is to create/enhance trail access to the Central Lakes Trail system in our region, so that each trail head would have similar amenities and uniformity, and so trail users would know what they could expect in each community. Some examples would be: ample parking spaces including places for bicycles, public restroom facilities, including handicap facilities, picnic areas, signs that explain trail etiquette and rules, maps, indexes to trail-friendly businesses, extensions into the communities, etc.

Last summer, a couple came into the local chamber of commerce office to get some information on local attractions. They were vacationing at a resort in Ottertail, MN. They hauled their bikes down to Garfield, MN and hopped on the Central Lakes Trail for a ride into Alexandria, and were then planning on riding over to Osakis. Ensuring that every community in our county has a quality trail head will help draw in more such visitors to our area, and will also make the trail more user friendly for our own residents.

We have a wonderful asset in our region in the Central Lakes Trail. Let’s make the most of it!