Evaluating and Mapping Student Preferences for Trail Features and Potential Uses in the Red Butte Creek Riparian Corridor

January 2016
Prepared by Elise Gatti, Matthew Brownlee, Ph.D, and Brian Peterson
Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, University of Utah

Study Purpose: To identify, evaluate, and map University of Utah student preferences and motivations for using a potential trail along the Red Butte Creek corridor on campus. The social data provided by this research are intended to be used alongside other scientific datasets in the holistic planning and design of the corridor.

Method: Quantitative social survey method and GIS representation. Researchers used a stratified random sampling procedure to intercept enrolled students ($N = 831$ for two questionnaires) at six sampling sites on the University of Utah campus during the fall 2015 term.

Findings: Students’ past use of trails and their preferred outdoor recreation activities indicate that they possess an array of nature-based recreational interests, with an emphasis on trail-based pursuits. Students strongly prefer a natural landscape environment for the Red Butte Creek corridor, and report a positive outlook toward using a potential trail. The findings indicate that recreational infrastructure, such as a trail or multiple trails, would likely be well received and heavily used by students. An accessible creek setting on campus would contribute to student health and resiliency, and could become an iconic landscape feature.

Recommendations:

1. Natural Landscapes
   Keep the corridor’s landscape character as close to its natural state as possible in order to meet students’ desire for contact with nature, and mental and physical relaxation.

2. Universally Accessible Natural Surface Trail(s)
   Provide at least one trail with a natural surface that is wheelchair accessible, and immersed in trees.

3. Passive Leisure Spaces
   Include opportunities for passive leisure activities like sitting and viewing wildlife.

4. Amenities
   Encourage use by providing access to amenities like drinking water, bicycle parking, dog waste bags, trash bins, and restrooms.

5. Wayfinding Signage
   Provide signage that directs users to amenities both within and surrounding the corridor.

6. Promotion
   Promote the corridor as a recreational, research, and educational resource to students using a variety of marketing methods.

Study contact: Matthew Brownlee, Assistant Professor, (801) 585-7239 / matthew.brownlee@hsc.utah.edu
Download the full report: http://www.health.utah.edu/parks-recreation-tourism/research/ORET.php
Research support generously provided by: