



**HEALTHY
WEST ORANGE**

TRAILS CONNECTION

2024

ANNUAL REPORT

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2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The Healthy West Orange Trails Connection (HWOTC) was formed to promote, activate and enhance the trail system to create opportunities for physical activity, social engagement, prosperity, and happiness. Our goal is to connect and enhance a dynamic regional trail system that we can all enjoy close to home. Bike/Walk Central Florida is proud to facilitate the largest grassroots coalition for trail activation and development in the Central Florida region!

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LETTER FROM THE HEALTHY WEST ORANGE TRAILS CONNECTION

In 2024, the Healthy West Orange Trails Connection moved from planning to implementation, building on its strong foundation and delivering meaningful progress across the region. We launched the Trail Project Implementation Grant Program, opening its first round of Small Project funding to support local trail efforts. The HWOTC Partner Cities and Towns also finalized and approved the Trailside Development Design & Policy Guidelines, a key planning tool to help integrate trails into both natural and urban environments across West Orange County.

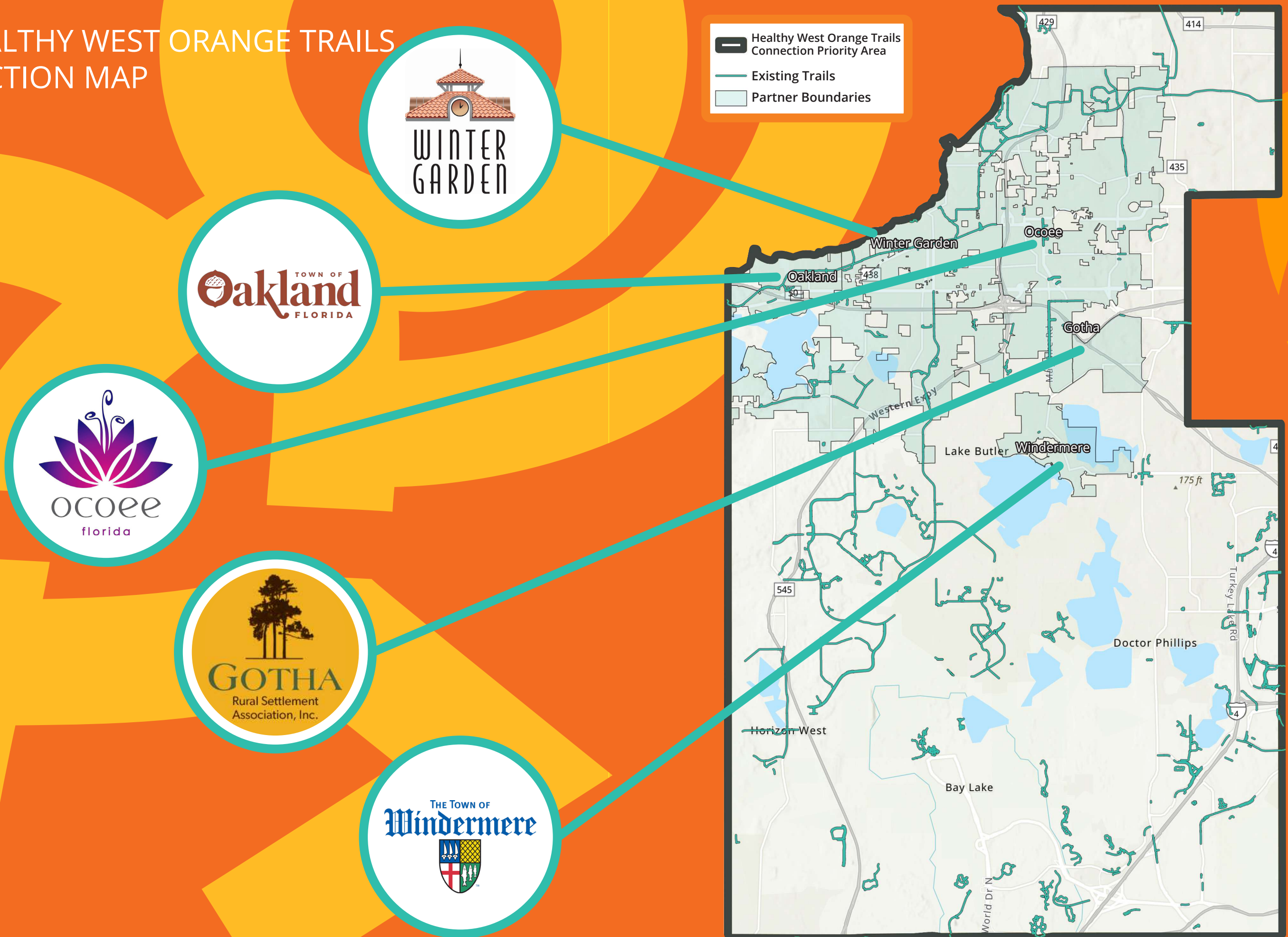
We continued to prioritize safety and engagement. Two new trail safety audits were completed in Ocoee and along the Pine Hills Trail, guided by an updated survey that will inform future evaluations. Meanwhile, the Communications & Events Working Group expanded outreach through the second annual Take Over the Trails Day and the Trailblazers Challenge, bringing visibility to HWOTC’s mission and encouraging more residents to walk, bike, and roll.

In just three years, HWOTC has evolved into a community-driven force for healthier, more connected neighborhoods. As we look to 2025, we’re excited to expand the grant program, strengthen partnerships, and continue making it easier for everyone to enjoy safe, active transportation and recreation across West Orange County.

Sincerely,

The Healthy West Orange Trails Connection Partner Cities and Towns

THE HEALTHY WEST ORANGE TRAILS CONNECTION MAP



CONTINUING TO BUILD HEALTHY TRAILS

From January through September, HWOTC advanced three major initiatives to support trails in West Orange County: the completion and approval of the Trailside Development Design & Policy Guidelines (TDG), the expansion and review of the Trail Gap Analysis, and the official launch of the Trail Project Implementation Grant Program with the opening of the Small Projects Grant category.

The TDG established context classifications for trails and offered policy guidance for partner towns and cities. The goal was to define how trails can be integrated into their communities, whether by preserving natural resources and rural character or by enhancing active transportation infrastructure in more urban environments. The Trail Gap Analysis, initiated in 2023 and expanded through collaborative working groups in 2024, reflected HWOTC’s commitment to long-term planning. By identifying high-priority gaps that would create the most immediate and significant connections, HWOTC partners were able to focus on linking existing infrastructure and improving access to healthy outdoor recreation and transportation options.

Finally, the launch of the Trail Project Implementation Grant Program marked the coalition’s flagship effort to invest directly in locally driven trail enhancements and expansions. While the program began with small grants, future phases are planned to include larger funding opportunities to empower local partners in expanding the trail network throughout West Orange County.

The HWOTC is governed by an Executive Committee and Steering Committee, as agreed upon by the Partner Cities and Towns. The Executive Committee is comprised of one (1) West Orange Healthcare District representative (Past Trustee - WOHD dissolved June 2023), one (1) Foundation for a Healthier West Orange (FHWO) representative, and one (1) City/Town representative (elected annually). The Steering Committee is comprised of one (1) staff member and one (1) alternate from each Partner City and Town. HWOTC Working Groups are comprised of various Steering Committee and Supporting Agency members.



INITIATORS



2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Facilitated by



STEERING COMMITTEE



SUPPORTING AGENCIES

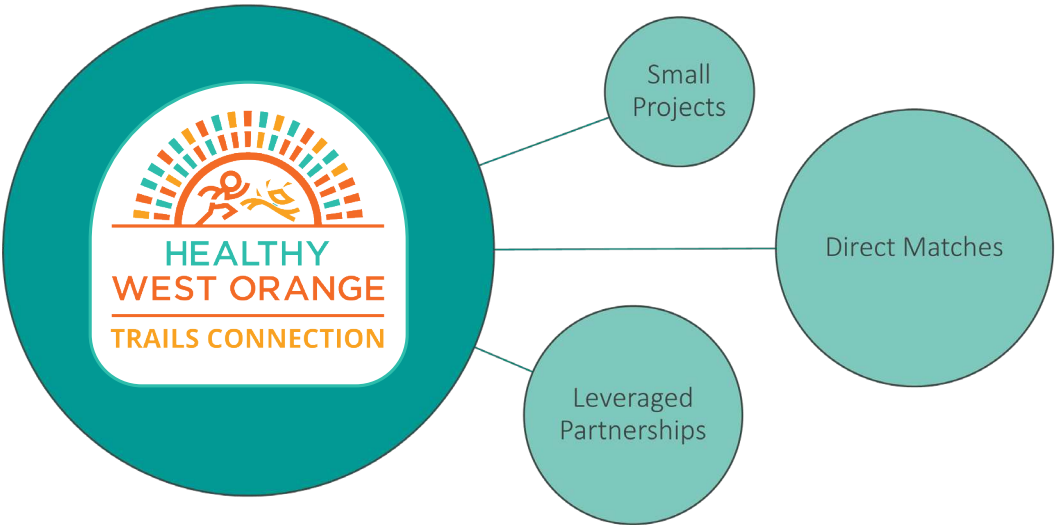
East Central Florida Regional Planning Council | Florida Department of Transportation
West Orange Chamber of Commerce | Kittelson & Associates | Friends of Lake Apopka
Orange County District 1 Commissioner’s Office | Orange County Parks and Recreation
Orange County District 2 Commissioner’s Office | MetroPlan Orlando

EXECUTIVE & STEERING COMMITTEES

Whereas most decisions relating to direction are expected to be made through consensus of the entire HWOTC membership, final decisions are based on a one-vote per agency system of the Steering Committee.

In 2024, the Executive and Steering Committees worked directly with

the program’s facilitating organization, Bike/Walk Central Florida, to develop a number of program components and initiatives in pursuit of the HWOTC mission, including an analysis of trail gaps in the Healthy West Orange Priority Area, the Trailside Development Design & Policy Guidelines, and the HWOTC Trail Project Implementation Grant Program.



HWOTC Trail Project Implementation Grant Application Process

- 1 - Grant Application Submitted
- 2 - Initial Working Group Review
- 3 - Executive Committee Review
- 4 - Steering Committee Approval
- 5 - FHWO Board Review, Final Approval, & Disbursement



HWOTC Trail Project Implementation Grant Program

HWOTC has developed and launched the first stage of a grant program intended to fund trail projects aligned with the HWOTC Mission. Program components include grant categories and eligibility requirements, application and review processes, and project prioritization and evaluation processes.

The Grant Program proposes to apportion the \$5 million dollar implementation fund managed by the Foundation for a Healthier West Orange into three categories:

- Small Projects
- Direct Matches
- Leveraged Partnerships

The Grant Program components were approved in March 2024, first accepting applications for the Small Projects category, which was allocated a total of \$500,000 in available funding. The remaining categories will be refined, with an expected launch in 2025.

Healthy West Orange Priority Area Trail Gap Analysis

To help identify priority trail connections and maximize opportunities to leverage available trail project funding programs, HWOTC commissioned an analysis of the existing trail system within the Healthy West Orange Priority Area. The analysis has continued to evolve through additional development and application discussions. See pages 10-11 for more information.

Trailside Development Design & Policy Guidelines

Approved a document that establishes context classifications for trails and provides policy guidance to support trail integration across varying land use types. See page 14 for more information.

PAGE 8 TOP: HWOTC Grant Distribution

PAGE 8 BOTTOM: HWOTC Trail Project Implementation Grant Application Process



Take Over the Trails Day

In February 2024, HWOTC hosted its second Take Over the Trails Day event in Oakland. To increase visibility and community engagement, the event was held alongside the Oakland Farmers Market, adding to the vibrant atmosphere and celebrating the community's active spirit. HWOTC partners and supporting agencies gathered along the West Orange Trail near the Healthy West Orange Arts and Heritage Center to engage trail users, share information, and promote HWOTC's mission. This "pop-up" event offered an opportunity to highlight the coalition's work while encouraging the community to learn more about the collaborative effort. Key messages shared included the formation of HWOTC, its mission, its partner organizations, and accomplishments to date.



ABOVE: Join the Movement! Make the Pledge! A Healthy West Orange representative connected with a community member to share the mission.

BELOW: HWOTC representatives announced raffle winners at Take Over the trails Day.



LEFT: Trailblazers Challenge visitors in Oakland entered the Take Over the Trails Day community prize raffle.

BELOW: HWOTC representatives promoted the Trailblazers Challenge and Take Over the Trails Day in Winter Garden.



Trailblazers Challenge

To expand outreach across West Orange County, the Communications & Events Working Group launched the Trail Blazers Challenge, a community initiative held in all five partner cities and towns. The challenge raised awareness of HWOTC's mission, encouraged trail development, and promoted Take Over the Trails Day.

At community events, HWOTC shared information about trails, health benefits, safety tips, and upcoming activities. Participants could also enter a prize raffle tied to Take Over the Trails Day.

This outreach campaign continued into early 2024, with raffle winners announced during the February event.



Raffle Prizes Included:

- **Grand Prize Package:** A year-long family membership to Oakland Nature Preserve, a \$100 Winter Garden Wheelworks gift card, and a \$100 Publix gift card.
- **Additional Prizes:** \$50 Publix gift card, two \$50 Amazon gift cards, a \$50 Winter Garden Wheelworks gift card, and another year-long family membership to Oakland Nature Preserve.

Trailside Development Design & Policy Guidelines

The Design and Connections Working Group completed the Trailside Development Design & Policy Guidelines, which was adopted by the HWOTC Steering Committee on June 27, 2024. This effort engaged professionals from multiple disciplines in a comprehensive review of Priority Area conditions, land uses, demographics, socioeconomics, and best practices from both West Orange County and across the country.

The centerpiece of the document is the policy guidance chapter, which outlines a framework of goals for trailside development, corresponding objectives, and strategies to achieve them. This structure mirrors the format of comprehensive plans, making it easier for partner towns and cities to integrate the guidance into their own planning documents.



To further support implementation, the guidelines include sample comprehensive plan language and real-world policy examples that demonstrate successful strategies in action.

Trailside Development Design & Policy Guidelines Sample Page of Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

Trailside Development Design & Policy Guidelines

June 2024

Table 4-1: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Policy & Design Goal	Policy & Design Objectives	Policy & Design Implementation Strategies	Applicable Trail Context Classifications
Optimize Access between trails and adjacent land uses.	Minimize access conflicts.	Encourage shared access points for adjacent developments if ingress/egress crosses the trail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural• Conservation• Commercial• Industrial• Low-density Residential• Medium-density Residential• High-density Residential
		Rear-load vehicular access and parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office• Institutional• Commercial• Mixed-Use• Low-density Residential• Medium-density Residential

Trail Safety Survey

After two years of evaluating the West Orange Trail through targeted audits informed by public feedback from the Trail Safety Survey, the Enhance Working Group revisited the concept and issued a new survey with a broader focus on all trails within the Priority Area. This updated survey, along with input from partners, has helped guide the selection of locations for future trail safety audits.

Trail Safety Audits

A trail safety audit is an in-person review of a trail segment to identify opportunities to improve safety and enhance the user experience. Each audit produces a summary document with observations and recommendations.

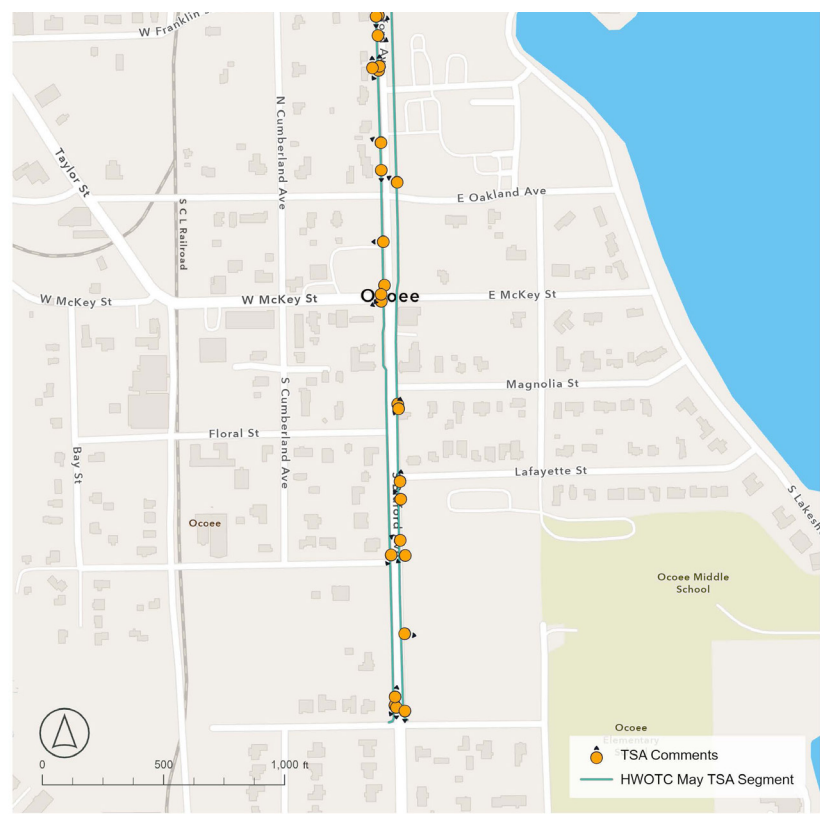
In 2024, HWOTC conducted two audits covering 2.4 miles in the Priority Area: downtown Ocoee (May) and the Pine Hills Trail (August). Working group members, public agencies, and private industry experts collaborated on these evaluations.

Based on member feedback, audit reports were updated to include worksheet-style recommendations, making it easier for partners to track progress. Discussions are underway to expand future audits to include evaluating new trails and recommending amenities and activation strategies.

HWOTC Trail Safety Audit mobile GIS app.



ABOVE PHOTOS: The HWOTC Trail Safety Audit walking and cycling teams recorded observations on trail items that needed attention.



LEFT: Sample from the Ocoee Downtown Wide Sidewalks Audit, highlighting all locations where auditors recorded observations.

ID	Comment Type	Action	Description	Accept (Y/N)	Project Completion Date		Notes
					Planned	Completed	
1	Accessibility	Recommendation	Replace worn truncated dome pads at Silver Star Road intersection.				
2	Trail Crossing Safety	Follow-Up	Investigate feasibility of an LPI at Silver Star Road crossing due to heavy traffic and frequent crossings from students.				
3	Signing, Signalization, & Pavement Markings	Recommendation	Ped crossing sign could do with a refresh/replacement.				
4	Accessibility	Recommendation	Move truncated dome pads to be in line with crosswalk.				
5	Trail Hazard	Recommendation	Fill pothole in crosswalk by commercial strip.				
6	Signing, Signalization, & Pavement Markings	Recommendation	Provide special-emphasis crosswalk treatment due to proximity to Unity Park- ladder striping and advance signage.				
7	Trail Hazard	Recommendation	Fill gap in between sidewalk panels that could catch bike tires.				
8	Trail Hazard	Recommendation	Pave around manhole cover so trail does not narrow in front of 130 Bluford Avenue.				
9	Landscaping Opportunity	Recommendation	Trim plant growth along trail near Country Day School.				

ABOVE: Sample of the “Worksheet” recommendation layout from the Ocoee audit, illustrating how findings and suggested improvements were organized.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE FUTURE & 2025 INITIATIVES

In 2024, the HWOTC Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and Working Groups advanced key initiatives to help fund improvements to the trail network and trailside development practices within the Healthy West Orange Connection Priority Area. These efforts laid the foundation for continued progress in 2025 and beyond. HWOTC collaborated with partners to shape policy changes that support trail development and established a grant program designed to fund a diverse range of trail projects. These collective efforts support our broader mission to promote, activate, and enhance the trail system throughout West Orange County.

- Continued advocacy in local and regional active transportation planning and implementation efforts
- Expansion of the HWOTC Trail Project Implementation Grant program
- Exploration and development of leveraged partnerships for additional trail network development opportunities
- Review of applications and disbursement of Trail Grant Program funds to approved applicants
- Application of Trail Gap Analysis to advance connectivity in the HWOTC Priority Area
- Integration of Trailside Development Design Guidelines into Partner Agency plans and policies
- Additional Trail Safety Audits, including evaluations of future trails and strategies for trail activation

For more information, visit:
<https://fhwo.org/hwo-trails-connection/>



The Healthy West Orange Trails Connection
2024 annual report reflects the efforts of the
largest grassroots coalition for trail activation and
development in the Central Florida region.

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