



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

An **IMBA Trail Town** is a community that is a great place to live and visit, where a variety of trail experiences can be found in a reasonable distance from the community center. It is a community where officials, trail organizations, residents and businesses all recognize the importance of trail-based recreation and play a role in developing and maintaining those amenities. These collective efforts are focused on growing the outdoor recreation opportunities for residents, which improve quality of life, increase public health, get kids outdoors, preserve open spaces, attract and retain employees, and more.

An **IMBA Trail Town** community offers a trail system that creates a great place to live, work, and play with a culture that supports trails.



IMBA Community Assessment

IMBA Trail Town Application

Application Period: Nov - Jan

IMBA Trail Town Designation

Awarded: April  
Valid For: 3 Years

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## Step One: Community Assessment

### What is the Community Assessment?

The community assessment outlines the key elements most communities share once they have made trail development and stewardship a community-wide priority. Within each section of the assessment, you'll find recommendations that offer guidance on next steps. Your community's assessment score and the resulting information can act as the catalyst for a variety of next steps, including:

- Inspiring involvement from your community
- Galvanizing diverse stakeholders around trails
- Gaining more support for trail development
- Solving issues around trail development
- Stimulating new fundraising efforts
- Emphasizing the need for trail maintenance

IMBA's Community Assessment is focused on natural surface, singletrack trails meant for recreational activities such as mountain biking, hiking, trail running, and horseback riding. Although paved and gravel paths are undeniably important to communities, they are not included within this assessment.

## Who should take this assessment?

Any community member who can leverage the results to improve their local trail amenities and corresponding community support. This could include city or county staff, trail advocates, members of friends groups, economic development staff, tourism or chamber of commerce staff, community development professionals, and so on. This survey should provide food for thought that can be shared across these organizations to inspire ideas, collaboration, and impetus for action.

While an individual may complete the assessment, this tool is most impactful when worked through as a group of stakeholders representing a variety of organizations and agencies involved in creating a great place to live, work and ride. The conversations that arise from this joint effort are often invaluable.



Anyone globally can take the Community Assessment, however, the official IMBA Trail Town Badge is currently only available to communities within the USA.

## How do I make the most of the assessment?

Answer each question as accurately as possible and you'll gain insights into how your community is doing in each of the topic areas. Understanding where you have gaps in the process helps identify areas of improvement which will inform how you approach officials, stakeholders and funders.

Assessment questions are organized into the following categories, and each has a role to play in effective trail communities: Access, Existing Trails and Infrastructure, Community Engagement, Assessment, Funding, Trail Planning, Stewardship, Community Vision.

### Definitions

For this self-assessment, please use the following definitions:

#### Community

A specific locale, including its landscape, infrastructure and residents, that features residential neighborhoods, essential services and shopping, and recreational trails. This could be a single town, a suburb of a larger city, or a rural area. It may include lands owned by a variety of entities, including city, county, state or federal agencies, etc.

In this assessment, the area of interest will be further defined by a 30-minute driving radius around a central location that is a focal point for that community – its downtown, commercial center, gathering place or city hall. The driving radius can include trail systems where the trailhead can be reached in 30 minutes, even if the trails themselves are outside that circle.

#### Bike-optimized trails

Trails designed and built with features developed specifically to enhance the mountain biking experience, such as bermed turns, shaped rollers or jumps. These can be located on shared-use, single-use, or preferred-use trails. Bike-optimized trails are not necessarily "bike-only" trails.

### Traditional singletrack

Trails designed and built primarily for multiple user groups, without specific features meant to enhance the mountain biking experience.

## How long will it take to complete?

If you are familiar with all of your community's trails and the types of community support around them, it will take about 15 - 30 minutes to complete. If you're not a trail user, it may take 30-60 minutes to gather the information you need to complete the assessment.

## Should I fill this out by myself?

The most effective way to approach the tool is to complete it with a group of varied stakeholders that could include the local MTB/trail organization, land managers, officials, community development staff, etc. The conversations that will come from this joint effort will be invaluable to your process. You'll find the survey questions directly below, so that your team can discuss them prior to filling out the assessment.

## Should I submit more than one assessment?

Only one assessment per community should be submitted with the best final answers possible. Use this opportunity to discuss the answers in their entirety, and submit one final copy when you feel confident in your responses.

## Can I save my answers to return to the survey?

No. Be sure you are prepared to answer all questions when you start the survey.

### Preview Survey

We recommend reviewing/printing the [survey preview](#) to prepare the information prior to starting the assessment.

## How do I choose the center point used in this assessment?

This point is meant to be the primary "core" of your community, a location that most clearly identifies it. This could be the downtown area, a town square, your city hall, a key gathering place, etc. The purpose of a trail friendly community is to provide easily accessible outdoor recreation to your residents, so this center point should be relatively close to where most people live.

## How do I figure out trail mileage within the 30-minute drive radius?

If you use the trails yourself, you'll likely know how long it takes you to drive to the various trailheads or starting points. If you're not familiar with these distances, you can use Google Maps to calculate drive time from your center point to each trailhead. If you can reach a given trailhead within 30 minutes of the center point, you may include all trail mileage that originates from that trailhead. To find the mileage and difficulty ratings of a given trail system, [TrailForks](#) can be a useful tool.

# **What if I'm unsure how to answer certain questions? My community falls between answers for some of the questions.**

If in doubt, select the answer that reflects the majority of your trails or the most common/typical scenario in your community for that question.

# **What if my community has a lot more trail mileage than what is asked for? Do I get extra credit?**

If you have 60 miles or more within your driving radius, as well as amenities and infrastructure to support trail tourism, you should still complete this assessment and then consider applying for our IMBA Ride Center designation, which recognizes some of the best riding destinations in America and around the world.

# **Why are you asking about bike-only trails? What about the other user groups?**

Increasingly, single-use trails are becoming a valuable strategy for communities which experience heavy trail use. They allow for separation of users, which reduces user conflict and enhances each user group's outdoor experience. In nearly all trail systems with bike-only trails, there are corresponding foot/horse-only trails as well.

# **What happens after I submit my assessment?**

You'll see your results immediately and receive a follow-up email from the IMBA team with additional resources. If your community achieves a qualifying score, you'll be invited to proceed with applying for the **IMBA Trail Town designation**, which celebrates a community's commitment to its trail system and the culture surrounding its trails, creating a great place to live, work, and play. IMBA staff will review your submission before an award is issued. If you opt-in to communications, we'll also send you periodic information related to your interests to help you on your journey.

# **How do I use my results?**

These scores can be leveraged in a variety of ways, but the main goal is to identify the gaps you see between your community's score and the total score, and read the recommendations for each of these areas. Those will provide you with resources and ideas on ways to improve. Your team can then work together on specific strategies to address those gaps. Remember, while it's tempting to work alone on this, you'll reduce your effectiveness by doing so. Working as a group with other stakeholders will bring greater progress on multiple aspects of trail and community development.

Your assessment results can be used to:

- Identify gaps and opportunities
- Guide conversations with officials and stakeholders
- Support fundraising and grant applications
- Strengthen your case for trail development and stewardship



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## Step Two: IMBA Trail Town Application

### What are the requirements for the application?

Communities must have a qualifying score from the IMBA Community Assessment and demonstrate a commitment to trail infrastructure, including a minimum of 25 miles of natural surface trails within a 30-mile radius of the town center. They must also show a dedication to trail funding, have an active local trail organization, and foster a strong culture of community engagement and consistent stewardship of the trail network.

### When are application and designation deadlines, and how long does it last?

The **application window is open from November through January each year**. The IMBA Trail Town designations are awarded annually in April. The designation is valid for **three years**. The Community Assessment is free, while the initial **application costs \$500**. The **renewal fee is \$250**.

### What benefits accompany a Trail Town Designation?

The communities who earn a Trail Town Designation get national recognition via IMBA's Trail Town Directory and map, a Trail Town Branding package to be used in marketing and communications for your area, the possibility of being highlighted in IMBA's marketing and communications globally, Visibility amongst outdoor industry partners and funders seeking trail-forward communities, an annual check-in to stay updated on your progress, challenges and goals, and priority eligibility for IMBA pilot programs, initiatives, grant opportunities and trainings.



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## Step Three: Get Started

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1. Take the [Community Assessment](#).
2. Ask Questions at our [IMBA Community Help Desk](#)
3. The [IMBA Resource Hub](#) is a great place to access resources to support each level of the trail development process.
4. We are here to assist you, reach out to the IMBA Community Team at [community@imba.com](mailto:community@imba.com).