

FREE NOTES

HARMONY PARK™



White Papers | 2025

Harmony in Path: Trails with Musical Instruments

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Trails with Musical Instruments

Beyond the Path

Picture a winding trail on a quiet afternoon. The leaves rustle in the breeze, birds call in the distance, and a few walkers pass by. While peaceful, the space has untapped potential. Many trails, although valuable for recreation and nature access, are underutilized and lack features that encourage people to stay longer, interact with others, and return often.

The goal is to transform these paths into vibrant, multi-sensory destinations. These should be places where people of all ages and abilities are drawn to spend time, connect, and create lasting memories.

Freenotes Harmony Park: Art & Engagement for Everyone

Freenotes Harmony Park instruments are outdoor musical instruments, built on a harmonious pentatonic scale. With each note blending perfectly, anyone can enjoy creating music, whether it's their first time or a lifelong passion. Crafted to withstand any climate, these instruments are as durable as they are welcoming.

- **Always in Harmony:** Built on a pentatonic scale so every note blends beautifully and intentionally.
- **Effortless to Play:** No tuning or musical experience is required, making self-expression possible for everyone, regardless of age or ability.
- **Durable and Accessible:** Weather-ready, ergonomic, and equipped with attached mallets for ease of use, even for those with limited mobility.

Their inclusive design invites trail users of all ages and abilities to explore melody, rhythm, and creativity in a way that feels natural and joyful. Freenotes instruments bring this spirit to life, turning everyday trail moments into sparks of connection, movement, and play.

Trails are Community Assets

Trails are vital for encouraging exercise, providing social spaces, and connecting people to nature. By adding engaging amenities like Freenotes instruments, communities can ensure their trails are more inclusive and enjoyable for everyone, including seniors, families with children, and individuals with disabilities.

Transforming Trails & Pathways

Introducing musical instruments to a trail system is a transformative way to enhance its value and purpose. Research highlights that attractive and accessible amenities are key factors in promoting higher trail usage.¹ Freenotes instruments perfectly align with this goal by providing:



Physical and Mental Wellness

These interactive instruments encourage gentle physical activity, improve coordination, and provide engaging resting spots. The act of making music is also a powerful stress reducer, offering a therapeutic escape from daily routines.



Community and Social Connection

Musical spaces naturally bring people together, creating opportunities for shared experiences among families, friends, and strangers. Research shows that engaging in outdoor activities improves social relationships and strengthens community bonds.²



Cognitive and Creative Engagement

Combining the benefits of outdoor activity with musical play enhances cognitive abilities, strengthens pattern recognition, and boosts creative thinking.³ This hands-on interaction makes trails a rich environment for learning and discovery.

Funding & Resources

Trail projects can leverage resources from a variety of sources for funding opportunities.

Resource	Website	What it Offers
National Park Service	nps.gov	Planning help, technical guidance, and partnerships for trail projects
Federal Highway Administration	fhwa.dot.gov	Grants to build, repair, and improve trails and facilities
American Trails	americantrails.org	Funding ideas, grant-writing tips, and success stories from other projects

¹ This claim is based on research by Dr. Jamie Rae Walker, which identifies that key amenities and accessibility are crucial factors in increasing trail usage and promoting physical activity.

² This finding is supported by research from Burdette and Whitaker (2005), who highlight how outdoor activities enhance social relationships and community dynamics.

³ Research by Wells (2000) demonstrates that outdoor environments improve cognitive abilities. This effect is amplified when combined with activities like music-making, which also stimulates pattern recognition and memory.

Harmony in Motion

Dorrian Green Park

Dorrian Green in Columbus, Ohio, blends nature, art, and music into an engaging community space with Freenotes. “Incorporating outdoor musical instruments along the pathways of Dorrian Green allows visitors of all ages and abilities to interact with each other, socialize, and enjoy the sculptural aesthetic of these harmonically tuned instruments.” Says Tim Schmalenberger, MKSK Lead Designer and Principal.

The Buffalo Rotary Music Trail

The Buffalo Rotary Club of Buffalo, Minnesota, transformed its vision into reality with the creation of a Music Trail at Sturges Park along Buffalo Lake. Funded through community and private donations, including the Minnesota Legacy Fund, the trail now features eleven Freenotes instruments.



Columbus, OH: Dorrian Green Park, Freenotes Harmony Park instruments, earned the 2018 Award for Design Excellence for MKSK Studios and the City of Columbus Recreation and Parks.

These projects demonstrates how outdoor musical instruments can:

- **Unite Communities:** The trail was a testament to community collaboration, leveraging local support to create a lasting public asset.
- **Increase Accessibility:** A local resident with a disability eagerly walks the trail just to play the instruments, highlighting how they serve as a powerful motivator for physical activity and engagement.

Conclusion: Turning Paths into Destinations

Freenotes Harmony Park instruments redefine trails, transforming them into multi-sensory destinations that foster creativity, connection, and well-being. By integrating these instruments into trail systems, communities can inspire joy, promote health, and ensure their public spaces are vibrant and engaging for all.

Join the movement to bring music outdoors.

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References

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