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Volunteers help make way for Midland Trace trail

By [Katie Wampler](#) | Staff writer

Posted: 12/20/05 - 11:39:29 am EST

WESTFIELD — They came with chainsaws, hedge clippers and one sturdy front-loader, but after only a couple of hours, the 18 volunteers had left more than a quarter-mile of usable trail behind the Carey Commons subdivision Dec. 3.

“We were pretty excited about that,” trail enthusiast and Friends of the Midland member Melody Sweat said. “We’re hoping to do something like this again.”

The finished trail segment marks the first progress the Midland Trace trail movement has seen in about a year, much to the delight of its grassroots support group, Friends of the Midland Trace.

Noblesville Parks Department, Precedent Development and Hazel Dell Elementary officials agreed to install a mile-long portion of the trail around the south end of the school about a year ago.

And developer Flynn and Zinkan agreed to install a trail and trailhead behind their recently opened Kroger on State Road 32.

Clearing the trail was relatively simple, Sweat said, because “folks along the Carey Commons kept it sort of passable.”

Friends of the Midland Trace took it from there.

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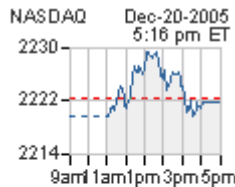
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After meeting with local landowners along the trail, they set up a quick-claim process, which expedites the process of signing over the land to become a public trail.

Less than a week after meeting, Friends of the Midland Trace, along with a few other volunteers, cleared the trail.

Director of Indiana Trails Fund and Hoosier Rails to Trails member Kevin Heber was quick to add the trail segment has work left, such as gates.

“This is pretty much in its infancy,” he said.

At full buildout, the trail would span eight miles from Ditch Road to the White River.

“It could go as high as 10, depending on the pace of development out West,” Heber said. “There’s always hope that it will actually go through Noblesville and somehow cross (State Road) 37 and keep going east of that, because there’s a nice opportunity for a trailhead out at Shane Road.”

The Midland’s beginning mirrors that of the now widely popular Monon Trail, Heber said, which runs north-south and intersects with the Midland.

“That’s how the Monon got started too, (volunteers) went out and cleared a section here and there,” he said. “Eventually it got adopted by the Indy Parks system, and we all know the rest of the story.”

For those unfamiliar with the Monon’s success, it has sprouted businesses along its path for thousands of users, from restaurants to sports gear shops.

Sweat said that was the motivation for several volunteers who are more interested in the trail’s benefit to downtown Westfield.

The trail will be “very valuable for downtown,” Sweat said. “I think we’re well on our way.”

However, others still need to catch the vision, Sweat said.

“People just don’t have the vision of what this can mean to our community. It is going to be just such an amenity to downtown Westfield. It will impact it more than the Monon even.

“If there’s anybody else that would like their section cleared, we’d be more than happy to accommodate them,” Sweat said.

Anyone interested in the trail is invited to the Friends of the Midland Trace’s next meeting Jan. 10 at the Washington Township Parks office in Carmel.

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- Friends of the Midland Trace will meet at 5:30 p.m. Jan. 10 at the Washington Township Parks and Recreation office, located at 1549 E. Greyhound Pass in Carmel. Call 574-1074 for more information.

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