

TO: Helena City Commission, City Manager, and Parks and Open Lands Staff

FROM: Upper DeFord Working Group, March 2022 (Eric Grove-Facilitator, Eric Sivers-MT Bicycle Guild, Lindsey Gilstrap-Helena Trails Alliance, Norane Freistadt-Pedestrian/Mobility advocate, Joel Peden-Disabilities Advocate, Karen Reese-HOLMAC representative, Lisa Bay-Pedestrian/Universal Access advocate) Brad Langsather-Staff Resource

RE: A consensus proposal for Upper DeFord

DATE: 5/31/2022

Exhibit A: Upper DeFord conceptual map.

Please Note: Actual trail locations may vary somewhat from where they are depicted on the conceptual map.

The second DeFord Working Group (DWG) was formed in March 2022, with the prior approval of the City Commission, to develop a consensus proposal for the Upper DeFord Trail. We are pleased to convey to you that we have reached an amicable solution for Upper DeFord.

At its first meeting, the DWG agreed that its goal was to: *"Find a solution that ensures all users, regardless of age, mobility, or disability are able to have a safe and enjoyable recreational trail experience."*

The DWG had three meetings March 17, 22, and 23, 2022. During these in-house and on-site meetings, the group formulated a unanimous consensus proposal for Upper DeFord that has four components, as described below:

Proposed Upper DeFord Project (components are color coded to match attached map)

Component 1 (red trail) - Universal Access (UA)/Bike Learner Trail (new construction)

A low-gradient Universal Access (UA)/bike learner trail would be built from a point just north of the entry-way to the Old Shooting Range parking lot at Davis Gulch Road, and from there, south to the Old Shooting Range kiosk/parking lot. The intention of this trail is to: 1) provide a connection for pedestrians and persons with disabilities between the lower DeFord Trail and the proposed UA Trail (component 2) and, 2) provide a connection for parents with children on bikes parking at the Old Shooting Range and wanting to access the lower DeFord Trail.

This trail would be built at a 90± degree approach to Davis Gulch Rd. for best sight distance, and would be built to U.S. Access Board standards and best management practices for Universal Access (UA) trails. Tread surface would be clear, firm, and stable; group members are researching best surface materials, but paving is not anticipated. This is envisioned as a slow-speed trail and will be signed as such, and designed and signed to encourage faster bike traffic to use the existing Rodney Meadows trail to the west to continue north or west. Signage would outline trail specifications.

Component 2 (blue trail) - Universal Access Trail (utilizes existing trail prism)

A low-gradient, UA trail, designed, designated and constructed for recreational pedestrian use and mobility/sensory-challenged individuals only, would be built from the Old Shooting Range kiosk to a point 100-300 feet from the DeFord Trail terminus with Dry Gulch Road.

The trail would be designed to meander where possible to enhance the experience of being in nature, and maintain a low gradient. Drainage would be routed to low areas, and through a series of culverts to protect the trail and reduce erosion. The trail would be built to U.S. Access Board standards and best management practices for UA trails. Tread surface would be clear, firm, and stable; group members are researching best surface materials, but paving is not anticipated. Dogs would be leashed for purposes of user safety and enjoyment, and turnout spaces/resting areas would be provided. Signage would outline trail specifications.

Component 3 (green trail) - Upper Davis Gulch Skills Course (utilizes existing trail prism)

The existing Upper Davis Bike Skills Course will be upgraded to provide a higher-quality experience for more riders. This work will consist of redesign and reconstruction of jumps and other features as determined by professional evaluation. Work will be done with equipment such as a mini-excavator, finished and shaped with hand tools. The goal is a jump course catering mostly to beginner-to-intermediate level riders that still provides some features and options attractive to advanced riders. In line with this intent, most gap jumps will be converted to tabletops. Wood features may be included, subject to approval by Open Lands staff. The finished trail will include appropriate signage at each terminus, and for individual features according to their size and difficulty. The finished course will include an option to link ride-arounds for minimal or no technical features for those riders wishing only to pass through this portion of the South Hills. The course exit may be fenced as it approaches the Old Shooting Range parking lot to provide further separation from the Universal Access Trail, and the alignment of the exit may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the other components of the Upper DeFord project.

Component 4 (purple trail) - Directional Mountain Bike Trail (new construction)

A directional mountain bike trail would be built beginning near the Old Shooting Range parking lot with the terminus at Dry Gulch Road. The directional trail will provide a safe uphill route for mountain bikers to the beginning of the Upper Davis Bike Skills Course, allowing riders to session the course. The directional trail will be independent from and located to the west of the skills course. Trail alignment will utilize an existing abandoned trail bed where appropriate. Design objectives include maintaining trail width where possible, especially in areas with steep side slopes, and maintaining a low trail gradient to accommodate riders of various ages and abilities. The finished trail will include appropriate signage at each terminus and may include fencing where necessary to provide trail separation and/or enhance safety. Trail alignment near the Old Shooting Range parking lot will accommodate the other components of the Upper DeFord project.

Future Work

The DWG is eager to work with City staff to carry this project through its implementation phase, and we seek your endorsement for the following means to accomplish this:

April through year-end 2022

-Assist the City in the public involvement process by helping inform constituent groups and the public about the Upper DeFord proposal and participating in site visits when possible

-Make ourselves available as informational resources and researchers for project components when necessary (e.g., seeking out qualified individuals for design, looking into construction materials, finding contractors)

-Raise money for a design engineered drawings for the UA trail components, anticipating the need for expertise in deploying the use of an amalgamated surface material and UA specs. **Would MBG need to raise money for the bike skills design as well?** (These drawings and specifications would help convey the project to the public, and provide more detail on which to base cost estimates.)

All of 2023

- Refine cost estimates and project components

-City would track in-house costs for grant match

-Conduct fundraising through grants, and begin work on appropriate volunteer trail components (e.g., return trail construction, site clean-up) tracking time for grant match

2024

-Implement full project