



**Helena Citizens' Council (HCC)
MINUTES
September 25th, 2019 7:00pm
City/County Building - Room 326**

Members Present: A quorum was present (7 members from 4 different districts = quorum)

District 1: John Andrew, Patricia Christian
District 2: Meg Bishop, Nancy Perry, Susan Lenard, Nick Sovner
District 3: Sumner Sharpe,
District 4: Tom Woodgerd, Douglas Hunsaker, Dylan Klapmeier
District 5: Shannon Stevens, TJ Lehman
District 6:
District 7: Dick Sloan, Doris Davis

Members Excused/Absent: (Eric Seidle , Flannery Herbert – resigned), Gary Dalton, Margaret Strachan, Whitney Bausch, Ben Kennedy, Bob Habeck, Denise Roth Barber

Guest Presenter: Rebecca Connors (City of Helena Public Information Officer)

Other Attendees: Dennis Nuvero, Angie & Eric Grove, Sharee Duprey, Scott Manzer, Lori Smith, Morgan Smith, Daniel Barry, Tony Jewett, James Driggers, Cheri Thornton, George McCauley, Dan Berry, Ryan Epp, Greg Painter, Sean Lawlor, Dawn North, Gina Lytle, Julie Clay.

Call to Order: Chairman Sumner Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Approval of August 38, 2019 Minutes:

Sumner Sharpe asked if there are any changes or additions to the August Minutes. No changes or additions. Minutes approved.

Coordinator Report:

Updates to the website include: Agenda on home page, Commission Photo
All HCC District members received the voter registration lists for their specific districts there are approximately 3000 per district
More discussion will need to be had regarding mailing labels, cards, postage etc.
New HCC Brochures have been placed at the L&C Library as well as Farmers Market

Rebecca Connors – City PIO

Activating Downtown Performance Spaces:

The city is interested in interactive art fixtures and wants to encourage utilization of spaces. Rebecca wants to plant seeds for the usage of Spaces:
Performance Park – e.g. weddings
KCAP Park
Areas in the Downtown-Walking Mall
Anchor Park
More Children's areas
Rebecca Connors said there will be workshops and possibly more engagement opportunities provided. She can be reached at rconnors@helenamt.gov
Organization of Events can be through the Parks Department with Jennifer Schade – Admin Assistant. There is a fee and a form to be completed for approval

Improving City Communications and Engagement with Neighborhoods:

Rebecca Connors handed out a Communications Document Template for the City of Helena.

It was mentioned that some information on the City's webpage was hard to locate, but the website is being improved while minimizing the number of clicks. The city is working on engagement opportunities and possible workshops to gather information and improve the communication between the city and its residents.

www.myhelenapp.com is still in the testing phase, with an expected roll out soon. Currently there is only an IOS version, the Android version is still being put together. The app proposes unique opportunities for citizens to interact with the city – for example: a pothole picture can be taken – it will incorporate its GIS location and the city will easily be able to get to that fix sooner.

Beattie St. Trailhead – Neighborhood Alternative by HCC member Meg Bishop

Please see Meg Bishop's attached Power Point.

Meg Bishop gave an in-depth presentation about possible alternatives (with a lesser impact) to the City of Helena's plan for a Beattie Street Trailhead.

Discussion and questions ensued from HCC members. Discussion included the City of Helena's process, public outreach and meetings, land use change approval, vaulted toilet support letters (not necessarily from local residents), legal requirements followed when receiving Federal/Grant Funding and environmental impacts especially in an historic neighborhood. There was a petition circulated and it got 130 signatures stating that neighbors wanted to keep the trailhead open to the public and that they were in support of the Lower Impact Alternative Trailhead option presented by Meg Bishop. Safety and ADA compliance is important while providing a more cost effective less impactful alternative.

Members of the public were also permitted to speak. Several of the public speakers live within HCC District 2. They commented that they had attended Helena's meetings regarding the trailhead design, and they were in favor of it. School bus turn around, safety and access for everyone is important. Gina Lytle from the Adaptive Community wants the Mt. Ascension trails to be ADA accessible and user friendly.

HCC members felt they need more information to be provided to them before they have an opinion.

Motion: A motion was made by HCC member Doug Hunsaker to proceed with further discussion on the Beattie St. Trailhead at the HCC October meeting. Nick Sovner seconded the motion.

There was further discussion, which resulted in an

Amendment to the motion: Pat Christian (HCC member) proposed an amendment to the motion: To invite City representatives to attend the October HCC meeting to further discuss and present their views. The amendment was accepted by the maker of the motion and also accepted by the seconder of the motion. A vote was taken on the amended motion: Aye 8 – Nay 5, and 3 abstained from voting.

Following Items Delayed Due to Time – on Next Month's Agenda

Street Lighting Update – John Andrew

Growth Policy Update – Sumner Sharpe

Reports from City Commission, Advisory Boards and Committees

Census Report – Pat Christian

Meeting Adjourned: 9:10 pm Next Meeting: October 23rd, 2019

Beattie Street Trailhead Project

A Potential Neighborhood
Alternative (low-impact/cost)

Prepared by
Meg Bishop

****IMPORTANT NOTE:** This presentation does not intend to present a definitive design. It is intended to suggest that a lower-impact/cost alternative is a viable alternative to the City's current proposed design that meets identified needs.



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

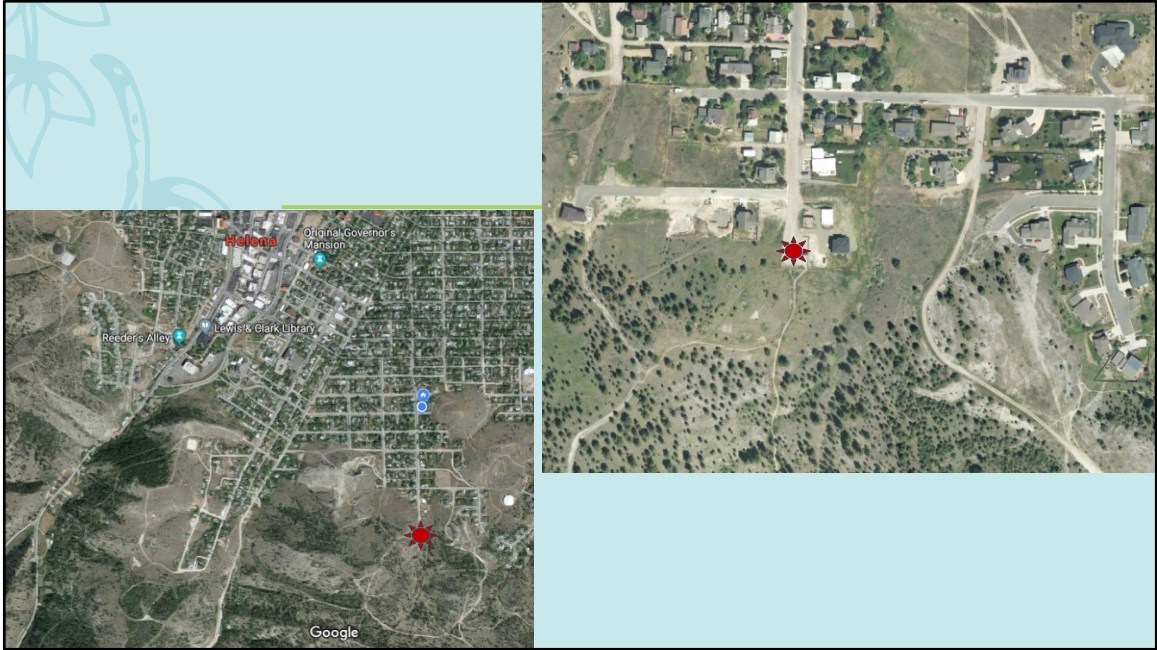
- A Neighborhood Perspective
 - “What’s the Big Deal?”
- Context for an Alternative Design

POTENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD ALTERNATIVE

- Addresses “Needs” for Access and Parking
- Emphasizes Low-Impact Environmental Considerations and Reduced Costs

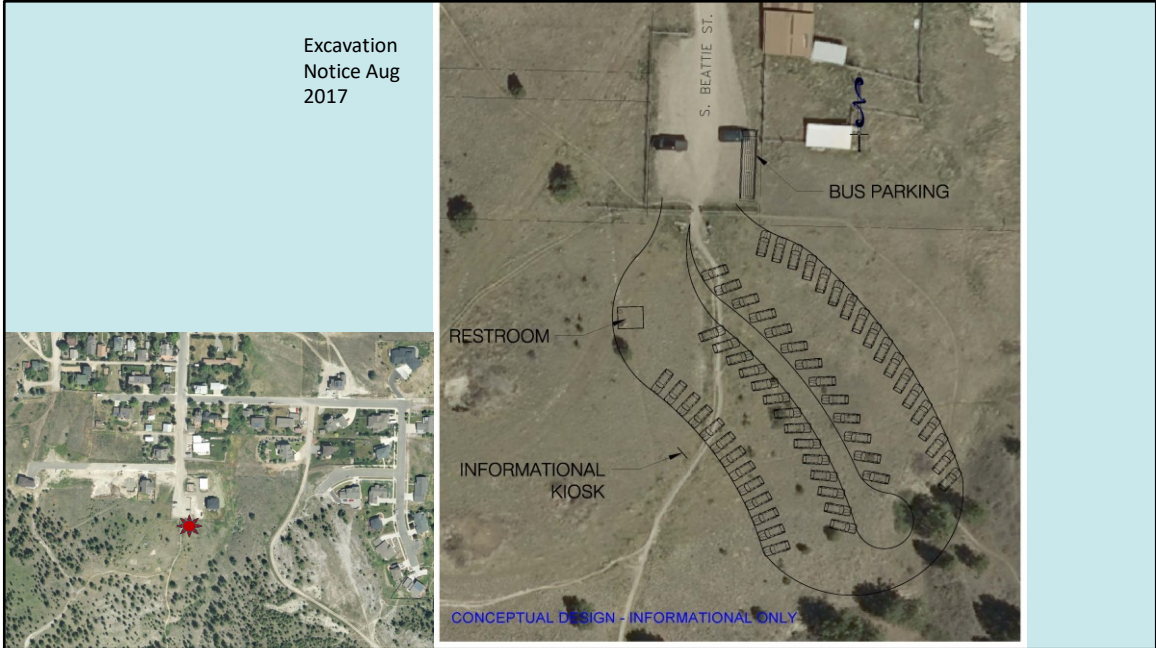
REQUEST FOR SUPPORT

- Least Economic and Environmental Impacts
- Accommodate Access, Facilitate Parking
- Reduce Potentially Significant Impacts to the Existing Historic Neighborhood



Orient the Audience

MT Helena Parking lot.... Residents in Adams Street neighborhood expressed concern about the increase of traffic. Reeders Village was designed specifically to accommodate traffic to the MT. Helena parking lot – wide boulevards – off-street parking.



This was quite a shock. Original 51-stall proposed parking lot (similar to Mt. Helena) – 40,000 sqft of asphalt, vaulted toilet, large footprint. The parking lot was first discussed at HOLMAC meetings back in 2012 without knowledge of local community until this notice was posted in 2017.

Local residents and stakeholders outside of HOLMAC were not notified of the intent to plan a major project with the potential of a variety of “Significant” impacts to the community and the BLM patent originally designated to remain in its natural state. The City assured BLM in their application for “change-of-landuse” for this parcel, that public outreach had been conducted. Yet no one in the community knew it was being considered. The BLM thus concluded that efforts have been made to conform with NEPA responsibilities. The local community would have filed an appeal, but the deadline had passed long before.

What's The Big Deal?

- **No public notice or public scoping prior to preparing an initial design**
 - HOLMAC mtg minutes, 12/2012: Motion to adopt a notification procedure to individuals whose property lies within 100 feet of a pending management activity identified in the Open Lands Work Plan. Motion carried unanimously.
 - BLM parcel was being considered as a “significant” facility (parking, etc.) in 2012 (HOLMAC minutes) but would need BLM approval (City’s Land-Use Change application to BLM)
- **Not part of any formal Decision Document (Work Plan is not a Decision Document)**
 - South Hills Trails Plan Draft 2003 (no mention of Beattie Street Trailhead). 2015 plan draft, “Prioritize projects that help disperse use AWAY from heavily used areas such as the “front side” (assuming urban interface) of Mt. Helena and Mt Ascension.”
 - Helena Open Lands Management Plan 2004 (NO parking desired in these “Neighborhood Access Points,” as Beattie TH was considered
 - Helena Comprehensive Park Plan 2010 (no mention of expanding BS parking)
- **A number of potentially significant impacts to the landscape, open space, and the community**
 - **No impact analysis (although NEPA/MEPA required for BLM approval and Recreational Trails Program or RTP Grant funding)**
 - **No data collection of actual use of current parking facility**

12/11/12- HOLMAC Adopted motion regarding notification procedure to individuals whose property was located near pending management activities. Brad reported the Beatty Street parcel could not have any significant facility placed on it as set out in the BLM deed. He had asked the BLM to amend to allow reconstruction of the parking lot, so it was on hold.

3/12/13 HOLMAC mtg - Noted that the BLM has to approve the parking plan and lot at the Beattie Street parcel and moving it would get the parking off the right of way. No mention of conducting public outreach with the community.

THE FOLLOWING ARE “DECISION DOCUMENTS” AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC ONLINE. These documents do not, in fact, support the City’s current proposal. The South Hills Trails Plan Final 2015 (see below) has not been vetted publicly or formally adopted by the City Commission. All actions taken by the City should be reflected in formal documents approved by the City Commission. The public should be able to access these decision documents easily and the information should be transparent. If decisions change, that change should be reflected in updated documents or in City administrative minutes. This process ensures the public’s “right-to-know” as stated in our Constitution.

South Hills Trails Plan Draft 2003 (There is a “Final 2015” version available only on the PPLT site, but it appears to be an entirely separate and unique document (see below) and is not considered a formal decision document)

Page 21 indicates that a Major trailhead is planned at Saddle Drive near the Donaldson property. There is NO mention of Beattie Street trailhead

Helena Open Lands Management Plan 2004 (no update found)

Clearly states in “Neighborhood Access Points,” that NO parking is desired in these areas. They will include an informational sign, access gate, and dog waste mitts.

On page 7-16 it characterizes that Beattie Street is a MINOR trailhead
In Section 12.5 Plan Updates, it states that, “if stakeholder priorities change drastically.... HOLMAC may decide to update this plan through public meetings....”

Helena Comprehensive Park Plan 2010

NO recommendation to expand Beattie Street Trailhead or develop a parking lot

Commission Administrative Meeting Minutes, HOLMAC, etc. – Scattered and sporadic at best. Often only an agenda without minutes recorded. When minutes exist, they are often incomplete.

****(NOTE) THE SOUTH HILLS TRAIL PLAN FINAL 2015 DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE A DECISION DOCUMENT as it has not been vetted publicly or formally adopted by the City Commission. (available only at pricklypearlt.org – not the City’s sites)**

Prepared by PPLT as a subplan to the Open space Management Plan. (PPLT leads a Trails Cmte that acts as a sub-cmte to HOLMAC)

Page 7, I Introduction – Trail Planning and Coordination – last paragraph: (PPLT and HOLMAC) have established procedures for considering public input... What are those? There was no public input involving local residents that would be most impacted by these activities.

Page 12, Section IV, Goal 11: “Prioritize projects that help disperse use AWAY from heavily used areas such as the “front side” (assuming urban interface) of MT Helena and MT Ascension.”

Page 14, Section V, Trailheads: Beattie Street would fall into a “Neighborhood access point” (in keeping with the Open Lands Mgmt Plan 2004 below)

Page 19, Section V, Mt. Ascension Park, Major Trail Maintenance/Improvement: “Install formal parking area at South end of Beattie.” 1) When was Beattie St. changed from minor to major trailhead? 2) Contradicts goals for “Neighborhood access points” on page 14. 3) No Public Input for this decision.

RTP GRANT LETTERS OF SUPPORT – VAULTED TOILET (January 2017)

Selective sources were asked to submit support letters. Fifteen letters of support were submitted by the following

-
- Tourism Business Improvement District/Bike Helena/Helena Tourism Alliance
 - Free Range Yoga Project
 - Prickly Pear Land Trust
 - Carroll College
 - Montana Conservation Corps
 - Team Great Divide
 - Mandy Alvino, Knight Street
 - Girls Thrive
 - David Payne, Shirley Road
 - Vitoria Cech, Clancy
 - Monday Funday Sole Sister
 - Robert Rasmussen (“the improvements will be designed to accommodate large outdoor events”)
 - Montana Bicycle Guild
 - USFS District Ranger
 - HOLMAC Chair, Dan Wirak



No local residents (major stakeholders) that would be directly and significantly impacted by the project

Letters of support were solicited from these individuals and organisations. No local residents were aware of the project proposal and, therefore, did not have an opportunity to submit letters of support or letters of concern. The primary stakeholder group involved with the planning were mountain biking groups and advocates.

The mention by Robert Rasmussen of the intent to accommodate large outdoor events was a surprise. That was never mentioned as a “need.” It became apparent that Beattie Street was an important component in Helena’s plan to facilitate mountain biking events.

Trail Usage and Value

A Helena, MT Case Study

Jeremy L. Sage, Ph.D., Norma Nickerson, Ph.D.
2/13/2018

Table ES- 1. South Hills trail system entry volume by trailhead.

Entry Point	Total		Nonlocal	
	Mountain Bike	On Foot	Mountain Bike	On Foot
Arrowroot Dr. TH	2,140	793	592	31
Beattie St. TH	1,014	7,570	507	841
DeFord TH	2,429	3,876	540	1,108
Dump Gulch TH	1,040	1,217	173	203
Mt. Helena Ridge TH	3,561	1,363	984	53
Mt. Helena TH	785	18,847	-	5,760
Old Shooting Range TH	1,748	3,089	283	151
Tubbs TH	897	4,635	-	129
Other Mt. Ascension Trails	1,955	2,854	977	317
Other Mt. Helena Trails	495	683	151	209
Other Ridge access Trails	1,375	674	573	281
Total Entries (May-Sep)	17,438	45,602	4,781 (27%)	9,082 (20%)

Abstract

The Mt. Ascension and Mt. Helena trail network provide a valuable outdoor recreation amenity to residents of, and visitors to, Helena. This report identifies the use and value of the trail system. Though 78 percent of trail use is by local residents, visitors to the region who used the trail system for hiking or biking spent over \$4 million in the local area in the summer of 2017 (May-September).

78% of trail use is by local residents. > 7X as many users accessed trails ON FOOT at BST.

If lumping numbers from DeFord and Old Shooting Range on Davis Gulch, there are actually more people accessing the trail system via these trail heads and so logically if services considered, these would be reasonable alternatives to Beattie Street. This is obviously low-hanging fruit that was not explored. It would have provided better services to more trail-users and saved significant dollars for the City.

ALSO, DeFord (along with the wood-chip trail along Davis Gulch) would offer greater opportunities for disabled access.

Trail Usage and Value: A Helena, MT Case Study

Prepared by

Jeremy L. Sage, Ph.D., Norma Nickerson, Ph.D.

Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research
College of Forestry and Conservation
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812
www.itrr.umt.edu

Research Report 2018-01

1/17/2018

This study was funded by the Lodging Facility Use Tax, with additional financial and in-kind support from Bike Helena, City of Helena Parks and Recreation, Prickly Pear Land Trust



Funding sources for this study are important and tie into current efforts by the Tourism Board and mountain biking interests to promote Helena as a biking destination. NO decision document indicated that Beattie Street was proposed for expansion – quite the opposite.... How could the public provide input to a proposal that was not mentioned in any comprehensive plan?

The Commission had not conducted its due diligence in approving the Beattie Street project for a number of reasons.

ASIDE: Many of us have been diligently attending meetings for the development of the “Helena Growth Policy.” Disconcertingly, there is a parallel effort towards economic development by the tourism board and special interests – this plan has not been made public – no transparency. When the question was asked at one of the meetings, the consultants seemed unaware of this effort. IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN FOLDED INTO THE GROWTH POLICY.



Neighborhood Meeting (January 2018)

- *No clear understanding of why the project was being proposed (NEED)*
- *Intended as a neighborhood forum (Major Stakeholders)*
- *Outside interests and City staff*
- *Request to be part of an inclusive process in the development of alternatives*
- *Contention revealed an underlying intent*

Since the local community were given little to no consideration when asking the City for information regarding the project, a local meeting was planned. Many local folks were concerned about the size and scope of the project and, since it was not included in any planning documents, what would have prompted it.

Surprisingly, an overwhelming number of mountain biking enthusiasts attended expressing confrontational indignance that a neighborhood would express concern about a project that would obviously have significant impacts to the community. It became apparent to many concerned neighbors that the intent behind the project had more to do with accommodating special interest plans than addressing the simple need of facilitating parking at the trailhead.

This fiasco was a classic result of the City's failure to involve all major stakeholders in the early planning of the project. Public participation should happen early and often. To add insult to injury, Helena City leadership appears to condone the practice of unilateral decision-making without providing all stakeholders the opportunity to be involved in addressing identified needs. Does the final decision rest with agencies/City leadership? Yes (within the confines of the law). But the public should be afforded the consideration and respect of being included in the process PRIOR to the development of alternatives.

Neighborhood Concerns

- **Traffic issues on Beattie**
 - Increased traffic
 - uncontrolled intersections, poor sight distances, narrow and pitched, limited resident off-street parking
 - General safety concerns
- **Clinton Park safety**
- **Environmental Impact to land designated as open space since 1970's**
- **Social implications**
 - Undesirable activities – noise, late-night activity, etc.
 - Intent as an “Event Center”
 - Vaulted Toilet
- **Mt. Helena Parking lot – historic neighborhood concerns**

Many local residents were involved in the effort to protect Mt. Ascension from development in the 90s.

The concerns above prompted the petition (next slide) and the intent to explore the development of a low-impact alternative. The City was asked for an alternative that would facilitate access and parking with minimal impacts to open space. The City ignored that request. The alternative provided in this presentation provides only an illustration of what could be possible.

Beattie Street Trailhead Petition

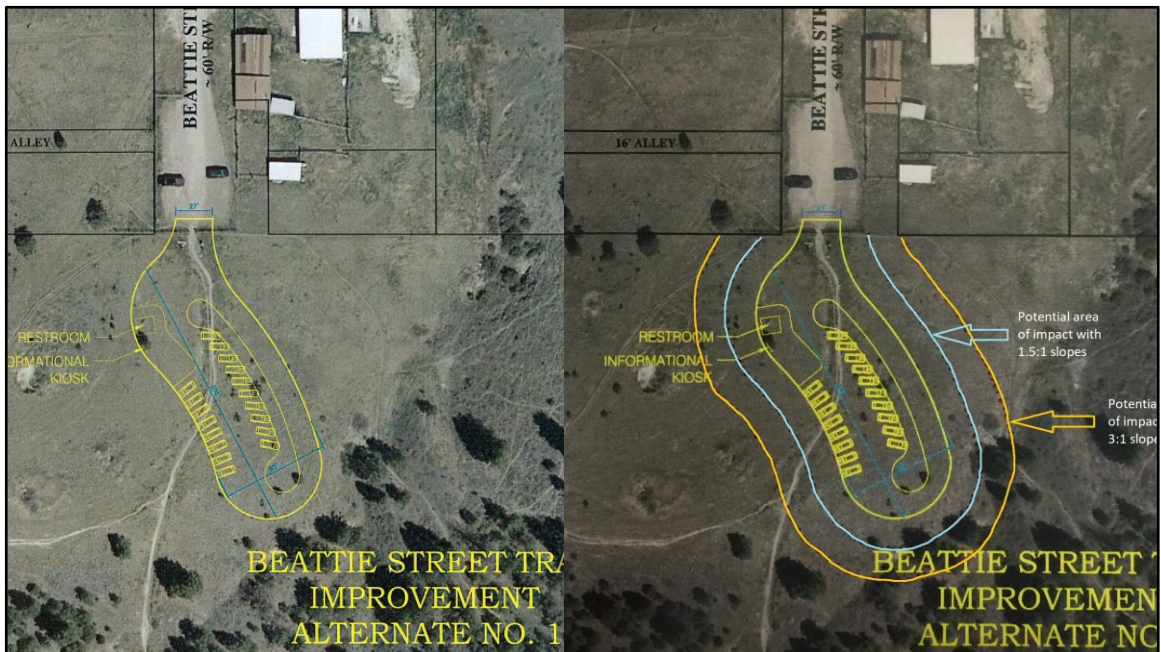
The city is proposing to expand facilities at the Beattie Street trailhead similar to those at the Mt. Helena parking lot with up to 32 parking spaces. We, the undersigned, are in favor of preserving public access to Mt. Ascension trails, but also seek to preserve the character of the surrounding neighborhood and the primitive, undeveloped nature of the trailhead access. We are concerned the proposed development will create more traffic on south Beattie and adjoining streets, threatening the safety of the citizens of the neighborhood and the families and children who use Clinton Park.



We can support a minor trailhead at the south end of Beattie Street which would include paved parking to meet existing demand (12-15 vehicles) with curb, gutter, and sidewalks at this location without any other added facilities. The current trailhead development designs proposed by the city do not protect the neighborhood and do not address the concerns of all trail user groups and other interested citizens. We, as members of the neighborhood and non-neighborhood trail users, request our concerns to be incorporated into the proposed design and to be actively involved in any planning for the Beattie Street trailhead development.

Print name	Signature	Address
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A petition was circulated. ~130 Signatures. This petition was the first time anyone in the neighborhood heard about the project (although the City had been contemplating the project since 2012). Collected and submitted to the Commission. Our concerns were not considered and incorporated in the subsequent design alternatives. Also, we requested an additional alternative that would offer a low-impact, lower cost approach. This was not accommodated. Our concerns were not reflected in any City meeting minutes.



Subsequent “Public” meetings led to the City’s approval of this Alternative (2 alternatives were presented)

The public requested the option of an “Alternative 3” that would offer a lower-impact less costly option. This was never considered.

SINCE THERE WAS NO IMPACT ANALYSIS (ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL), IT WAS STILL NOT POSSIBLE TO OFFER INFORMED COMMENTS. Analysis of impacts provides the public with information to provide thoughtful comments.

This slide also considers what the actual footprint could be given the slope/excavation limitations of the site.

There is STILL NOT A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING FOR WHY THE SCALE AND SCOPE IS WARRANTED.



Examples of parking options at Mt. Jumbo and the Rattlesnake in Missoula. The development of significant parking facilities are not customarily planned in existing neighborhoods.

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Most pictures are from trailheads in Bozeman showing low-impact designs w/o toilets for even lightly populated neighborhoods.



Anecdotal parking data collected over a period of time..... Parking lot averages much less than 10 cars at any one time.... But, again, this is not scientifically collected data. Simply claiming that the current parking area does not accommodate use or that it is normally empty does not inform the conversation. Real data regarding use and numbers should have been gathered to support the need.

1) 06/08/2019 1:45 – 2 cars – Saturday; 2) 05/14/2019 6:30pm Tuesday (16 cars); 3) 6/14/19 10:30 Friday; 4) 6/29/19 9:30 Saturday (10 cars); 5) 7/20/19 2:30 Saturday (1 car); 6) 9/1/19 6:00pm (1 car)

Neighborhood Low-Impact Alternative

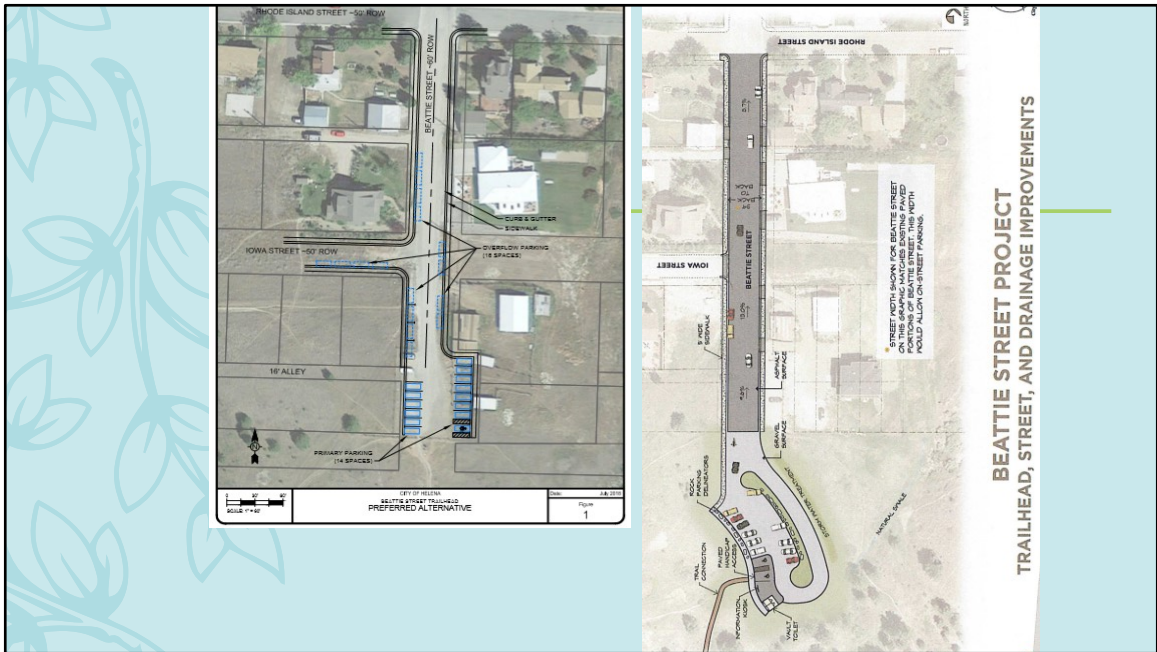
- Accommodate parking demands comfortably and safely
- Accommodating occasional demands for increased capacity (and encourage dispersed access to Mt. Ascension Open Space)
- Accommodate emergency services and snow-plow access
- Limits the increase of stormwater runoff and erosion resulting from storm events
- Provide and encourage trail access while maintaining the character and integrity of the neighborhood
- Protect and minimize impacts to the quality of lands designated "Open Space"
- Low-impact and Cost-effective
- Will Comply with all ADA Regulations

The City said that a formal parking area at the trailhead is necessary because current parking is too haphazard and does not accommodate current use. The trail-use study appears to support the popularity of the Beattie access point, largely for local hikers. BUT, extensive anecdotal evidence to date indicates that the current parking capacity more than supports current vehicle access (**unless there is an underlying motive to support the creation of an event center - never an expressed need**).

The City said that a parking lot is necessary because the current parking lot is actually the street itself and is too haphazard... In reality, Beattie Street will not be likely to continue on up the mountain.....

The City said that a formal parking lot is needed so that snow plows and emergency vehicles need to be able to turn around..... These vehicles currently do not have that ability on any of the dead-ends.... An alternative design that would maintain the dead end at 150' or less would not require emergency turnaround.

THEREFORE, based on the City's comments and neighborhood needs, a neighborhood Alternative design should accommodate the above NEEDS:



Side-by-side comparison of a “Neighborhood Design” example and the City design. This is just one conceptual thought for what an alternative can be that makes better use of current facility. THIS IS NOT A PROPOSED DESIGN. It provides a more low-impact/cost example of what is possible on the site. The City’s proposed design is large scope and scale and high impact to the landscape and the community. Does not conform with the City’s efforts to reduce carbon footprints – HCC’s resolution.....

City Code:Dead end streets may not exceed six hundred feet in total length. Dead end streets longer than one hundred fifty feet (150’); must have an emergency turnaround designed and installed according to the standards and requirements of the city. (Ord. 3167, 9-23-2013)




If there is a need for a vaulted toilet, there are a number of alternative locations that would serve the community in a better way.

Examples would be a number of parks in town, AND:

The “Old Shooting Range” trailhead would accommodate the higher uses along Davis Gulch (see Trail Use Study)

MORE PEOPLE ACCESS THE TRAIL SYSTEM FROM POINTS ALONG DAVIS GULCH THAN ON BEATTIE SO WHY NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS LOW-HANGING FRUIT? This option would benefit a greater number of users, be low-impact, and be much more cost effective for the City.



Please support the exploration of a low-impact alternative design that:

- Provides the same number of parking spaces as the City’s preferred design
- Minimizes land disturbance and excavation, reducing remediation requirements and potential impacts from stormwater runoff
- Maintains a sensitive approach to potentially significant impacts to an historic neighborhood
- Facilitates a more dispersed approach to trail access at other neighborhood points
- Balances the interests of ALL stakeholders

We are simply asking the HCC to support the exploration of a lower-impact, cost-effective alternative that accommodates expressed needs. We are not attempting to restrict access to users in any way. This is not a question of attempting to avoid Helena’s growth and increase in trail-users. As illustrated on previous slides, primitive, innocuous trail access points with reasonable parking availability is the norm in other towns and would allow Helena to use available dollars to enhance other access points along the Mt. Ascension open space interface. As shown in previous slides, there are other trail access points on Davis Gulch that would provide greater opportunities for development and would better encourage use by folks with limitations.