



City of Helena Parks, Recreation, and Open Lands Departments
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<https://www.helenamt.gov/parks.html>

City of Helena Open Lands Division Proposed Major Projects – Calendar Year 2021

DeFord Parking Area Expansion Project – Brad Langsather, Presenter

Current Situation

- There are overflow areas at this trailhead during peak use periods.

Recommendation

- The City recommends we complete an approximately 25 feet of existing trailhead parking area.
- Level, gravel, and fence additional 100 feet x 30 feet of parking area to the southwest of the current trailhead.

Estimated Budget

- \$2,000.00 (Fencing and Gravel)

SEE EXHIBIT "A"

Old Shooting Range Restroom Installation Project – Brad Langsather, Presenter

Current Situation

- There is a lack of restroom facilities and inaccessible trailhead amenities at this highly used trailhead.

Recommendation

- The City recommends install a vaulted restroom facility with hard surfaced access.
- Amenities will include a kiosk, picnic tables, and pet waste stations on accessible surfaces.

Estimated Budget

- \$16,500.00 (Concrete Parking Pad, Gravel, Grading of Parking Lot, and Installation of Short Footbridge)

SEE EXHIBIT "B"

SEE EXHIBIT "C"

Limekiln Parking Area Realignment Project – Brad Langsather, Presenter

Current Situation

- The current parking area is undersized and unsafe.

Recommendation

- The City proposes moving the existing Winnie Water Tank access gate northeast 75 feet, fill, grade, and gravel the area between Limekiln pavement and the access road, and separate the parking area from the access road with large rock delineators.

Estimated Budget

- \$2,500.00 (Fencing and Gravel)

SEE EXHIBIT "D"

Mount Ascension Parking Area Expansion Project – Brad Langsather, Presenter

Current Situation

- The current parking area is disorganized and inefficient.

Recommendation

- The City proposes increasing the width of the parking lot from 20 feet to 75 feet by excavating material from the southern roadside bank and relocating excavated material to the northern road berm.

Estimated Budget

- \$3,500.00 (Fencing and Gravel)

SEE EXHIBIT "E"

Directional Trails Exit Trail - Eric Grove, Presenter

Current Situation

- Riders must exit either down to Arrowroot or up to Eddy West. The arrowroot exit back up to Eddy West forces riders to navigate a blind corner against oncoming traffic on Arrowroot and is simply dangerous. The more used route is straight up the old Limekiln Jeep Road and is not sustainable.

Recommendation

- Build a connecting trail from the bridge to the start (Arrowroot) of Eddy West. It would intersect just above Arrowroot and use a large radius climbing turn to direct riders back up Eddy West.

New Climbing Routes – Bradley Maddock, Helena Climbers Coalition, Presenter

Introduction

- Develop new rock climbing routes on Mount Helena during 2021.
- Rock climbing has been continuing to grow in popularity across the nation as well as in Helena. Climbing is a safe activity that not only promotes the health of participants and facilitates enjoyment of the outdoors, but rock climbing is increasingly recognized as having significant positive economic impacts on the communities near the cliffs. Although data for the Helena area are not available, a study of the Custer Gallatin National Forest in southwest Montana found that climbers spent an estimated 2.6 million dollars in the region and supported 22 jobs.
- Since the last city approved project, there have been 19 routes established on the Mount Helena limestone cliff band that have seen a tremendous amount of use by local and traveling climbers alike. A website detailing the routes has been viewed close to 20,000 times since it was posted three years ago. This area brings climbers of all ages to the heart of our city for a day, a weekend, and sometimes long term. The proximity from downtown to Mount Helena climbing is a great asset to our already diverse recreation opportunities within walking distance of downtown.

Additional Route Development

- The Helena Climbers Coalition (HCC) would like to propose that up to 15 additional routes be developed along the Mount Helena Cliffs. The location of these new routes will be both intermixed within the current area of routes and also extend eastward toward and around the corner from the cave known as “Devils Kitchen”. The Helena Climbers Coalition would like to develop these routes over the next 2 years starting in the spring of 2021 while also improving the current spur trails and belay pads.
- The limestone at Mount Helena suits itself to sport climbing. Sport climbing differs from traditional climbing in that sport climbing relies on permanent anchors that are drilled into the rock for protection for the climber. The first climber uses quickdraws, which are carabineers connected by webbing, to anchor him/herself to the rock in the event of a fall. Bolts are placed a safe distance apart to provide protection for the climber. At the top of a route, a two bolt anchor is drilled so that climbers can lower off the route, as well as for setting up top ropes for other climbers. To minimize erosion, climbers will build a short access trail and belay pad at the base of the routes.
- To develop the routes, we will follow the same protocols used previously for bolting and camouflaging fixed anchors into the rock and establishment of belay areas to minimize erosion. These include painting all hardware to reduce visual impacts to other users, using high quality stainless steel bolts and hangers to increase longevity of hardware, and following general best practices detailed by the Access Fund and American Safe Climbing Association. In order to minimize risk during the initial route cleaning and fixed anchor placement, we suggest temporarily closing the 1906 trail for a single day each year while the installation of routes is being conducted. This mitigation measure has worked well during past development efforts. We will use our expertise to develop quality routes that are safe, aesthetic, and built to last.

Route Maintenance

- The Helena Climbers Coalition has a route maintenance program that keeps track of any aging and otherwise damaged or compromised hardware within the Helena area and aims to replace it within a timely manner with the help of grants funding from organizations like the Access Fund and direct funding from Helena’s growing community of climbers. This program has successfully addressed two minor issues over the past year at Mount Helena. For more information on this program please visit: <https://helenaclimberscoalition.org/fixed-anchor-maintenance-report-a-bad-bolt/>. In addition to developing and maintenance of routes, the HCC would like to

participate in the maintenance of the cliffs themselves by removing existing graffiti on the cliff face as we have done at other local climbing areas.

User Conflicts

- To the best of our knowledge there have been no user conflicts surrounding the rock climbing area on Mount Helena since its first development in 2017.
- Rock climbing is inherently dangerous. Rock climbers must assume all responsibility for risks. To illustrate this, the HCC has worked with the City of Helena to provide signage for climbers at both the trailhead and at the climbing area.

Conclusion

- We are excited to increase the number of rock climbing routes on Mount Helena. Having quality rock climbing within walking distance of downtown is truly remarkable. Helena stands to benefit not only economically, but culturally as well, by drawing young active individuals looking to plant roots in a vibrant community. Offering an increased amount of easily accessed outdoor recreation in our city park will continue to improve the lifestyle that Helenans love.

SEE EXHIBIT "F"

ADA Trails Expansion - Margareta (Meg) Seyr-Bishop, Presenter

- Consideration for ADA trails. The Old Shooting Range Restroom Installation Project will create an ADA-compliant vaulted toilet and amenities accessible for people with mobility issues. Although it is wonderful to have an ADA-compliant restroom facility, it would be even better to consider enhancements to existing trails that would provide folks with disabilities and mobility issues extended trail options instead of token access options. An obvious example would be to consider enhancing the DeFord (both upper and lower) to accommodate this need as well as wheelchair access. At a total of 1.5 miles, it is fairly level, scenic, and would require significantly less effort than building a new trail. It is time that people with disabilities and limited mobility be included in these discussions. All members of the community should be able to enjoy the benefit of our open space trail system.

Trail Etiquette and High Trail Usage - Claudia Clifford, Presenter

- Trail etiquette is a paramount concern that surfaced repeatedly during the Recreation Chapter rewrite. Is there funding allocated elsewhere in the Parks Department budget to work on etiquette issues (such work might include convening user groups to work out solutions to user conflict, trail signage, etiquette education campaigns, use of e-bikes on our trails, and more.) The possibility for user conflict continues to increase. More than ever, the Helena community needs to come to an agreement on trail use issues around speed, high marking, social trails, e-bikes, etiquette for passing other users, listening to music on the trails, etc. If the Department is allocating funding for this kind of etiquette and trail use work, could you specify how much and any details about your expectations for this work and how it will be conducted? We ask because this work is of utmost importance and should be prioritized as a major project, unless it is being planned and funded elsewhere.

Archery Change Trail Options - Ken Morrison, Presenter

- Having spent time running, walking and biking in the Mount Ascension area over the years, it seems it would be a welcome addition to have a more user-friendly option for a short segment of the Archery Range Trail at its northern starting point just south of the intersection with Pay Dirt, and Eagle Scout. The old road (trail) heading south from the intersection leads to a rocky and rutted ridge that is difficult to navigate for some walkers and runners and many mountain bike riders. I believe an option for these users would be appreciated.
- There is an unimproved parallel trail to the southeast of the road a few yards that crosses the ridge smoothly and would be safer and more enjoyable for most users. We would cover the cost of upgrading and signing a new trail option or are willing to organize the upgrading work to City trail specifications.

Davis Gulch Bike Course / Multi-Use Trails, Matt Culpo, Presenter

Davis Gulch Bike Course and DeFord Trails Project. The proposal is shown on the attached maps and is generally described as follows:

- Trail entrance/exit signage and separation improvements between the Davis Gulch Bike Course Trails and the DeFord Multi-Use Trails
- Annual maintenance management on the Davis Gulch Bike Course Trails
- Formalizing the Lower Davis Gulch Bike Course Trail, generally from the Archery Range entrance road to the junction with Davis Gulch Road.
- Providing Trail Maintenance and Improvement Management Liaison for future trail improvements and extension of the Lower Davis Gulch Bike Course to a termination point at Davis Gulch Road.

SEE EXHIBIT "G"

SEE EXHIBIT "H"

Dump Gulch Project, Eric Sivers, Presenter

- Construct a bike-optimized trail down the bottom of Dump Gulch. The Helena Open Lands network needs a better way to bring mountain bikers off the northern end of the Mount Helena Ridge Trail. Many riders don't want to descend Show Me The Horse Trail and ride 2 miles on the road back into town. If they come all the way to the city park, they have multiple ways down (Diretissima, Prairie, Prospect Shafts, McKelvey), but none of them are ideal and all have the potential for user conflict as trail use increases in the future. A trail designed to accommodate bikes in Dump Gulch wouldn't see much hiker use since McKelvey Trail is in the same drainage and provides a better hiking/running experience.
- Re-route portions of the 2006 trail above Aftershock Trail to reduce the grade. In particular, the first switchback above the Aftershock junction has an excessively steep approach. Moving the turn farther to the north and east would reduce the slope and allow for a larger radius.
- Re-route portions of the 2006 trail above Arrowroot Drive to reduce the grade and make it more sustainable. The original alignment avoided a significant downfall snag that was removed during forestry work several years ago. It would now be simple to add length to the trail to reduce the grade. Jim Phillips complained about this grade many times.
- Rehabilitate the portion of Paydirt Trail between the two rock outcrops. This segment continues to widen, and unsanctioned/vigilante trail work keeps attacking the outcrops making what used to be a minor obstacle into a major one, and an eyesore. I recommend consulting a professional trail builder for the best approach, but my concept is to narrow the trail and crib the downslope, providing a soil ramp over the outside of the rock outcrops for users who prefer to avoid them.
- I propose Helena Open Lands provide interpretive signage at appropriate or interesting points in the landscape. The Falcon Guide to Mount Helena might provide a good starting point for ideas. Interpretive signage could also provide an additional vector for etiquette reminders. In addition, etiquette doesn't have to be limited to things like yield conventions- it can identify rehabilitation projects, ask people to avoid certain areas, and ask them to bring ideas through the established process rather than causing problems (e.g. Paydirt).
- While this is not a major dirt-moving project, I recommend that Helena Open Lands conduct a system-wide trail assessment. As the department continues to improve the quality of its infrastructure, this should extend to the trail network. A very fit 62-year old recently described our trails to me as "no fun unless you're on the cusp of real fitness." This assessment should include a higher-level assessment of network function. It should also include a trail-by-trail assessment of things like grade, sightlines, erosion potential, etc. Many of our trails are overly steep, have outdated switchback designs, and have sustainability issues. For example: erosion due to running water is minor on the Helena Open Lands system, but we have many steep sections leading directly into tight switchbacks that result in unavoidable rutting by bicycles needing to brake for the turn. This is entirely a result of outdated trail design, and can be mitigated. A systematic assessment will help lay out a maintenance work plan for upcoming years.
- One final proposal of a different sort: I suggest the city purchase a few copies of Natural Surface Trails by Design by Troy Scott Parker. This is an informative 78-page book that is easily readable by a general audience. It explains and illustrates important concepts related to the natural surface trails that comprise the majority of the Helena Open Lands system. I propose that each incoming member of HOLMAC be loaned a copy for required reading so that members are able to participate in informed discussions.

Proposal for ADA-Compliant Trail on Mt. Helena, Tony Zammit, Presenter

- Helena’s Open Lands provide a wonderful recreation opportunity for Helena’s residents and visitors. However, there is a marked lack of facilities and recreation opportunities for individuals with limited mobility, who rely on wheelchairs, and for those who cannot ascend or descend the existing trails. Recognizing the disparity between these two points, the Helena Rotary Club is seeking to expand access to Helena’s Open lands with opportunities that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- As you know, Rotary reached out to the City of Helena’s Parks and Recreation Department in January 2019 to begin discussing the potential of building a new ADA-compliant trail from the Mt. Helena Trailhead parking lot. The proposed trail would travel north and west to a vantage point that provides panoramic views of Helena and the Helena Valley, including the downtown area, the Cathedral, Carroll College, and the Capitol.
- The proposed trail is approximately one-half mile (780 meters) in length and have an overall grade of less than 2%, with the trail gaining approximately 40 feet of elevation (13 meters) over its length. There is a basic rendering attached at the end of this request showing the proposed layout of the new trail. A meeting with the City’s ADA Compliance Committee presented the suggestion of ADA-compliant carve-outs with benches along the route. This proposal includes three such carve-outs that would also host an interpretive sign to present information about Mt. Helena’s 1) flora and fauna, 2) history, and 3) geology. Additionally, a sign at the terminus of the trail is proposed to explain the surrounding landscape.
- We have been working to secure funding to finance this project and are hopeful that our goal of beginning construction can begin soon. As you are aware, there have not been any new trails in Helena’s Open Lands due to a moratorium on construction imposed by the City Commission in the fall of 2018. However, with the revisions of Chapter 7 of the Open Lands Work Plan nearing completion, this proposed trail has become a strong candidate for the first trail to be built under the new process. Given the broad utility of this proposed trail, we are confident that it will be universally accepted and approved.

The principal goals of the trail:

- ✚ Provide access to Helena’s Open Lands to more people;
- ✚ Maintain as consistent an elevation as possible for the entire length of the trail;
- ✚ Not exceed a 2% grade to enable and encourage use for wheelchairs, strollers, and people of limited mobility;
- ✚ Maintain a 1-2% out slope to facilitate sheeting and eliminate the need for drainage ditches;
- ✚ Maintain a 60 to 80-inch bench (to accommodate two passing wheelchairs) for the length of the trail;
- ✚ Include three carve-outs to permit the installation of benches and interpretive signs along the route;
- ✚ Include a terminus lookout over Helena with benches and an ADA-compliant picnic table; and
- ✚ Allow for future expansion to the west of the trail that maintains ADA-compliance.

Estimated Budget

Estimated Budget: Estimated Budget:	
\$9,500	Decomposed granite surface material (includes delivery)
\$5,000	Bridge across draw
\$7,000	Excavation and surface material spreading
\$750	Benches for terminus (delivered)
\$1,000	Benches for Cutouts
\$2,500	Signage
\$25,750	Total Cost
(\$800)	Committed funds from Helena Rotary Club
\$26,950	Total Funding Needed

Materials and Equipment:

- The primary material required will be the decomposed or crushed granite for the surface material; both are an acceptable surface type under the ADA for trails. This material is easily and readily sourced and capable of being delivered to the Mt. Helena parking lot from local vendors. There is a small, wooden bridge may be needed to span a steep draw just north of Daisy Hill Trail. The estimated costs include this bridge.
- Machinery required will be a mini-excavator and possibly a skid steer for construction of the bench and delivering the decomposed granite and materials. The City of Helena owns an excavator and will be able to make it plus an operator available.

Other Funding and Personnel:

- Rotary and its members are ready to contribute with fund-raising, labor and has \$7,000 committed to this project. A portion of this \$7,000 is a grant that is contingent on being spent soon. When we have this project moving further along, we will begin fund-raising in earnest by working with the community and local businesses to raise funds to help cover this project's costs. A Helena nonprofit, the Montana Bicycle Guild, Inc., has also offered to coordinate with Rotary to provide additional volunteers, P.P.E., and tools.

Additional Considerations:

- Special care will be required to construct the trail where it crosses under existing power lines. Although a qualified equipment operator should be able to proceed without issue, it does warrant consideration of having spotters and extra care for this portion of the trail.
- Consideration of setbacks and consultation with the owners/operators of the power lines should occur to ensure no problems arise in the future.
- Existing trails may need small adjustments made where they will intersect this proposed trail. This may require some additional hand tool work to develop the new intersections.

SEE EXHIBIT "I"

Proposal for Rerouting Portion of Trail above Beattie, Nate Kopp, PPLT, Presenter

- In an effort to eliminate an unsustainable fall-line portion of the existing Beattie Street Trail, it is recommended we reroute the portion of the trail just above the recently constructed Beattie Street Trailhead. This would reroute a short section of the Paydirt trail at the junction of Paydirt and Prickly Pear Trails.

Exhibit "A"

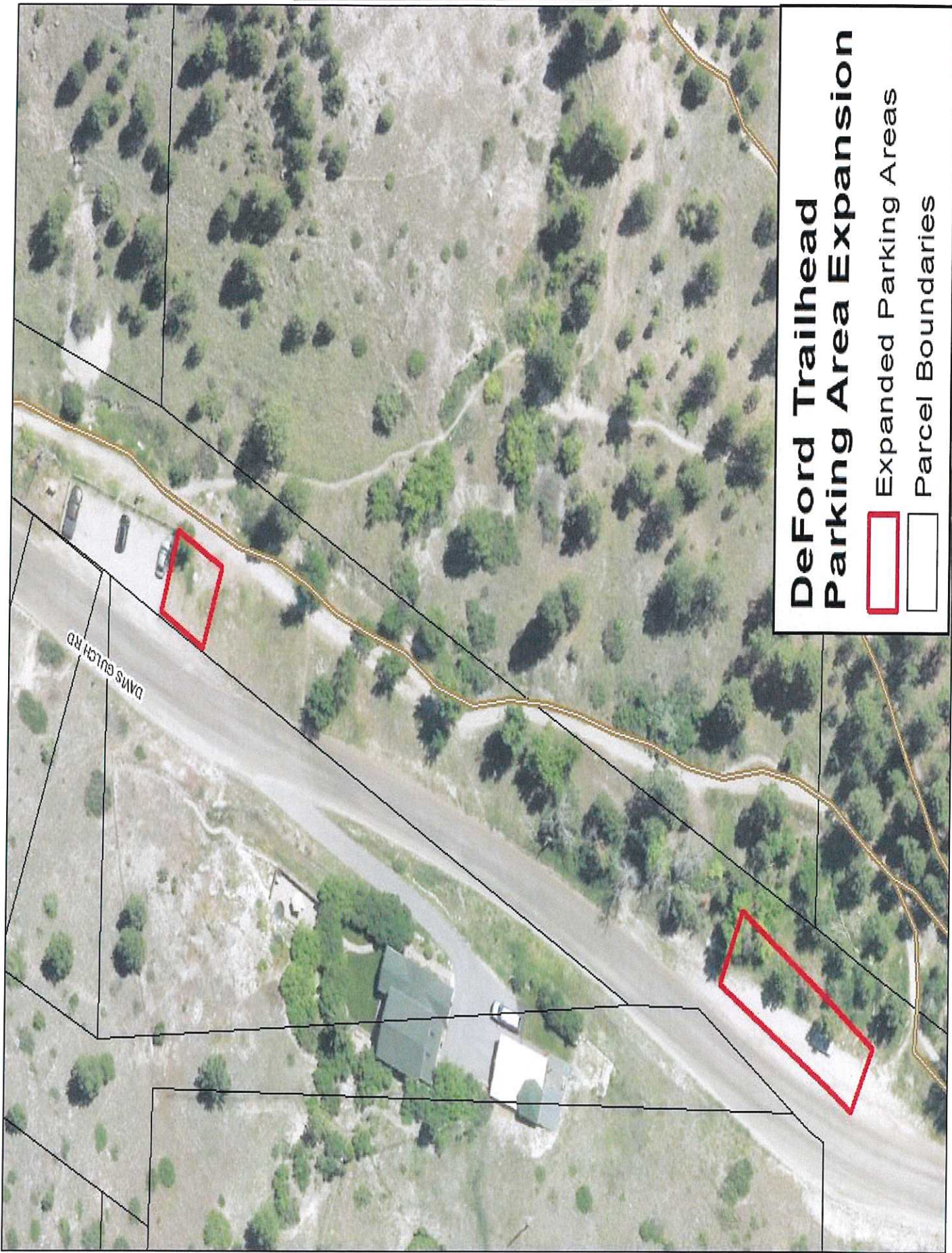


Exhibit "B"

**Old Shooting Range
Restroom Installation**

 Restroom Installation Site

 Parcel Boundaries

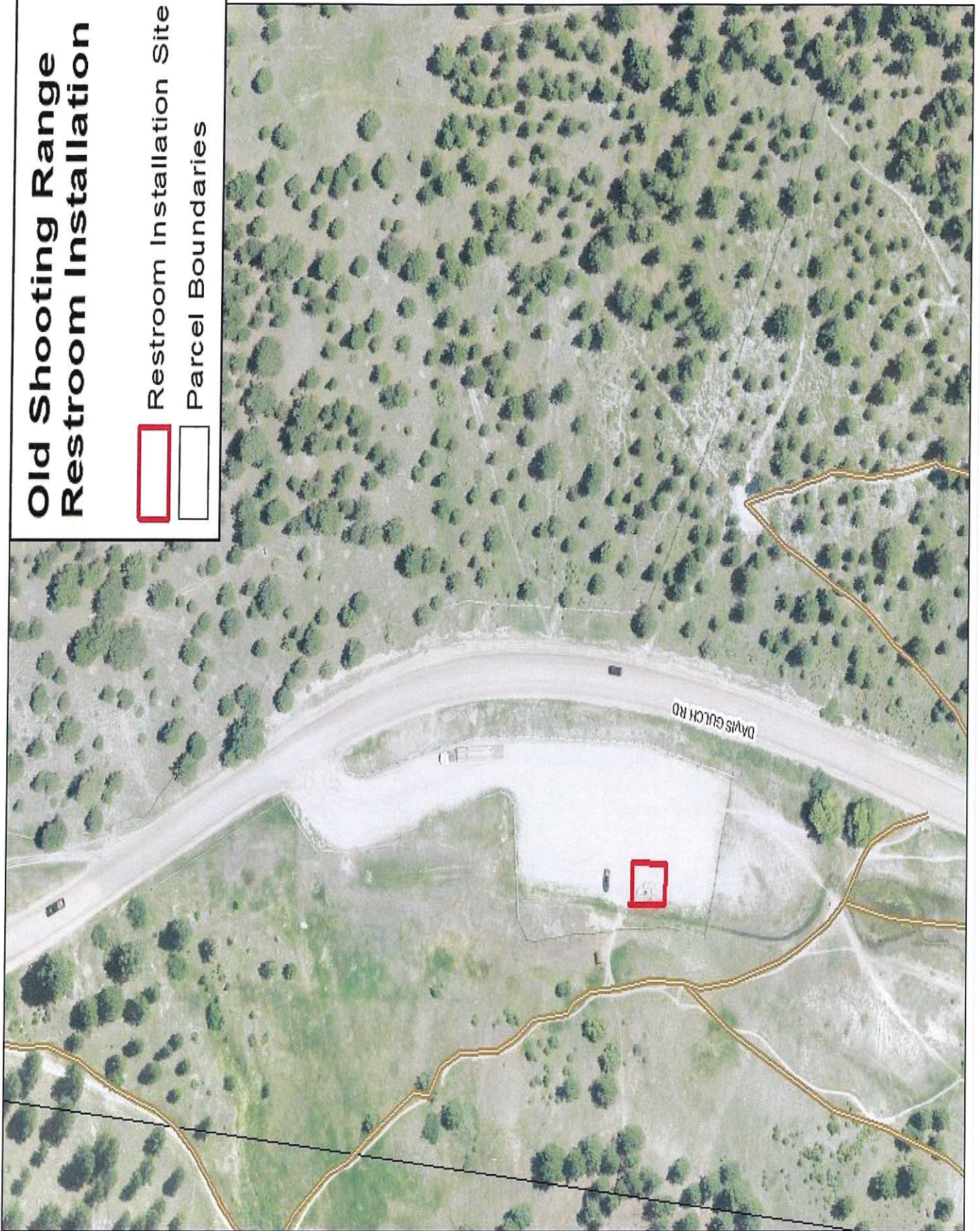

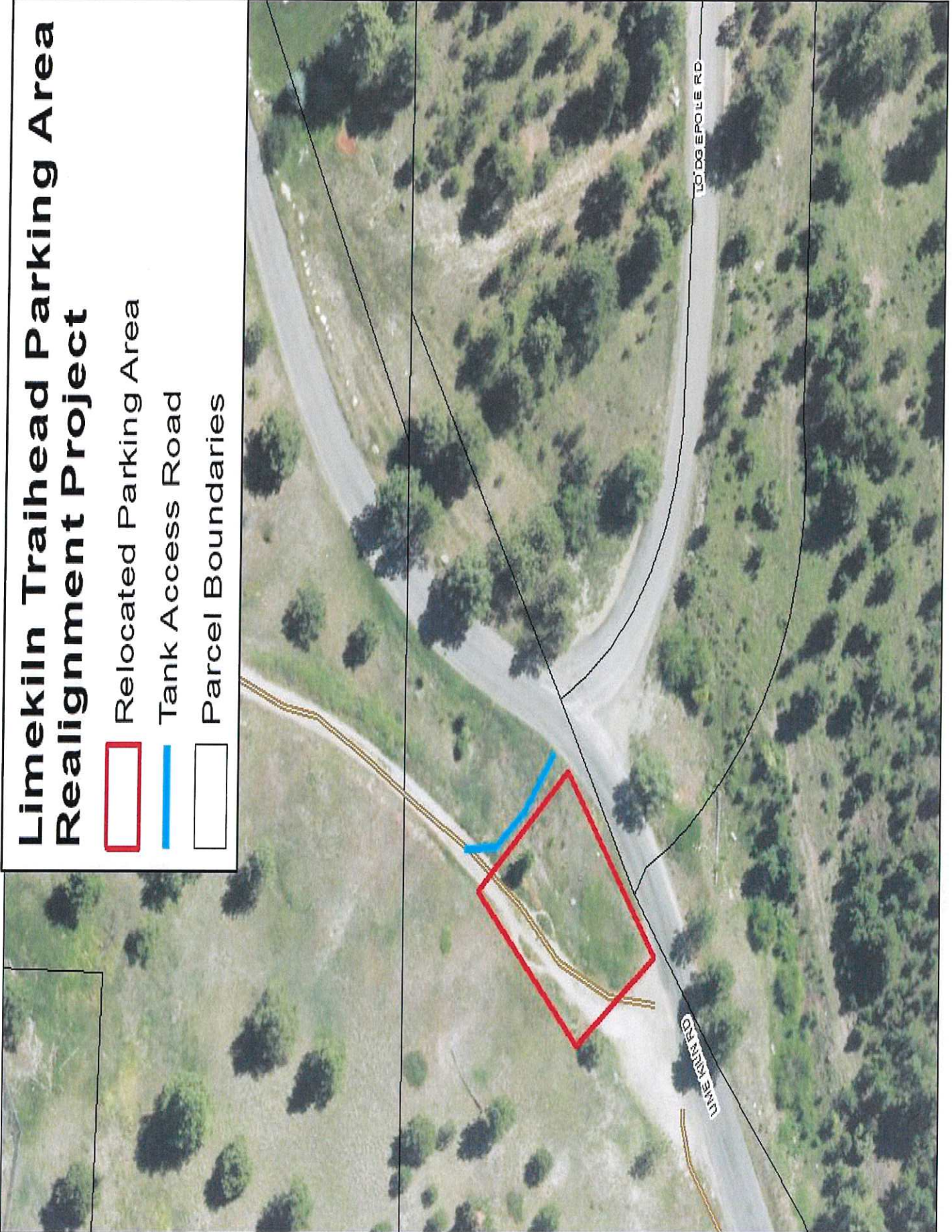


Exhibit "C"



Limekiln Trailhead Parking Area Realignment Project

-  Relocated Parking Area
-  Tank Access Road
-  Parcel Boundaries



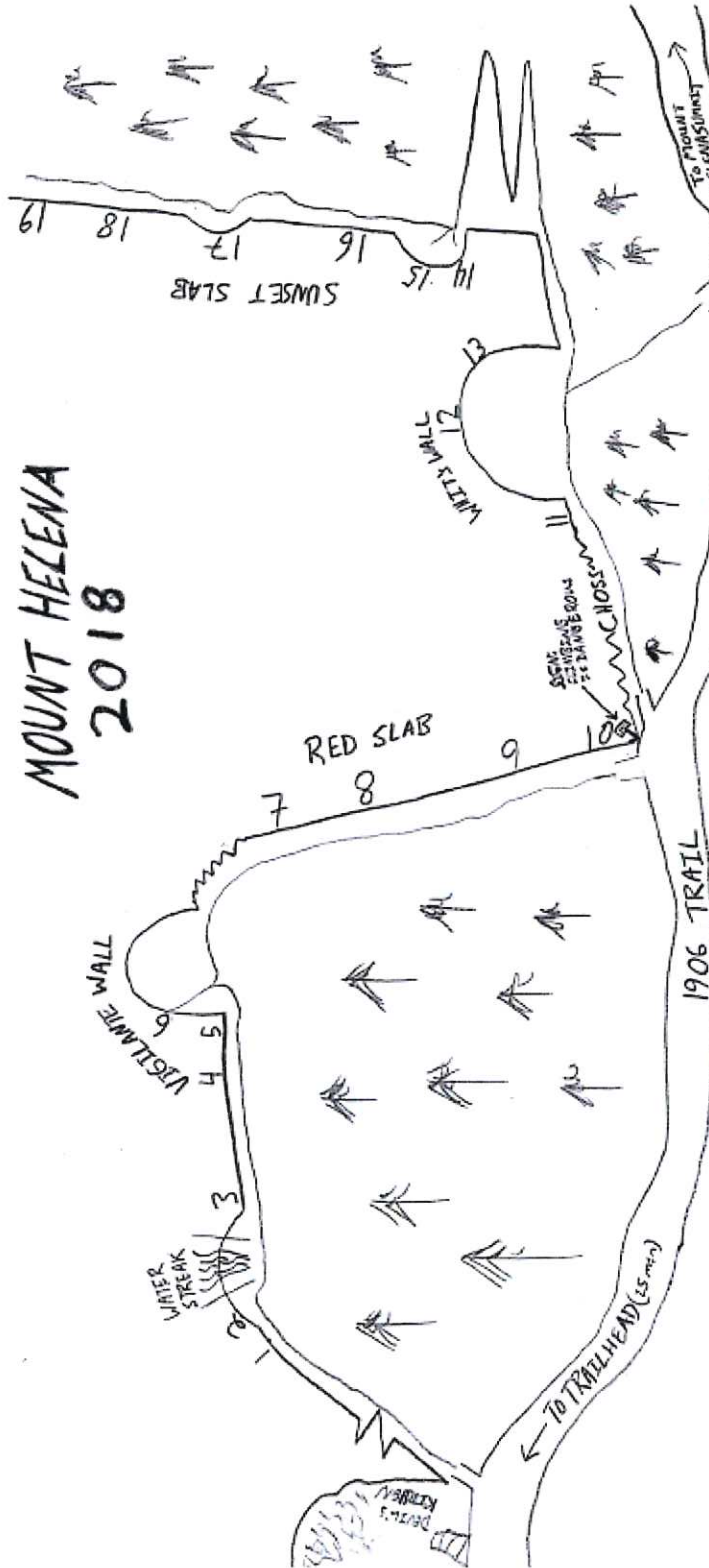
Mt Ascension Intersection 2006 Trail /Arrowroot Road Parking Area Expansion

-  Parking Area Expansion
-  Trails
-  Jefferson County Parcels



Exhibit "F"

MOUNT HELENA 2018



1. Dry Well 5.10d
30' (H.L., B.M., A.S.)
2. Oasis 5.9
30' (H.L.)
3. The Prospector 5.9+
70' (D.B.)
4. Bat Crazy 5.11c
70' (J.M., K.M.)
5. Vigilante 5.10b
70' (H.L.)
6. Hanging Tree 5.11c
70' (H.L.)
7. Big Dorothy 5.10d
50' 14 bolts + chains!!! (J.M.)
8. Devil Makes Three 5.10d
100' + 18 bolts + chains!!! (J.M.)
9. Apple 5.10c
75' 14 bolts + chains!!! (J.A.)
10. Black Lung 5.12a
110' 16 bolts + chains!!! (J.A.)

Rack of 12 or less quickdraws will work for all climbs unless otherwise specified. No further route development is permitted unless authorized by the City of Helena/Helena Climbers Coalition. Please feel free to lower off of all chains.

11. White's Weebler 5.10b
70' (J.M.)
12. A.C. Magro 5.13
50' (J.M.)
13. The Main 5.11b
70' (B.M.) 11 bolts + chains!
14. Ansel's Way 5.6 2P
50' 2P (underover/retro T.C.)
15. Summer Solstice 5.7
3' (H.L.)
16. Mr. Clean 5.7
50' (T.C.)
17. Diggles and Grenades 5.7 TR
50' (T.C.)
18. Golden Light Gainer 5.9 TR
70' (A.S., D.B.)
19. Last Chance 5.6 TR
55' (B.M.)

FAs: Jake Mergenthaler, Kim Mergenthaler, Hermas Lynn, Terry Cowan, Brad Maddock, Whit Magro, Jean Apple, Jackson Winhall, Andrew Schneider, Dan Bachan.

Climbing is Dangerous!!! Always wear a helmet and seek professional instruction!!! Routes are still new and may be dirty and loose, use caution!

Exhibit "G"

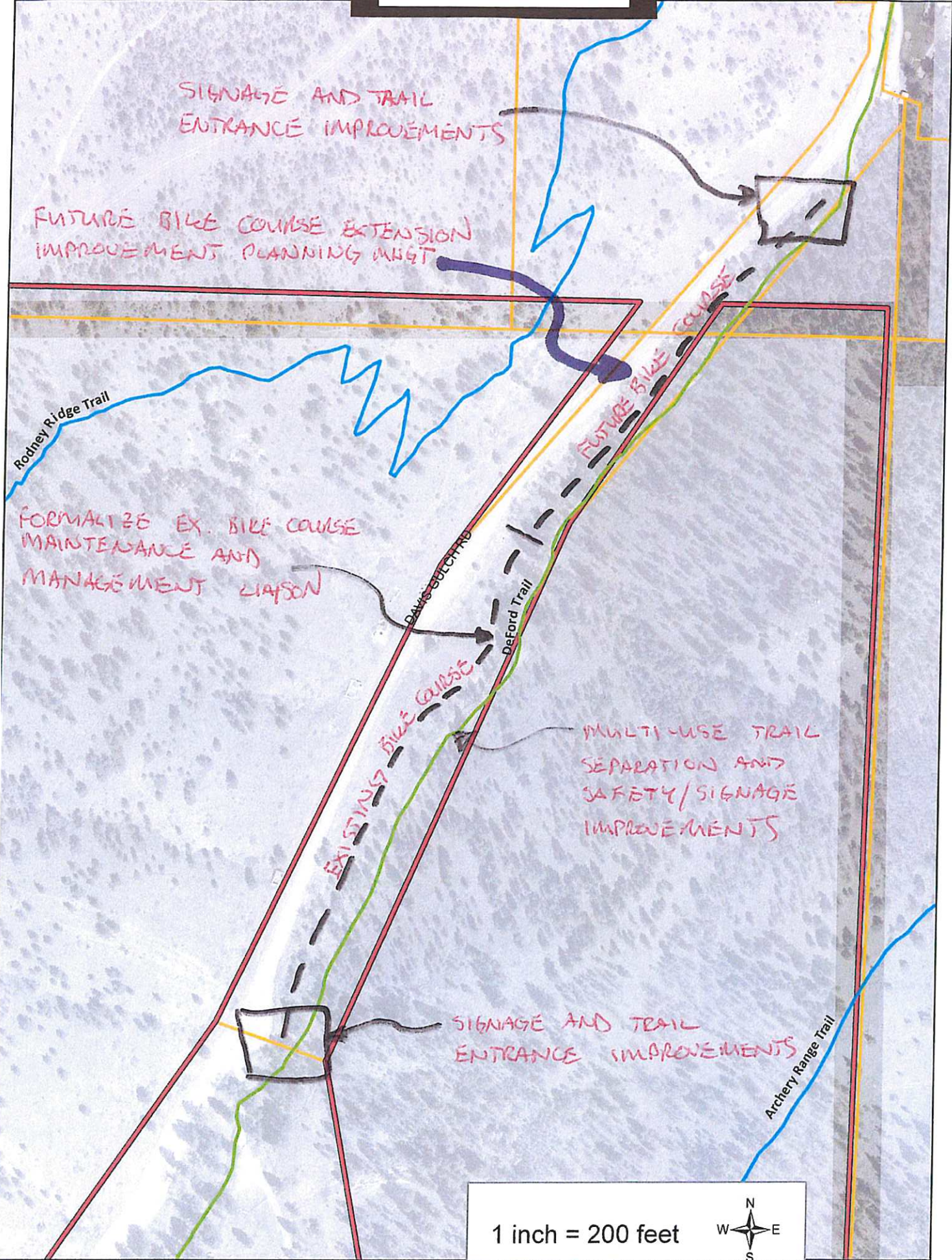


Exhibit "H"

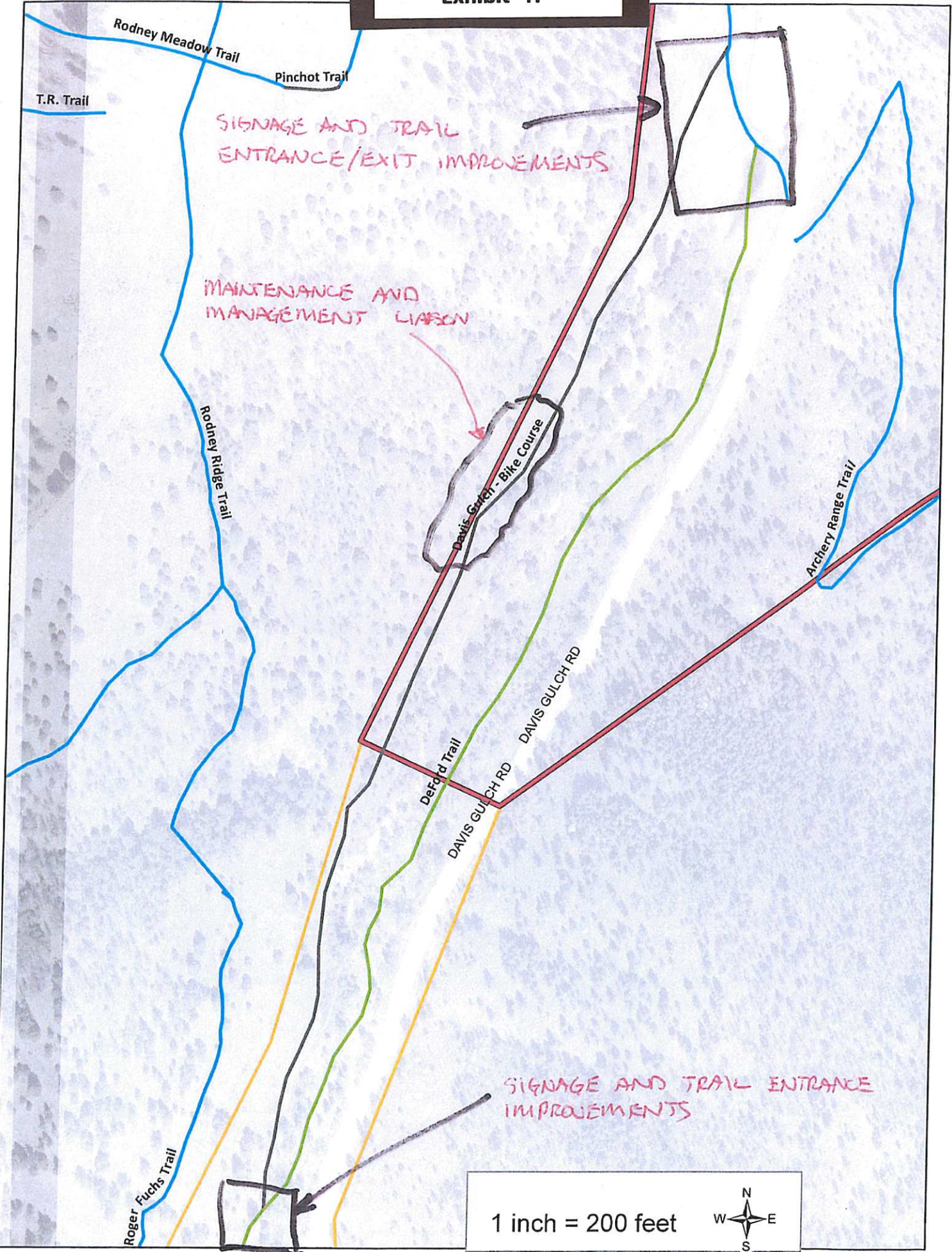
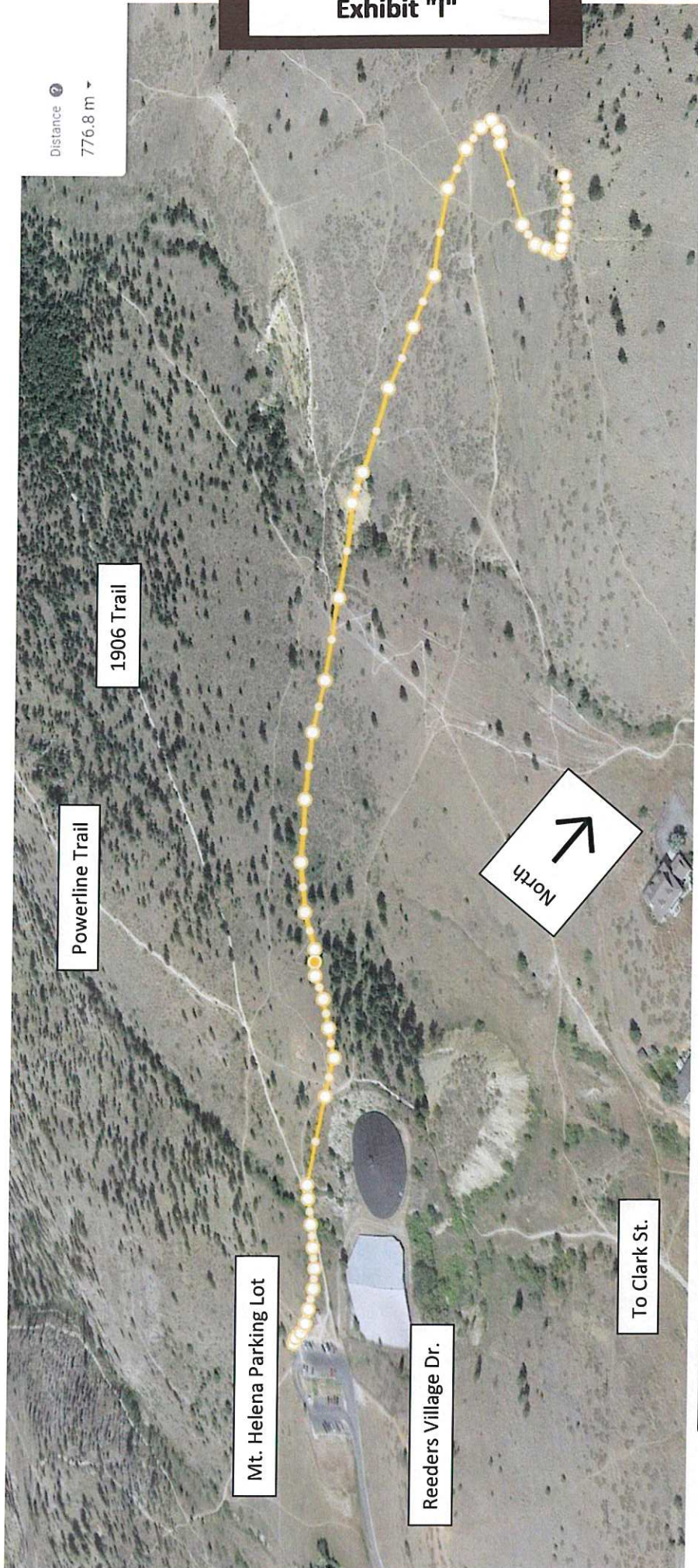


Exhibit "I"



Distance 776.8 m

Powerline Trail

1906 Trail

Mt. Helena Parking Lot

Reeder's Village Dr.

To Clark St.



Proposed Alignment of the ADA trail. The Mt. Helena trailhead parking lot is visible in the center on the far left, and the large structures that are visible are the water towers. This view is looking approximately south-southwest from 2000' above at a 45* downward angle