



MEMORANDUM

Consideration of a Proposal to Establish a Low Cost Walking Trail Loop above Karen Hornaday Park and Refer to the Parks Art Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission

Item Type: Action Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor Lord and City Council
Date: May 25, 2025
From: Councilmembers Davis and Erickson

PURPOSE

Review and discuss a proposal to establish a low-cost walking trail loop on newly acquired city property above Karen Hornaday Park, and if there is support for the concept, refer it to Public Works for implementation, or the Parks, Art Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission (PARCAC) for further evaluation and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The City's recent acquisition of property above Hornaday park offers an opportunity to enhance recreation by creating a walking trail loop, without requiring significant investment in formal trail construction, by utilizing and connecting existing informal paths and game trails.

The proposed trail would (see map):

- Start at the switchbacks on the old road at the east end of Karen Hornaday Park.
- At the northern edge of the new property, follow existing footpaths west along an adjacent city-owned lot.
- Descend via game trails along a ridge and through a meadow, returning to the park's west end near the campground.

As noted in a recent memo from Public Works (CC-25-152), people are already starting to use the new lot for hiking and recreation. Under the scenario we are proposing, City staff would offer hikers guidance to their walks by marking the desired route—using existing paths, game trails, and new connectors across meadows—with posts or flags and installing signage (e.g., “Undeveloped Trail – Use at Own Risk”). Certain areas may eventually warrant switchbacks or footbridges, and initial use by the public can help clarify those needs.

This approach, inspired by American Trails' Guidance for Managing Informal Trails (2019), has succeeded in places like Great Falls Park, Virginia, where unimproved trails (e.g., River Trail) use

existing paths with minimal intervention. Signage warns of hazards (e.g., uneven terrain, wildlife), and Virginia's recreational use statute (similar to Alaska's AS 09.65.202) limits liability.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

If this course of action is acceptable to Public Works, implementation can begin immediately. If further input or review is desired, make a motion to refer the proposal to the Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission (PARCAC) for evaluation and implementation recommendations.

Proposed Walking Trail Loop:

