

## Park City hoping to turn walkable, bikeable

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PARK CITY — As Park City reaches near built-out levels, the city wants to cut back on streets and take a unique approach to travel: a completely walkable and bikeable community.

City Hall in August gave the thumb's-up to a \$15 million bond for pedestrian and bike trails throughout the mountain town. But Parkites will have the final say since a "yes" vote means a hefty increase in property taxes. Residents will vote in November whether or not they want the upgrades.

"We're really trying to separate pedestrians from vehicles as best as possible," said Tom Baklay, the town's city manager.

The goal is to make Park City completely interconnected through pedestrian-friendly trails, linking neighborhoods and shopping districts.

"We have a great trails system up in the mountains, mountain biking and hiking, and that's an integral part of what we're doing. But this is more pedestrian connections in town," Baklay added.

It was two years ago that activist group Share the Road approached the City Council about making such changes to the city landscape. Of highest priority was creating safer walking routes around Park City — particularly to the schools. Both Park City High School and Treasure Mountain Middle School are along the busy Kearns Boulevard.

"As Park City keeps growing, it's getting busier and busier, and it's time we address this with safe routes to school," said Carol Potter, a member of Share the Road and executive director of the Mountain Trails Advocacy Group.

Potter describes city officials as "very receptive." They hired Salt Lake City-based consulting group Landmark Design to create a trail system to fit in with Park City's unique mountain, urban environment.

Public hearings were held and input from a steering committee was taken; the public played a large role in the plan. The resulting document influenced the city to approve \$1.5 million for upgrades last year in the council's budget.

But more was wanted — and needed.

So Park City continued studying. A city-conducted poll found 62 percent of residents would be in favor of a \$20 million bond for the walkable and bikeable trails.

Parkites have proven to be supportive of recreational improvements. Residents have approved three major open space bonds in the past six years, totalling \$40 million, and a 2001 bond for the ice arena at Quinn's Junction.

If the entire \$15 million trail bond is approved, Parkites would pay for the bond for the next 15 years. On a home assessed at \$100,000, a primary homeowner would pay an extra \$16.80 a year for the bond. A secondary home or business assessed at that same value would pay \$30.15 a year.

"We had this walkability study that identified as much as \$20 million to \$25 million in projects. So if the bond passed, that would be the base the council would start with," Baklay said.

Projects slated for construction range in their complexity. One project includes building a tunnel under Bonanza Drive, to connect the Rail Trail and Poison Creek Trail, rather than crossing the busy street.

"Bonanza is a terrible problem. That, to me, is the scariest problem," Potter said. "We want to see connections to all the neighborhoods, so people can drive back and forth between Prospector and Park Meadows."

As a trails enthusiast, Potter is understandably thrilled about the bond and will be voting for it. She hopes Park City can go on a "street diet," and more sidewalks, pathways and tunnels will create safer routes. She points out it could even draw more tourists.

"The first thing a tourist does when they get into a town is get out of their car and walk," she said. Adding of the trails: "The visitors will like it and the locals will love it."

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