



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701

Department of Parks and Recreation

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February 26, 2008

Honorable Mayor Alan Hanks and
Rapid City Council Members
300 Sixth Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Mayor Hanks and City Council Members:

In 2006, Senator John Thune's office contacted Rapid City staff with information about Federal Highway Transportation dollars that might be available in the fiscal 2007 Federal budget. The money would be allocated for pedestrian or biking projects located in Rapid City within the Greenway system. The Federal budget was adopted and the money is now available. The task of soliciting the community for projects fell to the Parks and Recreation Department and Advisory Board.

The Advisory Board solicited comments over a four month period in a variety of formats. All the proposed projects were reviewed and rated against the developed criteria in order to determine a priority which would be forwarded to the City Council. Out of more than 50 projects, the following four are presented in order of priority to the City Council for further review.

1. Founders Park Upgrades and Trail Expansion

(Restroom, expanded parking, bridge over creek, handicapped trail north side, trail from creek to Anamosa Street)

2. Connection of Bike Path along Steele Street to School of Mines

3. Extension of Bike Path to Rapid Valley (Greenway or Rail to Trail)

4. Extension of Bike Path from Fish Hatchery west to Cliff Side Park.

Back Ground and Analysis:

1876 –Rapid City was founded in 1876 by a group of miners, who promoted their new town as the "Gateway to the Black Hills." John Brennan and Samuel Scott, with a small group of men, laid out the site of the present Rapid City, which was named for the spring-fed Rapid Creek that flows through it. A square mile was measured off and the six blocks in the center were



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

designated as a business section. Committees were appointed to bring in prospective merchants and their families to locate in the new settlement. In August of 1876 more than 100 citizens called Rapid City home. By 1900 Rapid City had survived a boom and bust and was establishing itself as an important regional trade center. By 2007 Rapid City is one of the fastest growing cities in the Midwest, and it continues to grow today.

1972-- On June 9-10, extremely heavy rains over the eastern Black Hills of South Dakota produced record floods on Rapid Creek and other streams in the area. Nearly 15 inches of rain fell in about 6 hours near Nemo, and more than 10 inches of rain fell over an area of 60 square miles. The resulting floods left 238 people dead and 3,057 people injured. In addition to the human tragedy, total damage was estimated in excess of \$160 million (about \$664 million in 2002 dollars), which included 1,335 homes and 5,000 automobiles. From the destruction of the flood the Rapid City Greenway was created with over 600 acres of parks and trails that run east and west through the City.

2002—Rapid City's Federal Beef meat packing plant burned to the ground. The packing plant's role in Rapid City history ended suddenly in January 2002, when a spectacular fire ripped through the plant. It put 400 people out of work and closed the longtime packing plant forever. The land was sold in 2005 to local businessmen Mike Tennyson and Pat Tlustos. They are looking to the future and are currently building office commercial buildings and residential facilities on the 20-acre site.

2005—Rapid City Council Meeting: Adoption of the Rapid City Omaha Street Beautification Plan. Some of the improvements being considered for Founders Park are a possible expansion of the parking lot, proposed location for the Founder's Plaza, location for a new public restroom, enhancements around the trout sculpture area, and expansion of the volleyball courts to the east. Founders Plaza is a historic landmark depicting the original layout of the downtown area. There is a Founders Park Committee that has proposed to build this plaza, which will highlight the original 1-mile plat of Rapid City. It is called Founders Plaza because it is very close to the 1876 campsite of Rapid City's founding pioneers. This concept was originally presented to the City Council in 2003, however since the project is privately funded it may take longer than anticipated to move forward.

2006-- Senator John Thune's staff contacted the City regarding high priority projects and possible funding through the Federal Highway budget for those projects. Based on the discussions in the community about Safe Streets, pedestrian and bicycle safety, expansion and extension of the Rapid City Greenway both to the west and to the east in accordance with the East Greenway Master Plan, a general funding amount was identified that could embrace a combination of those issues. The Federal Highway bill included \$2 million for the improvements; however, because of the manner in which Federal Funds are allocated \$1.7 million dollars in federal funds are available for the project. Those funds must be matched with 18.02% local funds.

2006--Rapid City and the Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park Foundation purchased Cowboy Hill in 2006 for open space preservation. According to the plan put together by the Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park Foundation, the City of Rapid City, the Black Hills Mountain Biking Association the area commonly referred to as Cowboy Hill has become home to a large network of hiking

and biking trails. There are many groups who are interested in turning the hogback which runs through the middle of Rapid City into an outdoor recreation area. The Black Hills Mountain Biking Association has received over \$264,000 in grants to build trails on Cowboy Hill with the goal of creating a trail network that will provide a variety of outdoor experiences for people with various skill levels.

2007--Late in 2007 the Rapid City Council gave the task of soliciting comments for the use of the \$1.7 million dollars from the public to the Rapid City Parks and Recreation Department.

In September of 2007 the Parks and Recreation Department began taking citizen's comments. An email account was established on the City's web site to allow people to email their comments. Citizens could write letters to the City or call the Mayors office or the Parks and Recreation Department to submit ideas or suggestions. Two public meetings were also held to allow citizens an opportunity to bring forth their ideas in a group session.

The intent of the public input process was to solicit project ideas, not to see how many citizens wanted any specific project. We wanted to keep the public meetings and the written comments from becoming a lobbying effort by neighborhoods or organizations. Based on that premise, we requested that if a project had already been suggested that others refrain from commenting on the same project unless the project had a different scope to it.

2008--In January of 2008, after the completion of the public comment period, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board began the long and tedious task of sorting through all the proposed projects. There were projects in similar locations or scope that were combined into one project. After all the projects were listed there were more than 50 projects for the Board to look at and prioritize. (See attached spread sheet)

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board approached the project selection by first developing a list of criteria. Some of the criteria used were given to the Board from the Federal Transportation Administration, and some were the guiding principles that Parks and Recreation uses when developing CIP projects. The final list was taken from citizens comments. All the criteria are listed below.

Federal Transportation Administration (DOT Guidelines for use of \$1.7 million funding:

- ◆ Must be located within Rapid City
- ◆ Must be tied to the greenway bike/pedestrian path
- ◆ Must involve expansion of existing bike/pedestrian facilities
- ◆ Must not involve condemnation

Parks and Recreation Guidelines for Capital Projects:

- ◆ Does it improve or fix safety issues
- ◆ Is it part of an unfinished project
- ◆ Is it part of an existing master plan
- ◆ What project will create the most new biking and walking trips

Additional Guidelines that were used in looking at the projects:

- Will the project(s) make an impact in terms of use, visually, and economically on the City of Rapid City
- Can the project leverage other resources (i.e. \$\$\$, projects in the works, etc.)
- Will the project improve connections to other transportation modes as part of an overall transportation system, with an emphasis on links to public transit, neighborhoods, schools, etc.
- Will the project raise public awareness of walking and biking

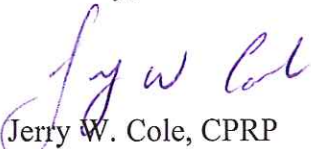
Some people might wonder why I have included all the time lines dating back to 1876. With this document and associated information I wanted to give a sense of history and obligation that we owe the Founders Park area of our community. We have a chance to do something really spectacular with Founders Park and the trail system in and around what has become known as M-Hill. It ties in with our tourist industry, it ties in with the greenway, and it ties in with our history.

On the north side of Rapid Creek is a rock that has the names of our founders inscribed into the sandstone. These names are barely visible now because of other names and inscriptions that have been etched in the stone. The rock is currently being used as a rock climbing area and with every foot scraped against the rock we loose another part of Rapid City's history.

Rapid City has some of the nicest parks anywhere. We have built parks such as Canyon Lake, Sioux Park, Memorial Park and Roosevelt Park, yet we don't have a park highlighting our founders. There is other funding waiting in the wings to improve this piece of our greenway. This project will let us tie it all together and create something that our founders would be very proud of.

I would ask you to review all the proposed projects and see if you agree that the #1 priority project, Founders Park, fits all the guidelines for use of the federal greenway funding. It will create a legacy for all the people who came before us, and leave one for those who will come after us.

Sincerely,



Jerry W. Cole, CPRP
Director, Rapid City Parks and Recreation