



Derek Melville
DIRECTOR

**CITY OF
EAST GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

August 30, 2022

Dear Community Members:

The City has been working with the West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance (WMMBA) and local trail enthusiasts to develop the Fred Bunn trails, a multi-use trail network at Manhattan Park. These proposed trails will accommodate walking, hiking, running and biking through the development of improved multi-use trails. In the spring, an updated conceptual design was reviewed by the public and the City collected input on the proposal through public open houses, email and public meetings. Based on feedback received, the City has completed an ecological assessment of the proposed trail areas and updated the conceptual design.

Attached to this letter is a copy of the ecological assessment, which was completed by Matthew MacGregor, senior environmental consultant at Barr Engineering Co., a local environmental engineering company. The assessment highlights key findings, including:

- The professional opinion of Barr Engineering is the proposed development of multi-use trails will not have any significant impact on the vegetative community, wildlife habitat or protected species within the area of investigation (AOI).
- There are no known occurrences of protected species near the AOI.
- The vegetative communities within the AOI are considered low quality due to the almost monotypic coverage of invasive species and low species density.
- The national wetlands inventory map (figure 2) identifies potential wetlands on the site. Further site analysis is in progress to delineate the boundaries of any suspected wetlands.

Also attached to this letter is an updated conceptual design and frequently asked questions about the multi-use trails project.

Sincerely,

Derek Melville, Director
Parks & Recreation Department

August 26, 2022

Mr. Doug LaFave
Deputy City Manager
City of East Grand Rapids
750 Lakeside Drive, SE
East Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Re: Manhattan Park Shared-Use Trails – Ecological Assessment

Dear Mr. LaFave:

Pursuant to your request, Barr Engineering (Barr) conducted an ecological assessment within the area of Manhattan Park planned for development of shared use trails. This ecological assessment included an evaluation of the existing vegetative cover, wildlife use and potential habitat for protected species.

1.0 Area of Investigation Description

The Area of Investigation (AOI) includes the south and eastern portions of Manhattan Park, located at 430 Manhattan Road SE in the City of East Grand Rapids, Kent County, Michigan. The AOI is predominantly wooded and is currently used by the public for recreational activities. The AOI contains many undeveloped trails and sledding hills. Surrounding land uses and cover types include residential and park lands. The dominant land uses and cover types within the AOI consist of upland scrub-shrub and forested habitats and emergent wetland areas.

1.1 Desktop Review

Barr conducted a desktop review to evaluate aerial imagery, topography, soil types, known occurrences of protected species and mapped wetlands within the AOI prior to conducting the ecological assessment. As part of the desktop review, Barr staff reviewed resources such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey (Figure 1) the National Wetlands Inventory (Figure 2), the Michigan Natural Feature Inventory (MNFI, Attachment 1) and publicly available aerial photography and topography (Figure 3, MCSA Group, Inc).

1.2 Methodology

The ecological assessment was conducted by an experienced biologist using a meander survey method to document existing vegetative cover, observe wildlife use, and assess the overall habitat value and function. The meander survey was conducted throughout the AOI, special attention was paid to the alignment of the proposed shared use trails that were flagged on site.

1.3 Results

Vegetative Cover

The majority of the AOI is dominated by common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), a non-native shrub species that is consider a highly invasive. Other plant species observed in the AOI include, cottonwood

(*Populus deltoides*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), glossy buckthorn (*Frangula ulnus*), hawthorn (*Crataegus mollis*), silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*), flowering dog (*Cornus florida*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), common burdock (*Arctium minus*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), white avens (*Geum canadense*), sensitive fern (*Onclea sensibilis*), jumpseed (*Persicaria virginiana*), and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*). The eastern edge of the AOI contains predominately native species with more mature native trees, plant species identified in this area included, red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), basswood (*Tilia americana*), false solomon-seal (*Maianthemum canadense*) and Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*).

The vegetative communities within the AOI are considered low quality due to the almost monotypic coverage of invasive species and low species diversity. The observed plant species assemblage is common in urban areas with predominantly clay soils and would not be considered regionally important vegetative community .

Wildlife

The AOI is part of a much larger undeveloped area surrounding the east side of Reed's Lake, extending almost to East Paris Avenue. Due to thick cover vegetative cover the AOI likely provides moderate breeding, loafing and foraging cover for a number of wildlife species including mammals such as white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*), groundhog (*Marmota monax*) and Eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*); and birds species such as common crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*), black-capped chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*), American robin (*Turdus migratorius*), white-breasted nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*), and Northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*).

The existing undeveloped trail system provides good opportunity to observe resident wildlife species. The AOI contains multiple undeveloped or undeveloped trails and appears to have moderate to heavy use by members the public. Based on review of available data and on-site evaluation, it is my opinion that the proposed shared use trails will not significantly alter wildlife use of this area. The proposed use of the AOI will be very similar to the existing recreational uses and may serve to limit human use of thick woody cover currently used by wildlife. The proposed project does not represent a significant impact to the existing wildlife habitat and/or its use.

Protected Species

The MNFI data base was queried to determine whether there are any known occurrences of protected species near the AOI. The only recent record of a threatened or endangered species is the Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) (NLB), a Federally Threatened species. NLB was last observed in Kent County in 1975 and there are no known hibernacula near the AOI. NLB will inhabit any forest with large trees that offer bark that is loose or has deep enough crevices to roost in. The AOI does not hold good cover for this species because of the thick understory and limited summer sun. Because the shared-use trails will not impact large trees and the low quality habitat, it is highly unlikely that the project will have any impact on NLB, especially if tree clearing activities were conducted between October 1 and March 31.

1.4 Conclusion

The proposed development of shared-use trails will not have any significant impact on the vegetative community, wildlife habitat, or protected species within the AOI. This conclusion is based on the low

quality of the existing vegetative cover, the proposed use being very similar to the existing recreational uses within the AOI and the development of more formal trails that may limit human intrusion into existing habitat areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this ecological assessment. If you have any questions, please contact me at your convenience at 616.822.9932 or mmacgregor@barr.om.

Sincerely,

BARR ENGINEERING CO.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt MacGregor", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Matthew MacGregor
Senior Environmental Consultant

Figures



- Area of Investigation**
- Area of Investigation
 - Appx. Parcel Boundary
- Wetlands (NWI)**
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
 - Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
 - Freshwater Pond
- Source: USFWS NWI



NATIONAL WETLANDS INVENTORY
 Manhattan Shared Use Trails
 Kent County, MI

FIGURE 2



03/27/2022

File Path: \\barr\apps\GIS\2022\03-27-2022\03-27-2022\Map\Figures\Wetlands\Wetlands_Inventory\Map_03-27-2022.aprx

Attachment



[MNFI Home](#) [Contact Us](#) [Plant List](#) [Animal List](#) [Abstracts](#) [Help](#)

Michigan Natural Features Inventory

Web Database Search

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Search Results for Town 07N, Range 11W, Section 34

Query Results Generated on Aug 01, 2022

Displaying Record 1 to 14 of 14 Records Found

Database Updated on Aug 01, 2022

[New Search](#) [Refine Search](#) [Previous 25 Records](#) [Next 25 Records](#)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	State Status	Federal Status	Last Observed Date	Element Category	Mapping Precision	Site of Observation	Best Documentation of EO	Town	Range	Section	County
	Beard tongue	Penstemon calycosus	T		1891-07-09	Plant		REEDS LAKE	Bailey, H.M. 1891. July 9 - Herbarium specimen, U of M.	07N	11W	27, 34	Kent
	Black-fruited spike-rush	Eleocharis melanocarpa	SC		1939-08-04	Plant	M	REEDS LAKE	BAZUIN, C.W. 1939. #3 AQC	07N	11W	27, 34	Kent
	Blanchard's cricket frog	Acris blanchardi	T		1917-09-24	Animal	M	REEDS LAKE	Blanchard, F.N. 1917. UMMZ #51811.	07N	11W	21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35	Kent
	Cooper's milk vetch	Astragalus neglectus	SC		1897-07-21	Plant	G	REED'S LAKE		07N	11W	27, 34	Kent
	Depressed ambersnail	Oxyloma peoriense	SC		1885			Grand Rapids	Unknown. 1885. Field Museum Chicago	07N	11W	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35	Kent
	Green violet	Hybanthus concolor	SC		1901	Plant	M	REEDS LAKE	Cole, E.J. 1901. Grand Rapids Flora.	07N	11W	27, 34	Kent
	Missouri rock-cress	Boechera missouriensis	SC		1893-06-18		GX	GRAND RAPIDS	Specimen (temporary placeholder citation)	07N	11W	7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36	Kent
	Northern long-eared bat	Myotis septentrionalis	SC	LT	1975-06-24			Grand Rapids	Huntzinger, Mike. 1975-06-24. MR 30239	07N	11W	16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34	Kent
	Paper pondshell	Utterbackia imbecillis	SC			Animal		Reeds Lake	Unknown collector and date; UMMZ #103934	07N	11W	34, 35	Kent
	Purplecap valvata	Valvata perdepressa	SC		1914-09-26	Animal		Grand Rapids, MI	Unknown. 1914-09-26.	07N	11W	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,	Kent

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35

	Pyramid dome	Ventridens intertextus	SC	1948-09-13	Animal		Grand Rapids, MI	Unknown. 1948-09-13. Harvard Museum of Comp. Zoo. 3 collected.	07N	11W	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35	Kent
	Showy orchis	Galearis spectabilis	T	1893-05-15	Plant	GX	GRAND RAPIDS		07N	11W	3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36	Kent
	Spindle lymnaea	Acella haldemani	SC		Animal	M	REEDS LAKE	Anonymous. No date. #5625 UMMZ	07N	11W	27, 33, 34, 35	Kent
	Twinleaf	Jeffersonia diphylla	SC	1980-05-26	Plant	S	Reeds Lake SE	Ouwinga, Stuart J. No date. Michigan Natural Features Inventory.	07N	11W	34, 35	Kent

Photographs



Sledding Hill/Wildlife Opening



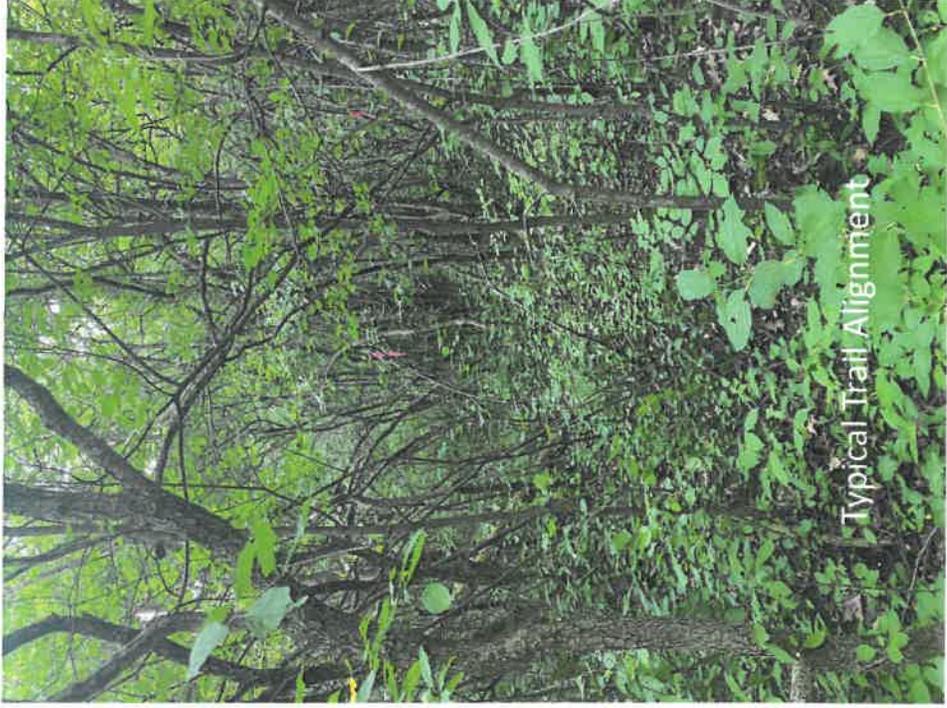
Existing Wood Chip Trail



Undeveloped Trail Typical



Scrub-Shrub Habitat Typical



Typical Trail Alignment



Typical Shrub-Scrub Habitat







Existing Undeveloped Trail



Wetland Swale/Drainage Course



Existing Trail with Erosion



Existing Trail with Erosion



Existing Trail Eastern Side AOI



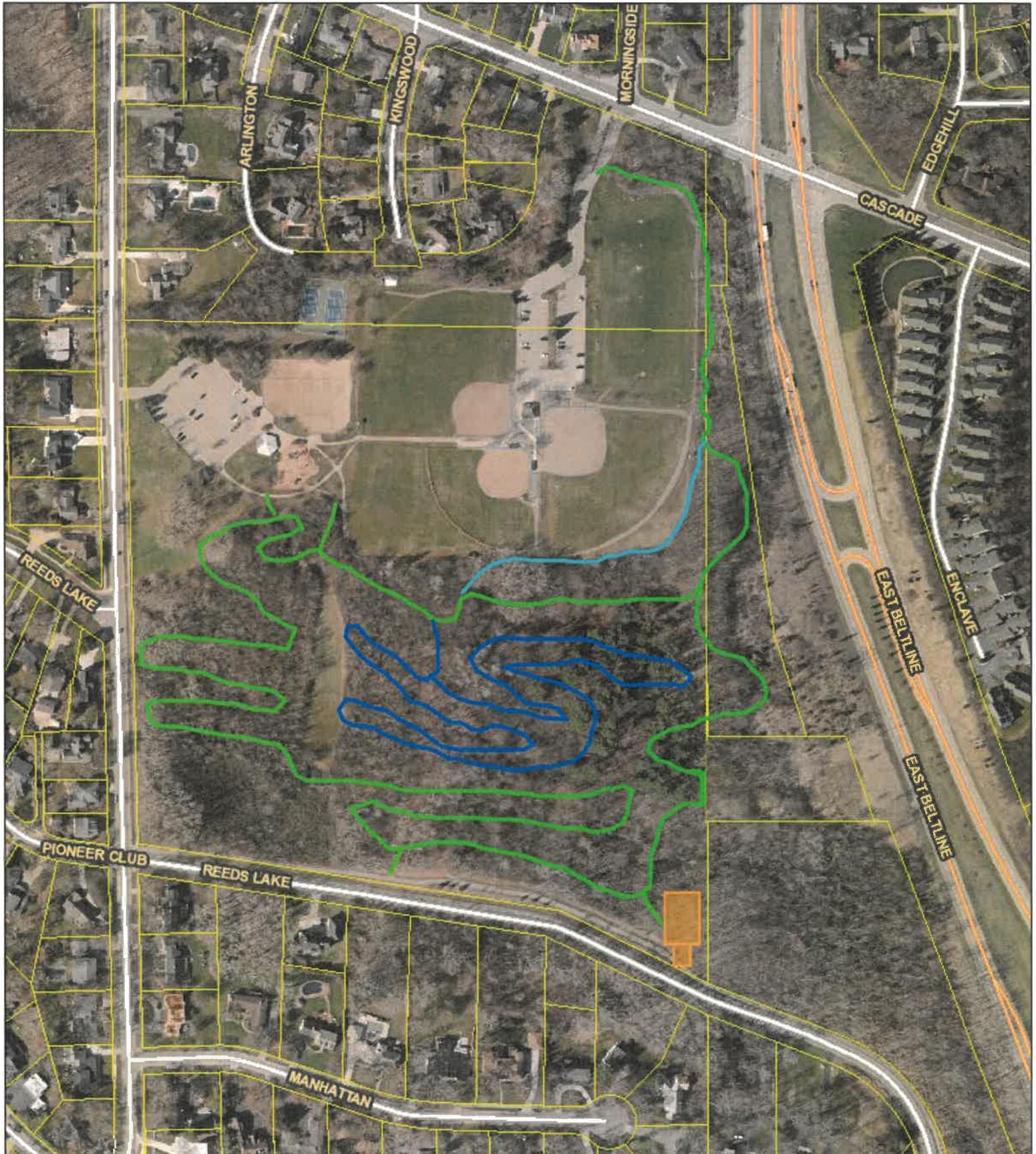
Proposed Trail Alignment Typical



Northern Edge of AOI

Fred Bunn Trails at Manhattan Park

Updated Concept Plan July 2022



~2.0 Mile

~.8 Mile

~.2 Mile

Proposed Parking



Fred Bunn Trails at Manhattan Park

Frequently Asked Questions

August 30, 2022

1. What are we planning to build?

The City of East Grand Rapids plans to build a multi-use trail at Manhattan Park in partnership with the West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance. The EGR Community Foundation is the fiduciary partner in this project, ensuring that all donations are routed through a single non-profit organization managed within the City of East Grand Rapids.

2. Have plans for the multi-use trails already been approved?

No. This project is currently in the design phase. The City and its partners at the West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance (WMMBA) are still collecting public input before final plans are presented to the East Grand Rapids City Commission. In order for this project to move forward, the Parks & Recreation Commission and City Commission must approve of all aspects of the plan. The Commission takes resident feedback, especially that of effected residents, into great consideration when reviewing plans and making decisions. Any comments on the proposed plans can be sent to input@eastgr.org. All emails received for this project will be shared with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Commission.

3. When will the build begin?

The intent is to have a professional trail building organization contracted to begin work in spring or summer of 2023, with a construction timeline of 5-8 weeks.

4. How long will the trail be?

The draft maps currently under review consist of an outer loop suitable for two-way traffic, and an inner singletrack loop of roughly 18" manicured with a mowed buffer that allows runners, bikers, and walkers to pass when traveling in opposing directions. The total mileage of the trail system is estimated to be roughly 3 miles.

5. What would the trails be made of?

The trails in Manhattan Park would be comprised of a natural surfaces such as dirt, gravel, and smooth rocks in areas where drainage is an issue.

6. Is the city conducting an environmental assessment of the property?

The city has solicited an outside consultant to perform an environmental assessment of the Manhattan Park property where the multi-use trails are proposed. The results of the assessment are attached to this FAQ document.

7. What does multi-use mean?

As with many other trails in the area including those at the Luton County Park, the Cannonsburg State Game Area, Ken-o-Sha Park, and others, the trails at Manhattan will be open for all non-motorized users excluding horseback riding. This means, as with the current trails on the site, the new trails will be available for bikers, hikers, walkers with dogs on a leash 6ft. or less, runners, snowshoers, and other users as regulated by park rules and guidelines. Some features

on similar trails are "bike-optimized" (e.g. a small pile of rocks called a "rock garden") but provide ample and obvious opportunities for walkers and runners to avoid them and stay on the dirt path.

8. Will the high school cross country team have the opportunity to race on these trails?

Yes, there is great potential for the EGR cross country team to use the trails once constructed. The team has a history in hosting smaller races as well as conferences within the existing trails; however, over time, the trails could no longer safely accommodate the number of teams using them. The enhancement of these trails will potentially allow the Pioneers to again host meets.

9. Will there be races on these trails?

While Manhattan Park has been used for cyclocross events in the past, the length of the new trail system does not lend itself to mountain bike races. The EGR HS Cross Country running team does hope to host small running events at the park. All park events within the City of East Grand Rapids (including Manhattan Park) are managed by the city through a permitting process that includes public hearings at the Parks & Recreation Commission meetings.

10. What is the initial investment required to build this project?

The city has contributed \$75k to the construction of this trail, and roughly \$100k has been raised through neighbors, EGR residents, and other local supporters.

11. What will be the annual incremental maintenance costs for the city?

There are little to no additional maintenance costs anticipated for the city above and beyond those already expended to maintain the greater Manhattan park. The WMMBA, an alliance of volunteers, has graciously offered to add this new trail system to the list of over 150 miles of trails in the area that they maintain. They will assign trail coordinators to assist with maintaining the trail system on a regular basis and will work in concert with the City to do so.

12. Are there limits to when/times people can be out there riding?

Park hours are posted and regulated by the city. No changes to these conditions are planned with the expansion of this trail system.

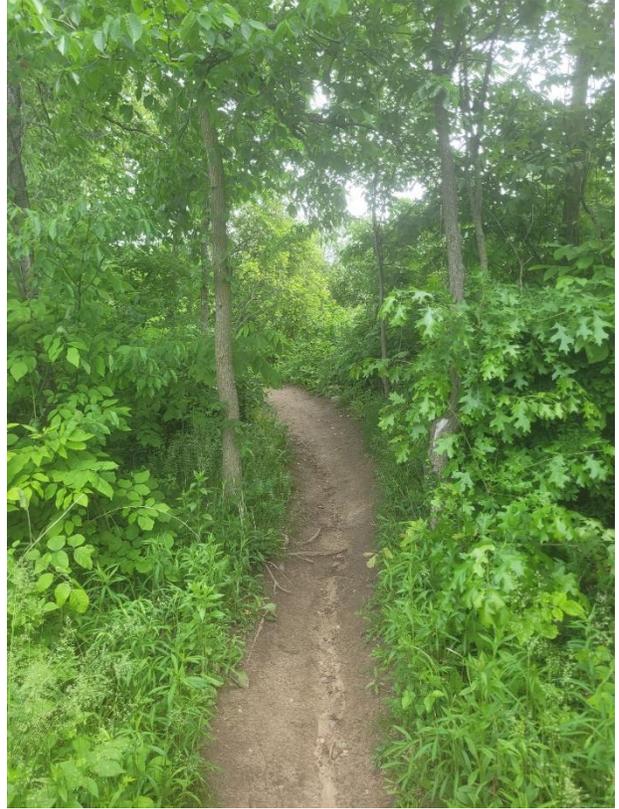
13. Are there any plans or potential to increase the length of the trail in the future?

The original target was to integrate ~3 miles of trail within the system in total to accommodate a "5k" distance for running events and otherwise. Any extension of the first build will need to be considered later and coordinated with the city.

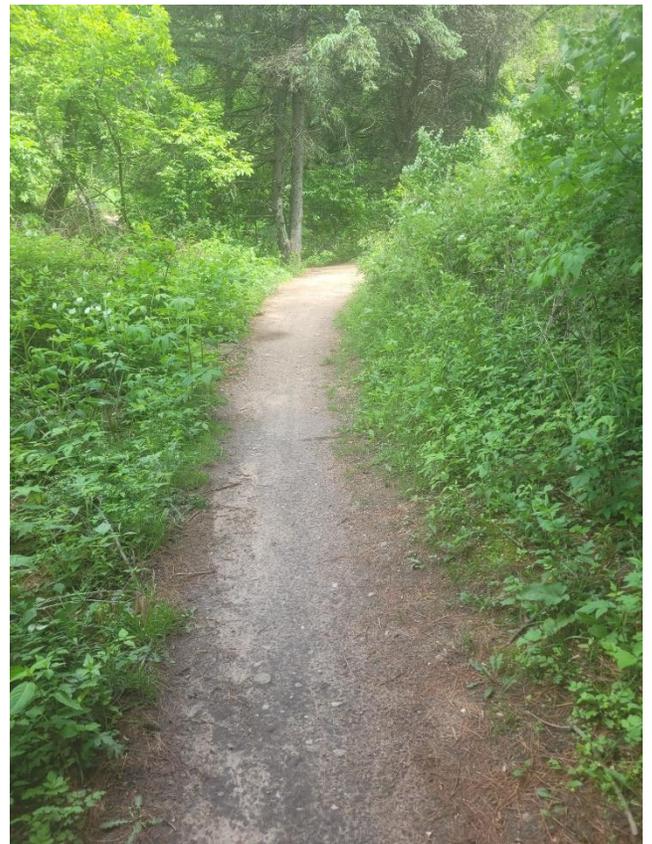
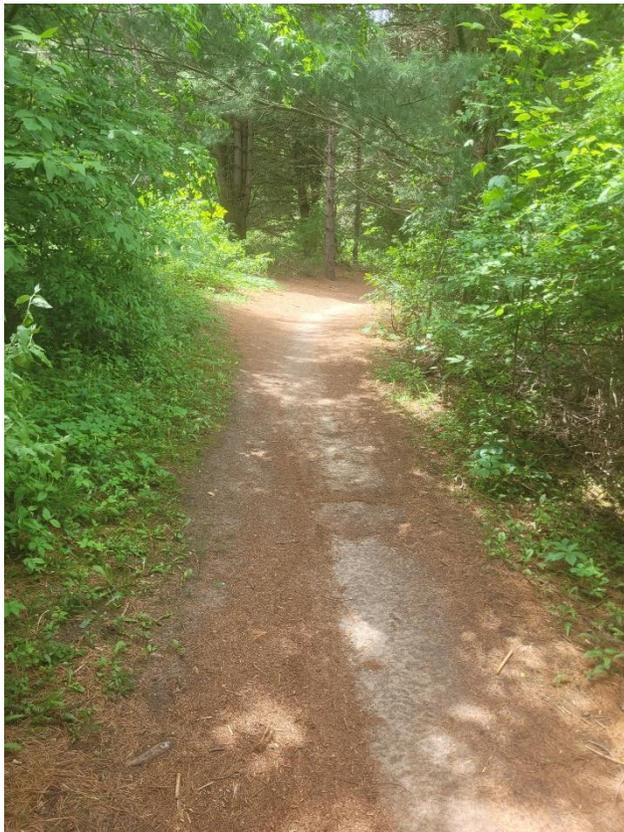
14. What will the trails look like after they are completed?

Each segment of trail is unique depending on the existing conditions of the site. The intent for the multi-use trail at Manhattan Park is to construct them like other multi-use trails in the area that are designed to fit into the natural topography of the site, and to also provide recreational opportunities in combination with access and respect for the environment. Displayed below are photos from the Merrell Trails in Rockford and Luton Park in Rockford, both of which are multi-use trails through wooded properties that were built with construction practices that match the proposed method of construction for the multi-use trails at Manhattan Park.

Merrell Trails- Rockford, MI



Luton Park- Rockford, MI



15. Is there a website to get more information or an email address to provide my input?

Details can be found at <https://www.eastgr.org/547/Manhattan-Park-Development>. The City Commission approved the general concept plans on May 17, 2021; however, the specific layout and features of the trail are still being finalized. Interested individuals are encouraged to submit their questions and comments to input@eastgr.org.

16. Is this trail going to be for advanced riders only or good for beginners/children as well?

Trails are generally not officially "rated" in this fashion and use of the trail is completely left to the individual to decide based on their skill level and comfort, keeping their personal safety in mind. As a multi-use trail, the trail will be built to accommodate a wide range of users.

17. I'm concerned about trail etiquette. Will the trails be wide enough for bikers and pedestrians? How do I know walkers will feel safe without getting run over?

The multi-use trails will be designed so that those on foot and bike can utilize them simultaneously. The WMMBA and potential contractors are specialized in designing trails that accommodate multiple parties. Appropriate signage will be utilized to alert users of the various persons using the trails and spell out expectations. For example, single file use will be encouraged. Depending on the level of difficulty, some trails may be more appropriate for running or biking than leisurely walking. The biking community takes trail etiquette very seriously as is demonstrated throughout the trails in West Michigan. Additionally, bikers who reside in EGR, such as high school students and/or those involved with clubs, are specifically trained in navigating trails in a respectful manner so all can safely enjoy them. Parents are encouraged to have discussions with their children regarding trail etiquette before they utilize the trails at Manhattan Park.

18. Where will riders be able to enter and exit the trail?

The primary entrance to the trail system will be to the left and right of the top of Manhattan Park sledding hill. Secondary access for foot traffic and mountain bikers exists via the established entries to the park along the Reeds Lake Trail.

19. Has a parking/traffic study been done to see if we can accommodate the added demand?

Given the limited distance of the trail (approximately 3 miles), it is highly unlikely this will become a "destination" trail in the manner other longer trails have become within the West Michigan area. While we do not expect significant growth in traffic or parking as a direct result of the trail project, city staff have solicited the services of a professional engineering firm to develop an implementation plan for Manhattan Park, and the process will include evaluating layout options for planned park improvements as well as identifying opportunities for additional parking on site.

20. What about added noise (e.g. music) due to increased use of the trail?

Park rules are posted and regulated by the city. No changes to these conditions are planned with the expansion of this trail system.

21. Is there increased liability for the city by allowing these trails to be developed?

User safety is being considered throughout the trail design process and will be at the forefront of the rules and policy discussion, but injuries are reasonably foreseeable in any recreational

activity, including walking, hiking, biking, pickleball, etc. As a result, since this proposed use is similar to other recreational uses in the city and because similar trails are present in communities across the country, the city does not expect any unique liability increases related to the addition of the proposed multi-use trail.

22. If an issue with the trail design arises after completion, or there needs to be an update to policies and procedures related to the use of the trails, how will that be resolved?

If changes to the trails or the rules and/or operation of the trail system is needed, the city will work with our residents and partners at the WMMBA to develop proposed solutions. The city will ultimately have final authority on trail modifications or any changes in policies or procedures related to the operation of the trail system.

*This FAQ page will be updated as additional information becomes available.