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(Note: others have proposed some of these ideas already in the Black Eagle Community Visioning document and on the Rivers Edge Trail website. With this DRAFT brochure, I am suggesting the particular idea of downhill mountain bike trails on Smelter Hill, which would be compatible with current efforts for trail expansion. If a skills park becomes part of the conversation, even better. Thank you. - Doug)

Intro to the Big Stack Bike Park

I have been riding my bike around Great Falls, and on the trail, for most of my 52 years. It was only recently, however, that I had the opportunity to go downhill mountain biking with two of my sons at Whitefish. I was grateful that my basic skills were good enough, surprised at how far bike technology had come in thirty years, and **totally shocked** at how much **fun** it was. So I started researching Downhill Mountain biking, and other singletrack opportunities, around the state.

Could we do this in Great Falls? YES, and it would be awesome! For downhill biking, all you need is elevation and a trail. Whitefish started with just one intermediate trail, the Summit Trail, the only one I rode on. It is 8 miles long and takes about an hour. It has a gentle enough grade that many people ride it uphill. Starting with just one trail would be a very low risk way to get this going.

The perfect spot for this would be the old Anaconda Smelter property. The elevation is there, along with easy access to the top of the hill. Bike trails would be a mild use compared to the history of that land. In fact, edgy bike parks all over use existing landscape elements as integrated features, both the natural terrain and man-made structures. The hillside is loaded with cool old roads, drainage ditches, rock walls, ravines, and concrete leftovers that would become fun things to ride over or under, or jump, just as they are at the many bike parks in Montana and around the world.

I know others in Great Falls have put forth similar ideas. What I am trying to do with this brochure is add my voice to theirs so support can keep building for a really amazing bike park on that land.

So that's the basic idea: one or more bike trails, on the old smelter hill, that give riders the benefit of gravity, and use existing features to create a unique biking experience in Great Falls.



Big Stack Downhill Mountain Bike Trail Map

See attachment A for maps of Whitefish and Discovery bike parks.

Top 10 Benefits of the River Phoenix Bike Park for Great Falls

1. Builds on visioning process already underway to repurpose the old smelter property. It might even be possible to do a couple of trails without full remediation of that property.
2. Works with landscape elements already there. In fact, they would be features.
3. Adds another really cool linkage to the River's Edge Trail.
4. Very low budget to get started. It is possible only volunteer labor can do the first trail. Much like the rest of the RE Trail, features can be added by individuals and groups over time.
5. Easy to expand, or not, as demand for more trails and features materializes, or does not.
6. Easy to add features for all ages, children up to seniors.
7. Increases the tourism potential for Great Falls. Adds the Wow factor.
8. Would look really great to see riders winding down the hill from across the river.
9. Downhill trail building, and bike park construction, is an established discipline from which we can draw standards, measurements, and professionals if needed.
10. Would increase demand for local bike shop sales, service and rentals.

Project Phases

Before Phase I, the most important accomplishment would be to open a **connector trail from the Tailrace Island parking area to the Rainbow Dam Trailhead**. That trail would open up the area for other great things to happen.

Phase I: Build FIRST Trail – EASY FLOW -- with the following characteristics:

1. Fun: using gravity on a singletrack dirt trail makes it fun.
2. Easy: a 10 year old should be able to make it down safely; an adult in moderate condition should be able to ride uphill. Like ski trails, bike trails are Easy, Intermediate, Advanced.
3. Safe: trail should be smooth and coasting should not generate excessive speed.
4. Make It FLOW
 - a. Use International Mountain Bike Association standards to add ups and downs, curves and slaloms, for that addicting roller coaster effect.
 - b. Standards link here: <https://www.imba.com/flow-country/trail-characteristics>
 - c. Note: IMBA has already visited Great Falls, see notes on GF Bike club website.

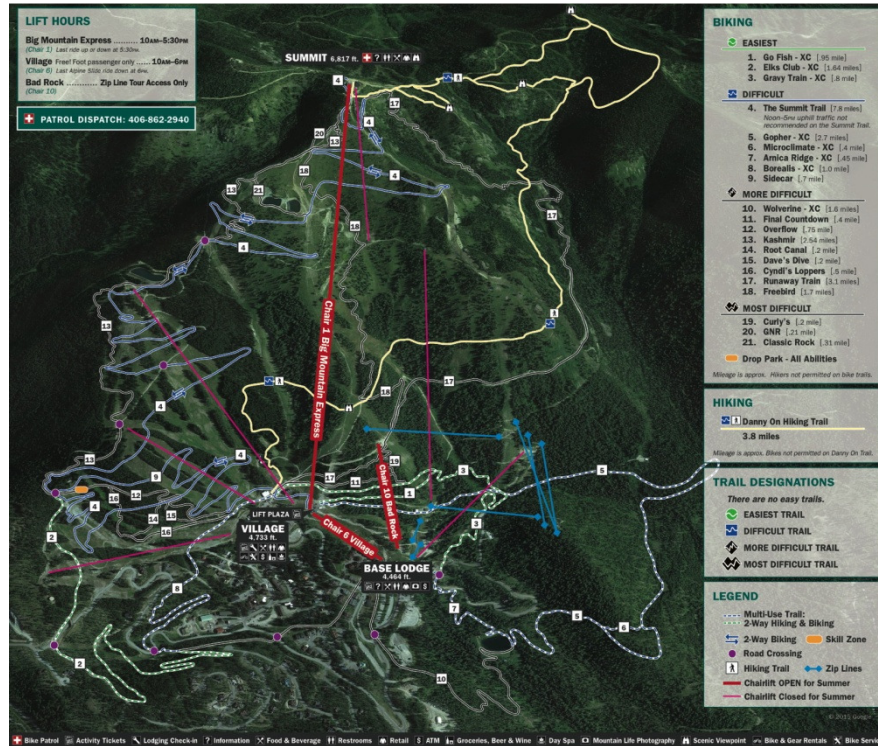
Phase II: Build More Trails – INTERMEDIATE and ADVANCED

1. Very similar to the Easy Flow trail, but harder, steeper and with more challenging features.
2. Use FLOW standards as above.

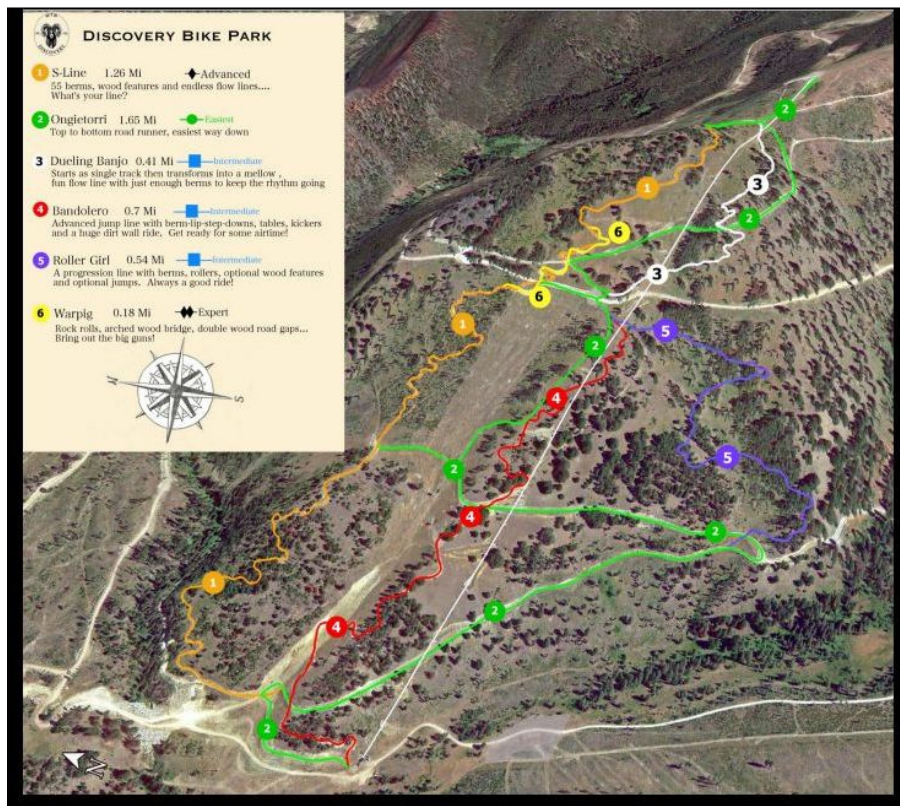
Phase III: Build Skills Park on Flat Land Across from Tailrace Island (Appendix B)

1. Skills parks have trails and features for children and adults of all ability levels to have fun and build their biking skills.
2. Features include jumps, bridges, logs, rock gardens, pump tracks, etc. These elements can also be added to the trails above.
3. Green River WY (pop 12,000) built a very nice park for a budget of \$208,000, and used tons of local volunteer labor and materials. www.greenriverbikepark.com
4. Note: phases 2 and 3 can be done in a different order, concurrently, or never.

Appendix A -- Downhill Mountain Bike Trail Maps



Whitefish



Discovery

Appendix B – Photos of Typical Bike Park and Flow Trail Features



Typical Bike Park



Easy Flow Trail for All Users



Examples of Urban Landscapes Repurposed for Biking

Other Elements for the Total Transformation of Old Smelter Land into Multi-faceted Recreation Area

Vision: create a recreation area encompassing the old smelter property that Looks, Feels and Operates like a theme park or resort. Include all of the following if possible.

- 1) Camping Near the River – because bikers are also campers.
 - a) FWP picnic area, right across the road from Giant Springs
 - b) Right below Black Eagle dam powerhouse, where Anaconda managers had houses
 - c) Tailrace island, for primitive camping
- 2) Zip Line
 - a) Crisscrossing the River below the dam
 - b) Starting at the top of the hill, behind Anaconda Hills Golf Course club house, and going down in a progressive multi-zip “course” similar to Whitefish.
- 3) Tree top obstacle course, similar to those popular in many resort areas.
- 4) Kayak launches and take outs in multiple spots on both sides of the river.
- 5) Hotels on some of the high ground
 - a) Above Anaconda Hills Golf Course
 - b) Near old fountain/waterfall on road down to tailrace island

Proposed Camping Area



This area is where the Anaconda managers had their houses, so the pollution level is probably much lower than other parts of the hill. In the 1980s many of the houses were moved off their foundations to other parts of Great Falls. Left behind are paved loop roads, trees and river access that would make a great campground. If we can get bikers and kayakers to stay a few days, their dollars will multiply through the community. It also sets Great Falls up as a friendly location for races and other events.

If this were paired with some RV friendly camping near Giant Springs, we would have the true beginnings of a destination. I think light-duty, bike-in camping could also be considered for Tailrace Island itself, though I imagine some may defend its character as just fine the way it is. At any rate, we want people to come to Great Falls to play and stay. These features would help.