



AGENDA REPORT

City Council Meeting

TODAY'S DATE: January 9, 2025

MEETING DATE: January 15, 2025

TO: Sandpoint City Council and Mayor Grimm

FROM: Jason Welker, Planning and Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Presentation on Potential Land Acquisition for North End Extension of Sandpoint-Dover Community Trail

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND:

This staff report outlines an opportunity for the City of Sandpoint to purchase a 2.53-acre Union Pacific Railroad Right of Way (UP ROW), which would provide critical recreational and transportation benefits to the community. Through communication with the Railroad, we believe the City can acquire the property below its appraised value of \$740,000.

The Union Pacific Right of Way is a 50-foot-wide, 500-yard-long corridor connecting Larch Street to North Boyer Avenue. Currently an unmaintained former rail line overgrown with weeds, this property represents a unique opportunity to enhance connectivity, recreation, and public infrastructure for Sandpoint residents.

The corridor is strategically located near the Kaniksu Health medical facility, the Milltown multi-family development (including subsidized senior and low-income housing), and single-family neighborhoods along North Boyer Avenue. Its acquisition would enable the City to transform this space into a linear park and trail, extending the heavily-used Dover to Sandpoint Shared-Use Pathway northward from its current terminus at Larch Street.

If purchased, the UP ROW would be designated as part of the City's park system and, in the future, developed into a linear park with a non-motorized pathway. This pathway would:

1. **Enhance Connectivity:** Provide a key pedestrian and bicycle link between Sandpoint's downtown commercial core and residential neighborhoods to the north.
2. **Support Recreation:** Create a safe, accessible recreational space for walking, cycling, and other outdoor activities.
3. **Serve Adjacent Neighborhoods:** Directly benefit residents of nearby multi-family developments, including low-income and senior housing, by providing access to outdoor recreation and improved mobility.
4. **Reduce Vehicle Dependency:** Encourage alternative transportation modes and reduce traffic congestion by offering a convenient non-motorized route for commuting and leisure.

The Union Pacific Railroad has invited the City to make an offer to purchase the property at a price of \$659,000, which is \$81,000 below its appraised value of \$740,000. The purchase would be funded using Parks Land Acquisition Development Impact funds, which are specifically designated and restricted for park expansion. While initial development of the pathway and park amenities would require additional funding, this purchase secures the land for future improvements as financial resources become available.

If Council directs staff to proceed, the next steps for staff are:

1. Make a final offer for the purchase to Union Pacific Railroad.
2. Begin preliminary planning for pathway development, including public engagement and funding strategy.
3. Coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Division to include the project in future capital improvement plans.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council approve the purchase of the Union Pacific Railroad Right of Way for \$659,000. This acquisition represents a strategic investment in Sandpoint's recreational infrastructure and connectivity, ensuring long-term benefits for the community's growing population.

ACTION:

No action is being taken tonight. This presentation is informational only. A resolution will be brought to the next council meeting if council determines this is a worthwhile course of action.

WILL THERE BE ANY FINANCIAL IMPACT? No **HAS THIS ITEM BEEN BUDGETED?** No

ATTACHMENTS:

Property Description UP RoW