



Foothills Trail System Evaluation

Phase I Review & Future Recommendations

June 2023



Introductions

An aerial photograph of Salt Lake City, Utah, showing the city's urban layout, including the downtown skyline and surrounding hills. Overlaid on the image is a diagram with three orange boxes. The top box is labeled 'Salt Lake City'. A line descends from this box and splits into three lines, each leading to one of the three boxes below. The bottom-left box is labeled 'SWCA', the bottom-middle box is labeled 'SE Group', and the bottom-right box is labeled 'David Evans & Associates, Inc.'. At the bottom center of the image, there is a small white circle containing the number '2'.

Salt Lake City

SWCA

SE Group

**David Evans &
Associates, Inc.**

Meeting Objectives

Share key findings from the 2020 Foothills Trail System Plan Evaluation

Identify gaps and needs to move forward

Share future recommendations and next steps

Share concurrent Public Lands efforts and next steps

We Are Here

Environmental

- Pre-NEPA
- Specific Study Area
- NEPA-Level Review
- Review by Public Lands Ecologists, Specialists & Experts

Plan Review

- Review of Master Plan
- Review of Phase 1 Construction
- Recommendations
- Land & Resource Management Plan

**Public Lands
Department
Review &
Recommendations**

**SLC Mayor &
City Council**

Process Review

Technical Committee

Who: City Staff from Public Lands, Public Utilities, Engineering

Role: Education on Trail System Management and Maintenance Best Practices; Development of enhanced review process

Internal Stakeholders

Who: City Department Leadership, the Mayor's Office

Role: Defined Expectations; Department Needs, Experience with the Foothills System

Community Stakeholders & Leadership

Who: Nonprofits, Community Planning Groups, Land Owners, Adjacent Land Managers, Underrepresented Community Members

Role: Share experience and observations within the Foothills, provide data and information, participated in review of existing conditions and best practices

Engagement

KEY TRENDS

- Enhanced signage, wayfinding and interpretation
- Minimize environmental and geotechnical impacts
- Enhancement of existing trails as a priority
- Clear communication and information
- Public stewardship
- Opportunities for separation of use
- Trail types and levels for all users
- Clear and organized coordination between management agencies
- Create safe spaces
- Well-managed open space

ENGAGEMENT GROUPS

- The University of Utah
- Community Organizations and Nonprofits
- Inclusive Recreation Providers and Organizations
- State and Federal Agencies
- Community Councils and Planning Groups
- Underrepresented Communities
- Representatives from Indigenous Communities in the Region

DEFINING SUSTAINABLE TRAILS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1 Supports current and future use with minimal impact to the area's natural systems and wildlife
- 2 Develop trails in areas already influenced by human activity
- 3 Provide buffers to avoid/protect sensitive ecological and hydrologic systems
- 4 Produces negligible soil loss or movement while allowing vegetation to inhabit the area
- 5 Provide ongoing stewardship of the trails and adjoining natural systems
- 6 Ensure the continued management and maintenance for the system
- 7 Accommodates existing use while allowing only appropriate future use

WHAT MAKES A TRAIL SUSTAINABLE?

MAINTENANCE & STEWARDSHIP

- Requires little maintenance
- Receives ongoing management and maintenance

ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Minimizes the ecological impacts of trails, especially in sensitive areas by considering tread, erosion, & water management

PHYSICAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Trails retain their physical form over years of use and natural forces
- Meets the needs of users
- Minimizes conflict

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Provides clear way-finding and navigability throughout the trail system
- Trails provide efficient access to desirable locations
- Inclusive to all users

Plan Evaluation

- 1) The Plan did not accurately discuss how the pre-existing 60+ mile network of trails fails to meet the criteria and goals for the desired sustainable, inclusive trail system.
- 2) The 2020 Plan fell short in its delivery of appropriate site-level planning, design, revision, and implementation strategies.
- 3) The 2020 Plan depicts recommended alignments on a map for future trail development without sufficient intended segment purpose and experience.
- 4) The 2020 Plan shows a limited understanding of existing natural and cultural resources within the City's Foothills.

Phase I Implementation and Trail Impact

- The Department **did** provide a degree of **well-built and designed trail segments** during Phase I implementation
- Development of trails along slopes unsuitable for trail development (i.e. City Creek Canyon)
- Lack of defined purpose for new segments
- Inexperienced project management and oversight during construction
- Ineffective efforts to mitigate trail braiding and restoration



User Demand



SLCO Growing at 1.25%

National Average = 0.38%

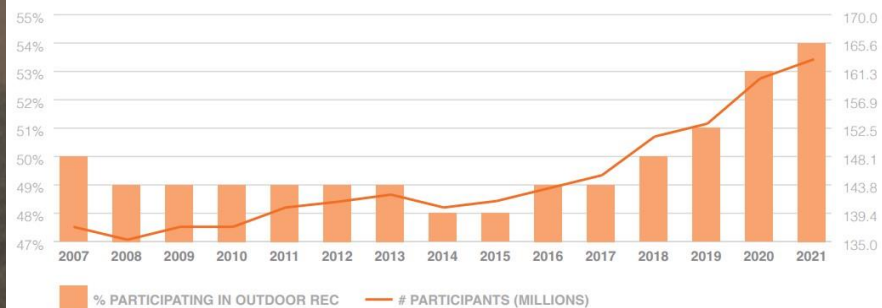
Trail use demand is increasing

HOWEVER

- Trail count fails to recognize user type and ability
- Accounts for historical trends rather than potential future use

OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION GROWTH TRENDS

2007 TO 2021



Evaluation of Future Facilities



- Some alignments identified within future phases are not supportive of future trail development.
- Future phases are ineffective in communicating intended trail use, experience and purpose.
- Additional segment-by-segment evaluation is recommended through implementation.

Evaluation of Future Facilities



- Extensive variation of existing conditions within the study area
- NEPA-level evaluation recommended for future proposed trail corridors
- Preliminary cultural assessments of the area reveal that some sites are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Recommendations for the Foothills Trail System



Future Trail Implementation
Process

Recommendations for the Foothills Trail System

1. Focus visitor use onto properly developed and well-maintained trails

- Use **formalized trail development** as a mechanism for land management
- Participate in **active environmental restoration** of user created trails
- Develop a **narrative** for proposed trails – what **purpose and experience** should they serve & STICK TO IT

2. Appropriate stakeholder (and public) collaboration and communication

- **Message** and **communicate** changes and reasoning well in advance!
- Establish a **clear information distribution** system
- Establish a **joint task force** consisting of managing entities

3. Environmental review following NEPA standards

4. Develop a greater Foothills management plan

Plan Evaluation

- 1) **The Plan did not accurately discuss how the pre-existing 60+ mile network of trails fails to meet the criteria and goals for the desired sustainable, inclusive trail system.**

Identify areas where existing trail system is failing and prioritize maintenance, restoration, and adjustments as needed

- 2) **The 2020 Plan fell short in its delivery of appropriate site-level planning, design, revision, and implementation strategies.**

Adhere to updated process for planning, design, review and implementation

- 3) **The 2020 Plan depicts recommended alignments on a map for future trail development without sufficient intended segment purpose and experience.**

Define purpose and desired experience of proposed future segments, building with intention

- 4) **The 2020 Plan shows a limited understanding of existing natural and cultural resources within the City's Foothills.**

Conduct NEPA-level review prior to future implementation

Next Steps

- Identify Future Trail System Needs
- “NEPA-Level” Environmental Review of Trail Alignments
- Evaluate Existing Trails for Integration, Rehabilitation, or Restoration
- Wayfinding, Signage, and Information
- Ongoing Segment by Segment Evaluation of Future Phases
- Foothills Natural Area Land and Resource Management Plan

Next Steps

Land & Resource Management Plan

- Land use planning to support "landscape management" that addresses the effects of natural and human influences on all resource conditions and trends.
- Develops comprehensive strategies to more effectively integrate conservation, recreation, and public access management and decision making.
- Provides further in-depth research and analysis on the human & natural landscape including consideration of:
 - Water Quality & Hydrology
 - Flood Plains & Rivers
 - Riparian Areas & Wetlands
 - Fisheries & Wildlife
 - Soils, Geology, & Mineral Resources
 - Fire Management
 - Threatened/Endangered & Sensitive Species
 - Noxious Weeds
 - Cultural, Historical, & Paleontological
 - Recreation & Public Access
 - Economic Considerations
 - Law Enforcement
 - Information & Signage
 - Land Use

Ongoing Management

- BST Maintenance
- Existing Trail Maintenance and Reroutes
- Weed Management
- Responding to partner initiatives and projects (USFS, Utilities, etc)
- Other landscape rehabilitation and restoration

Concurrent Efforts

Programs

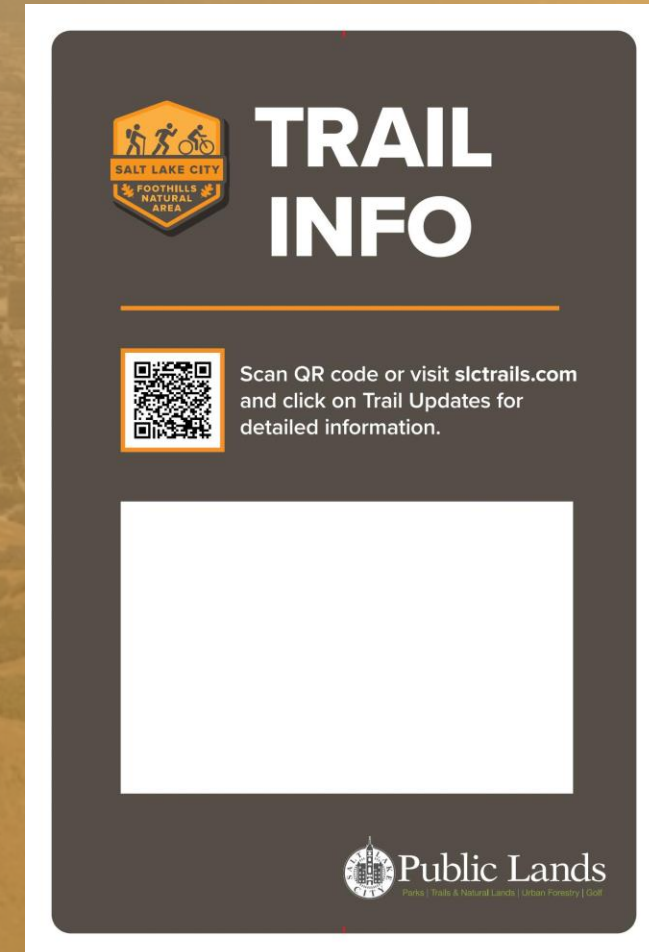
- **Public Lands Ranger Program:** Two Public Lands Rangers dedicated to the Foothills began patrolling in the fall of 2022.
- **BeWILD:** Public Lands is launching a new department-wide program this spring to educate the community on how we can enjoy and care for our collective public spaces together when limiting our impact.

Trailhead Improvements

- Victory Road
- Bonneville Blvd
- 18th Ave
- Popperton Park
- Emigration
- Update signage and add care stations at most residential minor trailheads

Communicating Changes

- Rangers
- Improved trailhead signage
- Temporary field signage
- SLCTrails.com website
- Monthly Foothills Newsletter
- @SLCPL Social Media





Questions?
