

Beacon Hill Trail System Preservation Plan

Prepared by Evergreen East Mountain Biking Alliance

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Table of Contents

- 1 Introduction 2
 - 1.1 Background 2
 - 1.2 Purpose 2
 - 1.3 Project Need 2
- 2 Existing Trail System..... 3
 - 2.1 Location..... 3
 - 2.2 Trail System Characteristics 3
 - 2.3 Operations and Maintenance 3
 - 2.3.1 Existing MOU Between EEMBA and the City of Spokane 3
- 3 Land Ownership 5
 - 3.1 Summary of Land Ownership..... 5
 - 3.2 Critical Parcels..... 5
- 4 Preservation Alternatives..... 6
 - 4.1 Access Alternatives 6
 - 4.1.1 Renew Handshake Agreements 6
 - 4.1.2 Memorandum of Understanding 6
 - 4.1.3 Easement..... 6
 - 4.1.4 Land Acquisition..... 7
 - 4.2 Trail System Management 7
 - 4.2.1 No Action..... 7
 - 4.2.2 Ownership Management 7
 - 4.2.3 Formalize Management Agreements with EEMBA East Mountain Biking Alliance 7
- 5 Goals and Policies 8
 - 5.1 Preserve the Beacon Hill Trail System 8
 - 5.2 Sustainably Manage the Beacon Hill Trail System 8
 - 5.3 Promote and Develop the Trail System 9

Appendix

Figure 1 – Existing Trail System Map

Figure 2 – Current Ownership Map

Figure 3 – Proposed Land Partners

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Beacon Hill Trail System Draft Concept Plan (2009) was prepared by the Fat Tire Trail Riders Club (FTTRC) after receiving a technical assistance grant through the National Park Service's RTCA Program in 2008. The plan was recognized by Spokane County in the Spokane County Regional Trail Plan (2014). In 2012 the FTTRC dissolved and became the Evergreen East Mountain Biking Alliance (EEMBA). EEMBA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and the eastern chapter of the statewide Evergreen Mountain Biking Alliance organization which is dedicated to trail building, maintenance, advocacy, and education for the sport of mountain biking.

The Beacon Hill Trail System Draft Concept Plan identified landowners effected by the Beacon Hill Trail System (trail system) and identified several methods in which private properties may continue to be utilized for future recreational use. The plan found that in order to preserve the existing trail system for future recreational use existing agreements between landowners and the public must be formalized. The purpose of the Beacon Hill Trail System Preservation Plan (EEMBA, 2016) is to build on concepts discussed in the Beacon Hill Trail System Draft Concept Plan and provide a means of preserving the trail system for future use.

1.2 PURPOSE

This plan's purpose is as follows:

- Inventory the existing trail system
- Discuss any existing park management practices
- Identify land owners inside the Beacon Hill area
- Provide alternatives for maintaining access to the existing/future Beacon Hill trail system
- Provide alternatives for managing the existing/future Beacon Hill trail system
- Create a shared vision for promoting and developing the Beacon Hill area among partners including land managers, owners, trail users and adjacent neighbors

1.3 PROJECT NEED

The Beacon Hill Trail System is located on approximately 30 contiguous parcels spanning approximately 650 acres. The existing trail system is located on public, private, and utility owned lands. Recreational use is permitted on these lands based on "handshake" agreements with private landowners, utilities and land trust entities. Excluding the existing memorandum of understanding between the Evergreen East Mountain Biking Alliance (EEMBA) and the City of Spokane for operation and management of the Camp Sekani trails there are no formal agreements between landowners and the public ensuring continued access of their land. The trail system risks becoming fragmented and unusable if land use permission becomes restricted.

Much of the trail system is not formally managed and the recreating public is often ignorant of land ownership issues in the Beacon Hill area. This has led to the construction of illegal or "rogue" trails. These older trails were often not constructed in a sustainable manner and over time have led to habitat destruction by erosion and soil disturbance. Formal management of the entire trail system is needed to ensure that trails are constructed and maintained in a responsible and sustainable manner.

2 EXISTING TRAIL SYSTEM

2.1 LOCATION

The Beacon Hill Trail System is located on land within the City of Spokane and Spokane County. Beacon Hill proper is considered to be bounded by Esmerelda Golf Course to the east, Camp Sekani to the west, Upriver Drive and Frederick Avenue to the south and Valley Springs Road to the north. The city limits of Spokane extend past Esmerelda Golf Course east to the Avista Corporation property. Land to the east of City limits is within Spokane County. Camp Sekani is located outside of City limits but is owned by the City of Spokane.

The trail system lies on land within and just outside of City limits and offers one of only a handful of outdoor urban recreation experiences within the greater Spokane area. Beacon Hill consists of approximately 1,000 acres of undeveloped ridgeline, pine tree forests, and granite rock outcroppings which offer vista views of the surrounding mountains, valley and the City of Spokane and Spokane Valley.

2.2 TRAIL SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

The Beacon Hill Trail System consists of over 30 recognized singletrack and doubletrack trails. There are approximately 17 miles of singletrack trails and approximately 10 miles of doubletrack trails (**Figure 1**). The existing trail system serves to connect the individual parks within the Beacon Hill park system. The parks which are connected by the trail system include Camp Sekani, John C. Shields Park and Minnehaha Park as well as the Centennial Trail and Esmerelda Golf Course. The trail system is accessed by the existing parking areas.

Trail use is made up of hikers, trail runners, disc golfers and mountain bikers. Trails are most concentrated within Camp Sekani Park and contribute approximately 40% of the overall singletrack trails within the trail system. Camp Sekani functions as the hub of the existing trail network and hosts several annual community events such as Hub-A-Palooza, the Double Down Hoe Down, Spokatopia and the Sekani Trail Run. Camp Sekani offers a great selection of multi-use trails but specializes in mountain biking specific activities such as downhill racing, dirt jumping, cross country riding and also contains a skills park. Trail users may access the western portion of the trail system from the Camp Sekani parking lot. An 18-hole disc golf course is provided within Camp Sekani.

Outside of Camp Sekani trails extend west toward Shields Park, Minnehaha Park and Esmerelda Golf Course. Esmerelda Golf Course is commonly used to access the western trails off of Beacon Hill. Trails from the Esmerelda Golf Course access the top of Beacon Hill. The western section of Beacon Hill generally consists of privately owned lands including several properties owned by the Avista Corporation.

2.3 OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Excluding the existing memorandum of understanding between the Evergreen East Mountain Biking Alliance (EEMBA) for operation and management within Camp Sekani there are no formal agreements between landowners and the public for continued public access to privately owned lands. Due to the lack of formal management some of the older trails were not constructed in a sustainable manner. Non-sustainable trails may cause destruction to habitat through erosion, are unsightly and may be built without private landowners consideration.

2.3.1 *Existing MOU Between EEMBA and the City of Spokane*

In 2015, Evergreen East Mountain Biking Alliance (EEMBA) renewed a 2-year contract extending through 2017 with the City of Spokane Parks and Recreation Department which defines the working relationship between the Evergreen East Mountain Bike Alliance and the City of Spokane; Parks and Recreation Department (Parks), for the City park property, known as Camp Sekani und the Parks' "Adopt-a-Park"

program. Under the current MOU, EEMBA is responsible for the following trail construction and maintenance practices:

1. Maintaining the single track trails, using standards and techniques for sustainable trails as presented in the IMBA trail building manual, Trail Solutions
2. Using techniques for maintenance that include water control treatments and correcting tread by de-berming and maintaining outlopes
3. Re-routing fall line trails as contour trails in order to correct drainage, minimize erosion and provide for sustainable trail conditions
4. Decommissioning and reclaiming excess braided trail lines and rerouting to a single line
5. Decommissioning unused trails
6. Vegetation and overgrowth control
7. Maintaining and up keeping the mountain bike skills park, structures and the dirt jump park
8. Implement a risk management plan for trails, dirt jump park, skills course and structures within Camp Sekani
9. Preparing a trail map of Camp Sekani and creating a trail numbering or naming system
10. Providing volunteers and tracking volunteer hours per the program
11. Collecting signatures on agreed upon liability waivers, and provide copies of records to Parks of all EEMBA work performed within Camp Sekani

EEMBA intends to continue their stewardship of the entire Beacon Hill trail system. EEMBA is dedicated to maintaining and managing the trail system on all future purchased lands.

3 LAND OWNERSHIP

3.1 SUMMARY OF LAND OWNERSHIP

Ownership of the Beacon Hill trail system consists of public, private, and utility owned lands. **Figure 2** shows the ownership layout of Beacon Hill. A parcel breakdown for the area is shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 Summary of Land Ownership of the Existing Trail System

Ownership	No. of Parcels ⁽¹⁾	Total Acreage ⁽²⁾
Public (includes City & County)	14	450 ⁽³⁾
Private	32	465
Utility (includes Avista Corporation)	4	100
Total	50	1,015

(1) No. of Parcels are the number of parcels which currently have a section of trail located on them

(2) Total Acreage is the land area associated with parcels which currently have a section of trail located on them

(3) Includes Esmerelda Golf Course, Camp Sekani, Minnehaha Park and John C. Shields Park

3.2 CRITICAL PARCELS

Maintaining access to trails which currently act as connectors to the various parks as well as maintaining the overall quality and flow of the trail system represents the best means of preserving the trail system to its' best and fullest potential.

Critical parcels are as follows:

- Parcel 35012.9023 which serves to connect City owned parcels 35012.9029 and 35012.9022. Proposed City owned.
- Area within parcels 36364.9052, 36364.9064, 36364.9065, 36364.9066 north of Camp Sekani which contain the downhill (race) trails and main climbing trails. Proposed City owned.
- Corridor from Camp Sekani (parcel 35012.9022) to the top of Beacon Hill and from the top of Beacon Hill to the Esmerelda access and Shields Park access. Proposed County owned within Spokane County. Proposed City owned within the City of Spokane.
- Parcel 35021.9055, 35021.9056 and 35021.9057 which could serve as an access point or trailhead along E. Valley Springs Road. Proposed County owned.

4 PRESERVATION ALTERNATIVES

The greatest challenge that the Beacon Hill Trail System faces is that most of the corridor trails and downhill trails off of Beacon Hill located between the established parks are privately owned and therefore public access may become restricted at any time.

4.1 ACCESS ALTERNATIVES

Approximately 60% of the existing trail system is located on privately owned lands. Recreational use is permitted on these lands by handshake agreements between the landowners and the public. Landowners may withdraw permission for use of their lands at any time. Much of these lands are crucial to the connectivity and enjoyment of the overall trail system and loss of access may result in the fragmentation of the trail system.

4.1.1 Renew Handshake Agreements

Private landowners allow recreational use of their lands under RCW 4.24.200 and 4.24.210. RCW 4.24.200 states: “The purpose of RCW 4.24.200 and 4.24.210 is to encourage owners or others in lawful possession and control of land and water areas or channels to make them available to the public for recreational purposes by limiting their liability toward persons entering thereon and toward persons who may be injured or otherwise damaged by the acts or omissions of persons entering thereon.”

Handshake agreements have been made between private landowners and the public and are intended as an informal means of allowing access to the trail system. Handshake agreements are non-binding and may be withdrawn at any time.

Trails which are on private lands currently operate under such handshake agreements. This system of recreational use has been mostly effective in the past but there have been occasions in which property owners have restricted access onto their land necessitating the rerouting of trails to maintain trail system connectivity.

4.1.2 Memorandum of Understanding

Memorandums of understanding (MOU) are a formal agreement between two or more parties. Evergreen East Mountain Biking Alliance entered into a 2-year MOU with the City of Spokane Parks and Recreation Department in 2015. The MOU established EEMBA as the Beacon Hill Trail System stewards. Under this agreement EEMBA is committed to maintaining and operating the Camp Sekani trails and Beacon Hill Trail System.

MOUs could be sought between EEMBA and private landowners in order to formalize recreational use on private lands. This option is not beneficial for private landowners as RCW 4.24.200 and 4.24.210 does not apply to private lands operating under an MOU. More liability is incurred by the private party if the agreement is legally binding.

4.1.3 Easement

Easements grant the right to cross or otherwise use someone else’s land for a specified purpose. Easements are legally binding and could be sought to ensure that trail corridors are preserved for future use. Easements may be purchased and owned by the City or County or gifted for the purpose of recreation use.

Recreational trails have a service life and must be reconstructed after they become degraded over time. If easements are pursued for the trail system, then future reroutes must be taken into account in order to ensure that connector trails may be maintained within the designated easement.

4.1.4 Land Acquisition

Much of the Beacon Hill Trail System is located on private, undeveloped lands. These private lands are situated between several existing parks and make up the Beacon Hills Park System. The trail system serves to connect each of these parks.

The preferred alternative is that land is purchased by the City or County and used to expand upon these existing parks. By acquiring public lands, the trails which are currently situated on private lands may be preserved, expanded upon or rerouted for future use.

Several funding options are available for the acquisition of private lands. Potential funding sources are:

- Conservation Futures
- Recreation and Conservation (RCO) Grant
- State Legislative Set-asides

Figure 3 is intended to show future ownership roles for the City of Spokane and Spokane County for each parcel located within the Beacon Hill area.

4.2 TRAIL SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The City of Spokane currently owns approximately 450 acres of parkland within the proposed Beacon Hill preservation area and Spokane County currently owns 13.5 acres of parkland within the proposed Beacon Hill preservation area. The Beacon Hill Trail System consists of trails which are situated within the public parks and outside of public parks on private lands. In 2015 EEMBA entered into an MOU with the City of Spokane which established EEMBA as the trail stewards to the Camp Sekani trails.

4.2.1 No Action

The no action alternative represents the least cost to landowners and includes suspending all management actions to the existing trail system. Under this alternative it is expected that the trail system would fall into disrepair and the trails would become degraded and unusable. In some cases, trails may be kept up by unqualified individuals and rogue trails may be reestablished leading to the destruction of natural habitat. Pride of ownership will fade and the Beacon Hill area will become unusable over time.

4.2.2 Ownership Management

Established City and County parks are owned and maintained internally by the landowners. As sections of the Beacon Hill trail system are acquired by the City and County over time, the cost of maintaining the trail system may increase. In addition, it is difficult to appropriate sufficient labor to maintaining a heavily used and expansive trail system.

The proposed ownership of the trail system will be by either the City of Spokane or Spokane County depending on property locations. Trails within the existing trail system extend from Camp Sekani (City owned), through Spokane County and then back into the City of Spokane. Therefore, individual trails management will need to be coordinated between the City and County.

4.2.3 Formalize Management Agreements with EEMBA East Mountain Biking Alliance

Trail system management is currently performed by EEMBA under the existing MOU between EEMBA and the City of Spokane. EEMBA works with the City of Spokane in order to maintain the existing trail system within Camp Sekani. Additionally, EEMBA performs services to the overall trail system located on private/utility lands, EEMBA is the main point of contact between landowners and the public.

The Evergreen East Mountain Bike Alliance is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) and volunteers trail management for the greater Spokane area. As the existing trail system becomes acquired by the City/County, MOUs could

be expanded between landowners and the EEMBA consistent with the existing MOU between the City of Spokane and EEMBA for management of the Camp Sekani trails.

5 GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies section is intended to discuss the preferred alternatives and additional steps that will be required in order to preserve the Beacon Hill Trail System.

5.1 PRESERVE THE BEACON HILL TRAIL SYSTEM

Preserving the existing trail system requires that access to all corridor trails between Esmerelda Golf Course, Minnehaha Park, John C. Shields Park and Camp Sekani are maintained. Current handshake agreements between private landowners and the public are non-binding and may become restricted at any time. Developed lands or lands which become restricted may become unusable and result in the overall fragmentation of the existing trail system.

Maintaining access to the existing trail system involves acquiring privately held lands, renewing handshake agreements with landowners and securing trail easements through properties while focusing effort on critical sections of the trail system.

Preserving the trail system requires the following:

- Secure City commitment to ownership of critical parcels described in Section 3.2 and as shown on **Figure 3**
- Secure County commitment to ownership of critical parcels described in Section 3.2 and as shown on **Figure 3**
- Maintain working relationships between EEMBA, the City and the County to dedicate future ownership of proposed non-critical parcels on a case-by-base basis as properties become available for purchase
- Maintain working relationships with private landowners in order to renew handshake agreements
- Proactively work with the City and County in securing public grants for property acquisition
- Seek other ways in which to formally maintain access to the trail system

5.2 SUSTAINABLY MANAGE THE BEACON HILL TRAIL SYSTEM

The Beacon Hill Trail System consists of over 30 designated trails located on approximately 650 acres of land. Camp Sekani contains the highest concentration of the trail system and is operated and managed by the Evergreen East Mountain Biking Alliance (EEMBA) through a memorandum of understanding between the City of Spokane and EEMBA. EEMBA also manages trails outside of Camp Sekani “unofficially”. Under this preservation plan EEMBA proposes to continue its’ efforts in maintaining and managing the trail system in collaboration with the City Parks Department and County Parks Department.

Trail system management will consist of the following policies:

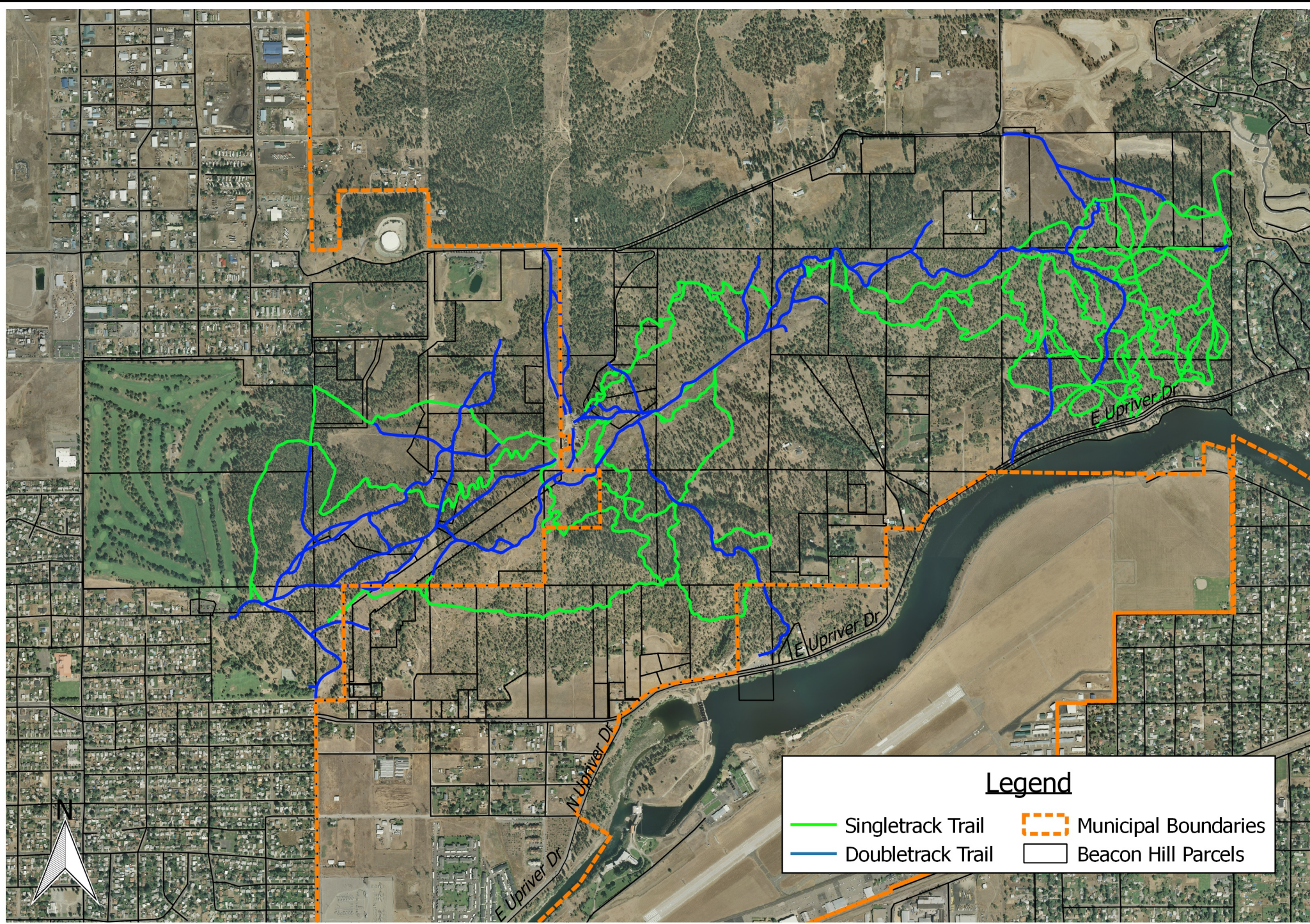
- Renew current MOUs between the City of Spokane and EEMBA in managing the Camp Sekani Trail System
- Expand existing MOUs between the City of Spokane and EEMBA for management of all future City owned properties/easements which support the Beacon Hill Trail System
- Enter into new MOUs between Spokane County and EEMBA for management of all future County owned properties/easements which support the Beacon Hill Trail System
- Coordinate trail maintenance and development with current landowners

5.3 PROMOTE AND DEVELOP THE TRAIL SYSTEM

The Beacon Hill Park System serves as one of the only urban recreational areas within the greater Spokane area. The four existing parks (Camp Sekani, John C. Shields, Minnehaha, Esmerelda) are all connected by the existing Beacon Hill Trail System. Many of the recreational users of the trail system do not understand that many of the connecting trails are private lands and may become restricted at any time. Since lands are not owned by the City or County outside of the established parks development within these lands are limited.

Promotion and development of the trail system will consist of the following policies:

- EEMBA will produce the Comprehensive Beacon Hill Trail System Plan with input from the City, County, private landowners and the numerous user groups
- Perform community outreach programs with the intent of educating trail users of trail management policies and trail use policies
- Promote and develop the Beacon Hill Trail System as a community gathering place with the capacity to host various trail-based events and attract recreation-based tourism



Legend

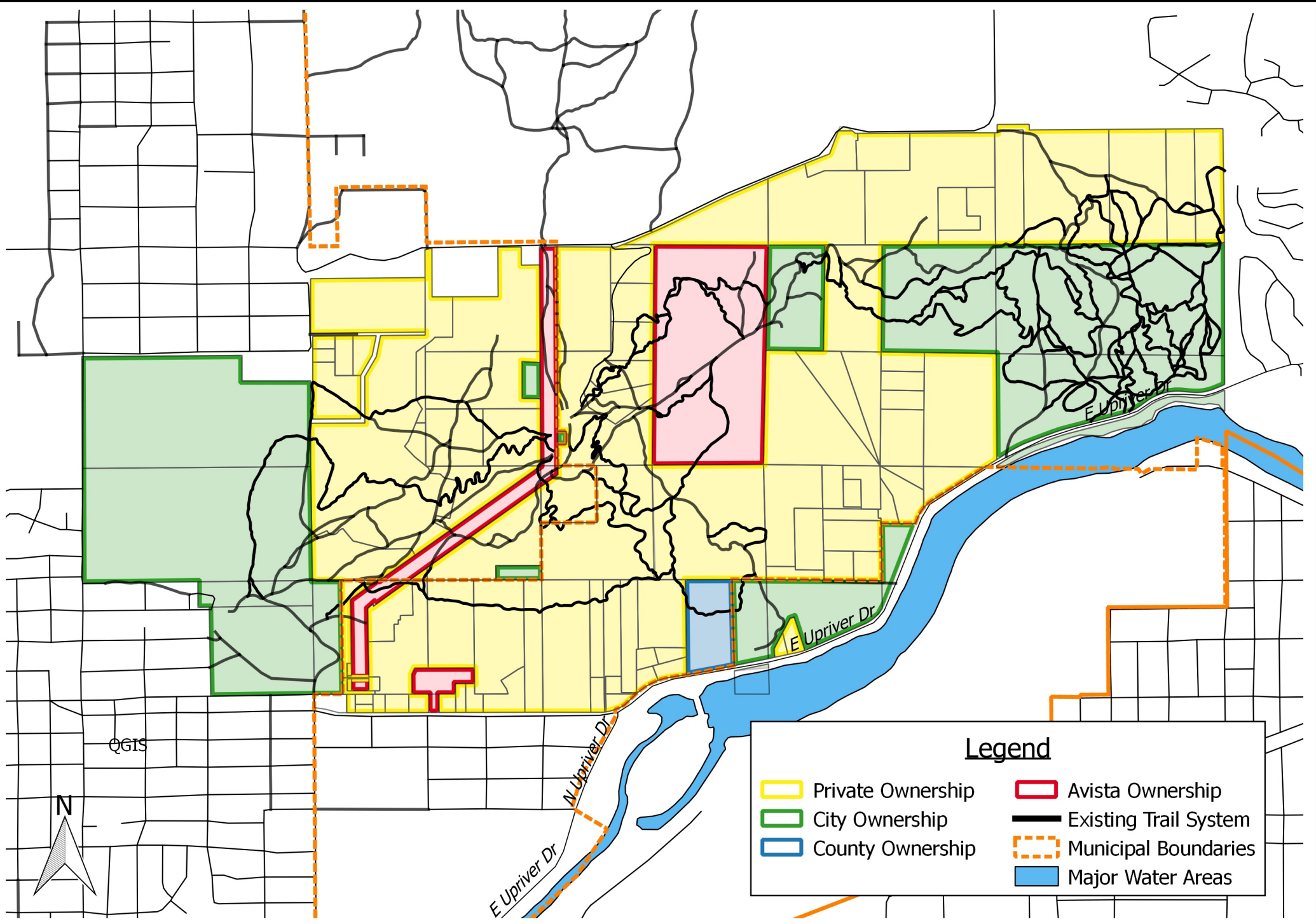
- Singletrack Trail
- Doubletrack Trail
- Municipal Boundaries
- Beacon Hill Parcels

SCALE: NTS
 DESIGNED: --
 DRAWN: NVH
 CHECKED:
 APPROVED:
 PROJ. NO.:
 DATE: 3/29/16



BEACON HILL TRAIL SYSTEM PRESERVATION PLAN

EXISTING TRAIL SYSTEM MAP



Legend

Private Ownership	Avista Ownership
City Ownership	Existing Trail System
County Ownership	Municipal Boundaries
	Major Water Areas

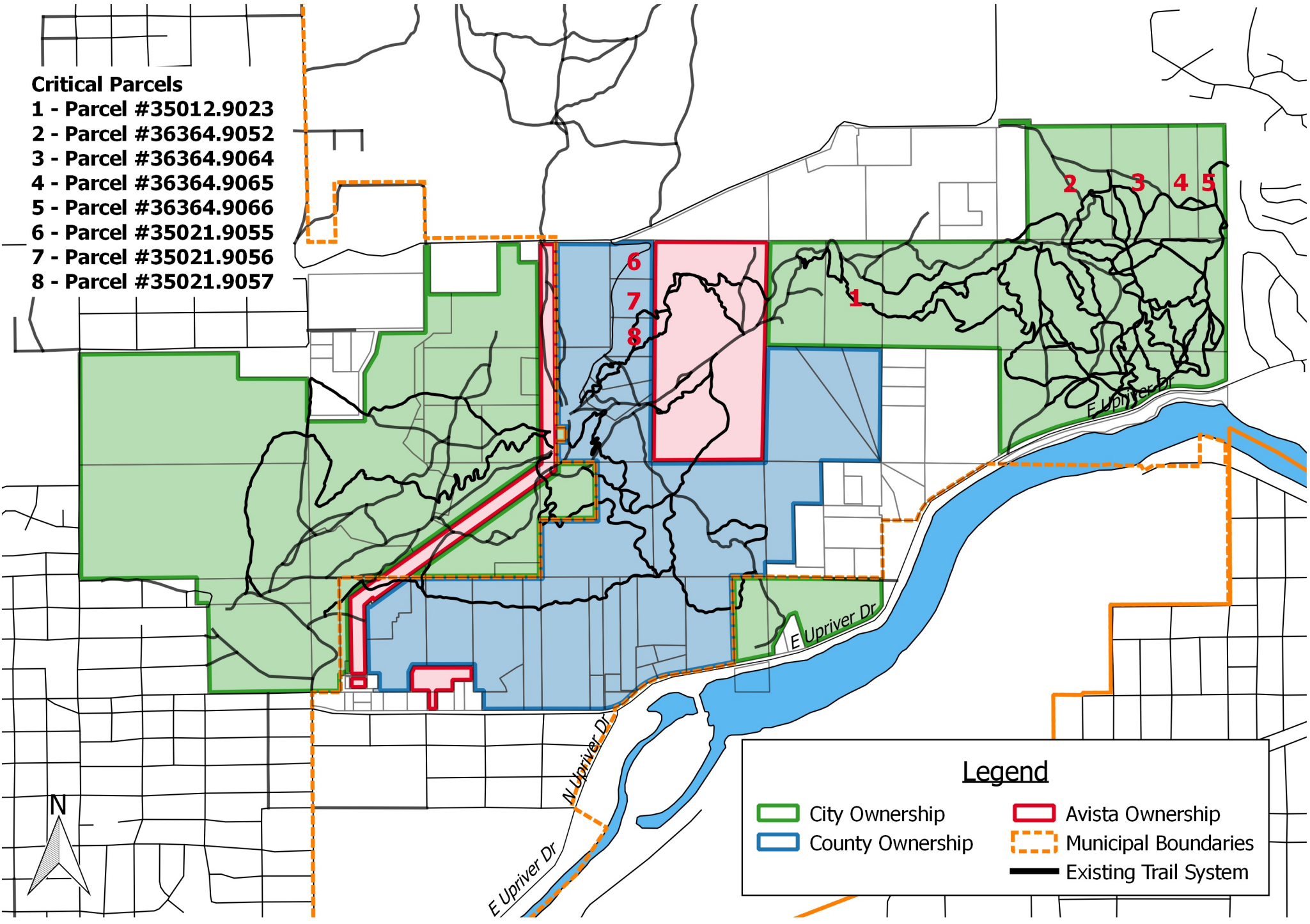
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 DATE: 3/29/16



BEACON HILL TRAIL SYSTEM PRESERVATION PLAN
CURRENT OWNERSHIP MAP

Critical Parcels

- 1 - Parcel #35012.9023
- 2 - Parcel #36364.9052
- 3 - Parcel #36364.9064
- 4 - Parcel #36364.9065
- 5 - Parcel #36364.9066
- 6 - Parcel #35021.9055
- 7 - Parcel #35021.9056
- 8 - Parcel #35021.9057



Legend

 City Ownership	 Avista Ownership
 County Ownership	 Municipal Boundaries
	 Existing Trail System

SCALE: NTS
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 APPROVED:
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 DATE: 3/29/16



BEACON HILL TRAIL SYSTEM PRESERVATION PLAN

PROPOSED LAND PARTNERS

FIGURE

3