

Star editorial: Trail plan is a slam dunk

STAR EDITORIAL BOARD

Feb 22, 2023

The logo for the St. Helena Star is centered on a dark red rectangular background. The text "ST. HELENA STAR" is written in a large, white, serif font, with "ST." on the first line, "HELENA" on the second line, and "STAR" on the third line. The background of the entire page features a gradient of red and pink tones, with the central logo area being a solid dark red.

ST.
HELENA
STAR

There's no easier way to unite St. Helenans than by promoting nature, outdoor activity and good health.

That's why the **trail plan** being promoted by a subcommittee of local citizens is such a slam dunk.

The plan is headed to the Planning Commission and City Council in the next few months. Organizers David Knudsen and Michelle Deasy pitched us on it last week, and we're happy to endorse their vision of making St. Helena "a walker's paradise," in Knudsen's words.

The St. Helena Trails and Open Space Plan envisions walking routes that showcase notable sites like the churches in the Oak Avenue area, the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone, and Vintage Hall.

It proposes that new development include walking amenities for the general public (the Farmstead hotel plan already does), and that the city take on liability for pedestrians who use designated walking routes on private property, with the owners' permission.

Most notably, it calls for the city to use existing trails to allow public access to scenic city property near Bell Canyon Reservoir, the Lower Reservoir, and **the spray fields and forest** adjacent to the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The trails are already there, and some walkers use them without authorization. The plan merely calls for the city to welcome that use and provide minimal amenities like benches and signs.

Promotion would be low-key — just loud enough to get the word out to locals without turning the trails into another Napa Valley Vine Trail. The walking routes closer to Main Street, on the other hand, could be promoted to visitors.

Knudsen, whose commitment to St. Helena has extended beyond his tenure on the City Council, envisions volunteers taking charge of maintenance, similar to the community garden at Meily Park.

Knudsen said the current draft of the plan is being revised to eliminate proposed trail construction by the city, which will substantially cut the city's implementation costs.

Like the historical heritage we discussed in **last week's editorial**, our town's natural beauty is a community asset — proof that St. Helena is more than just wine. The trail plan offers a discreet way to capitalize on that asset without exploiting it.

We encourage the committee that drafted the report to form coalitions with like-minded partners like the Blue Zones Project, Friends of the Napa River and the St. Helena Historical Society. They're already allied with Paul Asmuth, who's been looking for ways to allow public access to his visionary redwood grove near the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The committee has researched the legal technicalities, like the distinction between easements and access grants. Try as we can, we can't find any drawbacks here.

The plan is rooted in St. Helena's rural values. It would make St. Helena a more walkable, family-friendly and healthy community.

Who could be against that?

The Star editorial board consists of Napa Valley Register editor Dan Evans and community volunteers Norma Ferriz, Shannon Kuleto, Bonnie Long, Peter McCrea, Chuck Meibeyer, Gail Showley and Dave Yewell.

Rate committee meets Feb. 7

The Water and Wastewater Rate Advisory Committee will meet at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, at the firehouse.

MORE INFORMATION



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