

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: **ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS** of the City of New Haven authorizing the Mayor to apply for, execute, acknowledge, implement and deliver any and all documents as may be considered necessary or appropriate for the Connecticut Recreation Trails grant from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for the Mill River Trail
Submitted by: Executive Director of the City Plan Department

REPORT: **1629-11**

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

The City seeks DEEP Connecticut Recreational Trail Grant funding for planning portions of the Mill River Trail. The Trail is a coastal pedestrian and bicycle trail (and rollerblading and skiing as possible) that follows the Mill River from the Harbor at Criscuolo Park, along the east bank of the river, joining the network of trails in East Rock Park. There are other spur or loop trails that access nearby destinations. Maintenance of the existing trail, particularly in East Rock and the coastal public access easements between Humphrey Street and Grand Avenue has been carried out by several groups of volunteers who remove invasive species, mark, and groom the trail. The Trail will support recreational use, and non-motorized transportation use, it will enhance the health and quality of life as well economic competitiveness of New Haven.

The City of New Haven has previously partnered with the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to build out portions of the Mill River Trail in the Fair Haven neighborhood. In the 2016 Recreational Trails funding round, the City was awarded \$289,151 to design and construct portions of the of the trail, with Phase 1, State Street to Criscuolo Park, completed in 2020. The portion that connects State Street to Blake Field, dubbed Mill River Trail Phase 2, is currently being headed by the New Haven Engineering Department. In 2020, DEEP awarded the City an Urban Green and Community Garden grant to design and construct a portion of trail adjacent to the John S. Martinez School.

City Plan is applying to the 2023 round of this fund for a planning study to build upon previous successes on Mill River Trail by laying the groundwork for design and construction of the final connections between Criscuolo Park and East Rock Park, which will be known as Mill River Trail Phase 3. This is broken into four pieces: connecting the current northern terminus of the trail at Blake Field to East Rock Park, seeing if there is a better way to cross the railroad bridge at Humphrey Street, assessing steps forward when river frontage can be captured from current industrial uses between Chapel Street and Grand Avenue, studying a potential trail extension between Criscuolo Park and Quinnipiac River Park, and assessing potential improvements and final touches to bring the trail together as a cohesive waterfront trail. At the conclusion of this proposed planning exercise, **a waterfront path which borders the majority of the Fair Haven peninsula and connects to East Rock Park will be planned out for a total of over 4 linear miles of trail.**

The full budget amount of the proposed project is \$120,000. The funding request to DEEP for 80% of the project budget is \$96,000, and the City will be required to match 20% of the project budget, or \$24,000 either with in-kind services or cash.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- New Haven Vision 2025 (2015) names Mill River Trail as a priority trail
- Plan for Greenways and Trails (2004) identifies Mill River Trail as one of four major trails which makeup a citywide cycling system
- Mill River Watershed Based Plan (2018) names Mill River Trail as a priority public access project

The Board of Alder seeks guidance as to:

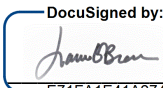
- Whether the proposal is aligned with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

ADVICE

The proposal is aligned with the City’s Comprehensive Plan because it:

- Sets the stage to secure funding to design and construct missing pieces of the Mill River Trail, one of four major trails in the proposed citywide bicycle network
- Connects residents to quality outdoor recreation through the conservation of open space
- Creates safe access to existing parks through implementation of off-street connecting trails

ADOPTED: March 15th, 2023
Leslie Radcliffe
Chair

ATTEST:  March 20, 2023 | 2:15 PM
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Laura E Brown
Executive Director, City Plan Department