

## Cavadini, Caley

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**From:** Ruth Currie <rucu12@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 29, 2020 10:14 AM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim  
**Subject:** Grandma's Gateway Objection

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I am writing to protest the current access points proposed on the Grandma's Gateway plan. These are promoted by ORA, a powerful well-organized group of bikers. Whenever their agenda is challenged they send out emails with talking points encouraging their supporters to write or attend meetings. But they are only one point of view and not a "majority" view as they claim. There are important other voices to be heard. Residents of neighborhoods impacted by such plans should always be consulted and considered. In this case, it's homeowners and residents of 29th St and Ebner Coulee Road, who were neither informed nor consulted about the GG plan.

Creating trails with access in residential neighborhoods creates two problems. Firstly parking: There is no provision for parking in the plan. While there may be a few who can walk or bike to these access points most will need to drive there and park somewhere. Secondly, impact on the neighborhood: A quiet residential street used mostly by residents becomes a much more public space. For many, especially those with children, that would be a very negative impact.

ORA says they need routes up the Bluff that avoid Bliss Road, but they already have three. They have taken over the former hiking routes in Hixon Forest that go from the parking lot to the top of the bluff.

Please continue to work to support all of us who live in La Crosse and enjoy the beauty of the bluffs and the quiet neighborhoods the city offers.

Thank You.

Ruth Currie  
1724 Cameron Avenue  
La Crosse



## **Cavadini, Caley**

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**From:** Rebecca Kilgore Guinn <rkilgoreguinn@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 27, 2020 2:03 PM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim; Padesky, Gary  
**Subject:** Grandma's Gateway project concerns

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Dear Mayor Kabat and Council Member Padesky,

I am writing to both of you due to my concerns about the Grandma's Gateway project. I was at the Parks and Rec board meeting on January 16 and listened to concerns about the project. I also heard the board quickly dismiss the concerns.

This itself is disturbing. There are legitimate concerns about this project. There has not been an environmental impact study done, there has been no traffic safety study done, and there has been little if any communication done with neighbors affected by this project.

My concern is that none of this has been done and yet the project moves forward. I am also concerned that it seems the Parks and Rec board believes these studies as well as the communication has occurred when they have not.

I have been concerned about the increasing number of bike trails in Hixon Forest and the impact they have on the environment and safety of hikers. I have voiced my concerns.

I am not sure who to speak with about my concerns about this project. As a representative of a newly organized hiking group I was invited to sit in on the Environmental Leadership Forum meetings. This group's meeting was misrepresented as an environmental study of this project at the January 16th board meeting.

I would like the opportunity to voice my concerns about this project as well as my ongoing concerns about the tactics the group that is spearheading this project is using to promote their interests.

I am writing to both of you as I am not sure who is the most appropriate person to share my concern with as well as information I have collected.

Thank you in advance for being willing to listen

Sincerely,  
Becky Guinn  
2025 Market St.  
608-785-2463- home  
680-780-0256-cell

Becky Guinn  
Sent from my iPhone



**Cavadini, Caley**

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**From:** Debra Cumberland <cumberland.deb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 27, 2020 1:08 PM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim  
**Subject:** Bluff Trail concerns

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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January 27, 2020

Dear Mayor Kabat,

I am writing to express concern over the Bluff Trail Project, slated for this spring by Parks and Recreation. I am concerned because the required studies have not been done to assess safety for the residents living there and for the community who will be enjoying the trails. These studies need to be done before the project should even be considered. For example, no environmental impact or erosion control or landslide risk study was implemented to assess for the stability of the bluff side. No traffic studies were done, and one of the trail access points is right at the crest of the hill on 29th Street, which has limited visibility, putting residents and bikers at risk.

The bluffs are one of the most treasured resources of the La Crosse area, but they need to be able to be enjoyed equally—and safely—by residents, bikers, and hikers. To ensure this, we need adequate studies that protect both our residents and our environment. Otherwise, the city is putting residents and the environment at risk. Once our bluff is cut into, there is no going back. Both our environmental resources and our finances will have been wasted. To rush into this without due consideration puts our residents and the environment at risk with potentially devastating consequences.

We need input from studies and the public to make wise decisions. The public was not informed upfront about these plans. There needs to be transparency and adequate studies in a project of this magnitude. As a mayoral candidate, transparency was one of the qualities that you promised the residents of La Crosse.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Debra L. Cumberland

Deb

## Cavadini, Caley

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**From:** Sue Knopf <graffolio21@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 26, 2020 9:15 PM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim; Sleznikow, Larry  
**Cc:** Burns, Leah; cjclair29@gmail.com; Rebecca Kilgore Guinn; Ruth Devitt  
**Subject:** Grandma's Gateway needs more study (from a member of a "small yet vocal minority")

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Dear Mayor Kabat and Council Member Sleznikow,

**Further study of Grandma's Gateway project requested:** I am one of the "small, yet vocal minority of well-intentioned people" (ORA's description in an email I received Friday) who would like further examination of the Grandma's Gateway project. I attended the park board meeting last Thursday and felt that the board ignored valid information provided by residents of the 29th Street and Ebner Coulee neighborhoods that are affected by trail access points.

### **What needs to be looked at?**

- From what I understand, an environmental impact study of the project has not been done, although at the park board meeting it was implied that such a study had been done. An environmental study should have been one of the first priorities of this project.

- Although the project has been in the planning for at least four years, the neighbors affected by the trail access points were not told about it until December 2019. This is not how the city or the park and rec department should operate. Doing so creates ill will and does not allow everyone involved to have a chance to suggest ways for the project to proceed.

**What are best practices?** How *should* a large new project like this be initiated? I'd think that two important components of early planning would be getting neighbors involved—or at least informing them—and finding out what the impact of the project would be on the environment. Neither of these was done.

### **I'm not necessarily against this project:**

*There are good things about it:* In last Friday's email, ORA stated nine reasons this trail system would be good for La Crosse, and I agree with many of them—it would be nice for kids to be able to trail ride or hike without having to get a lift from someone; it's good for kids to get outdoors and be active; having nice trails may discourage people from making more rogue trails and using the existing ones.

*But there are bad ones—or at least ones to be considered carefully:* I worry about the safety of bicyclists, especially inexperienced ones, accessing or leaving the 29th Street access point. I walked narrow 29th Street over the weekend. The leaves are off the trees right now, of course, but I can see that with trees and bushes in full leaf, visibility would be poor from many points—bicyclists can't see cars emerging from driveways and drivers can't see bicyclists.

**What will happen once the trail is done?** When the trail is done, will erosion and water control really be improved, as is claimed in ORA's email? I don't see how this could be predicted without some sort of environmental or engineering study.

*I urge you to request more study and more public input on this project.*

**Transparency requested:** I also urge you to support transparency and openness around city projects. Even if this set of trails ends up being a wonderful thing for the city, the way decisions were made and the impression that a key group of people—the 29th Street/Ebner Coulee residents—was overlooked and then ignored has already created feelings of frustration and distrust.

Sue Knopf  
415 King St Apt 603  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
(c) 608-784-8064  
(h) 608-519-1895  
[graffolio@charter.net](mailto:graffolio@charter.net)  
[graffolio21@gmail.com](mailto:graffolio21@gmail.com)



## Cavadini, Caley

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**From:** Marilyn Huckenpoehler <mbhuck1@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, January 25, 2020 7:21 PM  
**To:** Richmond, Andrea; Janssen, Barb; Kahlow, Chris; hallepd@cityoflacrosse.org; Padesky, Gary; Olson, Jessica; Weaver, Justice; Sleznikow, Larry; Gaul, Martin; Medinger, Paul; Ostrem, Phillip A.; Christians, Roger; Neumeister, Scott; Kabat, Tim  
**Subject:** proposed mountain bike trail project

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Dear City Council Members and Mayor Kabat,

I would like to express my concerns about the proposed mountain biking trails for Grandad's Bluff. Please slow the approval process down on this project so that the citizens can see the appropriate 3<sup>rd</sup> party assessments on the impact of this project, particularly with erosion and long-term impact on the bluff. I also urge you to provide time for and consideration of public comment on the project. As I understand it, early announcements about the planned trails were so vague that no one other than the ORA and other city officials knew the details of the project until recently.

Moreover, I urge you to give consideration to those who use the bluff and forest as a space for hiking and connection with nature. I've lived in the GENA neighborhood for 14 years. Although I once saw Hixon Forest as one of the benefits of living in this community because it provided quick nearby access to hiking in a beautiful setting, I now visit only once or twice per year because it has become such an unpleasant experience with the presence of mountain bikes. My weekend recreation now involves driving to state parks for my hiking (and stopping with friends for coffee or lunch in those communities close to the state parks). Claims that this new project will be a shared-use trail do not sit well with me because of my prior experience with the shared use trails in Hixon Forest.

Thank you for your service to our community,

Marilyn Huckenpoehler

118 South 22<sup>nd</sup> Street

La Crosse WI

608-782-5289



## **Cavadini, Caley**

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**From:** Teresa Mears <teeder5@charter.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 24, 2020 5:17 PM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim  
**Subject:** Grandmas Gateway Trails

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Dear Mayor Kabatt, I recently attended on 1/16/20 the Parks and Recreation City Council Meeting to understand the project proposed for trail access on Ebner Coulee Road and 29th Street. My home address is 3000 Ebner Coulee Road directly across from access point 1b. I have a couple concerns that I did express at the public meeting but felt impelled to also write to you. The first that I had learned anything about the project was the week before the meeting from a neighbor. Residents in the neighborhood who know the bluff, the roads, the traffic, the safety concerns have great input to offer. I wish I had been informed and asked to be a part of the planning. I am a walking, biking, hiking 65 year old enthusiast. I encourage outdoor activity and do support the efforts of the ORA group however, I would like to point out a couple things.

1. Changing the typography of the land on the steepness of the area marked on Ebner Coulee Road will have negative effects due to the amount of water and run off in rainfall. I've watched the rain pour off the bluff and down the Coulee Road creating a roadside raging creek of mud and debris. The gravel along the road is in constant repair after rain. Should the proposed rendering of the access point entrance put steps cut into the bluff it will wash out to the gully area and down the road.
2. Road condition. The Ebner Coulee Road edge is poorly maintained as it is by the city. The gravel continually washes down and the black top is breaking away. Therefore, I am concerned about Road maintenance should the Trails create more care needs. It has been observed that sometimes the Village of Shelby adds gravel and sometimes the City of La Crosse. Who is responsible for maintaining the condition of the road?
3. The rendering shows a fenced attraction at 1b. If one notices how the road is plowed of snow along Ebner Coulee, the fence would need to be set way back further to not be disturbed by plowing.
4. Safety concerns regarding parking. There is no room along Ebner Coulee Road to park. It is a narrow at best two lane. Children regularly walk and bike the road as there is no sidewalk.
5. 29th Street access point: with the street curbed, parking is more likely to occur, however there are blind spots coming from each direction along 29th Street that is a worry. Good signage is a must.

Mayor Kabatt, please take time to drive along, walk along Ebner Coulee Road and 29th Street and study the renderings of the proposed biking, hiking trails of Grandmas Gateway plan. The small trail flags are pink along the woods for you to easily find. Your diligence to ask the questions of the City Road maintenance department, Shelby Road maintenance department, as well as expressing your observed and learned concerns to the ORA is greatly appreciated. With Grandmas Gateway Trails passed and going forward this Spring, it is essential that the plan is completed correctly for the protection of the the citizens and maintained for the beauty of our city. Thank you for your time to read and note my concerns.

Teresa Mears  
3000 Ebner Coulee Road  
LaCrosse, WI  
608-397-3302

Sent from my iPad

## Cavadini, Caley

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**From:** Katy Kortenkamp <kvkort@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 24, 2020 1:16 PM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim  
**Subject:** Concerns about Grandma's Gateway Project

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Dear Mayor Kabat,

As a resident of La Crosse and someone who enjoys hiking on local trails, I'm writing to express some concerns regarding the Grandma's Gateway Project to build mountain bike/hiking trails on the west and south side of Grandad's bluff. Based on information from the recent La Crosse Board of Commissioners meeting regarding the trail project, I have several concerns.

1. There doesn't seem to have been an environmental impact study done for this project. Could excavating parts of the bluff and removing plants/trees to create trails lead to increased risks of landslides? This is unknown without a proper geological assessment. Is this assessment going to be done before breaking ground? They say the trail has been in the planning stages for years, and yet, so far, no formal assessment has been completed, or if it has no data has been presented to the public.
2. An environmental impact assessment could also help understand what the effects of these new trails will be on local wildlife in this area. The three zones of planned trails is an extensive network. Will it drive out the local wildlife or is there enough space to accommodate the trail activity and the wildlife populations? One of the reasons people like to hike in this area is because of opportunities to view deer, foxes, birds, etc. Understanding the impacts on these other residents of our town is important before undertaking such an extensive trail project.
3. At the meeting, the Parks and Recreation Director Jay Odegaard said that the access points for these trails (on city streets that have no additional plans for parking) will attract bikers and foot traffic, not cars. He doesn't have any data to back these claims up. Plenty of bikers and hikers drive to trail heads. If this trailhead is closer than the trailhead on top of the bluff, why wouldn't they drive to the closer trailhead? Plus, there is logic to starting at the bottom of the bluff rather than the top, as hiking up first and down second makes more sense, so you don't have to do the toughest part of the hike on tired legs. I live about 1 mile from this area, and if I want to take my kids hiking on these trails, I will drive to the access point, not walk with two children.

4. Mr. Odegaard also made the argument that the new trails will be safer than the rogue trails that exist now and so will improve safety. But again, is this based on any evidence? In parks with marked trails, there are always rogue trails that go off of the marked trails. These new designated trails will bring more hikers/bikers to a steep area of the bluffs, which will lead to more people having access to potentially unstable areas just by going off trail a little ways to "explore off the beaten path". We already know that a contributing cause for many of the falls on the bluffs is hikers going off designated trail areas. This action will continue and potentially increase risks because of increased access to steep areas of the bluff.

5. My last concern is whether these trails will really be multi-use. Will they be wide enough for hikers and bikers to comfortably use them simultaneously? I have heard that the trail width will be smaller than what is considered "best practice" for multi-use trails. However, I can find no information online about the trail width.

Overall, there is a lack of any information online about the trail plans. Why is this? Why has this project been in the planning for years, and yet so few residents have heard anything about it? Residents can't give feedback about a project for which they have no information. In addition, the city can't make good decisions about a project of this magnitude without collecting data about the environmental and safety impacts.

I hope you will demand that more information is gathered before this project is undertaken, and that this information is made available to the public.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Katy Kortenkamp  
2020 Winnebago St  
La Crosse, WI 54601

**Cavadini, Caley**

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**From:** john boysen <jpbnt1@charter.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 21, 2020 10:04 AM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim  
**Cc:** tlblumentritt@gmail.com; Medinger, Paul  
**Subject:** Proposed Ebner Coulee 29th St Mountain Bike Trail

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Mayor Tim Kabat,

Just recently we heard of the City and Park Commissions plans to carve mountain bike trails out of Grand Dad's Bluff and put the entrances on Ebner Coulee Road and 29<sup>th</sup> Street. It is very disappointing that the city has been working on this project for approx. 4 years but has kept it out of the public's eye. We are residents of the city living on 29<sup>th</sup> Street and do not support the construction of mountain bike trails on Grand Dad's Bluff as proposed for several reasons. First, as pointed out by Tracy Blumentritt, there have not been adequate studies done on the safety of cutting trails into the side of the bluff. Bliss Road should be warning enough of what happens when you carve into the bluff. Second, where would the mountain bikers and hikers park? There is not a lot of parking on 29<sup>th</sup> Street near the proposed trail entrance and Ebner Coulee Rd is rather narrow. Third, the visibility is limited on 29<sup>th</sup> Street due to the crest in the road. Now you want to add more parked

cars and trucks, hikers, bikers, and their equipment, all to an area which already has less than ideal visibility. This sounds like the perfect plan for a disaster waiting to happen. Fourth, we are told the trail is proposed to be a "multi-purpose" trail which would require a width of 4-8 feet. Is this trail actually planned to be 4-8 feet wide? If it is proposed to be any narrower, like 1-3 feet wide, it would no longer be "multi-purpose". Fifth, we are concerned that by carving trails into the side of the bluff and changing the water flow and topography of the area, it would give FEMA just one more reason to keep us in the flood plain. For all the reasons we oppose this project the most important reasons are the fear of soil erosion, mud slides and boulder movement, and the safety of the local residents, walkers, hikers, runners, and bikers that already use Ebner Coulee and 29<sup>th</sup> Street.

### THIS IS A BAD IDEA

John P and Joyce Boysen  
340 29<sup>th</sup> St. S.  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
Jpbtnt1@charter.net

John Peter Boysen RPh.  
340 29<sup>th</sup> St S  
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608-784-8556  
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Jan. 8, 2020

Mayor Kabatt, City Attorney Matty, Park Commissioners  
La Crosse City Hall  
400 La Crosse Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear Mayor Kabatt, City Attorney Matty, and the Board of Park Commissioners:

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed mountain bike trails intended to be built on the west side of Grandad Bluff. First, however, let me preface this by saying that I am generally not opposed to expanding our trail system. In fact, I am an avid supporter of outdoor recreation activities, including mountain biking. My family and I mountain bike, hike, fish, kayak, snowshoe, car and backcountry camp, and basically do everything we can to be outside. We feel so fortunate to live in such a beautiful area of the country that affords us so many outdoor activities.

So, with that in mind, I was initially very excited about the expansion of the Bluffland Trail System. However, as I learned more about it and talked with my neighbors and a geologist colleague of mine at UW-L, I grew increasingly alarmed. I will start with our most serious concern, and the one that in our view presents the greatest risk to property, life and limb.

**Reason #1: Increased risk of landslide and boulder movement on the bluff**

The hillside below the bluff rock face is remarkably steep and quite rugged. I know this because I live in a house that is directly below it and have explored this area a few times. It's hard to get up the hillside but it's probably even harder to come down, at least if you are trying to do it on two feet. Because of the steepness, ruggedness, and extensive flora of the hillside, during the initial building phase of the trail, workers will have to remove large trees, rocks, boulders, vegetation and lots of soil. In other words, it will require extensive excavation which will result in soil, rock, and vegetation disturbance. The hillside seems stable now (although we've recently had some small rock slides) because it is relatively undisturbed.

Cutting into the hillside to blaze trails and having more foot traffic potentially off the trails will result in soil erosion. People go off trail (so-called "rogue trails") for many reasons; e.g., to explore the many deer trails on the bluff or climb up to the rock face (which creates additional hazards). Professional trail building companies can attempt to minimize both soil erosion and rogue trailing, but it will still occur. We are not geengineers or professional trail builders but our logic and commonsense strongly suggest this is the case. Also, I have consulted with a very close family friend at Minnesota State-Mankato who is professor and chair of their Recreation Management program. She was previously at UW-L and knows the bluff well. When I told her what the city was proposing, she was, frankly, appalled. She has years of experience with trail building and said this is a big risk the city is taking and was very worried about the safety of the homes below the bluff. She described the bluff as a "fragile environment" and also brought up many other concerns about the project that we had not considered.

There is another complication that ratchets up the risk even further: the increase in heavy rainfall. A colleague, Colin Belby, a UW-L geomorphologist trained in reading landscapes, recently told me:

I appreciate your concern about soil erosion given the high frequency of intense rainfalls the region has experienced in the last 10+ years combined with the region's steep topography. I hope the designers are planning for future climate forecasts that indicate there will be a continuation of high intensity events, potentially an increase in precipitation such as been observed in recent years, and a decrease in the amount and persistence of snow. Water management will be critical for limiting the potential for soil erosion and trail washouts ... the (trail designers) will need to take great care to minimize the amount of cutting into the steep terrain to avoid undercutting and destabilizing the entire slope (personal communication, 12/19/2019).

If we are to believe the climate scientists (and we do) we will probably have more so-called "100-year" rainfall events--they will increase in frequency, duration, and intensity. This is something those of us who live below the bluff have worried about before; for example, during last July's really intense rainfall we kept a close eye on the slopes and hillside gullies in case we needed to take action quickly. This is not an unfounded concern as we've all seen what water can do to soil movement (witness the frequent washouts of Bliss road and the horrible mudslide in Victory, Wisconsin in 2016).

#### **Reason #2: Increased risk of auto-pedestrian/bicyclist accidents on 29<sup>th</sup> street**

If the trail access is located at the proposed location, there will likely be a significant increase in traffic and street-side parking. Currently, on the west side of 29<sup>th</sup> street, there are two homes that exit onto the street. In the empty lot directly adjacent to 134 29<sup>th</sup> street, 4-5 new homes will likely be built (my neighbor who knows the owner of the lot says it will be in the near future) which will also exit on to the street and will be directly across from the trail access. This will further limit the space available for street parking and congest the street even more. (See image below).



Yellow = existing driveways, red = possible new driveways, green = proposed trail access

Further, because our street does not have sidewalks, pedestrians, including those who will be entering and exiting their cars and loading or unloading their bikes, will be forced to walk on the street. With more traffic and more people on the street, the risk of auto-pedestrian/bicyclist

accidents will assuredly increase. This risk is compounded by the speeding that happens on 29<sup>th</sup> street. In our experience, very rarely does anyone drive 25 mph on this road.

This situation is made worse by the fact that 29<sup>th</sup> street is situated on a hill. If you are traveling north on 29<sup>th</sup> from the Cass street intersection, the road climbs a fairly steep incline and crests at exactly at the location of the trail access. Because of this hill, a blind spot is created for people traveling along 29<sup>th</sup> at the area where it crests. This will be an added danger to those entering and exiting the trail (particularly bicyclists coming off the trail at some speed and onto the street).

The photo below shows my daughter (yellow arrow) standing at about the proposed trail access point and illustrates the poor visibility of pedestrians at the crest of the hill. Note: she is standing about 50 feet from the car, which is stopped (and not travelling up the hill at 35 mph).



The parking on 29<sup>th</sup> street can already be quite congested at times. For example, when there is snow on the ground, families come to sled down the hills on the golf course. They cannot park on Bliss road, so they park along 29<sup>th</sup> street and consequently must cross Bliss road to get to the sledding hills. There have already been close calls with children walking along the street and then darting out from between parked cars or trying to cross Bliss road.

The street is congested at other times as well, mostly during events such as half-marathons and bike road races. And, finally, there is the usual occurrence of residents who have to park on the street when their driveways are inaccessible because of snow or ice.

Moreover, we already have a fair amount of pedestrian traffic on our street. Because of the hill, many local track teams train on our street at all times of the year. The runners start at the Cass street intersection and run up to the crest of the hill, which, as previously mentioned, has very limited visibility. (The photos below were taken on Jan. 7 and show two different track teams training on the hill at the same time).



Finally, at all times of the year, we have the usual walkers and joggers on our street.

In our view, the crest of the hill on 29<sup>th</sup> street is a dangerous location for a trail access. We think that if it is placed here, it will be a question of *not if but when* someone will be seriously hurt or killed.

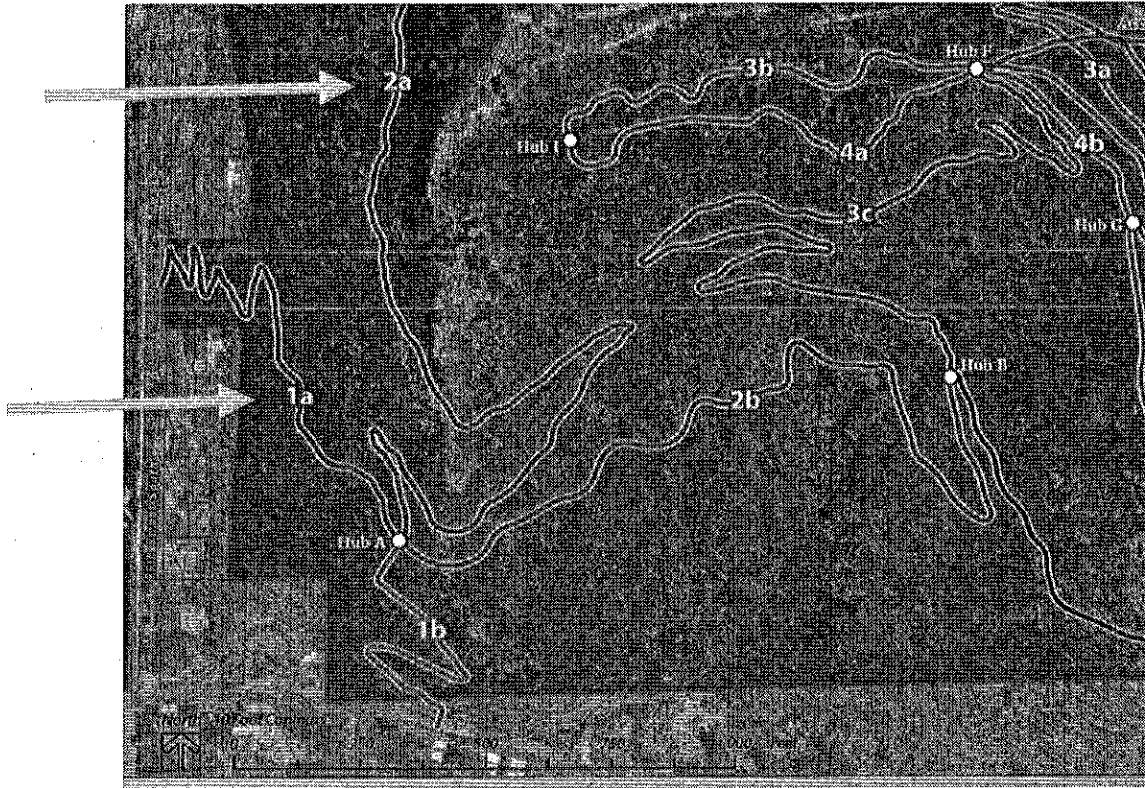
**To summarize:**

We understand and are in complete support of building and expanding the trail segments on the bluff and adding an access point from a neighborhood below the bluff. However, in our view, the risk to life and property of the two trails on the west side of the bluff is too great.

However, the City might disagree that the construction of these two segments presents substantial foreseeable risk to its residents. If that were the case, it seems to us the City (and perhaps other entities) would assume the liability associated with this risk.

**What we would like to happen:**

**WE RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT TRAIL SEGMENTS 1A AND 2A BE REMOVED FROM THE TRAIL PLANS.**



Thank you very much for considering our request and we look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Respectfully,

Tracie Blumentritt, PhD  
Rebecca Angle, PhD

135 29<sup>th</sup> St. South, La Crosse WI, 54601



Christine J Clair  
128 29<sup>th</sup> St. So.  
La Crosse, WI 54601

January 29, 2020

Rebecca Kilgore Guinn  
Ruth Devitt  
Local Hiking Group  
La Crosse, WI

Dear Ms. Guinn & Ms. Devitt,

I am writing about the City of La Crosse and Outdoor Recreational Alliance (ORA)'s project called Grandma's Gateway (GG.) Your organization has been relied on as giving approval for this project, specifically at a January 16<sup>th</sup> Park Board Commissioners mtg.

The majority of homeowners and residents on and adjacent to 29<sup>th</sup> St., 28<sup>th</sup> St., and Ebner Coulee and an ever-growing group of diverse citizens throughout the La Crosse area have major environmental, conservation, and wildlife concerns to Grandad's Bluff if this plan proceeds. In addition, there are serious safety issues for homeowners and users of these trails that are not being legitimately addressed.

For background, homeowners and residents in the above areas were never formally informed of GG's plan nor the specific impact it would have on our lives and property.

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, the Park Board denied our request to remove the specific trails and access sites of the north, west and south bluff sides. The Park Board relied on the information presented by the Parks Dept. in voting to deny our request. Over 22 neighbors presented our detailed outline of safety concerns - to our property, our lives, users of the trail and the stability and integrity of Grandad's Bluff. In response, the Parks Dept stated, and made part of the record, that the GG's proposed plan was reviewed by various other departments, agencies, community groups, trail building professionals, and the Environmental Leadership Forum. Jay Odegaard, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department stated that all agencies and groups had determined there was no issues or concerns with the proposed plan regarding citizen's concerns. I assert that Jay Odegaard's statements were misleading and a misrepresentation of the scope of the approval given by other departments, outside trail building professionals and the Environmental Leadership Forum.

At this January 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, another neighbor requested the "evidence" of the purported opinions and studies cited by Mr. Odegaard. There was no response from the Parks Dept. I subsequently reaffirmed that request to Council Member Slezniow. In addition, on January 22<sup>nd</sup> I filed an Open Records Request to the Parks Dept. Mr. Odegaard called me later in the afternoon to discuss what information they had and what exactly I was looking for in my

Open Records Request. In regard to any professional opinions and studies, Mr. Odegaard stated there really was nothing.

Following is information I have obtained since the January 16<sup>th</sup> Park Board meeting and information that was revealed to me in my conversation with Mr. Odegaard on January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

1. As stated, on January 16<sup>th</sup> the Parks Dept. presented that different City departments had reviewed and approved GG's plan. In my phone conversation with Mr. Odegaard on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, when asked what that "approval" entailed I was told it was given after looking at the GG written plan and map. Mr. Odegaard admitted there were no professional reports prepared and that the safety issues that the homeowners had raised were not addressed specifically with any of these individuals.

These "approvals" were not professional or comprehensive assessments, evaluations or opinions,, they were anecdotal and "a nod" after looking at the mapped plan. They did not address any of the safety issues that the neighbors had raised in November and December. As such, the reliance put on them should be minimal (if any) and they should hold no reliability regarding the safety concerns raised by neighbors.

2. On January 16<sup>th</sup> the Parks Dept. presented that an outside organization/trail specialist had reviewed and approved GG's plan. The organization stated was the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) and Trail Solutions.

Trail Solutions is a branch of IMBA. They are also a company that will be bidding on the proposed contract for GG's proposed trails. I contacted them on January 21<sup>st</sup> and spoke with Mike Repyak. Mr. Repyak stated he was familiar with GG and that Trail Solutions had been on site twice – once in late fall 2018 and in April 2019 for six days. Mr. Repyak stated that the April visit was for flagging potential trails, assessing materials needed for future building, and reviewing the totality of the plan. I asked specifically if Trail Solutions had performed any testing regarding the slope, the soil composition, the stormwater drainage patterns, the history of rockslides, boulder dislocation, etc. Mr. Repyak stated NO, that there were no resource specialists from Trail Solutions on site, and that the City had not identified any need for this testing or study.

Mr. Repyak acknowledged that Trail Solutions would be bidding for the trail building contract for GG's proposed plan. Obviously, if Trail Solutions is bidding on the potential contract for GG's proposal, they have a vested interest in this proposal moving forward and therefore any opinion of theirs is self-serving and not independent.

3. On January 16<sup>th</sup> the Parks Dept. presented that the Environmental Leadership Forum (ELF) had reviewed and approved GG plan. The Environmental Leadership Forum (my understanding) was formed by the Parks Dept.



I have spoken with several members of ELF and I was told that they were presented with GG's written proposed plan, that is was ORA representatives that presented the plan, they were presented with the plan as it existed then, were shown maps and did answer questions. But several ELF members state that they were told that neighborhood homeowners and citizens were aware of GG's plan (including the two access points and lower bluff trails) and they were in favor of the plan. My understanding is no information was presented regarding the safety concerns raised by neighbors.

Any proposal for changing topography, **that is above homes**, is inherently risky. Even if the need for the plan is greater than the risks, nothing should be done without legitimate evaluations as to the safety concerns for homeowners in the affected area. I have not heard any legitimate justification that this plan's need for trails on Grandad's Bluff above homes is greater than the risks to the homeowners.

Citizens should be able to rely on their local government to do their due diligence before moving forward on any plan or proposal that has (what I believe) obvious safety concerns. In this particular case, not only has the City of La Crosse not done their due diligence, but they have misrepresented that it was done. This is extremely disappointing.

Mr. Odegaard stated yesterday, January 28<sup>th</sup> that the Parks Dept. has hired IEG Engineering to do an independent evaluation. But the scope of that evaluation is a paper review of the proposed plan with no scientific soil analysis that would address potential land/rockslides, boulder displacement, erosion, stormwater drainage changes, etc. As such, this evaluation will not professionally address our safety concerns nor address the impact that this plan will have on Grandad's Bluff. This is unacceptable.

As your organization is a member of ELF, I wanted to inform you of the representation that implied your approval of the totality of GG's plan, including how this plan will impact the homeowners and residents living below Grandad's Bluff.

If you have any questions regarding the above, Paul Medinger is the Chair of the Board of Park Commissioners and chaired the January 16<sup>th</sup> Park Board hearing. His contact info is [medingerp@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:medingerp@cityoflacrosse.org) and 769-9895.

Sincerely,



Christine J. Clair  
608-792-9746



## Cavadini, Caley

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**From:** Janette Dean <janettenoelle@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 30, 2020 3:45 PM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim  
**Cc:** Cavadini, Caley  
**Subject:** Re: Protect GRANDAD'S BLUFF - ACTION NEEDED BY FEBRUARY 3

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Thank you, Tim, for such a prompt reply and that additional information!

I will review it and know that there may be a win-win solution for all with the additional input from ISG and the info-sharing to be done with those who are currently concerned. I don't like to jump into anything without understanding the aspects from all sides.

Thank you again!

- Janette

Janette Dean, Environmental Policy and Human Rights Advocate & Organizer  
MN/WI + NV/CA + Nat'l.  
507.725.3012 Home/Office  
507.500.0142 Cell

"Equal rights are human rights"

On Thu, Jan 30, 2020 at 3:25 PM Kabat, Tim <[kabatt@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:kabatt@cityoflacrosse.org)> wrote:

Hi Janette,

Thank you for the note, I appreciate you reaching out to me. I imagine we both share the goals of improving our outdoor recreation opportunities and for providing multiple access points to the beautiful area we live in. Attached are a couple of documents about the planning process for the Grandma's Gateway trail, as well as a map showing the proposed trail locations.

City staff have met several times with the neighborhood group and others in 2018 and 2019, but clearly we must do better at reaching out directly to the community.

As we have for most of the trails the City has developed, we work with certified trail builders to design and locate these trails and connections – making sure that the local conditions are accounted for and that issues of erosion, safety and habitat are properly addressed.

In addition to the current planning work we have hired ISG – an independent engineering firm – to review the trail specifications and standards and the traffic and parking conditions at the proposed connections on 29<sup>th</sup> Street and Ebner Coulee Road. Our goal is to get the information back by January 30<sup>th</sup> so we can share with the neighbors and Common Council.

Thank you again and please let me know of any other questions or concerns.

We will continue gathering information and try to address concerns as they are raised and discussed because we all want safe, well-designed trails and restored and protected habitat.

Sincerely,

Tim

*Tim Kabat*

Mayor

City of La Crosse

400 La Crosse Street

La Crosse, WI 54601

(608) 789-7500

[www.cityoflacrosse.org](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org)

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**From:** Janette Dean <[janettenoelle@gmail.com](mailto:janettenoelle@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Thursday, January 30, 2020 9:26 AM

**To:** Kabat, Tim <[kabatt@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:kabatt@cityoflacrosse.org)>

**Subject:** Fwd: Protect GRANDAD'S BLUFF - ACTION NEEDED BY FEBRUARY 3

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Hi Mayor Kabat:

I am surprised to learn that new mountain bike trails may be made on Grandma's Gateway when we know accelerating climate change is also going to add more challenges to the integrity and safety of the bluffs, let alone new trails that may impact bluff stability. Undisturbed habitats for wildlife are also important because it is their bluff, too.

Is there anything more you can share with me about these trails being proposed and bluff stability?

Thank you as I know you are very thoughtful about all these issues.

- Janette

Janette Dean, Environmental Policy and Human Rights Advocate & Organizer

MN/WI + NV/CA + Nat'l.

507.725.3012 Home/Office

507.500.0142 Cell

"Equal rights are human rights"

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Gretchen Guinn Paquette** <[gretchenguinn@gmail.com](mailto:gretchenguinn@gmail.com)>

Date: Wed, Jan 29, 2020 at 11:03 AM

Subject: Fwd: Protect GRANDAD'S BLUFF - ACTION NEEDED BY FEBRUARY 3

To: [janettenoelle@gmail.com](mailto:janettenoelle@gmail.com) <[janettenoelle@gmail.com](mailto:janettenoelle@gmail.com)>

Hello fellow activists and nature lovers,

Many of you have hear me talk about that reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, and how important it is for us to protect our natural world. I am sending this email in hopes of gaining support and momentum for a small group of environmentally conscious people. I am certain that if more people knew what was happening, more people would be involved.

The City and ORA are pushing a proposal for mountain bike trails on the top and sides of Grandad's Bluff - named Grandma's Gateway. The bluff side trials are multi-sided (included the famous West face) & above the homes on 29th St. & Ebner Coulee. This plan is moving forward without any soil, slope or storm water testing for bluff stability. The neighborhood residents were told NOTHING and only found out because one of them heard something about the plan. The general public also seems unaware of the extent of this plan. That was in mid-December.

Residents in the neighborhood and other citizens have raised multiple, legitimate safety concerns addressing how any unneeded soil adjustment on Grandad's Bluff increases the risk for potential land/rock slides, boulder dislocations, storm water flow increases & changes, erosion, etc. This will impact homeowners under the trails on 29th & 28th Streets and users of these trails. **All reasonable requests & efforts to have these questions answered have been met by misrepresentations by the Park & Rec Dept. & a refusal to put the plan on hold to address these serious concerns.** This is happening in this neighborhood, but there are 2 other phases to this plan and your neighborhood or area pristine environments may be next.

And equally as important, these plans will also change the appearance and integrity of our iconic Grandad's Bluff forever.

The questions for all La Crosse residents is:

- Do you want Grandad's Bluff and surrounding bluffs left alone from trails?
- Or do you believe we have enough trails in the area already?
- Or do you want more trails built into Grandad's Bluff and the surrounding bluffs? If so, do you want soil and other ecological testing done to protect the topography? If so, do you want them to be multi use or designated for hiking, biking, or skiing?

We need your help in writing letters to the Editor, signing and circulating our petition, and calling your council member & tell them to stop this.

**GRANDAD'S BLUFF NEEDS YOU!**

If you are willing to sign a petition, please let me know & I'll meet you anyplace. If you are willing to circulate petitions, I've attached one. I can pick them up after circulation too. Our goal is to turn the petitions in at the rezoning hearing on Feb 3.

**AND SHARE THIS EMAIL.**

Thank you and please reach out personally if you have questions or need more info.

Gretchen Paquette





## Cavadini, Caley

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**From:** Carol Abrahamzon <carol@mississippivalleyconservancy.org>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 1, 2020 8:38 AM  
**To:** Medinger, Paul  
**Cc:** Odegaard, Jason; Kabat, Tim; rtyser@gmail.com; Abbie Church  
**Subject:** Grandma's Gateway

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Mr. Medinger,

A citizen who attended the Jan. 16 Park Board meeting told me that Mississippi Valley Conservancy was said to be among a group of organizations that have endorsed plans for the Grandma's Gateway project. While a presentation was made to the group attending the Environment Leadership Forum (ELF) meeting last month, no endorsement was solicited from the attendees. To my knowledge MVC didn't have representation at the Park Board meeting on the 16th.

As you know Grandad is owned by the City and is not subject to Mississippi Valley Conservancy protections. However, Mississippi Valley Conservancy has protected a number of bluffland tracts that are now owned by the City, and are subject to the restrictions in conservation easements and DNR grant contracts. While the initial Phase I field design does not include land subject to Conservancy-held easements, later phases shown on the Concept Plan map do show considerable development plans for Conservancy protected land, which requires both Conservancy and DNR review and approval. To date, no written plan has been submitted for our consideration or review, nor has there been a discussion on allowable uses for the parcel in question.

**Carol Abrahamzon | Executive Director | Mississippi Valley Conservancy**  
[www.MississippiValleyConservancy.org](http://www.MississippiValleyConservancy.org) | The Land. Our Future.  
1309 Norplex Drive, Suite 9, La Crosse, WI 54601  
608.784.3606 Ext. 4

*If you've included Mississippi Valley Conservancy in your will, please let us know so we can say Thank You during your lifetime.*

