

## Possibilities for the Dundas Trailhead at Mill Park on the Mill Towns Trail From Farmstead Bike Shop and Farmstead Outdoor Adventures

### Background:

- Farmstead Outdoor Adventures has been leasing the Western half of the utility building (engine house) located in Mill Park since we purchased the business from Gear Resource about three years ago. We have run the kayak rental business out of that space since then.
- The Mill Towns Trail has potential to be a strong economic driver for Dundas. 2025 will see the completion of the Mill Towns Trail connecting from Dundas to Faribault to the south (upriver) and to Northfield to the North (downriver). In 2025, The Mill Towns Trail will connect directly to the Sakatah Trail, which runs from Faribault to Mankato. In the near future, the Mill Towns Trail will also connect to the Cannon Valley Trail, which runs from Cannon Falls to Red Wing.
- Dundas is well-positioned to be the go-to point of access to the Mill Towns Trail-Cannon Valley Trail-Sakatah Trail system. The Mill Towns Trail will run through Mill Park in Dundas, which is already filled with amenities important to trail users, including parking, toilet facilities, potable water, a picnic shelter and ample green space, including scenic views of the Cannon River. Nearby local businesses are also an asset to trail users who wish to eat, drink and relax. Martha's, L&M, Dawn's Corner Bar and Chapel Brewing are all easily accessed from the trail. In addition, trail users from the Twin Cities have easy access to Dundas from I-35.
- There are many examples of trail towns who have literally put themselves on the map by committing to support trail users with intention and hospitality.
  - Sparta, Wisconsin is a town widely known in the Midwest as the gateway to the [Elroy/Sparta-400 Trail-LaCrosse River-Great River Trail](#) system, which traverses 101 miles of Wisconsin on connected trails. Map [HERE](#).
  - Freeport, MN—just one example of a trail town on the [Lake Wobegon Trail](#) in Central MN.
  - We are happy to discuss other trails and trail towns here in the Midwest, as well as throughout New England.
- What is clear from our experience is that the towns that decide to provide hospitality attract trail users and become the go-to point of access for trail users.

### Proposal:

- Farmstead Outdoor Adventures and Farmstead Bike Shop would like to make the engine house in Mill Park a trail-user's kiosk, providing the following services for trail users and local folks:
  - Area hospitality—a visitor's resource for area businesses, parks, historical information, attractions, etc.
  - Bike racks
  - Benches/seating
  - Bike maintenance station—available all hours

- Trail advice and guidance
- River advice and guidance for paddlers
- Bike rental
- E-bike rental
- Bike service and repair
- Kayak rental
- Grab and go food and drink
- Gathering/meeting place for groups of trail/river users
- Winter gear rental (snowshoes, nordic skis) \*
- Shelter during inclement weather
- Public Rest Room (potentially)
- We envision using the entire building for these purposes—one half for the paddling base and the other half for cycling and hospitality. This will require removing the property currently stored in the Eastern half of the building by the Stai family—former owners of Gear Resource Outfitters.
- We envision staffing the building during peak trail use times, as well as by appointment for equipment rentals. We will staff more as busy-ness increases.
- Our staff will be trained in all areas listed above, including being a reference point for area business, etc. We would welcome any brochures/materials to support this goal.
- We support the current proposal to consider adding safer river access for paddlers on the west bank of the Cannon River to be located somewhere in Mill Park. We believe this will create safer river access for beginners and less-experienced paddlers. If this idea moves forward, we are committed to promoting this improvement and to alerting our paddling customers to the improved access to Dundas businesses during (or at the end of) their paddle.
- If the City would like to bring folks out to Mill Park during the winter, we could set up and maintain a simple snowshoe and/or nordic ski trail suitable for beginners and families. We could also plan specific winter events at the Engine House.
- This is a list of tasks related to the Engine House building in support of this proposal:
  - No new doorway access is necessary from our point of view: the garage doors can be opened during our open hours and will be suitable for public use.
  - We have already discussed adding signage to the building. We would like to move forward with this in any case.
  - We are not familiar with the east unit in the building, re: lighting, etc. This will need to be assessed in the future, as we currently have no access to that space.
  - IF the City wants to add a plumbed public restroom, we will need to assess water and sewer access for the building. I am not certain about current infrastructure. There is electric and gas service currently.
  - An alternative to a plumbed restroom would be installation of a port-a-potty along the east side of the building. This would serve trail and river users stopping at the Engine House facility.
  - There is an adaptive cycling group forming in the area. We have been working with them to plan and support regular group rides starting and ending at the Mill

Park trailhead. If a port-a-potty is the best solution, one that is handicapped-accessible would serve this group very well, as well as other users.

- Benches and picnic tables near the Engine House would provide places to rest and eat and drink. These could be positioned on the west side of the building and also near the put-in/take-out location (if that moves forward).