



N E W S : Friday February 18, 2005

## Biking, hiking trails plan unveiled

By **KORI KAMRADT** — County Reporter

MICHIGAN CITY — After two years of planning, the Michigan City Parks Department presented its detailed, multi-use trail plan to the public Thursday evening.

“The master plan itself encompasses the whole city,” said Michigan City Parks and Recreation Department Trails and Greenways Director Laura New. “It loops within one another and also connects regionally, as well as community trails that connect through our area parks, our schools, our libraries, our YMCAs and so forth.”

The total length of the Michigan City Greenways Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan to connect the entire city is some 26 miles long and will take 25 to 30 years to fully complete.

The first step of the numerous multi-use trails is construction of the Singing Sands Lighthouse Trail, which will cover 8 miles.

Landscape architect Jason Griffin of Butler Fairman and Seufert, the consulting engineering firm working on the project, explained that the Singing Sands trail will start at the existing Calumet Trail on the west side of the city, continue through the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) corridor, cross U.S. 12, and go alongside the Chicago South Shore freight tracks north past the NIPSCO plant. It will go through Indiana Department of Natural Resources property and then cross over Franklin Street on the north side of the city and into Washington Park.

Funding for the first phase of the Singing Sands trail has been secured with a \$950,000 grant. Construction will begin in 2006 and should be completed within six months.

The 8-mile trail will require three phases for completion and will encompass the Washington Park observation tower and a possible extension into Michigan.

The master plan calls for seven interconnecting trails that will pass by many of the city’s landmarks, such as Michigan City High School, the YMCA, the malls, and a possible link to the city of LaPorte.

“The idea is for alternate transportation and safety,” New said.

Each trail will have its own color-coding system so people will know at any given time which trail they are on. For example, all the benches and trash cans on the Singing Sands trail will be red. On average, the trails will be about 12 feet wide with 2-foot shoulders.

New said the major barrier right now is funding.

“Our goal is not only to receive grants, but build partnerships with landowners to use that as matching money,” New said. “There’s no taxpayer (burden), and that’s our goal.”

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