

EDITORIALS

Three Sisters swap deserves support

On Monday, the Grand Junction City Council will consider offering a piece of city-owned, commercially zoned property in trade to the owners of the Three Sisters land on Monument Road, as part of a larger deal to make the Three Sisters area a public park connected to the Lunch Loop mountain biking trail system.

It's a proposal that makes sense, not just for mountain bikers, but for the community as a whole.

The city land swap is only one part of the plan, but it's an important one. It would help take the 130 acres that includes the Three Sisters out of private ownership, ensure it is no longer a potential housing development and protect it as open space. But in exchange, property that is now owned by the city and not on the tax rolls would become private, with development potential.

In addition to the land swap, Mesa Land Trust plans to offer cash to the Three Sisters owners, with much of that coming from a \$675,000 grant the land trust has applied for from Great Outdoors Colorado. It expects to learn whether it received the grant in early December. Additional funding for the acquisition will come from private money donated to the land trust.

Once the deal is completed, Mesa Land Trust intends to deed the Three Sisters property over to the city.

There are plans to develop a bike trail system that is less technical than most of the trails in the Lunch-Loop system, as well as additional parking and other facilities. The property will also provide a biking area closer to the heart of Grand Junction that still allows bicyclists to connect to the Tabeguache Trail system.

Mountain biking is a multimillion-dollar contributor to the local economy, and adding opportunities for people to participate in the sport, closer to town, makes a great deal of sense.

So does protecting an important piece of undeveloped land on the main road from Grand Junction to the east entrance of Colorado National Monument.

We hope the City Council is able to take this important step Monday toward completing the Three Sisters transaction.