

Hurley school students aid design of future trailhead features

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HURLEY — As the effort to bring the local portion of Iron Belle trail into Iron County continues, some organizers hope the addition of Hurley students to the project will be the jolt the project needs.

“The project benefits (from youth participation) because you always want to have everyone’s voice in the decision making ... the youth look at things differently than everyone else in the community,” said Iron County Youth Development Agent Neil Klemme. “They’re not held back by previous roadblocks, they have kind of a, ‘Well let’s just do this,’ attitude.”

He hopes this can-do philosophy helps see the plan to have the trail run from the Montreal River in Hurley to Cary Park, before continuing to Montreal, Wis., become a reality.

The most visible example of youth participation has been in the design of two trailheads in Hurley and Montreal.

The Hurley trailhead is planned to be located between the Montreal River and Second Avenue/U.S. 51, roughly parallel with Silver Street. It is designed to serve both non-motorized and motorized trail users at where the Iron County trail system connects to Michigan’s trails.

The other trailhead would also be located along the Montreal River, allowing trail users to take a break near Montreal City Hall.

The designs took shape over the course of day-long event centered around a visit by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Community Vitality and Placemaking Team. The team features seven people from throughout the state, specializing in designing community spaces and projects such as the trailheads.

“The students kind of led the day that day. In the past, they kind of came and gave input and have given some feedback, but (there wasn’t) really very much involvement at all,” Klemme said. “Some of them, that was their first time being exposed to that.”

The resulting designs included an array of features, ranging from a parking lot and covered pavilion to playgrounds and basketball courts.

While the seven students participating in that day wound up playing an instrumental role in the design of the trailheads, that wasn’t necessarily the original plan.

“I would say, the difference this time was for sure that they led it. And I don’t know that we planned it that way,” Klemme said. “I don’t know that we anticipated they were going to lead it, I think it was just the way it worked out. We had more youth there than we had adults from the community during the tour, and the kids really knew their way around and knew the community really well. So they kind of took the lead on that.”

While the project has already benefitted from youth participation, Klemme said the kids are also getting something out of the experience.

“The benefit for the young people is building a connection in the community they don’t normally get,” he said. These are the kinds of projects kids are usually left out of.”

The day provided the students with not only a chance to apply things they learned in previous activities, but also gave them an insight into how projects like the trail happen.

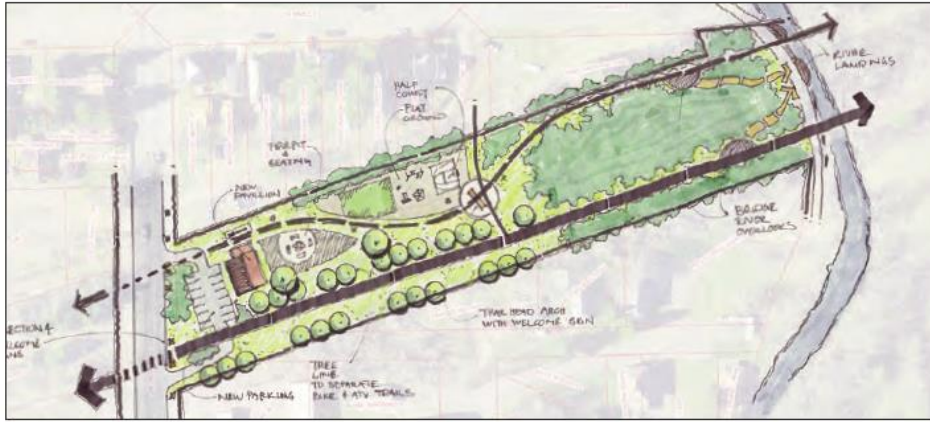
Klemme said one of the kids told him that the student learned more in that day than he did in a month of school.

“These kids really felt like their voices were heard.”

The day was particularly beneficial for Hurley senior Tanner Stephani.

“Based on the career I plan to go into — which is civil engineering and more importantly transportation engineer — I thought it was a good experience for me because next year I’ll be pursuing my career at Michigan Tech and it was something interesting that a lot of kids don’t get to do,” Stephani said.

“(It) really brings into sight what all goes into planning something big like that,” Stephani said. “Such as title



A GROUP of Hurley students, area motorized and non-motorized trail advocates, Coleman Engineering representatives and the University of Wisconsin-Extension Community Vitality and Placemaking Team met in October to sketch out a design, seen from two angles above, of a trailhead for Hurley. The trailhead, located between U.S. 51 and the Montreal River a half block north of Silver Street, is planned to serve both motorized and non-motorized users.

work, routing the trail, where the funds are going to come from and learning (about grant opportunities).”

While Stephani hadn’t previously been involved in anything similar beyond personal projects, he said he had been somewhat aware of the complexities of trail development as his dad is involved in the White Thunder Riders snowmobile group.

Stephani said he also felt the project benefited from the youth engagement.

“I think its good exposure (with) young people for the trail. It shows support, that the trail has a lot of support from the town and the people in it,” he said.

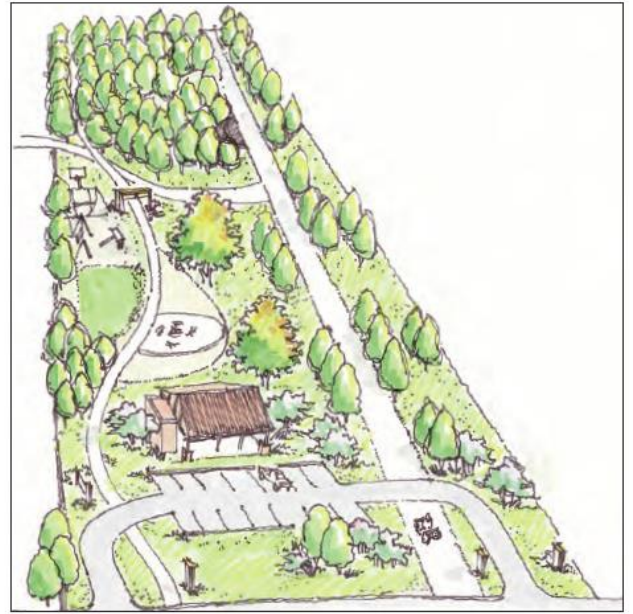
Over the years, Klemme said he has seen a change in attitudes in the community over youth involvement.

“I think (the trail event) was the culminating result of all that other stuff (that has been done in the past),” he said.

Since the students designed the trailhead, they have been involved in presenting the designs to various groups, including the Hurley City Council. A future presentation to the Montreal City Council is also



A GROUP of Hurley students met with a group of planning experts in October to sketch out a design, seen above, of a trailhead near the Montreal River on the west end of a non-motorized trail planned between Hurley and Montreal. The trailhead, located near Montreal City Hall, could include a range of features — such as a pavilion, volleyball courts and a playground.



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