

OUR OPINION

Keep Bozeman livable

City leaders are wise to join the rush for Peet's Hill acreage

Developments and development proposals are springing up around us fast and furiously.

There isn't a dry spot with a view in the valley right now that someone doesn't have their eyes on.

So the scramble to develop or preserve — depending on who you talk to — the 40-acre hillside that stretches almost south to north on the east edge of the city should come as no surprise.

Wisely, the city has decided to join the land rush.

This week, city officials announced that they will try to buy the stretch of undeveloped land that spans Sourdough Ridge and includes Peets' Hill, a beloved sledding slope.

City commissioners approved dipping into the city's park acquisition fund for this goal. This is exactly how this fund, which is fed by money developers have paid the city in lieu of building required parks in their subdivisions, should

be used.

City officials also are talking about joining forces with the non-profit, Gallatin Valley Land Trust, which is also trying to make sure the land doesn't fall into the hands of developers. And there is talk of funding the purchase of the land through the issuance of bonds.

Meanwhile, petitions are being circulated madly around town in an effort to arouse the town's sentiments for preserving this valuable open space.

There is probably not a person in this city who has either wandered along that ridge and marveled at the mountains ringing this valley, or who hasn't looked up at that ridge and found a dose of visual relief from this bustle of the city. A quality of a truly liveable city is this kind of wild, undeveloped, unmanicured open space just seconds from city center.

The city should continue to explore every possible option to make sure this land is not developed, because if Bozeman is going to someday succeed in linking all the city parks with a blend of hiking, jogging, skiing and mountain bike trails — this stretch of land will prove to be the backbone.