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## It takes Friends to climb mountains

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**Communities that rely on government least often, prosper most.**

Just look at Rathdrum. It's a tight-knit, pretty place with carefully cared for homes and manicured lawns. While Rathdrum has struggled with growth like other desirable areas, it has maintained a sense of balance so that quality of life isn't compromised.

One of the town's greatest assets is the mountain that looms over it like a vigilant friend. Another asset is a grassroots group called Friends of Rathdrum Mountain. The Friends have been working for years to preserve their namesake, and now the nonprofit organization is taking the next step.

With the city owning 557 acres on the mountain, the Friends are diligently working to find a way to make many of those acres accessible to the public. At last weekend's Rathdrum Days, the Friends unveiled dazzling plans for the mountain, featuring trails that would open doors to lovers of nature, science and unabashed recreation. Acknowledging that they need the city's help unlocking the key to the mountain, the Friends also have made it clear they're prepared to do the heavy lifting.

"The Friends are committed to raising the money and getting volunteers to build this trail," said Wes Du Charme, president of Friends of Rathdrum Mountain. "Our goal is to have this project come together by the community for the community."

"If we're given public access, the Friends will take the lead on making the trail happen," said Jim Ochenkoski, Friends secretary. "We want to minimize the cost to the city. We're not suggesting this to tax city resources."

Unlike the recent neighborhood park in Hayden's Broadmoore Estates and the planned \$1 million park in Coeur d'Alene's The Landings at Waterford, Rathdrum won't rely on taxpayers to absorb the vast majority of the costs. While still being one of Kootenai County's smaller cities, Rathdrum is setting a big example of the best way to take a potential resource and maximize it to the benefit of all, with as little cost to the public as possible.

We predict that because of sound government practices and an exemplary community organization, Rathdrum Mountain will one day be to its residents what Tubbs Hill is to Coeur d'Alene's. Upward and onward, neighbors.