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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release through January 29, 2019

MCPS, City invite public to comment on new master plan for Westside Park

Missoula Parks and Recreation and Missoula County Public Schools invite residents to comment on a draft master plan for Westside Park at a public open house on Tuesday, January 29. A master park plan guides future park development and is a comprehensive community vision for the park. The drop-in open house meets from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Lowell Elementary School cafeteria, 1200 Sherwood Street. Parks and Recreation will provide supervised activities for children and refreshments.

At the meeting, Parks and Recreation staff will present the proposed master park plan, summarize the design process to date and explain the next steps for park development. Residents will have the chance to ask questions and comment on the plan. When the final master park plan is approved, Parks and Recreation can pursue funding for park development through the City budget, state and federal grants, impact fees and private and public partnerships.

Parks and Recreation will accept public comment on the proposed Westside Park master plan at the open house and online from January 29 through February 19, 2019. Details will be posted at www.missoulaparks.org after the Open House.

The draft plan includes a new playground, which will be designed in part by local play experts—the Westside neighborhood kids who'll be using it. Last fall, 310 students from Lowell Elementary participated in a playground study, which included a field trip to six different playgrounds throughout the City. Kids had a chance to play on the features at each playground and tell park planners and MCPS staff which of those elements they would like to see in their own school playground. Park designers will use the study to gain valuable insight into how children interact with each other and with the various play features in each park.

Westside Park's existing wood playground was constructed in 1989 through a community-wide fundraising and build project. Playground safety inspectors contracted by the City have determined the structure has reached the end of its natural life expectancy, and they recommend it be replaced as soon as possible. In Missoula's harsh winter climate, wood playgrounds of this type have a typical life span of 15 to 20 years. Parks and Recreation plans to salvage and re-use some of the existing playground's elements and artwork where feasible. Funding for the new playground will come from the City, MCPS and private fundraising. Westside Park is located on land owned by MCPS and leased to the City of Missoula, which operates and maintains the park.

For more information, visit www.missoulaparks.org, or contact Nathan McLeod, Parks & Trails Design/Development Coordinator at 552-6261 or mcleodn@ci.missoula.mt.us.

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