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MISSOULA PARKS AND RECREATION PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release through September 19, 2019

Residents invited to envision future of downtown parks and trails

The Downtown Missoula Partnership and Parks and Recreation invite residents to share their vision for the future of Missoula's north riverfront parks and trails at park design workshops on September 19 and 20. The workshops are part of the larger [Missoula's Downtown Master Plan](#), a 10-year, forward-thinking strategy for Downtown Missoula.

In 2018, the Partnership and the Downtown Business Improvement District engaged community-planning consultants Dover, Kohl & Partners (DK & P) to update the 2009 Downtown Master Plan. The 2019 Downtown Master Plan builds on the success of the past and serves to guide decisions over the next decade affecting the city's historic downtown and adjoining neighborhoods.

The team from Dover, Kohl & Partners will be in Missoula September 17 through 20 to present the Downtown Master Plan for adoption, as well as conduct additional community outreach and planning for riverfront parks and trails.

The new Downtown Master Plan includes a preliminary analysis of the downtown park system and makes general recommendations for future park development based on public input. These concepts lay the groundwork for residents, the City and the Downtown Partnership to create detailed park master plans for the ribbon of parks and trails on the north shore of the Clark Fork River, from California Street to Missoula College.

Downtown business owners and stakeholders are eager to involve the community in downtown park planning, says Missoula Downtown Association Board President and downtown business owner Tom Snyder. "Community and tourism use of our rivers has increased dramatically over the last 20 years. We need to create spaces that keep up with that demand now and into the future," Snyder says.

“The ribbon of parks along the Clark Fork, in the heart of Downtown, are an amazing opportunity to create a green space that drives year-round traffic,” Snyder continued. “Spaces that people can enjoy with their families, hang out, create, eat—a dynamic, open parks system right in the middle of a thriving Downtown. As we begin this planning process, we need full engagement from the people who use it to make sure we create something amazing along the entire North Riverside Park corridor.”

The master park plans will consider expansion, improvements, amenities, green infrastructure and connectivity of the north riverfront parks and trails including West Broadway Island Park, Downtown Lions Park, Caras Park, East Caras Park, Bess Reed Park, Kiwanis Park and Ron’s River Trail. Consultants will also provide cost projections and phasing for Caras, East Caras, and Bess Reed Parks.

Strategic planning is essential to effective park development, says Parks and Recreation Director Donna Gaukler. “Master park plans provide the necessary foundation to apply for grants, raise funds, and engage community partners to implement our community’s shared vision for parks and trails,” Gaukler says. “Public participation is a critical part of the planning process. We’re interested in residents’ ideas for accommodating population growth, increased downtown tourism and increasing demands on the park and trail system. The master park plans will ensure that future improvements to downtown parks and trails will reflect residents’ goals and values.”

Residents may attend either of the Park Design Workshops, slated for Thursday, September 19 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Caras Park Pavilion, or Friday, September 20, 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. at City Council Chambers, 140 W. Pine. Parks and Recreation will provide youth activities for children ages 3 and up.

The contract with Dover, Kohl & Partners to develop the master park plans will cost an additional \$141,500. Park impact fees, which may be used to expand park capacity to accommodate community growth, will fund \$75,000 of the additional cost. City Public Works and Utilities will contribute \$10,000 to the effort, and the Downtown BID and its partners will fund the remaining \$56,500.

For more information on the Downtown Master Plan, visit www.missouladowntownmasterplan.com. For more information on the Park Design Workshops, call Parks and Recreation at 721-PARK or visit www.missoulaparks.org.

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