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## MISSOULA PARKS AND RECREATION PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release through October 13, 2023

### **Parks and Recreation seeks volunteers to help update master parks plan**

Parks and Recreation invites residents to help shape the future of our community's parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces. The department seeks volunteers for a Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails (PROST) Master Plan Community Working Group. Residents of all backgrounds, interests, ages and abilities are encouraged to apply by October 13 at [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org).

Working group members will help guide the PROST planning process, which updates the 2004 Master Parks and Recreation Plan and sets the City's course for parks, recreation, open space, and trails planning for the next 10-15 years. As a member of this diverse 15-20-person working group, residents can provide valuable perspectives to inform the plan update over the next year.

Parks and Recreation Director Donna Gaukler says the PROST planning process aims to be inclusive, equitable and focused on the needs of all community members. "A diverse, representative working group is critical to developing a plan that meets the needs of all Missoula residents. We want participants with different backgrounds, interests, ages, cultures, neighborhoods, abilities, experiences, and perspectives. Varied voices and viewpoints will lead to a more equitable, accessible, and engaging parks and recreation system for all," Gaukler said.

The Community Working Group's (CWG) 15-20 members will meet approximately seven times via hybrid in-person/online meetings between November 2023 and November 2024. If time, transportation, childcare or other factors are barriers to participation, Parks and Recreation will reimburse costs as permitted under law. If needed, childcare may be provided onsite.

The PROST Planning process will include extensive public outreach to ensure the plan reflects the community's needs and values, Gaukler says. "This is our community's plan—your voice and lived experiences are critical to creating the vision and guiding decision-making. Community collaboration makes all the difference in creating an inclusive, resident-driven PROST Master Plan. We hope residents join us for the wide variety of public engagement options we're launching early next year." Parks and Recreation will announce public open houses, focus groups, a community-wide survey, and online participation options at the City's public engagement website, Engage Missoula, in early 2024.

Through a competitive process, the City has selected the woman-owned planning and consulting firm Blue Point Planning to conduct a comprehensive analysis of current assets, programs, and service levels and develop a strategic implementation plan for adding and enhancing future community assets and services. The new PROST plan will establish a vision, goals, and strategies based on community needs, projected growth and service gaps to guide the department long-term. The City's three strategic planning lenses of climate change and resiliency, equity, and housing will be applied throughout the process. In addition, Parks and Recreation has contracted with the University of Montana for public engagement leadership, assistance, and a statistically representative survey.

Learn more about the PROST planning process and apply for the Community Working Group by October 13 at [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org). For questions or additional information, contact Open Space Program Manager Zac Covington [via email](mailto:via_email) or at 406-552-6267.

September 2023

# PROST

## Plan Update

**Parks,  
Recreation,  
Open Space, &  
Trails Plan  
Community  
Working  
Group  
Application**



— Help Guide the Planning Process! —

Apply by October 13, 2023

### CONTACT

Zac Covington or Ryan Applegate  
Missoula Parks and Recreation

**406-721-PARK (7275)**  
[www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org)



## Welcome • Qe lemt ḥu kʷ cxʷuy • Bienvenido • Karibu • Kitohkanitsimatsinoohpoaaw Zoo siab tos txais • добро пожаловать

*The City of Missoula acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish, Kootenai, and Kalispel people. Today, we honor the path they have shown us in caring for this place for the generations to come.*

We invite you to join the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails (PROST) Master Plan Community Working Group and help shape an exciting future for Missoula's parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces. As a member of this diverse 15-20 person working group, you can provide valuable perspectives to inform this plan update over the next year.

This planning process aims to be welcoming, equitable, and focused on the needs of all community members. We hope to honor the past, and uplift the voices of indigenous peoples, people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities and all who call Missoula home as we plan for the future together. Your lived experiences and ideas will help us build on our strengths while serving people across all ages, cultures, and walks of life.

We welcome you to lend your voice to shape a PROST plan that reflects our diverse community. [Please reach out](#) if you have any questions! [Please apply online by October 13, 2023.](#)

### **Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails (PROST) Planning Process**

Parks and Recreation has embarked on a process to update the 2004 Master Parks and Recreation Plan in the form of a comprehensive Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan. The 2004 plan has been used for many years as a guiding document and has provided excellent direction for the department as the community has grown.

However, as the plan is now almost 20 years old, and the community has grown substantially, much of the data and many of the strategies need to be updated. A planning process based on current conditions and anticipated community needs and values over the next 10-15 years is critical. BluePoint Planning was chosen as the consultant for the PROST Plan update through an extensive selection process.

### **Plan Purposes and Planning Outcomes**

The updated PROST plan will be the City's guiding document for parks, recreation, open space, and trails planning for the next 10-15 years. The plan will:

- Inventory of all assets, programs, services, operations, maintenance, management, and current service levels based on City Growth Policy goals (current and updated) and national standards.
- Thoroughly analyze current gaps in the system, service level deficiencies and needs, areas where service levels are currently being met or exceeded and define service levels specific to the community.
- Establish the plan's vision, goals, and objectives related to departmental needs and city strategic goals and objectives.

## Plan Purposes and Planning Outcomes (continued)

- Determine when and where future assets, programs, and services should be added based on community values and needs, projected growth, gap and service level analyses, findings from other city and partner plans and documents, and other relevant sources.
- Create a comprehensive list of implementation strategies with viable timelines, potential costs and funding, staffing, and workspace needs.
- Develop an innovative plan document and online resources that will aid the City in carrying out the plan over its lifetime.
- Apply the City's strategic planning lenses of climate and resiliency, equity, and housing throughout the process and in the final plan, coordinate with the City's Growth Policy planning, and complement other City planning processes.
- Serve as a model for future city planning processes and plans, particularly integrating the City's three lenses and public engagement processes.

## Community Working Group Role

The Community Working Group's (CWG) 15-20 members will be selected by project staff and the Public Engagement Committee and will be based on selection criteria approved by the Parks and Recreation Board.

The CWG will make recommendations to Parks and Recreation and the PROST planning consultant to help inform the planning process, provide input on public engagement strategies, review and provide feedback on various plan elements, and make general recommendations to the Project Management Team. This working group should be a broad representation of the greater Missoula community.

## Community Representation – [Apply by October 13](#)

- Arts and Culture
- At-Large
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
- Business/Economic Development
- Conservation/Ecology
- Education/Schools
- Health and Wellness
- Housing-Related Issues/Expertise/Lived Experience
- LGBTQ+ People
- Low-Income Individuals and Families
- Neighborhood Councils/Community Forum
- Older Adults
- Parks and Recreation Board
- Persons with Disabilities
- Refugee/Immigrant/Newly Resettled
- Sports and Fitness
- University of Montana Student
- Youth Representation
- Youth Development

## Selection Criteria

The following criteria for selection of the PROST Community Working Group are vital for the development of a successful planning process that benefits the entire community:

- 1) Demonstrate an ability to engage respectfully with others and bring information back to the Working Group by conducting interviews and collecting opinions representing a broad cross-section of residents and organizations.
- 2) Willingness to approach the process with an open mind and demonstrate a solutions-oriented ability to compromise/collaborate with others.
- 3) Ability to identify and develop thoughtful questions for the Technical Working Group, Public Engagement Committee, project management team and staff, and the planning consultant team.
- 4) Ability to be inclusive, neutral, and visionary.
- 5) Embrace a community perspective.
- 6) Represent diverse interest groups, experiences and geographies.
- 7) Approximately 80% of CWG members will reside within city limits.

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*The PROST Community Working Group is an opportunity to make a difference and help guide parks, recreation, open space, and trails planning and development in Missoula for the next 10-15 years.*

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## Responsibilities

- 1) Represent the perspectives and needs of PROST system users and those impacted by parks, recreation, trails and open space in the community.
- 2) Guide the Plan's development and ensure it is representative of community needs and desires.
- 3) Identify existing PROST system gaps, barriers, and opportunities.
- 4) Help engage stakeholders and garner public input.
- 5) Review and synthesize supporting information from the Technical Working Group, Public Engagement Committee, project management staff, and the planning consultant team.
- 6) Review and provide comments on draft documents.
- 7) Make recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Board and City Council regarding plan adoption.

## Anticipated Time Commitment

The Working Group will meet approximately seven times via hybrid in-person/online meetings. Each meeting will last approximately 3 hours, depending on content and desired outcomes. Meeting times will generally be Tuesday or Wednesday evenings, with a short break scheduled near the mid-point of the meeting. The first meeting is planned for November 14 or 15, 2023.

The Working Group plans to meet in November 2023, January through March 2024, and September through November 2024. Meetings will likely occur once a month or every six weeks during the months the Working Group plans on meeting. Each session will have required homework, such as interviewing others, site visits, reviewing documents, maps and plans, etc. In addition, there may be other project-related meetings that you may want to attend, such as public open houses, which will be held throughout the planning process.

It is anticipated that the group will not meet during Spring and Summer of 2024.

If time, transportation, childcare or other factors are a barrier to your participation, Parks and Recreation will reimburse costs (transportation, lost wages for missed work, meals, childcare, etc.) up to the amounts permitted under state law. If needed, childcare may be provided onsite.

## Planning Process and Timeline

In the fall of 2023, Parks and Recreation will officially begin the PROST planning process under the guidance of the BluePoint Planning consultant team. The first phase of a robust public engagement effort will occur in late fall of 2023/early winter of 2024 and public engagement will continue through calendar year 2024. An extensive technical inventory and analysis of related plans and planning processes, as well as PROST programs, amenities and facilities, will be started in early 2024 and completed later that year.

During this time, additional public engagement phases will provide residents ample opportunity to give input on future planning for parks, recreation, open space, trail locations, amenities, programs, and other related elements, including a statistically representative survey.

Parks and Recreation anticipates that draft planning documents will be ready for public and working group/team review and comment in early 2025, after which the planning process with the consultant team will be complete. The department is working with the consultant team to design a flexible document that can be revised and updated as future needs arise.

## Other PROST Planning Committees and Working Groups

**Project Management Team:** Functions as the steering committee for the project. It consists of Parks and Recreation staff, the consultant team, University of Montana staff, and other public engagement partners. This team helps guide and manage the planning process and strives to help the consultant team integrate plan elements with extensive public input and project analyses per input from all other project committees and working groups.

**Project Staff:** Parks and Recreation staff will manage the PROST plan update and will regularly interact with the consultant team, interface with project partners and solicit input from all groups, working groups, and the public as part of the plan update process.

**Public Engagement Committee:** Plans and implements activities to engage residents in the PROST plan and conducts a robust public process to inform the plan. Consisting of various engagement and outreach specialists, this group includes staff from the University of Montana, Missoula City/County Health Department, All Nations Health Center, City JEDI and communications staff.

**Technical Working Group:** Consists of technical experts in various PROST-related topics, issues, and needs, which can provide input and guidance on inventory, analysis, and planning activities throughout the process. It will include those from the cycling/mountain biking/hiking communities, the Missoula Public Health Department, USFS, Montana FWP, City planning, development, transportation, public works and equity staff, County open lands/planning, Mountain Line, MCPS, housing experts, and others.

**Key Engagements:** As this plan is anticipated to be adopted by local leaders as the updated PROST Comprehensive Master Plan as well as an issue plan of the City Growth Policy, ample opportunity must exist for getting input from local elected and appointed officials, City working groups and boards, and other related groups throughout the entire planning process. As needed, Parks and Recreation staff, the consultant team, and University of Montana partners will meet regularly with these groups to present information and solicit critical feedback.

## PROST Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### What are some other ways residents can participate in the planning process?

Your participation is vital to creating a PROST plan that truly reflects our community's needs and values. Additional public participation opportunities will be shared at the Engage Missoula website starting in January 2024. This planning process will offer numerous opportunities for residents to get involved and share their priorities:

- Participate in focus groups or public workshops to directly shape plan recommendations. Your voice and lived experiences are critical to guide decision-making.
- Provide input through community-wide surveys. Widespread participation in surveys will help ensure the plan's directions align with community values and desires.
- Follow updates and give feedback on the project website. Ongoing online engagement allows you to review information and share thoughts easily.
- Attend public open houses to learn about the plan's progress and provide your perspective.
- [Reach out to project staff](#) anytime with questions, comments or suggestions. We want to hear from you.

This is our community's plan. Please lend your voice to help shape the future of Missoula's treasured parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces. Your participation makes all the difference in creating an inclusive, community-driven PROST Master Plan. We look forward to your involvement!

### How long will the plan update take to complete?

The plan update process is anticipated to take approximately 18 to 24 months to complete.

## **How will the plan be implemented?**

Toward the end of this planning process, the consultant team will work with the City to create a toolbox of implementation strategies the City and its partners can use to execute the plan. This is a long-range plan that will serve the City for approximately 10-15 years.

## **How does the plan interface with other City planning processes?**

Parks and Recreation staff and the planning consultant team is working diligently to make sure this plan will integrate information from other similar and related planning processes and projects. Likewise, project staff will coordinate public engagement activities with those of other related processes and projects.

## **How will the plan address the three City strategic decision-making lenses of climate and resiliency, equity, and housing?**

The Project Management Team will ensure that the three City strategic decision-making lenses of climate and resiliency, equity, and housing are applied throughout the PROST planning process. The team will regularly consult with experts in related fields to ensure public engagement, inventory and analysis, proposed amenities and facilities, implementation strategies, and other associated elements align with the lenses.

## **What will the plan cost?**

Costs for the primary consultant team will be up to \$250,000 for the 18–24-month planning process. In addition, Parks and Recreation has contracted with the University of Montana WA Franke College of Forestry and Conservation for public engagement leadership, assistance, and administration of a statistically representative survey.

## **Where can I get more information about the PROST plan?**

Learn more about the PROST planning process and apply for the Community Working Group by October 13 at [www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org). For questions or additional information, contact Open Space Program Manager Zac Covington [via email](mailto:via email) or at 406-552-6267.