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PRESS RELEASE

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City, County seek input on the future of open space

Residents are invited to share their vision for the future of open space in the Missoula Valley at a February 6 open house hosted by Missoula Parks and Recreation and Missoula County Parks, Trails, and Open Lands. The public open house is part of a collaborative City-County effort to map out the next 10 years of parks and recreation service to residents—including the hillsides, riparian areas, agricultural lands, parks, trails and conservation easements that make up Missoula’s open space system.

The Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan was written in 1995 and last updated in 2006. City and County planners agree that it’s time to update the open space plan with today’s growth, development and community priorities in mind, says Elizabeth Erickson, the City’s Open Space Acquisitions Attorney. “The past 20+ years of open space conservation in Missoula has been wildly successful, due to the commitment of Missoulians who deeply value their open spaces. Because of the support of landowners, partner organizations and City and County residents, we’ve made great strides toward realizing our community’s initial goals for conserving open space in Missoula. We are now looking ahead to the next decade and want to hear from citizens about their priorities for the future of open space conservation in the greater Missoula area,” Erickson said.

To launch the new planning project, the City and County are engaging in a multi-faceted public process that will provide residents a variety of opportunities to participate in the plan development. The new Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails plan (PROST) will replace the 2004 Master Parks and Recreation Plan for the Greater Missoula Area and the 2006 Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan Update, although relevant components of those plans will carry forward, says city Parks and Recreation Director Donna Gaukler. “The earlier parks and open space plans have effectively guided the work and efforts of citizen boards, staff and elected officials and were developed through public input from focus groups, open houses, and surveys,” Gaukler said. “Both previous documents contain essential planning strategies and benchmarks to be integrated into the new PROST plan, which will guide City and County parks and open space programs throughout the next decade.”

The first PROST plan open house will focus on Open Space and will meet Tuesday, February 6 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Hellgate Elementary School, 2835 Flynn Lane, in Building #3. “The Open House will be a great opportunity for the public to weigh in on the future of open space in the Missoula Valley, including priorities, values, and next steps,” said Kali Becher, a natural resource specialist with Missoula County Parks, Trails and Open Lands. For those unable to attend, there will be opportunities to share feedback online at www.missoulaparks.org after the Open House.

For more information about the PROST planning process, visit www.missoulaparks.org or www.missoulacounty.us/parks-trails.

Media Note: Please see attached PROST project overview and planning area map.

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