



NEWS ADVISORY

July 26, 2017

For immediate release

City and Montana Rail Link to Hold Park Design Workshop

The City of Missoula and Montana Rail Link invite the public to participate in a workshop to help design the new neighborhood park at Johnson Street and South Avenue near Southgate Mall on the evening of Tuesday, Aug. 1.

The sale and donation by Montana Rail Link of 12 acres made possible the major steps of filling in the last missing link in the Bitterroot Trail between downtown Missoula and Hamilton and building a 4.5-acre park at the junction of two neighborhoods that have a severe shortage of open space and parks.

The facilitated workshop is hosted by Missoula Parks and Recreation, the Missoula Redevelopment Agency and Montana Rail Link. It will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Sovereign Hope Church, 1919 North Ave. Attendees should use the door closest to the Johnson/Central intersection. Missoula Parks and Recreation will host a children's playtime and workshop for kids aged 4 to 11 whose parents are attending the event. The workshop is a chance for residents of the Franklin to the Fort and Southgate Triangle neighborhoods to share their long-range vision for the new park to create a master park plan. The master plan will guide future park development as funding becomes available. A light supper will be served at the workshop; residents are asked to plan to stay for the entire session to gain the most from the event.

Using 1995 Open Space Bond funds for the park and urban renewal district funding through the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, the City acquired the 12-acre parcel at Johnson and South from Montana Rail Link for \$2 million, a price substantially below market value. The transaction followed several years of conversation between Mayor John Engen and MRL leadership.

"This is a great example of how the public and private sectors can partner to make positive change in our neighborhoods," said Ellen Buchanan, director of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency.

“MRL has provided the City with the opportunity to meet several needs with the development of this property. While nothing is set in stone, the northern portion may well be transformed into a mixed use development showcasing a range of housing types from affordable to market rate.”

In addition, the railroad has agreed to support a bicycle-pedestrian railroad crossing at Central Avenue, adjacent to the new park, supporting citizen goals for active transportation, connectivity, access and parkland service.

“Montana Rail Link has a long history of working with the City of Missoula to address transportation and access issues that dates back to the origins of the Company in 1987,” said Montana Rail Link President Tom Walsh. “The Johnson Street trail access along MRL right-of-way and new park are the latest examples of the importance that MRL and the Washington Companies place on giving back to the communities in which our employees live and work. We are honored to be part of a project that will have lasting benefit to the public and community of Missoula.”

For more information about the project or the park design workshop, visit www.missoulaparks.org or phone 721-PARK (7275.)

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