

PRESS RELEASE

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PARKS AND TRAILS BOND

City Council approves 12 new playgrounds

On Monday, February 22, the City Council unanimously approved the purchase and installation of over 130 pieces of new playground equipment for 12 playgrounds throughout the City.

The purchase includes new playground equipment at Bonner, Franklin, Greenough, McLeod, Northside, Pleasant View, Rainbow, Skyview, Wapikia, and Whitaker Parks. Equipment for two of the four planned playgrounds at Fort Missoula Regional Park (FMRP) is also included. The \$1.2 million expenditure is primarily funded by the \$42 million county-wide Parks and Trails Bond, which was approved by voters in 2014.

The Council expressed enthusiastic support for the new playgrounds at Monday night's meeting. "Our community has once again come together to support parks and playgrounds that will stimulate, engage, and entertain our children," said Ward 2 Council member Jordan Hess. "These playgrounds reach a diversity of areas across our community—a range of income levels and a range of geographies. It's a great time to be a kid in Missoula. I'm very proud of our staff and our community for making it happen."

The ten neighborhood playgrounds are projected to open this summer, and the new FMRP playgrounds will open when phase one construction is complete at the Fort. Neighborhood playgrounds were selected based on the age, accessibility and condition of each parks' current playground and the number of children served.

Each new playground design is unique from the others and includes play features that aren't duplicated in nearby park or school playgrounds, says Parks and Recreation Director Donna Gaukler. The designs feature nature-inspired play equipment to encourage active, imaginative play, and the new

equipment can be used in a variety of ways by children of all ages and abilities. Neighborhood residents throughout Missoula participated in an extensive public process last year to help choose the equipment for each playground.

Ward 5 Council member Julie Armstrong said she was pleased to see the level of public involvement in the project. “I've always loved playgrounds, they are truly great equalizers. No matter your socio-economic status, race, gender or age, play does not discriminate. I think whenever, and whatever we can do to propagate that philosophy, while encouraging increases in activity and interaction, we should. I'm so happy to have this project realized and provided for our city's neighborhoods,” Armstrong said.

At the request of citizens, the department worked with City administration and City Council to add approximately \$200,000 to the project budget from impact fees collected from new development. The additional funds helped diversify and expand play values, age ranges and numbers of children served at each playground. In response to public comment, the design team also expanded playground accessibility for children with disabilities, added tuned musical instrument toys to several playgrounds and added additional climbing equipment geared for older children at Franklin Park.

Each playground's design was reviewed by leadership teams from Silver Summit and Bonner All-Children's playgrounds to maximize accessibility and inclusive play at all sites. In addition, \$50,000 of Parks and Trails Bond funds have been allocated to augment partnerships and donations for Phase 2 development at Silver Summit playground at McCormick Park. Plans for Phase 2 include shade structures, paths, a gazing globe, landscaping and a “Loose Parts” portable playground.

Monday's Council action authorized the Mayor to sign eight contracts with playground equipment vendors and installation specialists totaling \$1,023,214.95, which includes playground equipment, installation and fall zone material for the 12 playgrounds. Equipment for the ten neighborhood playgrounds will be ordered immediately and installation will begin as soon as the weather allows for construction. Visit missoulaparksandtrails.org to see site plans, equipment photos and additional budget information.

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