

## **New Meadows Park, Master Plan Narrative**

**Adopted Month/Year**, County Parks and Trails Advisory Board

### **Master Park Plan**

Park master plans provide a comprehensive vision for a specific park or parcel of land in context with its location, current use, natural resources and community input. The adopted vision is a framework for park management and future development toward a common goal over a period of time recorded in both an illustration and a written narrative. A park master plan considers the values and interests identified through a public planning process to create a park design that fosters a positive user experience. Both the narrative and illustration should be referenced together.

The master plan may or may not be implemented in its entirety, pending funding, resources and recreation goals for the neighborhood.

### **Park History**

New Meadows Park is a County-owned 8.8 acre park located on the south side of Mullan Road at 7619 Mullan Road. The park was dedicated to the County as public parkland in 1980 through parkland dedication of the New Meadows subdivision. The park is bound by private residential property to the south and west. The north and east park boundary is shared with Sunset Memorial Cemetery with the north parcel currently undeveloped. South, adjacent the park is the New Meadows Neighborhood.

### **Why a Park Master Plan**

- Identified in the 2012 Parks and Trails Master Plan
- Park neighbor approached the Parks and Trails Advisory Board in August of 2015 expressing concerns regarding park condition and needed maintenance
- Increase of park use
- Increase of illegal motorized park use and illegal dumping in the park

### **Existing Conditions**

New Meadows Park currently has deteriorating play equipment and an asphalt basketball court; both have exceeded their lifespan and are in need of replacement. Residents currently use the park for walking on a single track natural surface (clay) perimeter trail that tries to be used as an impromptu bike skills course by neighborhood youth.

The southern park walkway is in need of significant improvements to the asphalt path. The southwest walkway is blocked due to private residential fencing.

### Grass Valley Important Bird Area

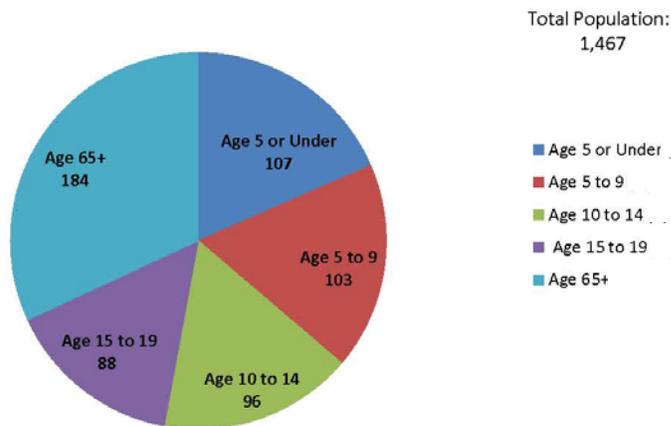
New Meadows Park is located within the Clark Fork River – Grass Valley Important Bird Area (IBA) with Mullan road as the northern boundary. The Clark Fork River-Grass Valley IBA was approved as a State IBA in 2006 and as a Continental IBA in 2009 by the National Audubon Society because of its significant value to species of conservation concern. New Meadows Park is within 1.2 miles of Kelly Island, a state Fishing Access Site, and a significant landscape to birds and bird habitat. The master plan design supports the IBA by limiting development to 44% of the parcel, leaving 56% undeveloped.

### Demographics / Level of Park Service

As per the 2010 census data, a population of 1,467 people live within a 1-mile radial buffer of New Meadows Park. This includes El Mar Estates and residents north and south of Mullan Road. Mullan Road is considered a pedestrian barrier for residents on the north side of Mullan Road wanting to access neighborhoods to the south. As Mullan Road is a barrier for neighborhood connectivity, both the Mullan Road Trail and Cote Lane Trail provide significant neighborhood park connections on the south side of Mullan Road spanning a total distance of 3.6 miles with New Meadows Park at the junction of both trails. One mile east of New Meadows Park, the Mullan Road shared-use path provides a pedestrian crossing to the neighborhoods on the north side of Mullan Road that are within the 1-mile service area of New Meadows Park.

### Population By Age:

#### Within 1-Mile Buffer of New Meadows Park



## Master Planning Process

The master planning process kicked off by sending out over 500 neighborhood design workshop postcards inviting residents within a 1/2 mile radius of the park. Residents were invited to attend a workshop on Wednesday, February 4<sup>th</sup> 2016 to identify neighborhood values and outcomes that defined guiding principles for the master planning process.

The workshop was held in the cafeteria at Hellgate Elementary School District No. 4 where 14 neighborhood residents were in attendance. Prior to the meeting an online survey was available. A total of 41 neighborhood residents submitted comment (workshop 14 people) and (online survey 27 respondents). The information gathered from the survey and workshop was used by staff to inform park design.

## Master Park Plan

The 2012 County Parks & Trails master plan classifies New Meadows Park as a neighborhood park, and recommends it be upgraded to a Community Park. A neighborhood park is intended to serve residents within a one mile radius, and a community park is intended to serve residents within a three to five mile radius. The 2012 Parks and Trails Plan notes that community parks often contain facilities for specific recreational purposes: such as; improved playground facilities, development of additional site amenities, site signage, a basketball court, picnic tables, benches, a multi-purpose sports field and a possible bike skills area.



The New Meadows Park master plan is designed to function as a community park, upgraded from a neighborhood park as recommended in the Parks and Trails Master Plan with many of the recommended amenities integrated into the plan, including: Park signage, improved park access & circulation, improved playground, basketball court, seating/picnic areas, multi-purpose sports field, bike skills area and a perimeter walking loop.

Below is a ranking from high to low of the park interest and values expressed through the public process that informed the park master plan:

Interest & Values	Respondents	(top five are in bold)	
<b>Low Impact Dev.</b>	<b>43</b>	Natural Elements	5
<b>Walking / Loop Trail</b>	<b>36</b>	Swings	4
<b>Playground</b>	<b>21</b>	Youth- Bike Skills Loop	3
<b>Dog Park/ Dog Area</b>	<b>12</b>	Mullan Ped. Xing	3
<b>Passive Rec.</b>	<b>11</b>	Preserve View shed	2
<b>Shade Shelter</b>	<b>11</b>	Basketball court	2
<b>Buffer Zone</b>	<b>11</b>	Tennis court	2
Multi-Use Field	7	Cultivated Garden	1
Nature Based Play	7	No improvements	1

**Low Impact Park development** was the number one rated value and interest by residents who participated in the master planning process. Low Impact Development (LID) is commonly known as using land planning and engineering to manage storm water onsite using natural features to filter and clean water before it enters the ground water. In the mastering planning of New Meadows Park, LID considers storm water management, local available materials, preservation and use of native grasses and vegetation, and limited infrastructure to maintain neighborhood character.

Two bio swales are proposed adjacent the parking lot to the north and south to capture and treat storm water runoff. A park restroom facility is located adjacent the parking lot to maximize access for service vehicles and visibility for public safety. A variety of restroom facilities will be considered (an enclosed port-o-let or vault style facility) if the need for an onsite restroom is determined. Vault style restrooms are typical styles found in local, state and national parks.

**Park walking loops and trails** are among the top rated park element residents request in their parks. To meet the neighborhood request and 2<sup>nd</sup> rated park interest, a .3 mile perimeter walking loop encompasses the park. The park has .5 miles of total paths. There is a .2 mile paved path around the primary play area that provides visibility of the playground, shade shelter, and turf area for park safety.

To meet current and past use of the perimeter trail as a bike skills course (9<sup>th</sup> Ranked Park Value & Interest), a conceptual bike skill park is integrated into the master plan aimed at youth ages 5-17. The bike skills area is designed specifically for practicing and developing foundational bike skills (balance, control, cadence and confidence) within a safe and managed park setting. The bike skills linear park is intended to provide riders with the experience of a bike trail with 2' and 3' high dirt rollers and progressive bike skill trail features for the beginner and intermediate rider. Community interest in bike skill parks has risen substantially in the last decade and offers a fun way to play outside and stay active for children and families.

**Playground development**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> rated park value and interest. A 3,500 square foot play pod will enrich the imagination and possibilities of play. Age appropriate playground equipment for both 2-5 and 5-12 years olds is intended for the park with signage for the intended user. As the project advances, additional neighborhood outreach will be needed to determine preferred playground equipment.

**A dog park or a dog exercise area** within the park ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> park value and interest. To maximize resources for park development and limit the amount of built infrastructure in the park, the master plan is designed to

provide informal spaces for people and dogs using suggested boundaries such as sidewalks and changes in vegetation to define informal dog exercise areas. To reduce potential conflicts between people and dogs, the Native Prairie, Secondary Play area and Tertiary Play area, provide un-programmed areas to meet the recreational needs of park users with or without pets.

Completing the top five park interest and values with an equal distribution of respondents were: Passive recreation, shade shelter and park buffer zone.

The New Meadows park master plan offers a mix of passive recreation opportunities, such as trails, seating areas to reflect, or nodes for small gatherings and green space for low intensity park games.

Park shade shelters are more than a typical park structure to relax or seek shelter from the elements. Shade shelters are a community asset during peak park use times. They provide public space for social gatherings, birthday parties, family gatherings, neighborhood meetings, clubs, etc. Additional public outreach will be needed to further design the shade shelter for a preferred architectural style.

To best support the privacy of adjacent home owners, a 100' park buffer is integrated into the master plan. All high active use areas are set outside the buffer. Sections of the park perimeter trail are within the 100' buffer and may require a level of vegetation screening.

For park safety vegetation screens are encouraged over privacy fencing on the southern park boundary between the park and residential homes to preserve view sheds into and out of the park. Adjacent property owners shall be contacted as the park design advances to determine their level of preferred screening and encourage participation in field placement of park trees.

### **Additional Considerations**

Currently there are no park hours for Missoula County Parks, however a few neighborhood parks have hours due to their proximity to residential homes. Pending park use, park hours may need to be considered for New Meadows Park.

Additional coordination with Missoula County Public Works, owner and manager of the existing well in New Meadows Park will need to take place to explore the feasibility of tapping into the well system to meet future park watering needs.

Vehicle access into the park for emergency service vehicles, visitor parking, park maintenance and park security is instrumental to the parks success and safety; as the parcel does not have street frontage for security and access. It is important that vehicle park access be planned for development at the same time additional park infrastructure is installed that is beyond the scope of a trail or path.

200 West Broadway Street  
Missoula, Montana 59802-4292



## Funding

The New Meadows Park master plan provides a basis for possible funding from various sources including and not limited to: Parks, Trails & Open Lands Matching Grant Program, Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds, State Recreation Trails Program, Parks, Trails and Open Land Capital Improvements, Grants, etc. As of the writing of this document, funding has not been secured to implement the project.

## Master Site Plan and Narrative prepared by:

Garrick Swanson

Parks & Trails Designer/ Planner II

County Parks, Trails & Open Space

200 West Broadway. Missoula, MT 59802

Phone: (406) 258-4719 | Fax: (406)258-3920

[gswanson@missoulacounty.us](mailto:gswanson@missoulacounty.us)

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