



## MRA Board Memo Cover Sheet

December 12, 2022

**Project Name:** Match Funding for Construction of Caras Park, Clark Fork River ADA Access and Riverbank Restoration

**Urban Renewal District:** Front Street

**Map and Project Location:** North bank of the Clark Fork River, adjacent to Caras Park

**TIF Investment:** Up to \$100,000

**Federal Grant Funding:** \$1,220,304

**Local Funding:** \$305,076

**TIF as a Percentage of the Total Funding:** 6.5 percent

**Project Description:** The City of Missoula's Parks and Recreation Department was recently awarded \$1,220,304 from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Association (EDA) to construct improvements along the north bank of the Clark Fork River adjacent to Caras Park. Planned improvements include a new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible path along the river's edge, stone and concrete stairs to the river, concrete viewing platform, streambank revegetation and stabilization of approximately 400 feet of the north bank.

Up to \$405,076 in local funding is needed to satisfy the required EDA grant match for construction and complete design and permitting of the project. The Missoula Downtown Partnership and City of Missoula have committed \$305,076. To fulfill the remaining required grant match, the Parks and Recreation Department is requesting MRA Board approval of up to \$100,000 in funding. This request includes \$10,000 in contingency funding.

**Cost Breakdown of TIF Funds:**

Matching funds for construction	\$ 90,000
Contingency funds	\$ \$10,000

**City of Missoula 2020–2023 Strategic Plan Goals:** The project aligns with the following goals in the City of Missoula's 2020–2023 Strategic Plan, including:

- **Design and create programs, facilities, and spaces that promote equity.** The project will create ADA access to the river's edge for viewing wildlife and activity at Brennan's Wave, and entering the river. Currently there is no formal ADA access to the river in Missoula. The project will localize and formalize access for all user groups in a heavily used section of the river.



- **Prioritize infrastructure development that promotes equitable growth and implements adopted policy.** The planned improvements are identified in the North Riverside Parks and Trails Plan. The community identified a riverfront promenade as a top priority in the North Riverside Parks and Trails Plan.
- **Implement adopted Energy Conservation and Climate Action initiatives, including by partnering to plan and implement the Clark Fork River Restoration and Access project.**



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** MRA Board

**FROM:** Annie Gorski, Deputy Director

**DATE:** December 8, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Match Funding for Construction of Caras Park, Clark Fork River Access and Riverbank Restoration Project (**Front Street URD**) – **Up to \$100,000 TIF Request**

### Overview

The City of Missoula's Parks and Recreation Department was recently awarded \$1,220,304 from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Association (EDA) to construct improvements along the north bank of the Clark Fork River adjacent to Caras Park. Planned improvements include a new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible path along the river's edge, stone and concrete stairs to the river, concrete viewing platform, streambank revegetation and stabilization of approximately 400 feet of the north bank. The project is consistent with recommendations in the North Riverside Parks and Trails Master Plan for an ADA accessible riverfront terrace in this location. The MRA provided \$5,000 for the Parks and Trails Master Plan. The new formalized river access will be located in the vicinity of Brennan's Wave and will have a direct connection to Ron's River Trail and the Great Lawn area adjacent to the pavilion that was completed this summer.

Up to \$405,076 in local funding is needed to satisfy the required EDA grant match for construction and complete design and permitting of the project. The Missoula Downtown Partnership and City of Missoula have committed \$305,076. To fulfill the remaining required grant match, the Parks and Recreation Department is requesting MRA Board approval of up to \$100,000 in funding. This request includes \$10,000 in contingency funding.

### Matching Funds Include:

- Downtown Missoula Partnership: \$150,000 (*Funds Committed*)
- City of Missoula: \$155,076 (*Funds Committed*) (2018 Open Space Bond, Conservation and Stewardship Mill Levy, Park District #1)
- Missoula Redevelopment Agency: up to \$100,000 (*Funds Requested*)

## Request for Tax Increment Assistance

Up to \$100,000 for the construction phase of the Clark Fork River Access and Bank Restoration Project.

**Total TIF Request    \$ 100,000**

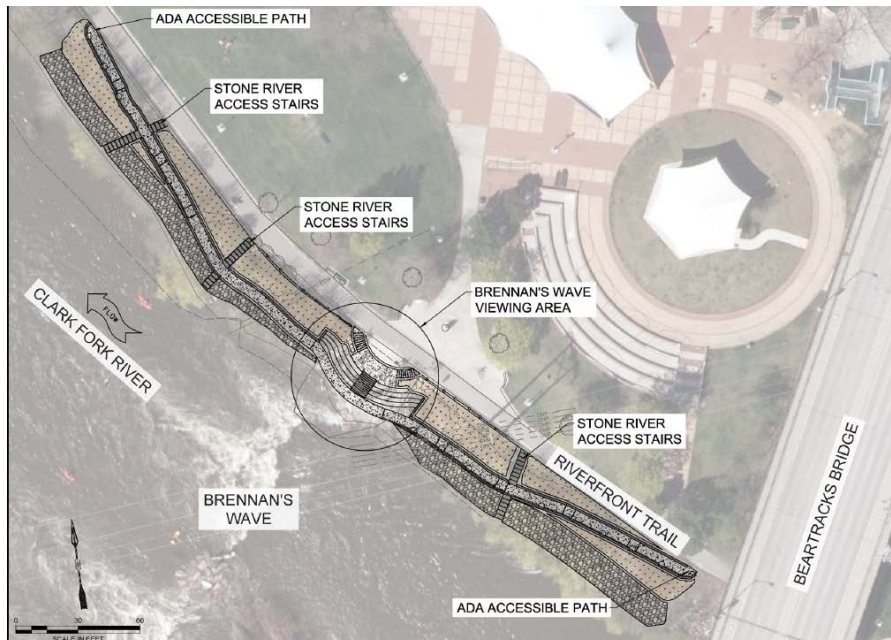


Fig 1: Major project elements of Caras Park river access project

## City of Missoula Strategic Plan

The project aligns with the following goals in the City's Strategic Plan:

- **Design and create programs, facilities, and spaces that promote equity.** The project will create ADA access to the river's edge for viewing wildlife and activity at Brennan's Wave, and entering the river. Currently, visitors climb over rocks to enter the river at Brennan's Wave. There is no formal ADA access to the river in Missoula. The project will localize and formalize access for all user groups in a heavily used section of the river.
- **Prioritize infrastructure development that promotes equitable growth and implements adopted policy.** The planned improvements are identified in the North Riverside Parks and Trails Plan. The community identified a riverfront promenade as a top priority in the North Riverside Parks and Trails Plan.
- **Implement adopted Energy Conservation and Climate Action initiatives, including by partnering to plan and implement the Clark Fork River Restoration and Access project.**

### Economic Stimulus and Employment

This project is expected to increase visitors to Caras Park and downtown Missoula. The Missoula Economic Partnership estimates the project could generate an additional 21 jobs in downtown Missoula due to increased tourism and activity downtown.

### Urban Renewal Goals

The planned improvements align with goals and strategies in the Front Street URD related to parks and trails including:

- ***Advocate for and support expansion and upgrade of parks, trails, open space and other public facilities.***
- ***Assist the Parks Department in planning, upgrade, and expansion of parks, trails and open space.***

### Project Feasibility

Completion of design, engineering and permitting is expected in 2023. Construction is expected to begin in summer of 2024 and conclude the following summer. The Parks Department plans to hire engineering consultant, RESPEC Company, LLC (RESPEC), to oversee final design, permitting and construction preparation. RESPEC brought the project to 60 percent design. Initial consultation with state and federal permitting agencies was completed earlier this year and no major permitting challenges were identified. The budget was prepared with input from the U.S. EDA and includes an approximately five percent contingency. If there are cost overruns, additional funding may be available through the 2018 Open Space Bond or other City funding sources.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the MRA Board approve the City of Missoula Parks and Recreation Department's request for up to \$100,000 to help fund construction of the Clark Fork River Access and Riverbank Restoration Project and that the amount of the TIF will be based on actual costs of TIF eligible improvements, and authorize the Board Chair to sign the Memorandum of Understanding with the Parks and Recreation Department.





January 14, 2022

EDA Denver Regional Office  
1244 Speer Boulevard, Suite 431  
Denver, CO 80204

Dear Economic Development Administration:

On behalf of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, I am writing in strong support of the City of Missoula's Competitive Regional Tourism Grant application to improve access to the Clark Fork River at Brennan's Wave in Caras Park in downtown Missoula. Caras Park, located on the banks of the Clark Fork, directly adjacent to Brennan's Wave, includes a large events pavilion and performance stage and hosts a wide variety of community and tourism-related events throughout the year.

The Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) is a public agency with a mission to foster economic development and public infrastructure in its urban renewal districts and Caras Park and Brennan's Wave are located in MRA's Front Street Urban Renewal District. MRA was fundamental in the creation of Caras Park and is delighted that it has become an outdoor jewel that arguably can be considered the heartbeat of downtown, often referred to as Missoula's Living Room. MRA was also a major contributor to the effort to develop Brennan's Wave as one of many features to draw people into the park and into downtown Missoula. Brennan's Wave has become extremely popular for spectators as well as those who come down to "ride the wave."

If received, this grant would be dedicated to a shovel ready project to construct a more sustainable and accessible trail system at Brennan's Wave, and to develop resilient, natural infrastructure on the banks of the Clark Fork River. As a major funder during the creation of Caras Park, a repeat funder of improvements to the park over the years and the single largest funder of Brennan's Wave, MRA stands ready, to the extent that funds are available, to commit funding to this project to help provide the required matching funds.

The Brennan's Wave Access project will increase access and capacity to one of Montana's most popular outdoor recreation sites. Brennan's Wave is a nationally recognized manufactured whitewater feature on the Clark Fork River which has attracted national competitions and thousands of kayakers, surfers and standup paddleboarders since it was completed in 2006.

This project includes riverbank stabilization, expanded riverfront entrances, seating, viewing areas, and improved access for cyclists, pedestrians, and people with disabilities. The improvements will increase downtown Missoula's capability to host national watersports

events and a wide variety of tourism-related events – activities that are essential to the economic vitality of downtown Missoula.

The U.S. Census Bureau lists Montana as one of the top five states with the largest share of employment in travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation. Missoula is located between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks and is a significant tourist draw. According to the University of Montana's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, tourism spending throughout the state was down 16 percent in 2020, largely due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic has evolved, outdoor recreation has become an increasingly important component of the tourism industry. Voted one of the nation's "Best River Towns" by *Outside Magazine*, Missoula will be an essential element of Montana's tourism and economic recovery with its striking natural features, exemplary parks and trails system, and bustling service industry.

The Brennan's Wave River Access project has significant community support, and will help attract the visitors, new businesses, and workforce Western Montana needs to recover from the global pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ellen Buchanan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ellen Buchanan, Director

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Ellen Buchanan, Director Missoula Redevelopment Agency

**FROM:** Ryan Applegate, Associate Director Business Operations,  
Nathan McLeod, Senior Landscape Architect, Parks &  
Recreation

**CC:** Donna Gaukler, Director Parks & Recreation  
Morgan Valliant, Associate Director Ecosystem Services  
Linda McCarthy, Director Missoula Downtown Partnership

**DATE:** December 5, 2022

**SUBJECT:** URD Funding Request- Caras Park River Access

The City of Missoula is requesting Missoula Redevelopment Agency consideration of financial support not to exceed \$100,000 to support the construction of the river access and riverbank restoration project at Caras Park.

The City of Missoula and the Missoula Downtown Association were recently awarded a \$1.5M competitive American Rescue Plan, Travel Tourism and Outdoor Recreation construction grant from the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Association (EDA). The grant supports construction of a river access and riverbank restoration project along approximately 400 feet of the north bank of the Clark Fork River adjacent to Caras Park. This project will also increase capacity of Caras Park and will bring jobs during construction and is projected to create 21 jobs in the downtown area.

This project aligns with and implements the City of Missoula's strategic priorities of community design and livability and environmental quality by implementing adopted climate action initiatives. Such initiatives include partnering with area organizations to plan and implement the Clark Fork River Restoration and Access Project. The Caras Park River Access project is a key component of the larger Clark Fork Restoration and Access Project. Additionally, river access at Caras Park is a high priority for the community per the adopted Downtown Master Plan, Downtown North Riverside Parks and Trails Plan, and the 2018 Open Space Bond Clark Fork River Restoration and Access Plan.

Over the last two years, Missoula Parks and Recreation has worked with a nationally known, qualified design, permitting and engineering firm, Respec, to design and permit multiple river access and erosion sites; bringing the Caras Park River Access project to 60 percent design.



Before award of EDA grant funds project partners were required to do a thorough vetting process to ensure that the project was feasible and permissible. This effort involved consultation with permitting agencies including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, MT Fish Wildlife and Parks, the Army Corps of Engineers, Missoula Floodplain Administration, Montana Department of Natural Resources, and MT State Historic Preservation Office. No potential permitting challenges or roadblocks were identified during these consultations.

The project aims to localize and formalize access for all user groups throughout a heavily used section of streambank. Project features are oriented around equitable access, community involvement, flood control, and streambank revegetation. Project components include an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible path, stone river access stairs, concrete river access stairs, concrete viewing platform, stone terrace seating, landscaping, and streambank revegetation. See Figure 1

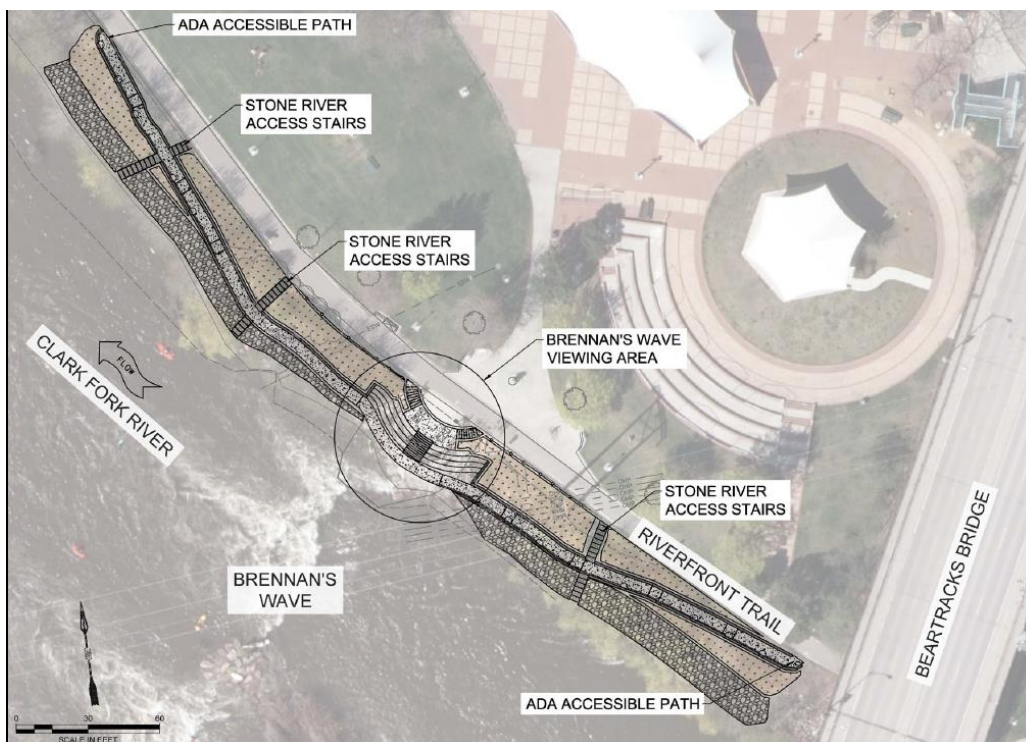


Fig 1: Major project elements of Caras Park River Access

The total award for the construction project is \$1,525,380 with an EDA federal cost share of \$1,220,304 and local cost share of \$305,076. The construction project has a built-in \$72K, 5%, contingency. The project will require additional design engineering, landscape architecture, project permitting, construction plans and specifications, and construction bidding services quoted from RESPC at \$90,000, increasing the total local match to \$395,076. Additional contingency funds, if needed, may be derived from 2018 Open Space Bond sources or other City funding sources.

We expect to complete design, engineering and permitting in 2023. The current proposed timeline for construction would commence in August of 2024 with a completion date by Summer 2025.

Current identified local match are as follows:

- Downtown Missoula Partnership: \$150,000
- City of Missoula Sources (2018 Open Space Bond, Conservation and Stewardship Mill Levy, Park District #1): \$155,076

The funding gap currently is \$90,000 and due to the planned CY2024 construction and fluctuating construction environment, the request of Missoula Redevelopment Agency partnership match does include a contingency and is not to exceed \$100K.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ryan Applegate and Nathan Mcleod, Missoula Parks and Recreation

Attachments: EDA award announcement, Grant award doc, Army Corps of Engineer Concurrence letter, Business letters of support

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE INVESTS \$1.2 MILLION IN AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDS FOR PARK DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT TOURISM IN MISSOULA, MONTANA

*Contact: EDA Public Affairs Department, (202) 482-4085  
August 23, 2022*

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo announced the Department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) is awarding a \$1.2 million grant to the city of Missoula, Montana, to support a river access construction project in Caras Park. This grant is funded by the American Rescue Plan.

This project will provide new amenities such as a viewing platform, retaining walls, and an ADA path, creating greater access to the park and supporting local tourism. The EDA investment will be matched with \$305,076 in local funds and is expected to create 21 jobs, according to grantee estimates.

"The Biden-Harris Administration is dedicated to supporting the travel, tourism and outdoor recreation sector as it works to recover and rebuild following the pandemic," said Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. "This EDA investment will support the local tourism industry by attracting new visitors to support local businesses."

"The Economic Development Administration plays an important role in supporting community-led economic development strategies designed to boost coronavirus recovery and response efforts," said Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Alejandra Y. Castillo. "This project will create a new destination for outdoor recreation and tourism, leading to a diverse regional economy."

"Expanded access to Caras Park will have a lasting impact on the Missoula community and the recreational economy it supports," said Senator Jon Tester. "This critical funding will not only go toward modernizing the park's infrastructure and making it more accessible to community members and visitors for years to come, but it will also create good-paying Montana jobs, and that's what the American Rescue Plan was all about."

This project is funded under EDA's \$240 million competitive American Rescue Plan [Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation program](#). EDA awarded \$510 million in grants to all 50 states and territories in 2021. The two programs are designed to accelerate the recovery of communities that rely on the travel, tourism and outdoor recreation sectors. Effective May 26, 2022, EDA has officially closed all of its American Rescue Plan programs for applications. The \$3 billion program funding will be awarded on a rolling basis through September 30, 2022.

### **About the U.S. Economic Development Administration ([www.eda.gov](http://www.eda.gov))**

The mission of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing the nation's regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. An agency within

the U.S. Department of Commerce, EDA invests in communities and supports regional collaboration in order to create jobs for U.S. workers, promote American innovation, and accelerate long-term sustainable economic growth.