

Missoula City Council
435 Ryman St
Missoula, MT 59802

March 14, 2025

RE: OSAC Review of the Tipp Clark Fork River Open Space Project

Dear Members of the Missoula City Council:

On February 13, 2025, the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) voted to approve up to \$112,700 from the 2006 and 2018 Open Space Bond funds to support acquisition of the Tipp Clark Fork River property of approximately 16.5 acres adjacent to the Kim Williams Trail. The approval was based upon a 7 to 3 vote with one member absent.

In support of this acquisition, Committee members agreed upon the importance of protecting the Clark Fork River riparian corridor and increasing public access. Members pointed out that river access was the highest priority on the most recent PROST survey of Missoula residents. Though there is currently no development on the property, there was concern that under future ownership the property could be put to undesirable use and/or a future owner could pursue vehicular access to the property via the Kim Williams Trail. Many Committee members were excited about the prospect of increasing mountain biking trails for the public and for Missoula Parks & Recreation youth camps. Furthermore, the committee was appreciative of the landowners willingness to donate over half of the value of the parcel. Most members believed that the asking price was very reasonable for the purchase of riverfront property near the City.

Despite these attributes, the project also generated some critical feedback from OSAC members. While all members agreed that protecting the river corridor and increasing access is of prime importance to Missoula residents, several members agreed that it seemed unlikely the site would be developed, and one member mentioned that, compared to previous acquisitions, there seemed to be little urgency to acquire the property due to its location, lack of access, and recreational zoning. There was some concern that, if acquired, many people would feel uncomfortable using the property due to potential hazards associated with encampments along the Kim Williams Trail.

In the end, a majority of OSAC members believed that the benefits of acquiring the property outweighed the concerns. However, the decision was not without debate and three members voted against the project. OSAC thanks you for your time and we hope that the City Council will consider supporting this funding request based on a majority recommendation by OSAC members.

Daniel Gundlach

Danny Gundlach, Chair
Open Space Advisory Committee