

Attn: City Council and Mayor,

I am writing on behalf of the Peas Farm Old Boys Soccer Group. All of the roughly 300 current and former members of our group support the following position on the Duncan Drive Property and its future.

We are commenting on the proposed rezoning for the parcel in the west Rattlesnake, along Duncan Drive, to the north of Mountain View Drive. In your map it is proposed to be changed to "Rural Residential (R-R1)". We agree with this for the majority of this parcel but disagree with it for the 13 acre Duncan Drive Property which includes about 10 acres for the PEAS Farm and 3 acres for the Duncan Drive playing field. We feel that the 13 acre parcel should probably be zoned as OP-1 (Open Space), so request that you make that designation change before City Council adopts this plan.

Our understanding is that Missoula's OP-1 (Open Space) zoning is for preserving natural lands, parks, and conservation areas, allowing uses like parks, trails, community gardens, and potentially limited public facilities (like restrooms or small visitor centers) while restricting intense development. If we are incorrect, please clarify.

While we are very much in favor of the PEAS Farm remaining a community garden long into the future, our primary interest is in the Duncan Drive playing field, so that's the focus of these comments.

Our goal is to ensure the Duncan Drive playing field remains a playing field for the long term. We know there are lots of parks within the city limits that have been sold or given to the City, to be managed by City Parks and Rec, and we fully support that happening with this playing field. We would also fully support MCPS keeping the property and continuing to utilize it as it is currently.

We recognize that this has been a complex rezoning project, with a number of considerations for each parcel. The following details are intended to help you with this decision, as it pertains to the Duncan Drive Property.

First, the history of this playing field is important:

- Prior to 2008, this was just a patch of open space, with a mixture of native plants and noxious weeds.
- In 2008, our group and nearby neighbors built this playing field, with donated labor, money donated by members and neighbors, and with the written support of MCPS, Missoula County and City of Missoula Parks and Rec. We built this playing field with 2 goals in mind: 1. To have a playing field in the Rattlesnake for kids and adults, and 2. To not have houses built there.
- MCPS and the City entered into a 10 year lease covering management, maintenance and other details, and in 2014 signed a 40 year lease (details below).
- We have been playing on this field since then.

Our Old Boys Soccer Group plays on this field on Wednesday evenings, April through October, with about 35 participants every evening. We also organize a parents and kids game there on Sunday morning, with about 30 participants on a typical Sunday.

The field is not just a soccer field for us. It's available for rent from Parks and Rec by anyone, and kids can often be seen kicking soccer balls around, throwing lacrosse balls, rugby balls, footballs and frisbees, as well as throwing a stick for a dog. We always intended it to be a neighborhood resource available to all, and it has evolved into exactly that.

Missoula Parks and Rec has a stated goal of having parks in all neighborhoods, and that includes playing fields. On the Rattlesnake Drive side there's Pineview and the Syringa Bike Park, as well as the Hellgate soccer and softball fields, but they are only supposed to be used for MCPS sanctioned sports. The Duncan Drive playing field is the only public sports field in the entire Rattlesnake.

I'm sure you are aware of the current 40 year lease on the 13 acres (10 farm, 3 playing field) between MCPS and the City. In case you have not had an opportunity to read the current lease, some important points:

- It is a 40 year lease that expires in 2054, and which supersedes the previous 10 year lease.
- Either party can terminate, but only with 3 years written notice.
- The lease references an MOU between Garden City Harvest (GCH) and MCPS which emphasizes that GCH provides educational opportunities for MCPS kids.
- The lease states that the "Duncan Drive playing field serves as a youth and adult sports field for groups and citizens, primarily from the surrounding neighborhoods", and it also states "The 3 acre portion of the Leased Premises shall be used for outdoor park and recreation playing fields.....", which reinforces the long-term value the City and MCPS sees in this remaining a playing field.
- The lease states "The City is granted the first right of purchase".

In addition to the above lease, our Old Boys Soccer Group, Friends of Missoula Parks and Missoula Parks and Rec signed a Memorandum of Agreement in 2025 for maintenance of the playing field. This simply formalizes the arrangement we've always had, where Missoula Parks and Rec mows and provides other turf maintenance, and our Old Boys group members are the volunteers that change irrigation pipes and start the irrigation twice per day, and repair and maintain the irrigation system. We also perform other volunteer caretaking services, like pulling noxious weeds; as a result, the park is now about 99% noxious weed free. We also purchase the required liability insurance.

In conclusion, it's clear what the intended use is for this field, and what the best use is for this field. We built this field with our own money and our own blood, sweat and tears, literally picking rocks, hauling in soil, levelling and planting grass. We continue to lovingly care for this playing field as it is a very special resource to us, and to the kids and neighbors. It would be a shame to lose this valuable resource, so we encourage and implore you to not zone this parcel residential, so that we can keep the PEAS Farm a community resource and so that the Duncan Drive playing field remains a playing field long into the future!

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts on the Duncan Drive property with you.

John Oetinger
Peas Farm Old Boys Soccer Group Executive Committee

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