



Dear Mayor and Members of City Council,

July 22, 2020

Grant Creek Trails Association (GCTA) is keenly interested in the proposed rezoning for higher-density development of the two parcels of land at 2920 Expo Pkwy and would like to share our unique experience, perspective and concerns from over 13 years of advocating for a trail system in the Grant Creek Valley.

GCTA's first safety concern about the proposed rezone and development regards the constrained egress out of Grant Creek (a Wildland-Urban-Interface area). During the initial planning phases of the Grant Creek Trail (GCT), GCTA and Missoula Parks & Rec researched multiple options to keep the trail within public right of way. We discovered Grant Creek Rd.'s (GCR) position between riparian, creek and hillside areas makes it physically impossible in some locations and fiscally irresponsible in others to align a non-motorized trail along GCR. Minimally, we found adding a shoulder to GCR was also a non-starter for the same reasons. The physical and geographical constraints of GCR have also stopped a trail extension from GCT's south terminus at Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

As a consequence, egress out of Grant Creek (the *only* way out for residents and *only* way in for emergency vehicles) is limited to a narrow, winding and problematic two-lane road with no shoulder and little to no feasibility for widening. In the event of a major wildfire in the valley, one vehicular accident in any of the constrained sections of road would not only prevent safe evacuation but also prevent emergency vehicle access. The proposed rezone and development would nearly triple the current population of Grant Creek north of I-90, exacerbating these issues. We submit that this situation is not consistent with Missoula Growth Policy Goal SW-10: "Ensure the security of Missoulians through the development of well prepared and responsive emergency and disaster services and infrastructure."

Another principal concern is the safety of trail users and non-motorized travel. The GCT intersection with Stonebridge Rd provides limited protections for pedestrians and bicyclists attempting to cross. Non-motorized traffic then moves onto GCR intersecting Expo Pkwy with even fewer protections. The safety of non-motorized residents and visitors will be directly impacted if the number of vehicles on these intersecting east-west streets rises significantly.

GCTA's third safety concern regards the Bluebird Trailhead planned for the existing lower Snowbowl parking area east of GCR and north of Town Pump. All users of the Bluebird trailhead and conservation land coming from west of GCR will have to cross GCR for access or be relegated to driving to the trailhead. If the rezone application is approved, the estimated 1,800 additional residents and their vehicles will make crossing GCR by foot or bicycle even more treacherous than it already is.

Finally, GCTA is concerned that the proposed rezoning and development includes minimal green space for lawns, play areas and parks. GCTA supports Missoula Growth Policy Goal SW2: "Missoula will grow and sustain parks and open spaces to provide safe and accessible places for outdoor activities and view sheds, each important to health and wellness." A new development nearly tripling the population of Grant Creek without any public parks is not consistent with the spirit of Goal SW2.

In summary, GCTA supports the current zoning of the property at 2920 Expo Parkway and is opposed to the proposed rezoning.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dave Cotner", is written over a blue horizontal line.

Dave Cotner, GCTA Board Member