

**MISSOURI-MADISON RIVER FUND RECREATION PROJECT
FY2025 GRANT APPLICATION FORM**

Project Name: River Drive Connection

Reservoir or River Segment: Black Eagle Reservoir County(ies) Cascade

Site Name (or project location): River's Edge Trail – Great Falls

Applicant Name: Olivia Hollis

Position and Agency: Trails Coordinator – City of Great Falls Park and Recreation

Telephone: (406) 791-8984

Email: ohollis@greatfallsmt.net

Project Sponsor Name: Kevin Vining

Position and Agency: Parks Manager – City of Great Falls Park and Recreation

Telephone: (406) 791-8982

Email: kvining@greatfallsmt.net

Project Cost Breakdown and Financial Request:

Complete the financial section below by providing total project cost (to the nearest dollar), contributions by applicant and cooperators, request for NorthWestern Energy match of agency funds (see detailed instruction), and River Fund Grant request. Document in-kind contributions by public agencies for determination of NorthWestern Energy match request. A description of funding sources and in-kind contributions should be included in the Project Description.

Total project cost:	<u>\$187,750</u>	
Applicant Contributions – cash	<u>\$4,176</u>	
Applicant Contributions – value of in-kind:	<u>\$6,000</u>	
Other Contributions – Please list by source:		
River's Edge Trail Foundation	<u>\$38,000</u>	
	<u>\$</u>	
	<u>\$</u>	
	<u>\$</u>	Percentage of Total Project Cost:
Total Applicant and Other Contributions:	<u>\$48,176</u>	<u>26%</u>
NorthWestern Energy Match Request:	<u>\$10,176</u>	<u>5%</u>
River Fund Grant Request:	<u>\$129,398</u>	<u>69%</u>
Proposed Project Implementation Period:	<u>2025 Construction</u>	

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1. Has this project been previously submitted for funding consideration by the River Fund Board, either as a separate project or part of another project? x Yes No

If yes, please identify which years the application was submitted and, if the project was previously funded, list the amount funded by year.

An application for this project was submitted in FY2024, but was not funded in order to spread funds to additional needs.

2. **Project Description:** Provide a description of the proposed project. Be sure to include specific project elements that are planned, and any associated cost detail.

- ▶ This project would reconstruct a 700 lineal foot segment of the River’s Edge Trail. The existing 33 year old asphalt would be replaced with durable, long-lasting, 5” reinforced concrete. This project would bridge a gap between a segment that was upgraded to reinforced concrete through the River Fund in 2021 and an upcoming Montana Department of Transportation Project. A detailed cost estimate and conceptual design are included with this application, provided through the in-kind services of TD&H Engineering (pages 8-9). Additionally, an accessible concrete picnic table and concrete access pad would be added along this very scenic and centrally located trail.

This segment of the trail is a high priority for improvement for several reasons:

As one of the oldest remaining original sections of trail, the poor current condition creates costly and time consuming maintenance. This upgrade will reduce operating and maintenance costs for the Park & Recreation Department, and is a one-time expense which will increase accessibility and improve safety on the trail.

This portion of the trail is also centrally located near the historic downtown, a new mixed-use development which includes 83 apartments, several parks such as the Skate Park and Water Park, and the Weissman Trail Bridge which connects the downtown area with the west side of the river and the Fairgrounds. It is part of an important and wide-reaching trail connection.

The community is heavily invested in this area. There are 8 art installations along this stretch— donated by the community. The Flower Growers Club volunteers weekly to maintain the River’s Edge Trail Native Plant Garden along the trail, and has leveraged grant funding to install native plants. Additionally, the River’s Edge Trail Foundation has more than doubled its matching funds for this project to show strong local support. Through private donations, the Foundation also funded the purchase and installation of a flashing crosswalk nearby, and another will be installed at the water park crossing directly connected to this portion of the trail.

Lastly, this would coincide with other development and community investments in the area. This project would connect with the upcoming MDT trail, which is a long-awaited safety improvement for the trail which currently has a confusing route and crosses 4 busy streets and 2 active rail lines. By building on that development we can further leverage funds from the federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality program, state DOT, City, and private donations from the citizens and local businesses in Great Falls through the River’s Edge Trail Foundation. That upcoming multi-million dollar connection will enhance this trail corridor and increase visitation. Moreover, the new development across the street will provide housing in the downtown area that’s walkable to downtown and West Bank Park to attract young people to this part of the city and help drive economic development and community activity—also increasing use on this section of trail.

3. **Project Phasing:** Briefly discuss whether the project could be phased over more than one year or construction season.

▶ Ideally, to keep costs down, the project would be completed within one year. Design would commence upon grant award, with construction anticipated for the summer of 2025. Phasing this project would drive up the total cost due to an increase in material costs as well as repeated mobilization. The costs for this project have increased by more than 12% in one year according to the in-kind estimate provided by a professional engineer.

4. **Cultural Resource Management:** Cultural Resource Management (CRM) requirements for any activity related to this Project must be completed and documented to NorthWestern Energy as a condition of awarded River Fund grant funds or NorthWestern Energy matching funds. Grant and matching funds may not be used for any land-disturbing activity, or the modification, renovation, or removal of any buildings or structures until the CRM consultation process has been completed. Agency applicants must submit a copy of the proposed project to a designated Cultural Resource Specialist for their agency. Private parties or non-governmental organizations are encouraged to submit a copy of their proposed project to a CRM consultant they may have employed. Private parties and non-governmental organizations may also contact the NorthWestern Energy representative for further information or assistance. Applications submitted without this section completed will be held without any action until the information has been submitted.

Summarize how you will complete requirements for Cultural Resource Management.

▶ The CRM requirement will be met by documenting consultations with SHPO and the City of Great Falls Historical Preservation Officer.

5. **Scoring Criteria.** Respond to the following Scoring Criteria. Put answers in the cell after ▶.

5.1 Does the project occur at a 2188 license site?

▶ Yes

5.2 Project is for operation and maintenance of an existing recreation site. Describe if the project will meet operation and maintenance needs. Higher points awarded to projects that are higher priority and are not a recurring expense. Lower points awarded to projects that are low priority and/or have been previously funded. It is unlikely that the timeframe of River Fund would address emergency operation and maintenance needs but could support non-emergency operation and maintenance needs.

▶ This project reduces maintenance requirements for Park and Recreation and is not a recurring expense. The City Park & Recreation Department maintains and operates the River's Edge Trail, and pavement maintenance is the most significant annual and long term expense obligation for the trail. Replacing this existing 33 year old asphalt with durable and long-lasting concrete will help meet the City's operation and maintenance requirements for the Trail for decades to come.

The trail pavement replacement directly correlates with reducing maintenance costs for this 2188 project site. Concrete trail replacement is a one-time cost that will have a life expectancy of 50 to 100 years. The River's Edge Trail Maintenance Plan stresses the need to replace the aging asphalt trails with concrete in order to reduce operations and maintenance needs and improve accessibility.

5.3 Project involves collaboration with other agencies or organizations. Identify project partners other than NorthWestern Energy or River Fund, if any, and describe their participation. Document all funding sources and all in-kind support and services to a project, because all are sources of partnerships and in-kind contributions from public agencies qualify for calculation of NorthWestern Energy matching funds. If there are no project partners, explain why.

- ▶ Development, maintenance, and operation of the River's Edge Trail is carried out through a strong, long term partnership between many stakeholders including, among others, several City Departments, MDT, Montana State Parks, the River's Edge Trail Foundation, local advocacy groups, many volunteers, and NorthWestern Energy. Partners and participation in this project include:
 - The River's Edge Trail Foundation is providing public support and \$38,000 cash, more than double last year's committed funds, which demonstrates the high level of support and urgency for this project. These funds are raised from private local donations by Great Falls community members and businesses who love the trail.
 - City Agencies will provide \$4,176 in cash and \$6,000 of in-kind planning services, engineering support, and administration of the 2188 Project.
 - TD&H engineering provided the preliminary design for the project and coordinated the design with the upcoming MDT trail connection as an in-kind service.
 - Local advocacy groups are providing grant writing services and broad public support.
 - While not directly related to this trail segment, MDT is providing right-of-way permission and funding for the upstream segment of the Trail that this project connects to.

5.4 Project provides a benefit to public recreation in the Project Area and addresses specific issues and goals of the Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan (CRP). Identify how the project provides a benefit to public recreation and describe how the project specifically addresses issues and goals in Chapter 2-1 of the CRP.

- ▶ By restoring the trail to a smooth, durable surface, the River Drive Connection project aligns with CRP goals including:
 1. ***To provide safe and well-managed recreation sites and dispersed use areas that provide enjoyable user experiences across a spectrum of opportunities and seasons.***

This is a popular, all-season trail segment that many types of recreationists enjoy year-round. The upgrade will enhance the recreational experience and safety. Currently, because of the poor surface condition, the Park & Rec Department has to mark potholes and roots with spray paint as a safety precaution for events such as the annual Ice Breaker Race. This project will restore the aging trail section to a safe, low maintenance recreation site that will appeal to users who have avoided this area due to the degrading trail conditions. Overall, concrete trails are proven to be easier to maintain during the winter and eliminate costly and time-consuming maintenance associated with asphalt trail surfaces, resulting in a site that's safer and easier to manage well.
 2. ***Continue to improve and expand recreation opportunities that offer universal accessibility.***

Universal accessibility is at the forefront of all Park and Recreation operations and projects. This project will enhance accessibility as well as safety for cycling, walking, rollerblading, and using strollers or scooters. Adding the accessible concrete picnic table will help open this scenic and popular location to people using wheelchairs, in a section of the trail that does not currently have any accessible facilities.

5.5 Project responds to a clearly identified need. Describe and document the need for this project and how the project would address that need. Cite specific sources, as possible, to establish need and support the project. Discuss consequences if the funding request is unsuccessful. For a new

construction or acquisition project, identify how post-project, long-term costs (such as site maintenance and management) will be provided.

- ▶ This segment of trail was identified as a high priority section for replacement with concrete during a trail audit conducted on 2/16/23. The audit assessed nearly the entire 20 miles of asphalt trail within the Great Falls city limits. Participants in the audit included representatives from the City Engineering, Planning, and Park & Recreation Departments. Other agencies included members of MDT, FWP, and the River's Edge Trail Foundation. The results of this collaborative audit demonstrate the need for this project and consensus regarding the conversion to concrete.

Also, the River's Edge Trail Maintenance Plan lists pavement maintenance as the most capital intensive activity associated with trail maintenance, and recommends "... full depth replacement of deteriorated asphalt with more durable concrete. Costs to replace with concrete are considerably higher than asphalt but the added quality and durability are invaluable." Following that recommendation, this project will address the degraded trail condition segment with a long-term, durable solution.

The City of Great Falls Park and Recreation Master Plan includes a statistically valid survey with input from over 3,000 residents. Among all Park and Recreation facilities in Great Falls, Trails scored the highest in usage (68%), need (77%), and priority (48%). This project will address the clear demand to improve the River's Edge Trail as identified in the Master Plan.

The project area will be maintained by the Park and Recreation trail crew and park staff year-round. Efforts will follow the City's adopted River's Edge Trail Maintenance Plan. The Trails Division budget currently supports only routine maintenance of the trail system. If grant funds are not awarded, the Department will not have sufficient funds to complete the project and would have to seek alternative funding and delay the project.

5.6 Project design options have been considered, estimated, and a preferred design selected. Well-designed projects reduce occurrences of budgetary overages, design changes, and additional complications. Discuss the current design phase for this project, demonstrate that the project has been well vetted, and include cost estimates.

- ▶ A Conceptual Design of the project is included in the application. Detailed design would proceed upon award of project funding. The design was developed by an engineer who has worked on many similar trail projects and was created in consultation with all project stakeholders. Cost estimates were prepared from recent similar project bid results.

The chance of complications or design changes is very limited considering the project requirements. Right-of-way is available, and permitting requirements are similar to the adjacent project successfully completed in 2021.

If there is an efficient way to conduct this work during the upcoming MDT project, in order to reduce the number of trail closures, the City will coordinate that effort. However, it would likely present a number of challenges and stipulations that would ultimately drive the cost of this project up.

5.7 Project supports or protects other resources and is consistent with or supports resource plans in the Project Area. Describe how this project will protect resource values (such as public access, water quality, fisheries, wildlife, habitats, and cultural resources) and support other resource and agency plans, including Project 2188 License plans and land use and land management plans in place in the Corridor. Management plans should provide justification for the project.

- ▶ This project will protect public access to the riverfront, and meets the second goal noted in the *Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan* which states “Land and Water based recreational values and opportunities associated with the river will be created, preserved and enhanced, including public access to the river.” This project will preserve and enhance a popular and central location for river access.

This project also addresses multiple goals from the most recent *Great Falls Growth Policy Update* including:

- Maintain and enhance the Missouri River, River’s Edge Trail, its values, and heritage for perpetuity
- Maintain and enhance the River’s Edge Trail
- Maintain open space opportunities, trees and fresh air for all to enjoy

The River’s Edge Trail is also documented in the *Montana State Trails Plan* and supports the Urban Trails goals including:

- More local trails, greenways, and trail connections for recreation and transportation in, around, and between Montana’s populated urban areas
- Develop urban trail linkages between residences, parks and other recreational facilities, schools, historic and cultural sites, open space, shopping areas, and other important community destinations.

Enhancing this section of trail will allow users to visit and engage with interpretation and cultural resources such as the historical Tourist Park garden and walls, and history of the former Cataract Mill. The project is located within the *Great Falls Railroad Historic District* which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. This project will improve user experience when visiting many of the contributing buildings and structures on the Register that can be accessed by the trail.

- 6. Insert map(s) showing the location of the proposed project, drawings and design work related to the project, and a reasonable number of photos (as available) here.

Current asphalt trail surface condition photos



Trail surroundings, Weissman Trail Bridge, historic Milwaukee Station, garden & murals



PRELIMINARY CONSTRUCTION COST ESTIMATE

River Drive Connection

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT PRICE	ESTIMATED TOTAL PRICE
101	Mobilization	1	LS	10,000.00	10,000.00
102	Traffic Control	1	LS	4,000.00	4,000.00
103	Remove Existing Asphalt	7020	SF	2.00	14,040.00
104	Reinforced Concrete Trail - 5" Thick	7020	SF	15.50	108,810.00
105	Tree Protection	1	LS	1,000.00	1,000.00
106	HC Picnic Table and Slab	1	LS	2,400.00	2,400.00
107	Site Restoration	1	LS	3,500.00	3,500.00
108	Miscellaneous Work	1	LS	16,000.00	16,000.00
109	Engineering and Const Administration	1	LS	28,000.00	28,000.00

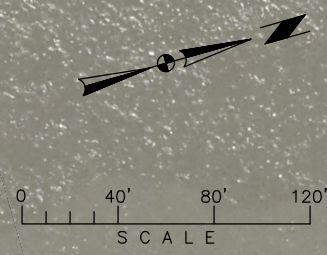
Total Estimated Construction Cost **\$187,750.00***

Prepared By: 

Date: Aug-24

*Due to significant construction inflation, the cost of this project has increased by roughly 12% from last year's application.

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NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

REV	DATE	REVISION

TD&H
Engineering
406.761.3010 • tdhengineering.com
1800 RIVER DR. NO. • GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59401

DRAWN BY: CDF
DESIGNED BY: JPJ
QUALITY CHECK: JPJ
DATE: 2023-09-08
JOB NO. FIELDBOOK

RIVER DRIVE CONNECTION
RIVER'S EDGE TRAIL, GREAT FALLS MT
PROPOSED TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

PROPOSAL.DWG
FIGURE 1

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