

Community Forests: A path to prosperity and connection

FOY'S COMMUNITY FOREST

NOTABLE BENEFITS



RECREATION



TOURISM

ACRES: 170

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2012

OWNERSHIP: Flathead County, Montana

MANAGEMENT: Foy's to Blacktail Trails

COMMUNITY SERVED: Flathead County, Montana

POPULATION: 103,806

TOTAL ACQUISITION COST: \$920,000

FUNDING BREAKDOWN:



■ Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

■ Cost Share

For a comprehensive review of the community and economic benefits provided by this forest and others, go to the full report at www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests

U.S. FOREST SERVICE



When Flathead County acquired Herron Memorial Park in 1977, it gained much more than a 120-acre natural park—it gained what would become an anchor for land protection efforts by the community. Trail enthusiasts started organizing in 2001 to protect public access to lands from Herron Park to Blacktail Mountain. The **Foy's Community Forest**, which was created in 2012, secured critical access for the community and expanded the trails in and around Herron Park. The network of trails in the region provide exceptional recreational opportunities for the community's rapidly growing and changing population, while supporting the increasingly important tourism economy and local business community. By investing in this trail system, the U.S. Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP) protects a key recreational opportunity for residents and maintains the quality of life that residents and visitors know and love.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY FOY'S TO BLACKTAIL TRAILS





Promoting economic development: Local economic development organizations realize the value of conserved lands and trails to creating a community where people want to live. Kim Morisaki, the business development and marketing director for the Flathead County Economic Development Authority and Montana West Economic Development, explains that “Visitors and locals alike enjoy the miles of biking trails like the rugged Foy’s to Blacktail Trail or the much anticipated Linear Park and Trail through the heart of Kalispel. As Americans continue to move to amenity-filled areas that allow them to live, work and play all in one place, communities that invest in trails and other attractions will continue to see growth.”

Enabling recreation: Herron Park and the surrounding trail network are used extensively for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and running. Various events take place on the trail system each year, including several running and mountain biking events, like the Herron Hustle, Wild West Cyclocross Race, Herron Half Marathon, 10 K and 5 K races, and the Foy’s to Blacktail Trail Marathon. In fact, according to Foy’s to Blacktail Trails, Herron Park receives approximately **150,000 visits** each year, with 75 to 90 percent of visits made by local residents. The Trust for Public Land estimates that the value of trail use is **\$2.3 million** per year for residents.

Bolstering tourism: Economic activity is also spurred by the spending of nonlocals who come to the area to enjoy amenities like the Foy’s Community Forest and the larger tapestry of recreational opportunities. According to Diane Medler, the director of Discover Kalispell, “The availability of trails in town is critical for residents, as they place a high value on access to outdoor recreation, and for visitors as they look for these types of outdoor amenities when planning to explore the natural world. We support and promote the Foy’s to Blacktail Trail system... because it makes our destination a great place to live, work, play and visit.”

In fact, an estimated **15,000 to 32,000 visits** of the Foy’s to Blacktail Trail System are made by nonresidents, who spend **between \$3.4 million and \$7.1 million** in the local economy. While not every visitor came exclusively to visit Herron Park and the larger trail system, these amenities are a part of what attracts visitors to the region, which contributes to this economic impact.

Enhancing property value: The local real estate community recognizes the importance of these amenities like Foy’s to Blacktail Trails. Erica Wirtala, the public affairs director for Northwest Montana Association of Realtors explained that “Montanan’s of all ages and backgrounds can appreciate and value accessible public lands. Proximity to trails, whether in urban or wilderness settings, has consistently shown to increase the overall worth of property.”

This project was completed in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and would not have been possible without generous support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

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