



MISSOULA DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT  
MISSOULA DOWNTOWN FOUNDATION

Local & State Media  
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## **15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL RIVER CITY ROOTS FEST - AS WE KNOW IT - TO BE RE-IMAGINED**

With a regional draw and national lineup of bands from across the country, the 15<sup>th</sup> River City Roots Festival will not take place in the streets of Downtown Missoula this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. Initially slated for August 28-29, the 2020 Roots Fest will not be possible in its current state.

Given the current pandemic, the Missoula Downtown Association (MDA) and its Roots Fest Planning Committee will look for other ways in which to celebrate Missoula and will pivot the festival to allow for smaller groups of attendees, local entertainment, and implementation of the reopening guidelines in a responsible way.

Since 2006, Roots Fest has served as Missoula's signature celebration and welcome festival for University of Montana students and their families. Roots Fest typically draws around 15,000 attendees from all over the country and features live music on Main Street, a juried art show, a four-mile fun run, local food and beverage providers, and the family fun fest in Caras Park. Funded by business sponsorships and vending fees, Roots Fest is admission-free and accessible for all.

"The health of our community is a number-one priority," said Bob McGowan, President of the MDA Board of Directors. "We recognize and appreciate the value of events that draw people together in celebration, and we want nothing more than thousands of people dancing in the streets of Downtown. However, we also understand we must be prudent in our actions and do all we can to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 in our community."

Some ideas the Roots Fest Committee members are exploring include volunteer and outreach projects such as a river restoration project, tree watering, or neighborhood outreach. Other ideas might include a virtual festival, a multi-venue, mini-festival, or the replay of previous lineups. Additional ideas and suggestions from the community can be directed to [info@missouladowntown.com](mailto:info@missouladowntown.com).

"By the time we get to the end of August, I think our community will need a break from COVID," said Ellen Buchanan, MDA Board Members and Chair of the Roots Fest Planning Committee. "However, this year's Roots Fest – as we know it – will not be a mass gathering of people dancing in the streets to live music from all corners of the country."

“Even though the virus has not impacted Montana or Missoula nearly as badly as most of the rest of the country,” Buchanan said, “it is impossible to predict where we will be in August. It’s essentially impossible to continue planning for a large community gathering in the streets under the current conditions. So, we will creatively re-imagine a River City Roots Festival that is more localized, smaller in size, and more meaningful in this current state of affairs.”

Buchanan and the Roots Fest Committee was slated to announce the 2020 Main Stage lineup, Art Show artists and food vendors in late April. More than 20 Missoula-area businesses were already committed to sponsoring the festival. As the committee works on pivoting Roots Fest, its focus on Missoula, sustainability, our roots, and the river will remain at the forefront.

“Festivals and events are an important part of who we are as a community,” said Linda McCarthy, Executive Director of the Downtown Missoula Partnership. “They are part of our culture and our economy, and they bring people and life to the streets and parks of our city center. They highlight creativity, stimulate commerce, and introduce this special place to newcomers, both residents and visitors. We will find new and energizing ideas to celebrate this place we love during this most difficult time, and we will be thoughtful and responsible in our offerings during this pandemic.”

For more information on River City Roots Festival, visit [www.rivercityrootsfestival.com](http://www.rivercityrootsfestival.com) or contact the Downtown Missoula Partnership Office via email ([info@missouladowntown.com](mailto:info@missouladowntown.com)) or phone (406-543-4128).

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