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### **Hundreds celebrate McEuen Park dedication**

It was a day that has been decades in the making. McEuen Park in downtown Coeur d'Alene officially opened to the public on Saturday, with all of its attractions ready for the first time to be enjoyed by a community thrilled with its newest gem.

“It really is a wonderful day to be a resident of Coeur d'Alene,” Mayor Steve Widmyer told a large gathering at the Grand Plaza overlooking Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Numerous officials—including engineers, architects, planners and landscapers—applauded the efforts of all those involved with the 20-acre park transformation.

But the day belonged to the community; to those who will enjoy the park for generations thanks to the vision, determination and commitment of so many.

“It’s absolutely awesome; the change is excellent,” said Jennifer Snyder of Coeur d'Alene as she watched dozens of kids splashing and smiling on the colorful water features of the splash pad. “What an awesome place for people of all ages.”

Scott Lyon of Spokane rode his bicycle to Coeur d'Alene to experience the dedication. “It was definitely worth the trip,” he said. “We have parks in Spokane ... but nothing like this.”

Among those speaking at the dedication was former Coeur d'Alene Parks Director Doug Eastwood, who was instrumental in engaging the public and seeing the vision for McEuen Park become a reality.

“What I see here today is a park that is most likely to be one of the most noticed parks in the Pacific Northwest, if not the country,” Eastwood said. “Great parks make great cities—it’s not the other way around—and that’s what we have here today.”

Former Mayor Sandi Bloem emphasized that the city listened to thousands of citizens through the McEuen Park planning process. While the community is excited about its new park, Bloem suggested people listen to what the park itself might say.

“It would say, I have so many friends of all ages because there’s something for everyone. It would say my disadvantaged friends get to participate and enjoy all parts of the park because it’s ADA accessible. It would say thank you for making such an incredible use out of this space,” Bloem said.

Dean Haagenson, owner of Contractors Northwest, Inc., the primary contractor for the job, said his firm has been involved with more than 700 projects since 1975.

“No project gives us more satisfaction than this park.” Haagenson said.

Largely funded by the city’s urban renewal agency, the Lake City Development Corporation, McEuen Park will withstand the test of time, said LCDC board chairman Denny Davis.

“Starting today, this new McEuen Park will be a memory-maker for people and families for generations to come,” he said.

But there is also an important economic factor to building a world-class park, Davis added.

“Make no mistake about it. This park will attract job creators and will encourage them to grow their businesses here in Coeur d’Alene,” Davis said. “It will help to draw young families to Coeur d’Alene’s traditional neighborhoods, keeping them vibrant.”

Construction of McEuen Park was a sometimes contentious issue. But those who spoke on Saturday agreed that in the long run, the spectacular park will draw the community together.

“The road that brings us here today was a little long and at times bumpy,” said acting Parks Director Bill Greenwood. “My belief is that it will build bridges for us all, even for those who had difficulty grasping the vision of what we see today.”