

SOUTH BILLINGS MASTER PLAN

INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND PLACES



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Big Sky Economic Development Authority (BSEDA)

Building Blocks Day Care

Community Leadership and Development Inc. (CLDI)

ConocoPhillips

Friendship House

Guadalupe Church South

Home Builders Association

Hanser's Automotive

Intermountain Distributing

Knife River

Little Flower Church

Living Water Church

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MSU Bozeman – Nutrition & Education

Mid West Motors

Mountain Motor Equipment
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01

INTRODUCTION



Introduction

OVERVIEW

This forward-looking Master Plan for the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District (SBBURD, or the District) defines a Vision that will guide future investments in infrastructure, place-making, and people. The Master Plan promotes health, safety, and neighborhood resiliency. It advocates for safe neighborhoods, empowerment of people, and healthy lifestyles. It supports a more robust business climate for national retailers and manufacturers, local businesses, and even micro enterprises and entrepreneurial programs with a social mission.

The Vision respects the heritage of South Billings, integrates the content of the 2007 South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal Plan, and reveals opportunities that can be realized through investments in programs, projects, partnerships, planning, and—most importantly—people.

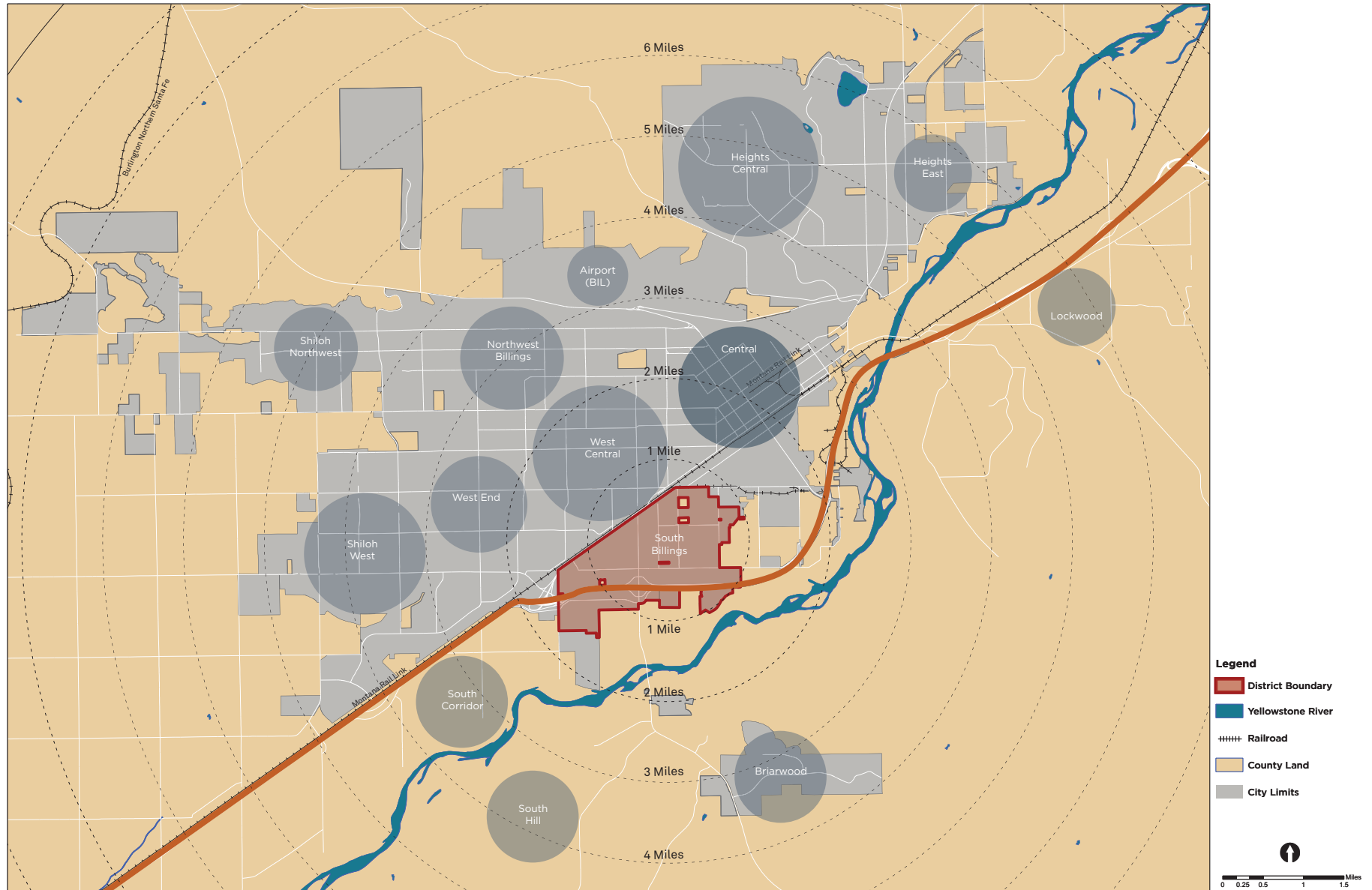
Recommendations presented in the Master Plan address community and economic development investments as well as infrastructure improvements; these recommendations recognize that education, empowerment, and preservation of culture and the environment are as essential as streets, utilities, and public services to maintaining quality of life, sustaining a healthy community, and supporting a durable economy.

This plan focuses on creating strong, connected, and diverse neighborhoods where current and new residents and businesses can coexist and prosper in a place with an identity that will retain and continue to attract visitors and new investors.



Community members, stakeholders, and local partners helped shape the Vision of the Master Plan for the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District.

VICINITY MAP



PLANNING CONTEXT

LOCATION

Located within the City of Billings, Montana, the SBBURD study area is bordered on the south and east by unincorporated lands in Yellowstone County and industrial and commercial districts to the north and west (see map to the left).

Centrally located, the 1,633-acre urban renewal district is approximately 2 miles southwest of the Central Business District center, less than 1 mile north of the Yellowstone River, adjacent to the West Billings Interstate 90 (I-90) interchange, and connected to one of region's largest commercial corridors, King Avenue. East of the District lies unincorporated farmland and the Western Sugar Cooperative Factory and ConocoPhillips Refinery, both long time employers. The SBBURD is one of the larger urban renewal districts in the state, with the potential to become a regional and local destination for commercial services, recreation, and employment all within walking distance of new, revitalized, and established and affordable neighborhoods.

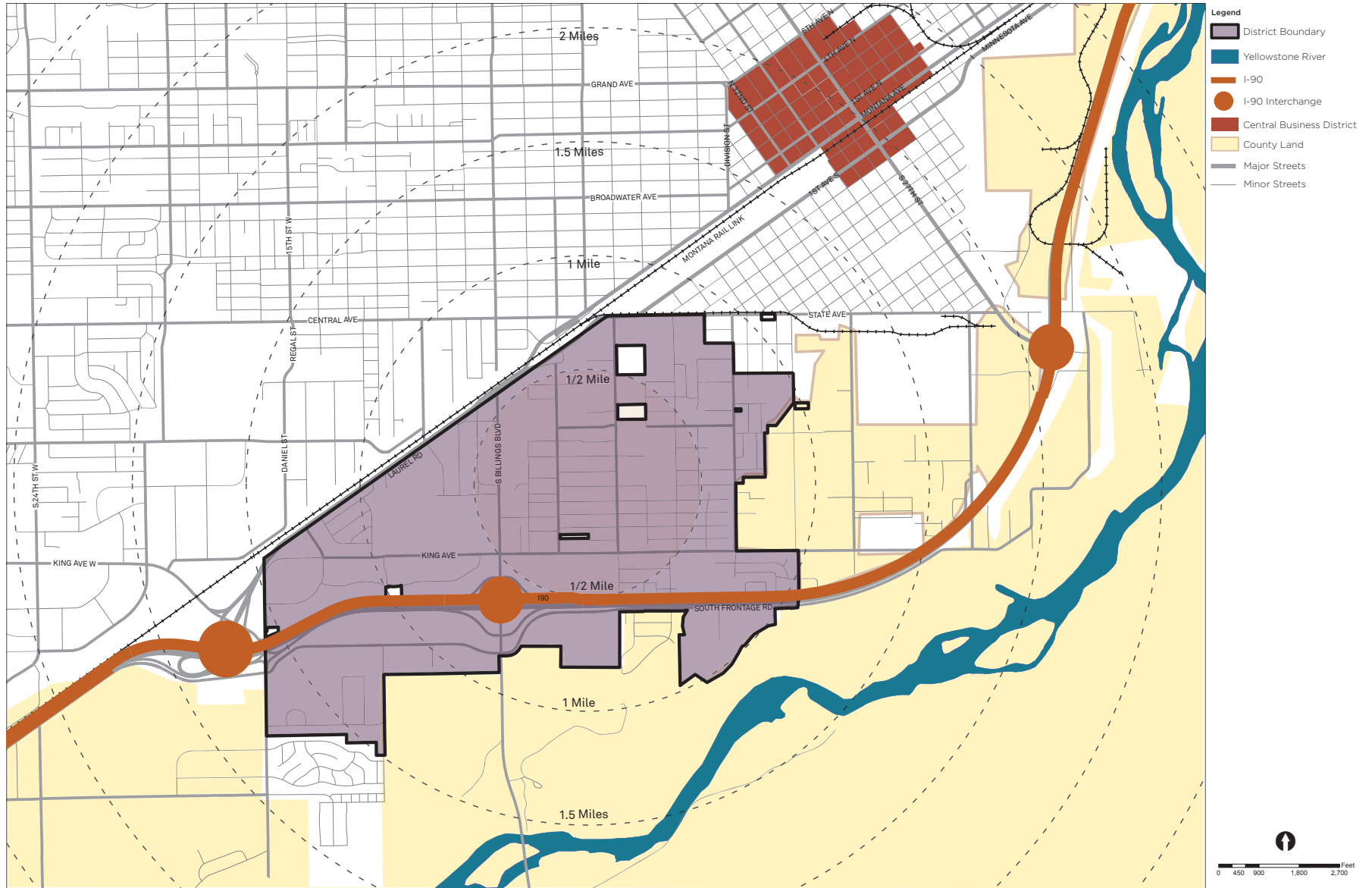
PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS

South Billings is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse areas in the City of Billings, with a variety of engaged stakeholders. The longstanding Southwest Corridor Task Force represents residents' interests. The more recently formed South Billings Urban Renewal Association (SBBURA) includes members of many South Billings businesses, property owners, and residents. Several nonprofits, faith-based, and community organizations are working with residents to improve the neighborhoods, increase access to services, improve educational opportunities, reduce homelessness, and provide local employment options. Community activity and identity are centered on the parks, churches, public schools, and the Boys and Girls Club.



Community activities and identity are centered on the parks, churches, public schools, and the Boys and Girls Club.

DISTRICT CONTEXT



ACCESS

The District is bisected by I-90, with access available from the South Billings I-90 interchange within the District and the West Billings/King Avenue/I-90 interchange just west of the District. The District is bordered or intersected by several arterials: South Billings Boulevard, King Avenue, Laurel Road, State Avenue, Midland Road, and South Frontage Road. Although intended to provide local access and travel between neighborhoods, the existing network of collector streets is incomplete, missing important east-west connections, sidewalks, and pathways. The District is served by MET Transit, with routing designed primarily around the public school schedules.

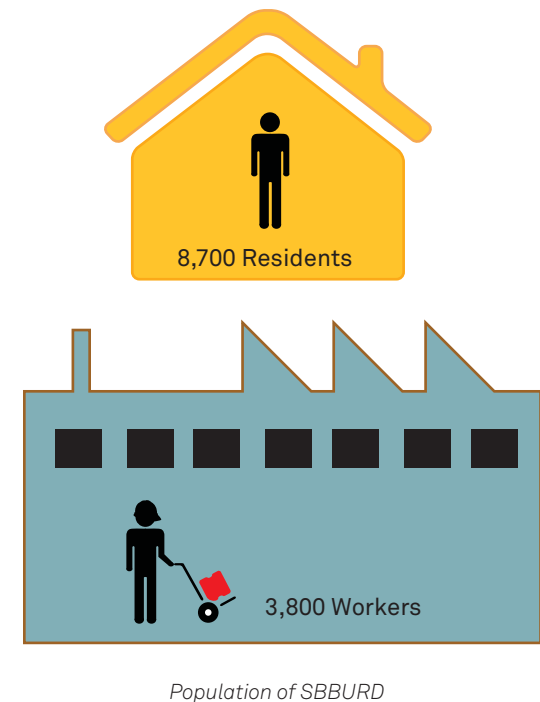
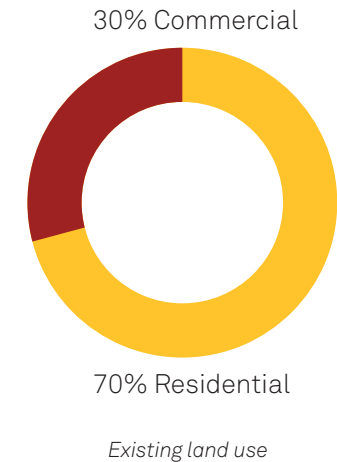
LAND USE

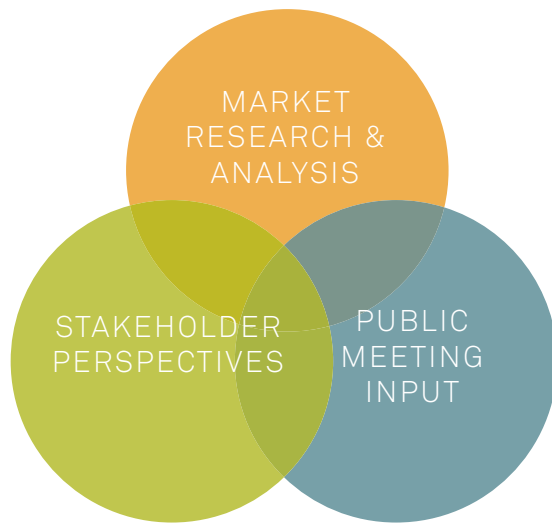
Land use in the District is diverse and is currently made up of about 70% residential and 30% commercial development, with several opportunities for infill and reinvestment. Recent commercial development along the interstate and South Billings Boulevard has increased the taxable value significantly in the District, but portions still suffer from disinvestment and infrastructure deficiencies. Most of the residential areas consist of modest, affordable single-

family homes on 6,000 to 7,000 square foot lots. Interspersed throughout the District are pockets of multi-family units, manufactured home parks, and vacant land. The neighborhoods qualify as low to moderate income by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards. Recent Census data show that about 8,700 people live in the District, and 3,800 people work in the District.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT (TIFD)

In 2007 and 2008, the City of Billings and Big Sky Economic Development Authority (BSEDA) worked with property owners, businesses, and residents in the South Billings neighborhoods to create the 1,633-acre South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District (SBBURD). This process established one of the largest tax increment finance districts (TIFD) in Montana, providing a designated source of funding to invest in projects that will regenerate and encourage investment within the District.





The process was designed to balance stakeholder engagement and the public process with research and technical analysis to develop an exemplary and achievable plan.

FOCUSED PLANNING OBJECTIVES

In early 2011, the City of Billings hired a consultant team led by AECOM to partner with community members to prepare a Master Plan for the neighborhoods within the District. Objectives of the planning process were to:

- Achieve consensus on a long-term Vision for the District.
- Develop a comprehensive Master Plan with implementation strategies and a Marketing Plan.
- Plan to leverage investments to maximize the benefit and growth of the TIFD revenue.
- Quantify and document the needs and costs of neighborhood and infrastructure improvement projects.
- Establish priorities for infrastructure and neighborhood investment.

APPROACH

PLANNING TEAM

The planning team included local and nationally recognized consultants, community leaders and neighborhood representatives, City planning staff, and representatives from economic and community development organizations. The consultant team, local

engineers, and planners provided local knowledge, community connections, and familiarity with plans, policies, and development standards. National consultants provided fresh perspectives, economic and market research, case studies, and innovative ideas on approaches to planning, funding, investment phasing, and implementation.

BALANCE PERSPECTIVES

A spatial analysis was conducted using geographic information system (GIS), relying on City asset inventories and property tax databases to evaluate physical, social, and economic assets and opportunities. The findings focused on trends, needs, and deficiencies and are described in greater detail in Chapter 2 and the appendices of this Master Plan. These analyses, coupled with market research, stakeholder interviews, and meaningful public outreach, provide a balanced perspective that informs both the near term and long range recommendations found in the Master Plan.

GRAY, SOCIAL, AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Rather than focus solely on the much-needed street and utility infrastructure projects, the Master Plan advocates for placemaking, complete streets, and environmental enhancements to create attractive and enduring neighborhoods. The planning process addressed the importance of social infrastructure, exploring strategies to empower neighborhoods and promote prosperity, social equity, and health.

The Master Plan recognizes the importance of maintaining and improving community centers, parks, schools, and continuing education. A variety of community champions, including educators and health care and social service providers, provided vital perspectives on the people and processes already underway. The CLDI (Community Leadership & Development Inc.) explained the group's strategy as follows: "to change the landscape one lot at a time" by building parks, planting trees, and providing youth training and employment opportunities.

Another memorable quote is "[build this neighborhood] with us, not without us," inferring that improvements that only address new development or that would inadvertently

gentrify the District could significantly impact existing residents and businesses for the worse. It was clear early on that existing residents could be empowered to improve their own lives and existing businesses to expand and thrive with thoughtful guidance and support.

Efforts to "green the neighborhood" are underway, and the Master Plan can contribute by strengthening the partnerships, engaging neighborhood residents, and advocating for trees, artist and farmers markets, and access to healthy foods, as well as policies and programs that address environmental clean-up and resource protection.

AFFIRM PRIORITIES

The Master Plan includes a prioritized list of capital projects and a list of recommended programs, policies, and planning. Both lists were developed based on input received throughout the planning process. Investments were prioritized considering the project goals and prioritization criteria. Goals and criteria were developed in consultation with the Steering Committee and the public, as documented in greater detail later in the plan.

The project evaluation matrix is included in Appendix A. The initial lists of priorities were further refined during the November community and Steering Committee meetings and recommendations are summarized in Chapter 5.

“BUILD THIS
NEIGHBORHOOD
WITH US, NOT
WITHOUT US”

PLANNING PROCESS

WORK PLAN

Guided by a work plan that was approved in April 2011 by a ten-person Steering Committee, the planning process included abundant opportunities for people to participate, contribute, and learn. The consultants were available throughout the process to listen, learn, discuss ideas, and present findings. The process was designed to balance stakeholder engagement and the public process with

research and technical analysis to develop an exemplary and achievable plan—a plan that could be implemented over time using TIFD revenue to match other funding sources and/or to supplement programmed capital projects.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

The City, the Steering Committee, SBBURA, and the Southwest Corridor Task Force publicized and promoted awareness of the planning process. Before each public event, postcards were mailed, public service announcement made, Facebook® and electronic notices sent, and posters displayed. Throughout the year-long process, an interactive website (www.southbillings.com) accommodated e-mail registration and notifications, comments, sharing of information and review of studies, meeting minutes, and public presentations.

Engagement activities included six Steering Committee meetings; four community workshops; several smaller meetings with business and real estate interest groups, social service and health care providers, representatives of faith communities, the schools, and nonprofits; and direct coordination with community and economic development agencies.



The planning process was guided by a work plan that included abundant opportunities for people to participate, contribute, and learn.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The City hosted several public workshops, open houses, and other events including:

- **May 19, 2011**
Evening workshop at Ponderosa Elementary School to introduce the planning process, review goals, and learn about needs.
- **June 23, 2011**
Evening workshop at the Moose Lodge to discuss a Strategic Vision and opportunities.
- **September 29, 2011**
Afternoon open house to engage the community in conversations and evening workshop to present and evaluate options, and determine preferences using electronic polling equipment.
- **November 17, 2011**
Evening workshop to present the draft Master Plan and gain input on investment priorities using electronic polling equipment.

Throughout the project, the consultant team maintained a website and Facebook® page to ensure that the community had access to the reports, presentations, contact information for the Steering Committee and consultants, and a calendar of events. All presentations,

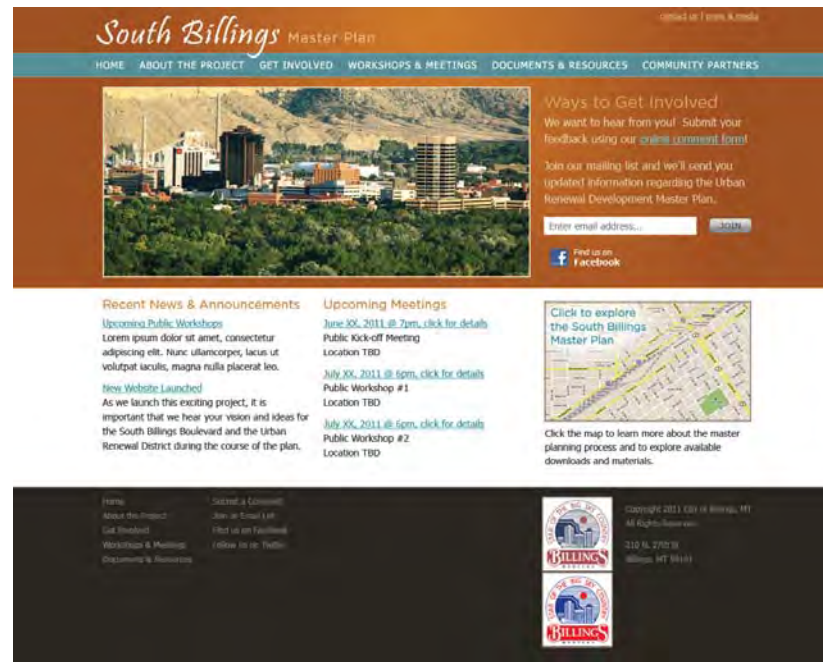
case studies, meeting minutes, and interim reports were and continue to be available for review and download at www.southbillings.com.

POLICY GUIDANCE

The Master Plan is informed by and builds upon a variety of existing policy documents and

studies. Plans, policies, and studies reviewed include and are not limited to the following:

- Yellowstone County and City of Billings 2008 Growth Policy Update
- SBBURD Urban Renewal Plan
- City of Billings Subdivision Regulations
- City of Billings Unified Zoning Code
- City of Billings Safe Routes to Schools Plan
- 2010 Billings Housing Needs Assessment
- 2010-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Billings Area Trail and Bikeway Master Plan
- City of Billings, Southside Neighborhood Plan
- Billings Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2008
- City of Billings (FY 2012- FY 2016) Capital Improvement Plan and Modifications
- South Billings Boulevard Master Plan



Public awareness of the planning process was raised through an interactive project website, Facebook updates, mailings, and posters.

ONE DISTRICT, FOUR NEIGHBORHOODS

A visitor’s first impression of South Billings is likely of a place that is difficult to access, hard to understand, and home to disparate uses. More careful study reveals several neighborhoods, each containing several subdivisions.

The patterns of the lots, streets, and uses suggest that the District developed over several years, evolving from agriculture to small farmsteads and workforce housing (1940s–1960s), followed by highway commercial and industrial uses (1950s). In the 1960s, construction of I-90 and the removal of the Washington Avenue Bridge disconnected South Billings from the Yellowstone River. Improvements to South Billings Boulevard and the construction of the South Billings interchange in the 1990s made land on either side of the interchange attractive for commercial development, with Cabela’s and Sam’s Club the most recent additions.

The Master Plan recognizes the District as four distinct neighborhoods: Amend Village, Four Corners, Optimist, and Orchard. Each has its

own mix of uses, distinct character, and unique assets, challenges, and opportunities.

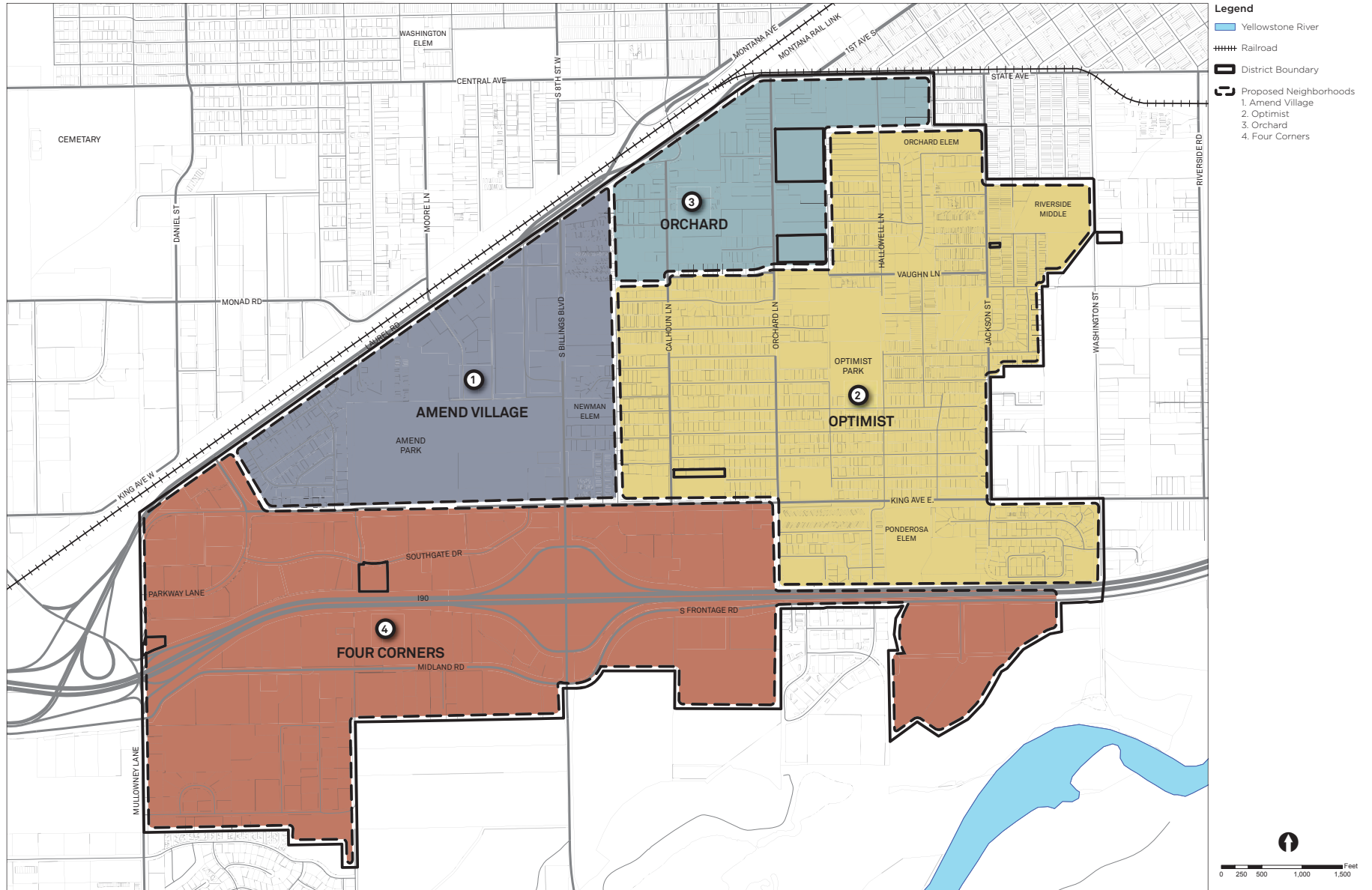
The delineation of each neighborhood’s boundaries was informed by current use and zoning, parcel lines and ownership, and anticipated or envisioned future land uses. The boundaries may be further refined as the neighborhoods evolve. More significant than

the specific boundaries is the recognition that the greatest opportunities to create vibrant community places and village or town centers occur at edges, where the neighborhoods meet or overlap and the greatest mix of uses intersect.

ONE DISTRICT, FOUR DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhoods	Regional Services	Community Services	Neighborhood Services	Employment	Single Family Housing	Diverse Housing
Optimist	●	●	●	●	●	●
Orchard	●	●	●	●	●	●
Amend Village	●	●	●	●	●	●
Four Corners	●	●	●	●	●	●

NEIGHBORHOODS



GOALS

The following goals developed with input from the Steering Committee are tailored and specific to the SBBURD. Each goal is supported by an active statement that defines one or more desired outcomes. Recommendations in the Master Plan were developed and are evaluated and prioritized considering these goals and other evaluation criteria that emerged during the planning process.

01

Neighborhood and District Repositioning
Make SBBURD a desirable destination for reinvestment.

02

Connect and Green
Create walkable neighborhoods, multiple use greenways with pathway connections, and integrated drainage.

03

Complete the Neighborhood
Provide better streets and more diverse housing choices.

04

An Identifiable Place
Develop a high quality community with strong character, true to its place and sensitive to context.

05

Engage People who Live and Work Here
Achieve a simple and clear Vision with the agreement of property owners.

06

Integrated Sustainability
Address economics, ecology, culture, and social strategies across multiple scales.

07

Reinvest and Expand Infrastructure
Ensure the availability of City sewer and water, and complete streets with integrated stormwater and expanded transportation choices.

08

Reduce Blight and Encourage Reinvestment
Encourage public and private partnerships to find interim and long-term uses of vacant or underutilized land.

OUTCOMES

PRAGMATIC VISION

The resulting Master Plan is both visionary and pragmatic, presenting a Vision and Planning Framework for the whole District with a supporting Neighborhood Visions, Plans, and Recommendations for each of the four neighborhoods. Sketches and photos are included to illustrate a few of the many identified opportunities. The Planning Framework guides decision making, the Vision Statement(s) reveal possibilities, and the Implementation Plan identifies near, mid, and long-term actions that consider current real estate and investment market realities and can adapt to unanticipated changes.

THE WAY FORWARD

Transforming the District into a vibrant, pedestrian, mixed-use area is achievable over the long term. In the near term, this will require commitment, connections, and incremental and strategic investments and actions to sustain the engagement of multiple stakeholders and to maintain the political will needed to realize the Vision.

HOLISTIC SOLUTIONS

The planning process recognized that the District and its neighborhoods will be improved through investment in the following:

- **Projects:** Coordinated private investment and public capital improvement projects addressing utilities, complete streets, public facilities, and public amenities.
- **Policies:** Focused on health, safety, sustainability, and resiliency – linking social equity and health sustainability.
- **Programs:** Addressing employment, housing affordability, food access, housing and transportation choices, and community engagement.
- **Partnerships:** Between public and private sectors and including non-governmental organizations and nonprofits.
- **Planning:** Additional planning to refine policies, development and conservation guidance, and regulations.
- **People:** Investment in people to facilitate meaningful and rewarding participation in the community for the transformation of the District...one lot at a time.

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION

The following Master Plan chapters describe a long range Vision and include detailed lists of capital improvement projects, programs, and policies. The recommendations are informed by the public process as well as by research and analysis. The Implementation Plan is focused on incremental progress, recommending near term and long-term actions and investments. The process included a variety of stakeholder engagement opportunities as well as review of existing plans, programs, and policies and extensive technical analysis and research.

CONTENTS OF THE MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan document is organized into six chapters. Following this Introduction, Chapter 2, District Opportunities, Constraints, and Key Findings summarizes key findings related to the District's opportunities and constraints. Chapter 3, District Vision and Recommendations, describes the proposed Planning Framework for South Billings, presenting the overall Vision and District-wide concepts and recommendations for infrastructure, land use, community services, amenities, and connections. Supporting visions, opportunities, and recommendations for each of the four neighborhoods—Amend

Village, Four Corners, Optimist, and Orchard—are presented in Chapter 4, Neighborhood Visions and Recommendations. Chapter 5, Implementation, provides guidance for achieving the Master Plan and includes a description of TIFD funding capacity and anticipated revenue, funding sources, and a list of priority investments in capital improvement projects, programs, policies, and planning. Chapter 6, Conclusions, is a synthesis of key messages embedded throughout the plan.

02

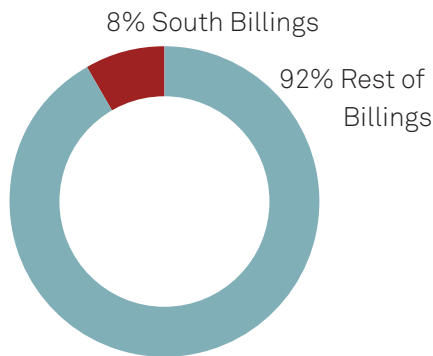
KEY FINDINGS



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District Opportunities, Constraints, & Key Findings

The analysis evaluated the economic, physical, and social environments of the South Billings area and identified key challenges and areas of opportunity to position the District for reinvestment and improve quality of life, health, and safety. Recurrent issues include connectivity, infrastructure, attractiveness and identity, and health, safety, and wellness.



Total Existing Population (2010)

ECONOMICS / MARKET FORCES

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

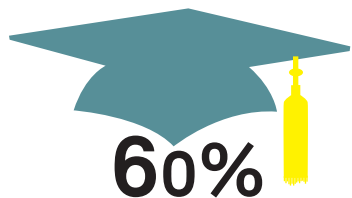
As identified in the November 2011 market conditions analysis, the South Billings population grew at about half the rate of all population in Billings over the last two decades (refer to Appendix B). South Billings is generally more racially and ethnically diverse than the overall population of Billings. South Billings residents generally have fewer years of education, have lower incomes, and are more likely to live below the federal poverty line than all of Billings' population.

South Billings' population grew slower over the last 20 years than overall growth in the City. Billings is Montana's most populous city and is larger than any city in a 500-mile radius, with about 106,500 people in 2010. The population has grown at an annual rate of just over 1% for the last 20 years, adding more than 21,000 people over the last 21 years. About 8% of Billings' population is located in the District, with about 8,700 people in 2010. Over the last 20 years, South Billings grew about half as quickly as the City of Billings, adding about 900 new people.

South Billings' population is more racially and ethnically diverse than the City's population. The City of Billings is predominantly white, with the most common racial minorities being American Indian (5% of population in 2010), Black (1% of population), and other races (6% of population). About 6% of Billings' population is ethnically Hispanic or Latino. Racial minorities are more prevalent in the South Billings area, with the most common minority groups being American Indian (10% of population in 2010), Black (3% of population), and other races (9% of population). About 11% of South Billings' population is ethnically Hispanic or Latino.

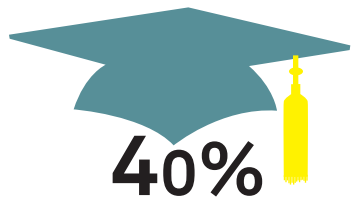
South Billings' population has lower educational attainment than the City's overall average. More than one-quarter of people in the City of Billings have a Bachelor's degree or higher, and about 40% have a high school diploma or less educational attainment. Ten percent of South Billings' residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 60% have a high school diploma or less educational attainment. One of the common themes from stakeholder interviews was that finding skilled workers was difficult in South Billings.

CLASS OF BILLINGS



Have high school diploma or less education

CLASS OF SOUTH BILLINGS



Have high school diploma or less education

South Billings' household income is lower than the City's average. About 50% of Billings' households earn less than \$50,000, compared with 65% of households in South Billings. About 7.7% of Billings' families were below the federal poverty line, compared with 10.9% of South Billings' households.

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of the economy in Billings, Yellowstone County, and the larger surrounding region affect economic opportunities in South Billings. The mix of firms in Billings is generally indicative of the types of firms that may locate in South Billings (refer to Appendix B).

Yellowstone County's employment growth outpaced the state and the nation since 1970. Between 2000 and 2010, employment in Yellowstone County increased from nearly 65,000 in 2000 to more than 75,000 in 2010, an increase of 15% (about 10,700 jobs). The sectors accounting for nearly 60% of employment growth were Health and Social Assistance, Retail, and Accommodations and Food Services. In comparison to the average wage in the county (\$38,000 per year), only Health and Social Assistance has above average wages (averaging \$46,500 per year).

Billings is the regional employment center in Yellowstone County. In 2010, the Billings area had about 56,800 employees, accounting

for about three-quarters of employment in Yellowstone County. The District had about 3,800 employees or about 7% of Billings' employment.

Billings is a nexus for energy production, an important part of the economy in Billings and Montana. Montana has the largest coal reserves in the nation, with about 120 billion tons, is the nexus for several oil and gas pipelines, and has three refineries in Yellowstone County. More than 1,000 jobs in Billings are directly related to oil and gas exploration (accounting for 22% of Billings mining-sector jobs) or petroleum manufacturing (accounting for nearly one-third of Billings manufacturing-sector jobs).

Billings' unemployment rate has been lower than the national or state average over the last decade. The unemployment rate in the Billings Metropolitan Statistical Area shows seasonal variation, but has generally moved downward until 2008. After hitting a low of 2.1% in late 2006, the rate rose to 6.4% in January 2011. These rates are low relative to national averages.

South Billings has a broad mix of businesses. In 2001, South Billings was home to nearly 180 known businesses. The mix of businesses includes manufacturers; warehousing and distribution; automotive, farm, and other parts

suppliers; repair shops; construction firms; regionally serving retail; convenience stores; restaurants; hotel and hospitality businesses; recreation-related businesses; personal care and fitness services; and nonprofit and religious organizations.

South Billings' mix of employment by occupation is overall similar to the City average, with variation in the mix of occupations. The most common occupations in Billings and South Billings are office and administrative support. However, South Billings has a relatively high share of transportation/moving workers and relatively fewer sales/related workers compared to the City average.

RESIDENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

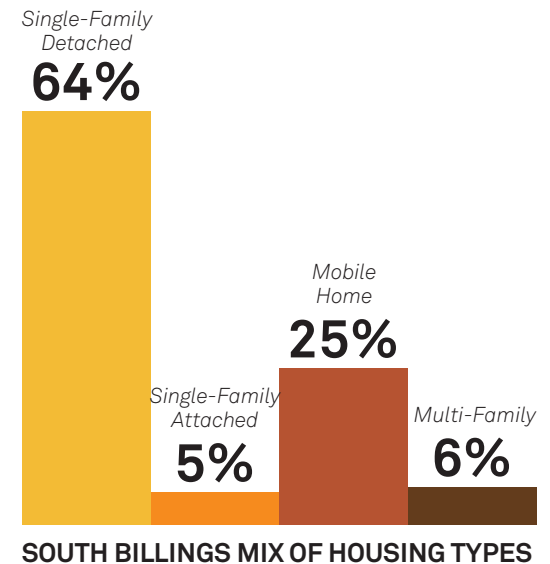
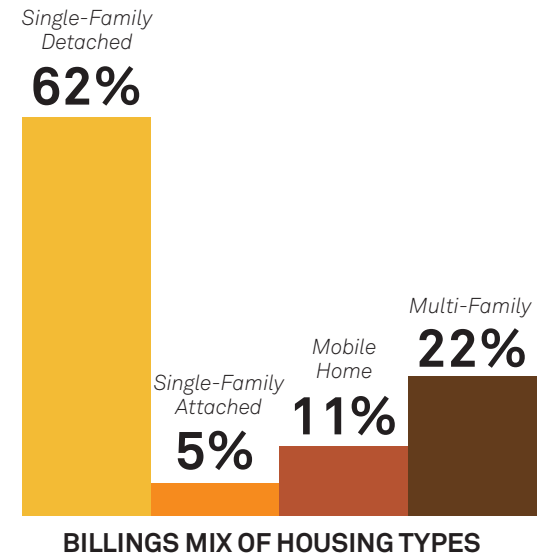
Billings has about 50,000 dwelling units, with nearly 3,500 dwellings located in South Billings. South Billings accounts for about 7% of the City's housing, the majority of which is single-family detached and owner-occupied.

From 1998 to 2010, Billings averaged about 470 new dwelling units per year. The number of permits peaked in 2003, with about 650 permits issued that year. Since 2004, the annual number of permits issued varied from about 500 permits per year to about 300 permits per year.

South Billings' mix of housing types, aside from single-family detached housing, is different from the City's average. Nearly two-thirds of housing in Billings and South Billings is single-family detached housing. South Billings has a larger share of mobile homes (25%) than the City average (11%). South Billings has a smaller share of multi-family housing (6%) than the City average (22%).

South Billings has more owner-occupied housing than the City average. About two-thirds of Billings' housing is owner-occupied, compared with three-quarters of housing in South Billings.

South Billings' housing is generally less expensive than the City average. About one-third of housing in Billings is valued at between \$80,000 and \$150,000. In comparison, less than 15% of housing in Billings is valued at between \$80,000 and \$150,000.



SOUTH BILLINGS' ABILITY TO CAPTURE POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH DEPENDS ON THE DISTRICT'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES, RELATIVE TO OTHER AREAS OF BILLINGS

GROWTH PROJECTIONS

Population and employment in the City of Billings are growing and likely to continue growing (refer to Appendix B).

Billings is forecast to grow by about 25,000 people over the next 20 years. The forecast for population growth in Yellowstone County shows the county growing by about 34,600 people over the next 20 years. If Billings continues to account for about 75% of the county's population, then Billings would grow by about 25,000 people over the next 20 years. For population, that means, in rough and round terms, an increase of about 1,300 people per year in Billings; at about 2.3 people per dwelling unit, resulting in about 550 dwelling units per year. Over the last 12 years, Billings averaged about 470 new dwelling units per year. The forecast for new dwelling units (550 per year) is higher than but relatively consistent with the historical rate of building (470 new dwelling units per year).

Employment is likely to continue growing in Billings. The forecast of employment growth in Yellowstone County shows the county growing by about 26,000 employees over the next 20 years. As the regional economic center, Billings is likely to attract the majority of job growth in Yellowstone County. If Billings continues to account for about 75% of

Yellowstone County's employment growth, the City will add nearly 20,000 jobs over the next 20 years. Depending on the type of employment, employees typically require an average of anywhere from 250 to 2,000 square feet of gross built space (in offices, stores, warehouses, and factories). Some of that employment will work out of residential space (e.g., some professional services, construction workers) and will not require new employment space. As a rough estimate, the expected employment growth for Billings would create an average annual demand in the City for new commercial and industrial space of 330,000 square feet or more.

South Billings Boulevard can capture a share of Billings' population and employment growth. Growth in South Billings depends on: (1) the amount of growth in the Billings area; and (2) the District's comparative advantages, relative to other areas in Billings, for capturing that growth, as described in the following chapters.

KEY ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH BILLINGS

As indicated in the November 2011 Market Conditions Analysis, South Billings' advantages and challenges, relative to the rest of Billings, will affect the amount, timing, and type of growth that occur in the District (Appendix B). This analysis focuses on the mid- to long-term market in South Billings, focusing more on longer term fundamentals than current market prices and volumes—more on the longer trends than on the business cycles.

The assessment of available demographic information and growth projections for the Billings area indicates that the character of today's real estate market is not a likely predictor of market demand in the 10- to 20-year planning horizon. In a longer planning horizon, physical and regulatory characteristics may give South Billings some advantages relative to other areas for development in the Billings region, if not overall, then for a particular development type.

South Billings' location is an advantage relative to the rest of Billings. South Billings has direct access to I-90 and is reasonably close to the amenities and commercial areas in Downtown and the West End, making the District an obvious location for additional urban development, especially for uses that prefer to

locate near I-90. South Billings is positioned to benefit from future urban growth to the south and southwest.

South Billings' access provides both advantages and disadvantages. Transportation advantages include the interchange with I-90 and State Route 212. Disadvantages include limited transportation connections with the rest of Billings and the District's incomplete street grid. South Billings is separated from the rest of Billings by the railroad tracks that run parallel to Laurel Road, along the north boundary of the District. Relatively few roads cross the railroad tracks, limiting local access. In addition, the internal street grid is incomplete, with some streets requiring reconstruction or completion.

South Billings' incomplete pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure creates disadvantages. South Billings has incomplete or nonexistent infrastructure for pedestrians (e.g., sidewalks or street lighting) and bicycle infrastructure. These deficiencies create barriers to pedestrian and bicycle use within the District and from the District to the rest of the City.

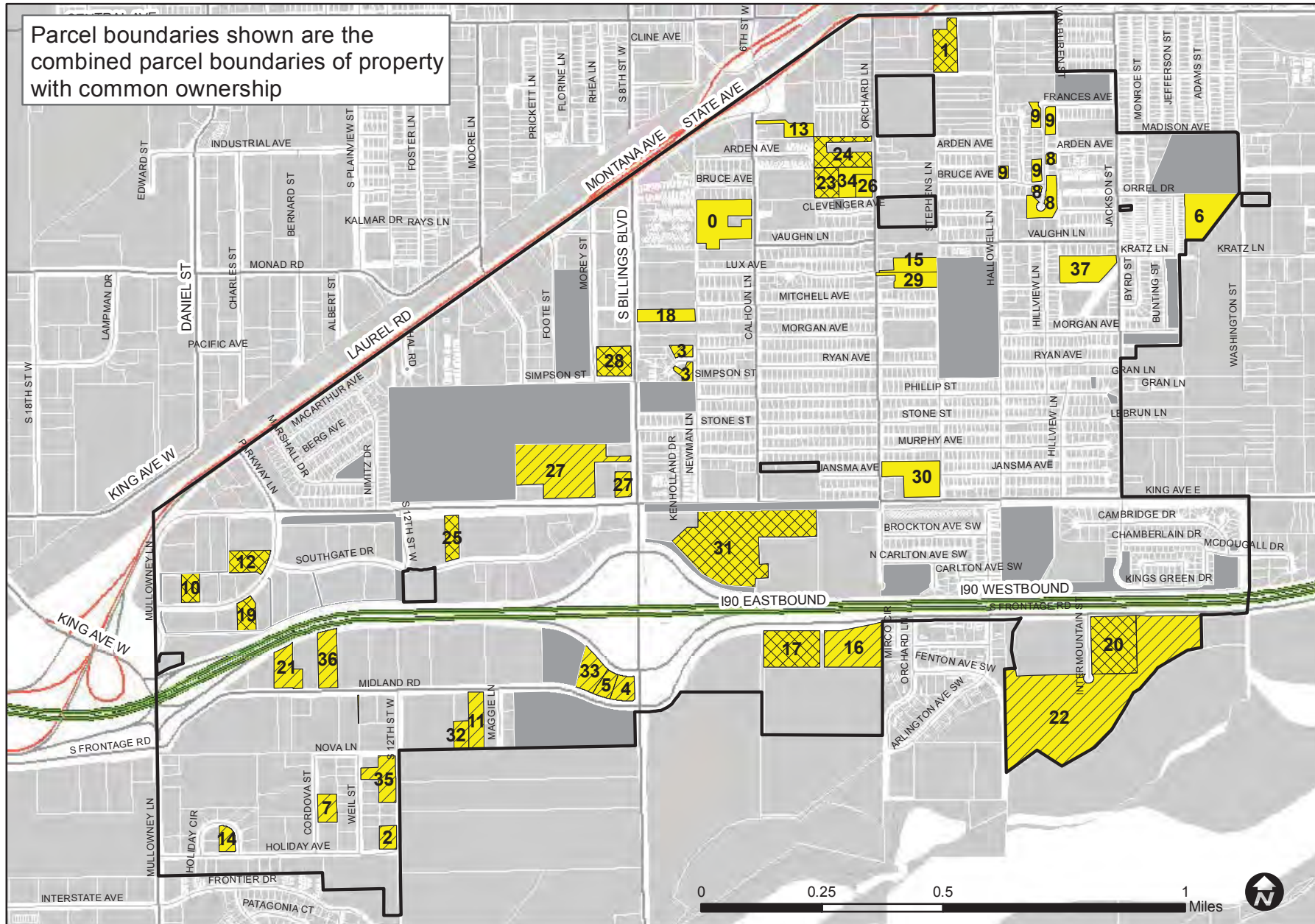
Infrastructure deficiencies are mostly related to streets in poor streets and generally poor storm drainage. There are a few that were



Incomplete pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle infrastructure is a key challenge to existing and future development.

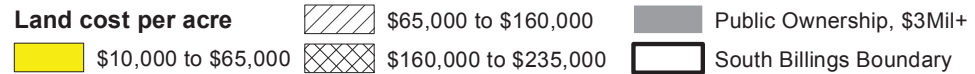
VACANT PARCELS

Parcel boundaries shown are the combined parcel boundaries of property with common ownership



Largest vacant land parcels in South Billings, by land value

Source: City of Billings GIS Parcel.shp, 2010



annexed into the City and are still served by septic systems and wells, however City services is available if the property owner agrees to pay the connection and service fees. Generally the area is well served by water and sanitary sewer with main lines in place that include the capacity to provide service to all existing, infill and new development.

Areas with deficient infrastructure are highly unlikely to develop further until the deficiencies are addressed. The areas with complete (or nearly complete) infrastructure will develop sooner.

South Billings has a mixture of uses, some of which can create compatibility issues. Existing uses in South Billings include industrial uses (e.g., warehousing and distribution and manufacturing), commercial uses (e.g., regional retail, local retail, hotels, restaurants, and self-storage), residential uses (e.g., single-family houses, mobile home parks, and townhouses), public uses (e.g., parks, schools, and government offices), and various nonprofit uses (e.g., Boys and Girls Club, religious institutions, etc.). For the most part, commercial, residential, public, and nonprofit uses are generally compatible, especially if traffic from large-scale retail is not routed through residential neighborhoods. The biggest compatibility issue is between industrial and

residential uses, with problems around truck traffic in neighborhoods, and noise and odor issues that affect nearby residences.

South Billings' land base creates opportunities for future development, with some challenges. Vacant lots are typically considered more attractive as opportunities for redevelopment in the short term because they present fewer barriers and costs, such as the relocation of existing businesses and demolition of existing structures. Established businesses or residential areas are sometimes considered less likely to redevelop while there are other, more attractive sites in the area. The map to the left shows vacant industrial, commercial, and residential parcels larger than 1 acre in South Billings. South Billings has about 170 acres of vacant parcels. The average vacant parcel size is about 1 acre, with seven parcels larger than 5 acres and two 13-acre parcels. The proliferation of small lots can create a need to assemble land for many types of office, commercial, and residential projects.

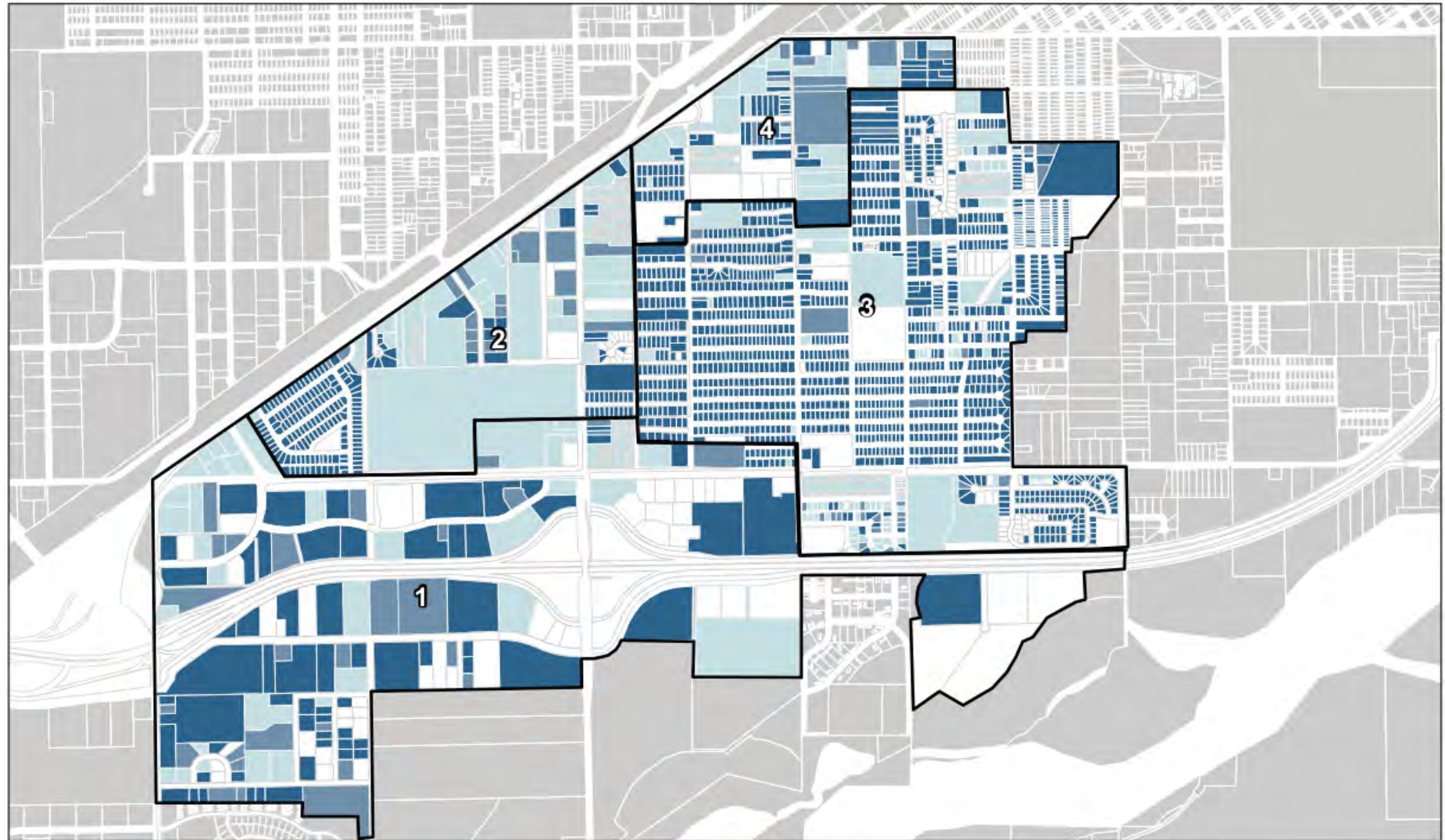
South Billings' commercial and industrial land costs are lower than land costs in other parts of the City, but amenities are also more limited in South Billings. Commercial land in South Billings costs about \$4 to \$5 per square foot, in comparison to \$8 to \$10 per square foot in areas such as Zoo Drive. Commercial

and industrial rents are also lower in South Billings than in other parts of the City. In general, commercial and industrial land in the District has a value of \$250,000 per acre or less, with most land valued at \$150,000 per acre or less. In comparison, commercial and industrial land in the West End generally has values between \$150,000 and \$1,000,000 per acre, and \$200,000 or more per acre in other parts of Billings. Although land prices are lower in South Billings, amenities in the District are also less than in other parts of Billings, making South Billings less appealing to potential residents and businesses.

South Billings' residential land values are also lower than land values in other parts of the City. In general, residential land in the District has a value of \$200,000 per acre or less, with most land valued at \$150,000 per acre or less. In comparison, residential land in other parts of Billings is generally valued at \$200,000 or more per acre, with substantial areas valued at between \$250,000 and \$500,000 per acre.

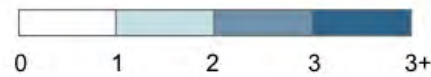
South Billings has redevelopment potential. Lots with existing development may redevelop over the next 20 years, as infrastructure and other improvements increase land values. The map on the following page shows the improvement to land value ratio for all properties in the District, which is an

IMPROVEMENT TO LAND VALUE RATIO

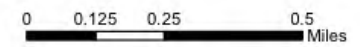


**Improvement to land value ratio
for all properties, South Billings**

Source: City of Billings GIS Parcel.shp, Tax Assessor 2010



Proposed Districts



indicator of redevelopment potential for land with existing development. Parcels with a low improvement to land value ratio (i.e., parcels where the improvement value is less than or equal to the land value) are more likely to redevelop than parcels with a high improvement to land value ratio. For example, a parcel with an improvement to land value ratio of one (i.e., where the improvement value is the same as the land value) has more redevelopment potential than a parcel with an improvement to land value ratio of three (i.e., where the improvement has three times the value of the land).

In summary, relative to other areas of the City, South Billings has the advantage of excellent access to and visibility from I-90, proximity to Downtown and West Billings, and a supply of lower priced buildable lands (including several parcels about 10 acres in size). Disadvantages include incomplete sanitary sewer and transportation infrastructure and incomplete or lack of sidewalks or bike paths. In addition, while land costs in South Billings are somewhat lower than in other parts of Billings, the amenities in South Billings are also less, making South Billings less appealing to potential residents and businesses.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH BILLINGS

South Billings is a relatively underperforming area of Billings. Over the past 20 years, residential development in South Billings has occurred at less than half the pace of the City of Billings (refer to Appendix B). Residential development opportunities include the following.

RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

Over the next 20 years, South Billings may have an average of 20 to 40 new dwelling units built per year. Residential development in the City of Billings is expected to add an average of 550 dwelling units per year. Right now, South Billings has about 8% of Billings' population living with the District. If 8% of new growth each year went to South Billings, that would be about 44 dwelling units per year. But South Billings has not had the same rate of growth for population as the City as a whole; over the last 20 years, its population has grown at about ½ the rate for Billings as a whole. That would cut the number of new dwelling units per year to 22.

South Billings' residential development is likely to be slow over the next few years. With current market conditions, demand for residential development is greatly reduced. Residential development in Billings for the last 3 years

has been down to a small percentage of its historical average. South Billings is getting a small share of that substantially reduced residential growth.

South Billings is unlikely to attract development of large residential subdivisions or large, expensive houses. The market for residential development in South Billings is mainly infill development, on parcels generally smaller than 10 acres. In the next 5 or more years, the types of development that are potentially feasible are single-family units about 800 to 1,100 square feet on lots around 6,000 square feet, with a one-car garage.

South Billings offers limited near-term opportunities for multi-family housing. Building multi-family housing will be difficult based on feedback from developers and brokers: (1) existing zoning limits multi-family density to about 10 dwelling units per acre; (2) the neighborhoods in the District oppose most types of attached housing; and (3) there may not be market demand for attached housing in the District. Given current market conditions, public subsidy and changes to land use codes are necessary to make attached housing with modest density (e.g., 12 to 20 dwellings per net acre) feasible.

IF SOUTH BILLINGS CAPTURES 7% OF BILLINGS' NEW EMPLOYMENT, THE DISTRICT WOULD GROW BY 1,400 JOBS OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

The District has long-term opportunities for employment growth. Employment development opportunities in South Billings include the following.

South Billings is likely to have growth of 700 to 1,400 jobs over the next 20 years. Over the next 20 years, average job growth in Billings is expected to be about 20,000 new jobs. Right now, South Billings has about 7% of Billings' employment. If South Billings captures about 7% of new employment, the District would grow by 1,400 jobs over the next 20 years, requiring about 465,000 square feet of new built space. If South Billings grows at ½ the rate of Billings, the District would capture 700 new jobs, requiring nearly 230,000 square feet of new built space. This estimate for new commercial and industrial built space may be optimistic, especially in the current economic climate.

South Billings' job growth will occur unevenly, as businesses locate or grow in the District. Employment growth in South Billings will occur unevenly over time, with the areas that have characteristics that appeal to potential employers (e.g., good roads,

sewer and water service, etc.) developing sooner. The employment sectors with the greatest opportunity for growth in Billings are agricultural services, energy production and services, regional medical services, and warehousing and distribution.

Retail and services will grow as Billings' population increases and visitor counts increase. Growth in South Billings will be affected by the presence of existing businesses that serve the larger region, such as Sam's Club or Cabela's, as well as businesses that serve visitors, such as the hotels and conference facilities.

South Billings' growth is likely to locate near I-90 in the near term. The area along I-90, centered around the intersection of South Billings Boulevard and King Avenue East, is generally the area most likely to grow soon. The types of development that will occur in this area are similar to what is currently there: commercial, retail, and industrial.

The neighborhood has ample vacant or partially vacant land to accommodate growth, including the site with Cabela's and areas north of King Avenue East. South of I-90, several vacant sites about 10 acres in size, as well as

some smaller sites, provide opportunities for larger scale development, including industrial uses, back office functions, hospitality, or large-scale retail uses that require a large site and/or highway visibility. Some sites are likely to redevelop over the next few years while others may redevelop further into the decade.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

South Billings has areas with promising development and redevelopment opportunities. The District has several large vacant parcels that could accommodate new commercial or industrial development, as well as redevelopment opportunities, including: (1) available sites along Midland Road, (2) some of the public as well as private sites around Amend Park, (3) along Orchard Street approximately from Optimist Park to State Avenue, (4) the triangle at the intersection of Laurel Road and King Avenue East, and (5) other redevelopable areas within the District.

A number of parcels will not redevelop until the market can support greater density, which would make redevelopment financially feasible. These areas are more likely to develop sometime beyond the next 3 to 5 years and may need to wait until infrastructure improvements are completed.

South Billings may attract limited mixed-use development. Mixed-use development will depend on improvements in the District. Developing a village center or building vertically integrated mixed-use (e.g., a building with retail on the first floor and housing on the upper floors) will require improvements to infrastructure, land use accommodation for more multi-family housing by right to support the mixed use, and development of other amenities to make the District more attractive. Mixed-use is more likely to develop 7 to 10 years out or more.



The energy production and services sector is a potential area for employment growth.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

South Billings has many assets that provide a foundation for future growth and prosperity. Commercial uses are easily accessible from major highways and arterials, neighborhoods are close to major employers and to the Central Business District, there is abundant affordable housing, utilities generally have adequate capacity, and great schools and parks are within walkable distances from the neighborhoods. However, the area is somewhat fragmented and isolated from the larger community, and there is structural deterioration and long-term land vacancy.

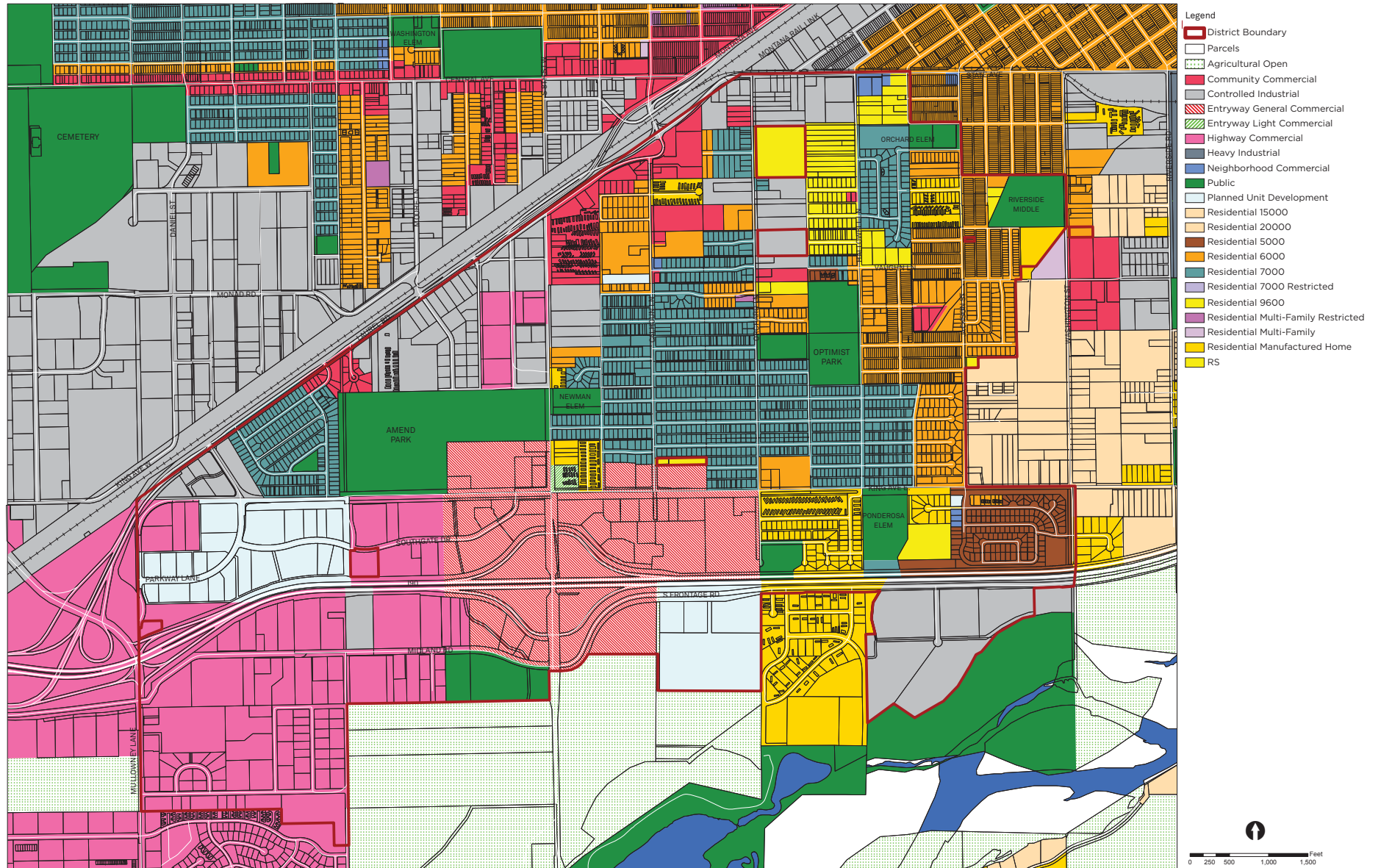
Key challenges faced by the District include improving connectivity, creating more diverse housing choices, providing parity in infrastructure, and creating a more attractive environment. The opportunity in addressing these challenges is the elevation of the overall quality of life for residents and business owners alike, and the positioning of South Billings for redevelopment and reinvestment. The following summaries of District elements are supported by spatial analysis, GIS mapping, and background information located in Appendix C.

LAND USE AND CHARACTER

South Billings has significant potential to be a thriving and diverse place. It possesses established residential neighborhoods, well-positioned highway-oriented commercial areas, schools, and parks. Transitional areas include dispersed industrial areas, lack of diversity in housing types, and limited neighborhood commercial uses. The character of the District is not clearly defined through its gateways, edges, and streetscapes; enhancement of these would help establish a more positive image for residents, businesses, and visitors.



ZONING MAP



ZONING REVIEW

Zoned areas within the District include Residential, Commercial, and Industrial zoning.

RESIDENTIAL (575 ACRES)

Residential zoning allows single-family, duplex, townhomes, multi-family, and modular home uses. However, the majority of lands are zoned for single-family and duplex/townhomes. 79% of residentially zoned properties permit duplex/townhome housing types, but most multi-family uses must undergo special review.

COMMERCIAL (519 ACRES)

Commercial zoning in the District is primarily focused on highway-oriented commercial uses bordering I-90. Zoning districts include primarily Entryway, Highway Commercial, and Community Commercial and very limited Neighborhood Commercial.

INDUSTRIAL (204 ACRES)

The majority of Industrial zoned properties fall in the Controlled Industrial zoning classification. Controlled Industrial allows a broad range of commercial and industrial uses, but does not permit manufacturing or processing. Controlled Industrial zoning has development regulations that address landscaping, setback, and screening requirements; however, many properties are not in compliance with these regulations.

LAND USE

RESIDENTIAL

- The District has a mix of old and new construction, with pockets of buildings in poor condition in the northern and eastern sections.
- 83% of residential buildings are in fair to good condition, while 17% of residential buildings are in poor condition.
- Although zoning allows for a diversity of housing types, the majority of residential land uses are single-family.
- Most multi-family housing within the District requires special review, which development stakeholders indicated has been a barrier to construction.
- A greater diversity of housing types could accommodate a variety of living situations, income levels, and life stages; a greater efficiency of land uses would facilitate improved infrastructure and services.

COMMERCIAL

- The majority of commercial properties are in average to excellent condition, with only a few parcels in poor condition.
- The dominant commercial land uses in the District include highway-oriented commercial near I-90 and community commercial near Laurel Road, South Billings Boulevard, and State Avenue. Businesses on Laurel Road are diverse and reflect the transitional nature of the pre-I-90 highway corridor.
- The District is well positioned for good highway access; consequently, commercial uses reliant on access have located in the Southgate Drive, Parkway Lane, King Avenue, and Midland Road areas. Businesses in these areas include distribution, warehousing, farm and construction equipment, and other similar operations.

INDUSTRIAL

- The primarily industrial lands are located on Laurel Road, South Billings Boulevard, Orchard Lane, and the South Frontage Road.
- The Controlled Industrial zoned lands on Laurel Road and South Billings Boulevard are home to an eclectic mix of auto dealerships, automotive repair, old motels converted to rental units, and the Montana Department of Transportation maintenance facility.
- The industrial land uses on Orchard Lane generate significant truck traffic and may conflict with the surrounding residential uses.
- Many of the industrial properties fail to meet the development standards outlined in the land use regulations. These properties lack landscaping, have inadequate or inappropriate fencing, encroach upon setbacks, and have poorly located storage areas.

VACANT LAND

- Vacant lands consist of 172.7 acres, roughly 11% of the District's total area.
- The District has an ample supply of land for a diverse range of uses.
- Key opportunity sites include:
 - Corner of South Billings Boulevard and King Avenue
 - Corner of Laurel Road and Parkway Lane
 - Industrial zoned land on Orchard Lane
 - Industrial lands south of I-90 with views of Yellowstone River floodplain

ATTRACTIVENESS, CHARACTER, AND ORIENTATION

Creating communities that are unique, vibrant, diverse, and inclusive allows for businesses, residents, and visitors to positively define their neighborhoods. How the community is experienced – first impressions, a sense of “heart and soul” – is as important as the quality and character of the physical environment.

DISTRICT EDGES, STREETSCAPES, PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

Gateways to the District occur near the Laurel Road and South Billings Boulevard I-90 interchanges. Moving into the District from the north, State Avenue and South Billings Boulevard provide the initial impressions of the area. The current experience is somewhat poor, lacking definition. Enhancement of these key areas could form a more identifiable and positive image of the District.

The streetscapes and pedestrian environment vary throughout the District. Several areas are well landscaped, have good sidewalks, and are generally nice environments. Other areas are less pedestrian friendly, including perimeter corridors and interior residential streets.

CONNECTIVITY

Improvements are needed to connect the District to surrounding areas, and community and commercial services. Key challenges include improving local access into and out of the District, creating clear routes to the Downtown and to services, improving street conditions, ensuring pedestrian safety through sidewalks and streetlights, increasing transit frequency and convenience, and enhancing wayfinding throughout the District.

TRANSPORTATION

East-west street connectivity, both into and out of the District, is not clearly defined and in some cases lacking. Movement between the King Avenue commercial areas and commercial areas to the west on Laurel Road is not continuous and is difficult to navigate. Access into and out of the District from the north is also challenging. Streets leading from Downtown do not clearly connect to the collector streets in the District. Moore Lane provides access from the north, although the terminus of this street is at the soccer fields and not to one of the major collector streets. Within the residential neighborhoods, east-west circulation is limited, with no street connections traversing the entire residential neighborhood.

STREET CONDITION

Many streets in the District are in poor condition, most notably the neighborhood collectors including Calhoun, Orchard, and Hallowell. Surface drainage is also a significant issue, with many areas of standing water remaining after a storm. Several streets to the west of Optimist Park remain unpaved. Street lighting exists in the older more established residential areas but is lacking in most other residential, commercial, and industrial areas of the District, compromising pedestrian safety and contributing to crime.

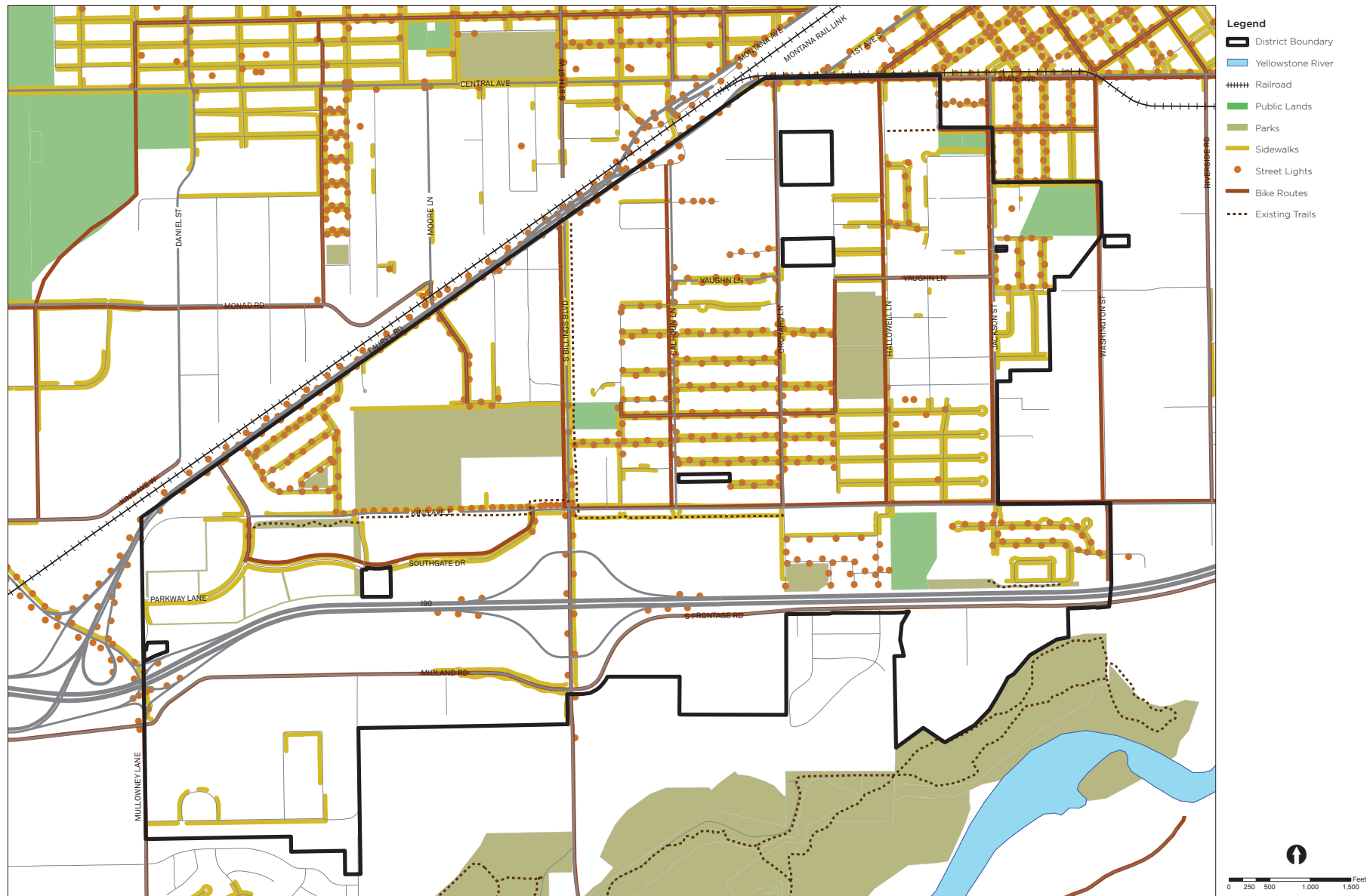
TRANSIT

Transit service reaches most areas of the District, although frequency and schedule are issues. Three routes serve South Billings, each with approximately a 1-hour frequency. Most problematic for some residents, bus service stops at approximately 6 pm, leaving those requiring transit unable to hold an evening job or to shop for household needs with few public transit options. Inadequate transit disempowers those who rely on public transportation.



Several streets in the District remain unpaved. East-west street connectivity is lacking in some cases, making movement between areas difficult.

PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY



PEDESTRIAN AND BIKE

The pedestrian environment has several pockets of few or no sidewalks. Most industrial areas and several of the residential neighborhood collectors lack sidewalks, while several blocks to the east and northeast of Optimist Park have no sidewalks at all. Laurel Road is an especially difficult area for the pedestrian to navigate with its heavy, fast-moving traffic and narrow or non-existent sidewalks. As with the street connectivity, east-west pedestrian circulation is limited within the residential neighborhoods.

A multi-purpose path was included in the reconstruction at South Billings Boulevard, although few other bike paths or lanes are provided within the District. The City recently completed an Urban Area Bikeway and Trail Master Plan, and findings from that plan are incorporated into the South Billings Master Plan.

WALKABILITY

Although the schools and parks are within comfortable walking distance for much of the neighborhoods, pedestrian safety is not adequate. The Safe Routes to Schools Plan has recently been completed, and findings from that plan are incorporated into the South Billings Master Plan. Commercial services are not walkable from large portions of the residential areas.

Through this planning effort, a walkability analysis was conducted that indicates the fragmented walking environment could be greatly enhanced by establishing or extending sidewalks or pathways in key areas to reconnect parts of the existing street grid. By doing so, walking commutes would be reduced considerably, and residents and employees would be more encouraged to walk to nearby locations, thereby increasing physical activity and improving health conditions in the District (refer to Appendix C).

GREEN SYSTEMS

A principle of smart growth is to respect the natural environment and preserve trees, parks, open space, floodplains, farmlands, and critical environmental areas. Because of its proximity to the Yellowstone River, the District should strive to minimize its impact on this important ecosystem. South Billings is a relatively flat plain with beautiful, large cottonwood trees, wetlands, and a large drainage channel running along the edge of King Avenue. Two large community City parks – Amend and Optimist – are found in the District, and just to the south of the District is the regionally significant Riverfront Park. Access to Riverfront Park is visually and physically limited by I-90. This major amenity is virtually unknown to the District, although it is literally feet away from the study area boundary and a significant opportunity for future access.

STORM DRAINAGE

Storm drainage within the District is not adequate. The relatively flat terrain and lack of street drainage infrastructure (curb and gutter, green swales) make maintaining water quality a challenge.



Generally the utility infrastructure is in good condition. However, while some areas have formal storm drainage, others lack the necessary infrastructure.

PUBLIC/COMMUNITY SERVICES

The four schools in the District – three elementary schools and one middle school – are a significant asset and generate positive identity to the neighborhoods. Other public service facilities (fire or police stations, post office) are limited. The community has expressed a desire for a community center and library. In terms of neighborhood services, the commercial focus of the District is highway-oriented and does not offer locally serving commercial retail such as sit-down restaurants, dry cleaners, pharmacies, fitness centers, health clinics, and other uses that benefit a local residential population.

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Utility infrastructure within the District is generally in good condition with sufficient capacity to accommodate growth. However, some areas are not serviced by sanitary sewer and remain on septic. Storm drainage is also an issue. The District sits in the low lying reaches of the Yellowstone River and is relatively flat. Consequently, the lack of adequate underground or above ground storm drainage systems is a significant problem for many residents.

WATER

Water systems are in good condition and have adequate capacity for future redevelopment. Within the past 2 years, new 12-inch water mains have been constructed along Calhoun Lane and Orchard Lane.

SANITARY SEWER

Sanitary sewer systems are also in good condition and have adequate capacity for existing and future growth. However, several residential blocks in the northeast area between Hallowell Lane and Jackson Street remain on septic and drainfield systems.

STORM DRAINAGE

Existing systems are in good condition and do not require any near term rehabilitation, although much of the area (Calhoun and Orchard lanes in particular) has poor drainage and standing water following storm events. The City has limited funds to address deficiencies. A recent study of the City's storm drainage funding needs identified \$165 million in deficiencies, far more than the approximately \$3 million budget. Consequently, projects are prioritized based on human health and safety issues, while projects considered more of a nuisance, such as Calhoun and Orchard

lanes, receive lower priority. Inadequate storm drainage results in quality of life issues for residents of the area and could contribute to long time residents leaving the neighborhood for better serviced areas.

More ecologically sensitive approaches to stormwater management may be an opportunity to address stormwater deficiencies in an economical way. Additional on-site treatment for both water quality and detention purposes will be required for compliance with state and federal water discharge requirements. Developing systems using alternative methods and less reliance on underground piping could reduce future capital and operations and maintenance (O&M) costs. Alternative processes to consider include rainwater capture and reuse.

PRIVATE UTILITIES

Power is provided to the majority of the area by the 8th Street substation. There is adequate capacity to serve future development. Some gas lines date back to 1954 but have adequate coverage and capacity. Fiber optics and phone also adequately service the area.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Roadway and Infrastructure improvements are underway in the District. Several Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects have been completed or are planned for the District, including the following:

- South Billings Boulevard Trunk Water and Sewer (2001)
- South Billings Boulevard Storm Drain and Force Main Installation (2004)
- South Billings Boulevard Reconstruction (2006)
- King Avenue East Water Main Project (2008)
- Orchard Lane 12" Water Main Replacement (2009)
- Calhoun Lane 12" Water Main Replacement (2010)
- Newman Lane Improvements (planned for 2013)
- Calhoun and Orchard Lanes Overlay (planned for 2012/2013)



One capital improvement project recently completed was the installation of sidewalks on Jackson Street.



Several programs seek to address food security and increase access for low-income residents.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Social infrastructure refers to the system of social services, networks, and facilities that support people and communities – it is an integral component of this planning process. In South Billings, a variety of community champions, including educators, faith-based organizations, and health care and social service providers, represent the primary perspective on the resident needs in the area, have the most established and trusted relationships with those underserved, and have many programs and initiatives currently underway.

This section describes City resources and advocacy partners for improving the health of local residents, protecting and providing for school children, and empowering the impoverished, and concludes by identifying opportunities for enriching or adding to these efforts.

As indicated by demographic and market data, residents and businesses alike are struggling to make ends meet day to day; the down economy is adding yet another burden on those already stressed within the study area. The following provides a select summary of the larger initiatives that currently support Billings' social infrastructure needs, some of which could be expanded to further target South Billings.

THE SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR TASK FORCE

This task force covers the SBBURD and is designed to identify issues and solutions and give the residents a chance to make a difference right where they live. The Southwest Corridor Task Force guides and supports this planning process.

BILLINGS METRO VISTA PROJECT (MVP)

The Billings Mayor's Committee on Homelessness was formed in 2006 to develop and implement a plan to address homelessness. In the fall of 2009, the Committee adopted Welcome Home Billings, a 10-year plan to increase overall collaborative efforts and resources to assist the homeless in our community. This large-scale initiative involves hundreds of community members and a variety of projects, including an AmeriCorps*VISTA project known as the Billings Metro VISTA Project (MVP). VISTA members work to create or expand community-based programs, services, and systems that prevent and intervene in homelessness through capacity-building activities, including:

- **The Community Garden and Food Security Initiative** – A Community Garden and Food Security Initiative was created as part of the MVP. Two AmeriCorps*VISTA members began work on the initiative

in July 2010 to increase food security within the community. The initiative aims to provide low-income residents in particular with increased access to fresh, nutritious foods and the skills and knowledge of how to grow that food by establishing a network of community gardens and growing spaces. Several community gardening projects with other nonprofit agencies and policy changes are underway as part of this effort. South Billings could be another targeted project for the MVP.

- **Billings Area Food Policy Council** - Since the fall of 2010, the MVP program has supported the Billings Area Food Policy Council (BAFPC), which meets monthly to collectively address food security in Billings and neighboring communities. The BAFPC has created a novel network resulting in greater communication and coordination among stakeholders at a grassroots level to increase overall access to food in the community while promoting local food production (with an emphasis on organic growing methods). Similar to the Food Security Initiative, South Billings could be a targeted area for the Food Policy Council.

COMMUNITY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

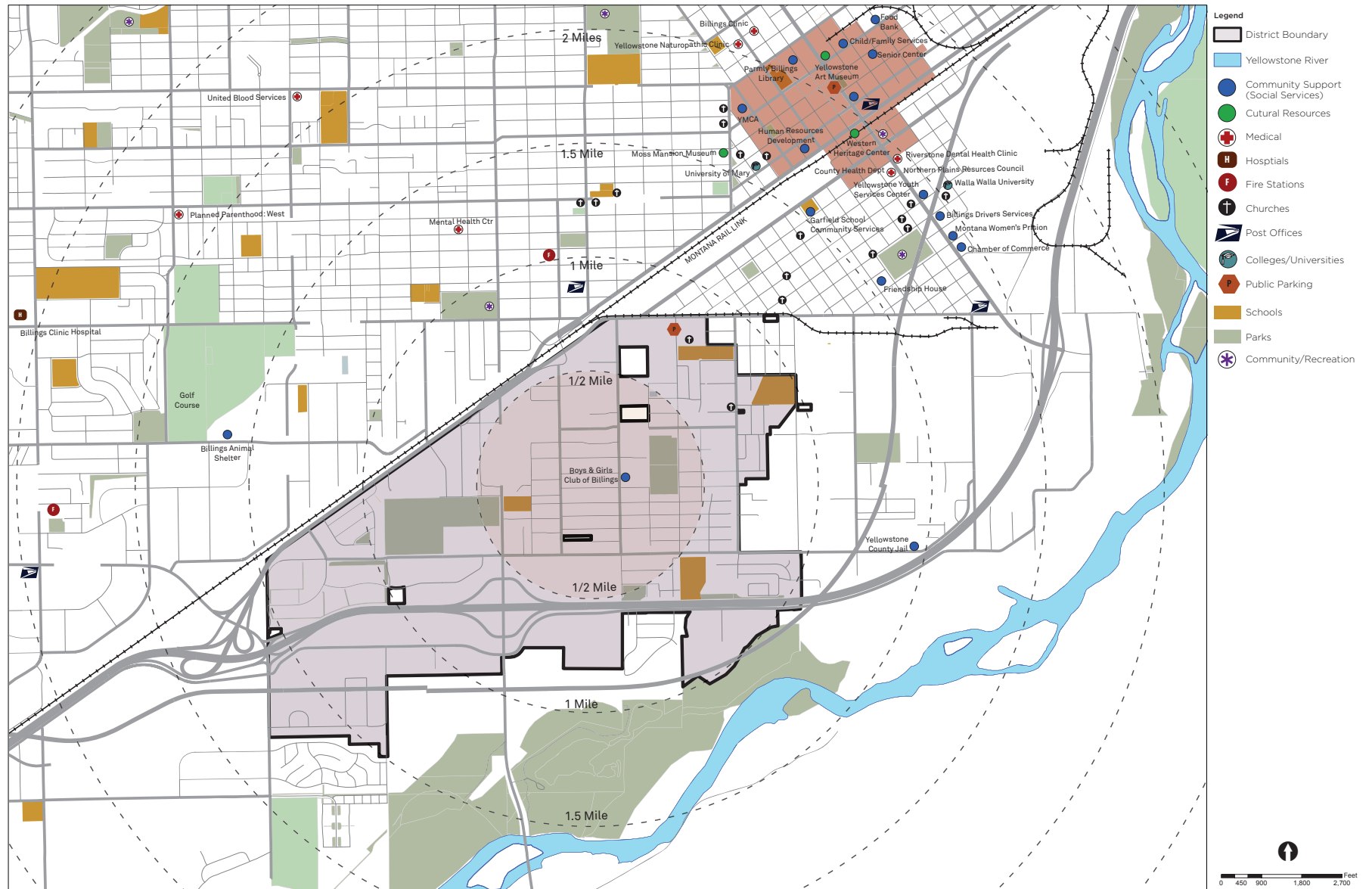
Community Housing Development

Organizations (CHDOs) are private nonprofit organizations certified by the City of Billings HOME program to perform housing-related activities involving ownership, sponsorship, and development. CHDOs are potentially seen as strong implementers of this plan.

CITY OF BILLINGS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION PROGRAMS

The Billings' Community Development Division joins community partners with resources to increase access to housing, create a sustainable community, and promote neighborhood revitalization throughout the City. The Division is primarily responsible for managing federal grant programs, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program. Programs for first-time homebuyers, housing rehabilitation, new affordable housing development, rehabilitation / conversion for multi-family units, TIFD redevelopment, property management, and demolition are within their oversight and are available for South Billings residents. Activities associated with community development programs must benefit lower income households and neighborhoods. Funding is made available through an annual allocation process for housing, neighborhood projects, and public services.

COMMUNITY SERVICES MAP



NEIGHBORHOOD CHAMPIONS

In addition to City resources, the schools, social service providers, faith-based organizations, and businesses also provide vital social programs. The following are some of the most active entities currently supporting families in South Billings to provide child care, mentorship, job assistance, community gardening, safe houses, or addressing health issues.

- Yellowstone Boys & Girls Club
- Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch
- Community Leadership & Development Inc.
- Building Blocks Day Care
- Salvation Army
- Friendship House
- Little Flower Church
- Guadalupe Church
- South Side Senior Center
- Vineyard Church
- Riverside Middle School
- Ponderosa, Newman, & Orchard Elementary Schools
- RiverStone Health

As indicated at a stakeholder meeting in September 2011 and individual interviews, the following entities are also very interested in supporting additional targeted services for South Billings residents related to capital infrastructure for job training programs and social services.

- ConocoPhillips
- Montana State University-Billings (Continuing Education and Nutrition & Education Departments)
- Salvation Army
- United Way
- College of Technology (COT)



Faith-based organizations provide programs that support families including child care, mentorship, job assistance, community gardens, safe houses, and various programs that address health.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES AND FINDINGS

One of the remarkable findings of this plan is the breadth and depth of the service providers supporting the social needs of residents in the area, and the passion and determination to work within this planning process to tailor programs and opportunities to empower residents of South Billings. All of these stakeholders have helped develop the following list of key findings.

- **New Programs** – There is significant interest by service providers to use and expand existing programs and relationships to better meet the needs of residents; partnerships are already developed and momentum is strong. In other words, there is no need to establish new organizations but rather provide spaces and abilities for improved collaboration among those already working in the study area. Establishing community kiosks in high pedestrian traffic areas (adjacent to schools) to alert community members of existing programs is also an opportunity.
- **Community Facilities** – There is a currently a shortage of building space where service providers can rent or community members can access meeting spaces to collaborate and address community-based initiatives. It is important that these spaces are walkable by residents, if the services are to be well used. This indicates the need for more than one facility within the District.
- **Neighborhood Empowerment/Support Entrepreneurial Spirit**– The engaged service providers believe in providing opportunities for empowering residents rather than hand outs. Developing local resident/business-based neighborhood associations could engage each area to oversee and guide the implementation of the plan as it suits their needs best. Similarly, providing a policy and regulatory environment would support and allow for local home-based businesses to fit a known local need (a local business that provides a service to drive locals to work, or individual vendors to go door to door with fresh fruits, vegetables, fresh breads, etc.).
- **Mobility** – Some residents in the study area do not have the means, and scheduled bus routes do not provide the flexibility to access existing job opportunities outside the study area. Opportunities may include supporting home-based work/live enterprises and changing bus routes or schedules to meet the demand.
- **Job Training** – ConocoPhillips and other businesses in the study area need local labor but are having difficulty finding trained labor. Partnerships between MSU-B College of Technology, ConocoPhillips, local businesses, and financial institutes are plausible for developing a jobs training center that is multi-purposed, allowing space for other community uses.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The Master Plan for the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District stems from the key findings presented in this chapter. A future vision should build upon the District's assets and distinguishers and leverage the competitive advantages of South Billings as summarized below.

OVERALL DISTRICT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

01

Availability of resources to make improvements to the District:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds that can be used primarily for physical improvements.
- New Market Tax Credits, which apply to the eastern part of the District, and potential for an EB-5 center in Montana (described in Chapter 5), which can both be used for economic development.
- Existing plans for capital improvements to the District's infrastructure.
- Existing programs that can be applied in the District, such as low income housing tax credits or Small Business Administration (SBA) loans.
- Interested parties who are willing to work on improving the District, such as nonprofits and faith-based organizations.

02

Locational characteristics of the District:

- Excellent visibility from I-90.
- Proximity to Downtown and other close in neighborhoods.
- Great access to the Yellowstone River.

03

Existing businesses and public facilities:

- Two conferencing facilities served by hotel/motels.
- A large destination soccer park with adjacent undeveloped parkland and private land.
- Four public schools and an active Boys and Girls Club.
- Many employers and established businesses.

04

Existing land base and land prices:

- A number of developable sites close to the interstate highway (for retail, office, and industrial uses).
- Lower land prices than most other City neighborhoods for residential, commercial, and industrial land.

05

Land use patterns:

- Existing and potential diversity of land uses—housing, employment, commercial, and community services in proximity to each other and accessible.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

- Access and visibility from I-90.
- Proximity to amenities and commercial areas within Billings.
- Urban infrastructure and services, which are only complete (and an advantage) for some areas within the District.
- Existing economic base, which includes the commercial and industrial businesses in the District.
- Vacant land, including several parcels larger than 5 acres.
- Relatively low land costs, which are offset by lower amenities relative to other parts of Billings.
- Access to the Yellowstone River.
- New commercial development that can catalyze redevelopment.
- Access to a range of potential public financing tools to stimulate new development and help expand existing or attract new development and businesses (see Appendix B).

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

- Expected population growth in Billings of 25,000 over the next 20 years.
- Low housing costs, relative to other parts of Billings.
- Vacant land for residential development, including opportunities for infill development.
- Relatively low land costs.
- Access to parks, ranging from neighborhood parks to large community parks.
- Existing schools in the District.
- New commercial development that can catalyze redevelopment, including neighborhood commercial.
- Access to a range of public financing tools to assist with the rehabilitation of existing units and development of new ones.

OTHER COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

- Coordinating investment and codifying and adopting the Master Plan will provide increased certainty about public sector investments and the Vision for the future of the District. This increased certainty and possibility of direct partnerships are an important benefit to property and business owners, creating a competitive advantage for the area.

03

DISTRICT VISION



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District Vision & Recommendations

LONG-TERM DISTRICT-WIDE VISION

South Billings is a vibrant District of the City where businesses thrive and neighborhoods are safe, healthy, attractive, and affordable. Four diverse neighborhoods – Amend Village, Four Corners, Optimist, and Orchard – are connected not only by a network of complete streets, utilities, and pathways but by a shared commitment to improve the quality of life through investments in people, community amenities, and economic development programs. Efforts to “green” South Billings have successfully engaged a diverse group of residents, community leaders, service providers, and business owners in social enterprise and given pride to local living.



INTRODUCTION

Establishing a strategic, District-wide Vision is a critical first step when framing the Master Plan. Ultimately, the Vision will guide the street and infrastructure investments needed to support the commercial and residential areas of South Billings. The integrated investment categories highlighted in the key concepts to the right are described in greater detail later in Chapter 3.

01

KEY CONCEPTS

A new Planning Framework for the District establishes four distinct neighborhoods. Each neighborhood consists of an appropriate mix of commercial, community, recreational, and residential uses blended together and connected by investments in complete streets and new or revitalized mixed-use hubs.

02

Integrated investments are proposed to support:

- **Access and Connectivity**
Define and develop a network of complete streets, greenways, and pathways that can be realized through capital improvement, and public policy and redevelopment initiatives.
- **Infrastructure Improvements**
Invest to retain property values, encourage investment, and protect the environment.
- **Community Greening**
Include environmental protection, open space strategies, and landscape quality.
- **Land Use and Character**
Promote policies and development standards that encourage mixed-use districts, housing choices, walkable neighborhoods, and land use intensities that will support improved transit and the desired professional, community, and commercial services.

03

A mix of appropriately sited and connected land uses would include new, protected, and revitalized residential areas with access to local and neighborhood services. Businesses serve the larger community and the region and are easily accessed from the interstate and celebrate the proximity of the Yellowstone River.

04

The District Vision leverages access to I-90 and the proximity to the Yellowstone River, the area's agrarian heritage, and parks and recreation as an opportunity or niche market.

- **Public Services and Facilities**
Promote quality of life and safety by providing the needed police, schools, parks, libraries, and transit opportunities.
- **Community and Economic Development**
Invest in programs to grow the tax increment, attract new investment, preserve the existing tax base by stabilizing and/or improving deteriorated residential neighborhoods, and retaining, improving, and growing existing businesses.
- **Community Health, Safety, and Resiliency**
Improve access to services in partnership with nonprofits, community service providers, health agencies, and faith-based organizations.

05

High priority recommendations build upon and/or stabilize existing assets and property values and encourage private investment.

06

Infrastructure investments are prioritized equitably and consider:

- Defined condition and need.
- Number of people (residents and businesses) who will benefit.
- Degree that the investment benefits multiple neighborhoods.
- Funding availability.
- Ability to cost share with other projects (e.g., development, CIP, or maintenance projects).
- Safety and health benefits.

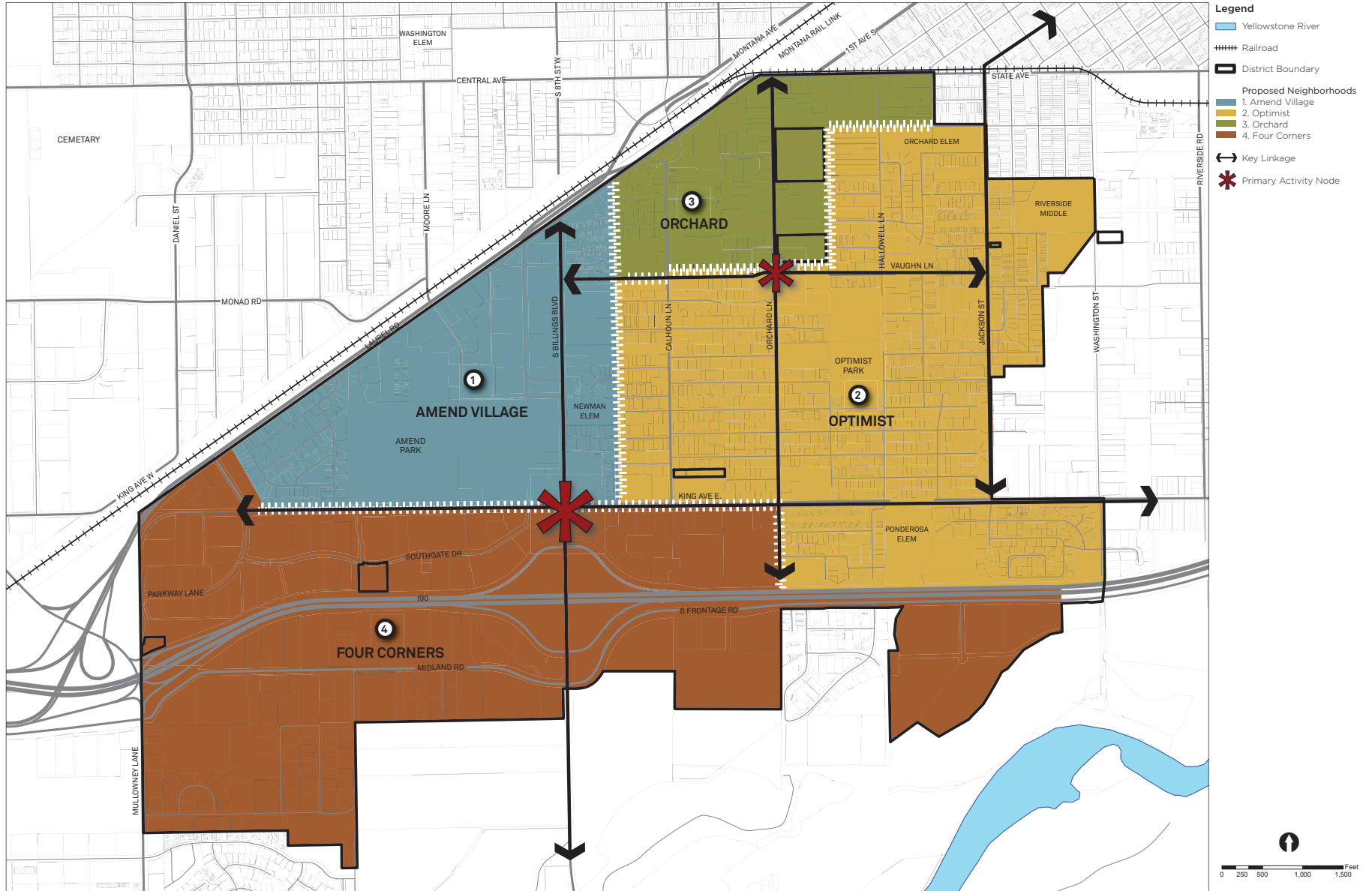
PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Planning Framework and supporting Neighborhood Concept Plans presented in Chapter 4 illustrate the recommended spatial organization of the entire District and its four smaller neighborhoods. The Planning Framework provides guidance on the overarching Vision for the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District, while the individual Neighborhood Concept Plans build the existing physical structure, protecting what is valued, strengthening what works, and introducing compatible new uses and forms to provide new housing, employment, and transportation choices and thereby improving the livability, vitality, and character of the District.

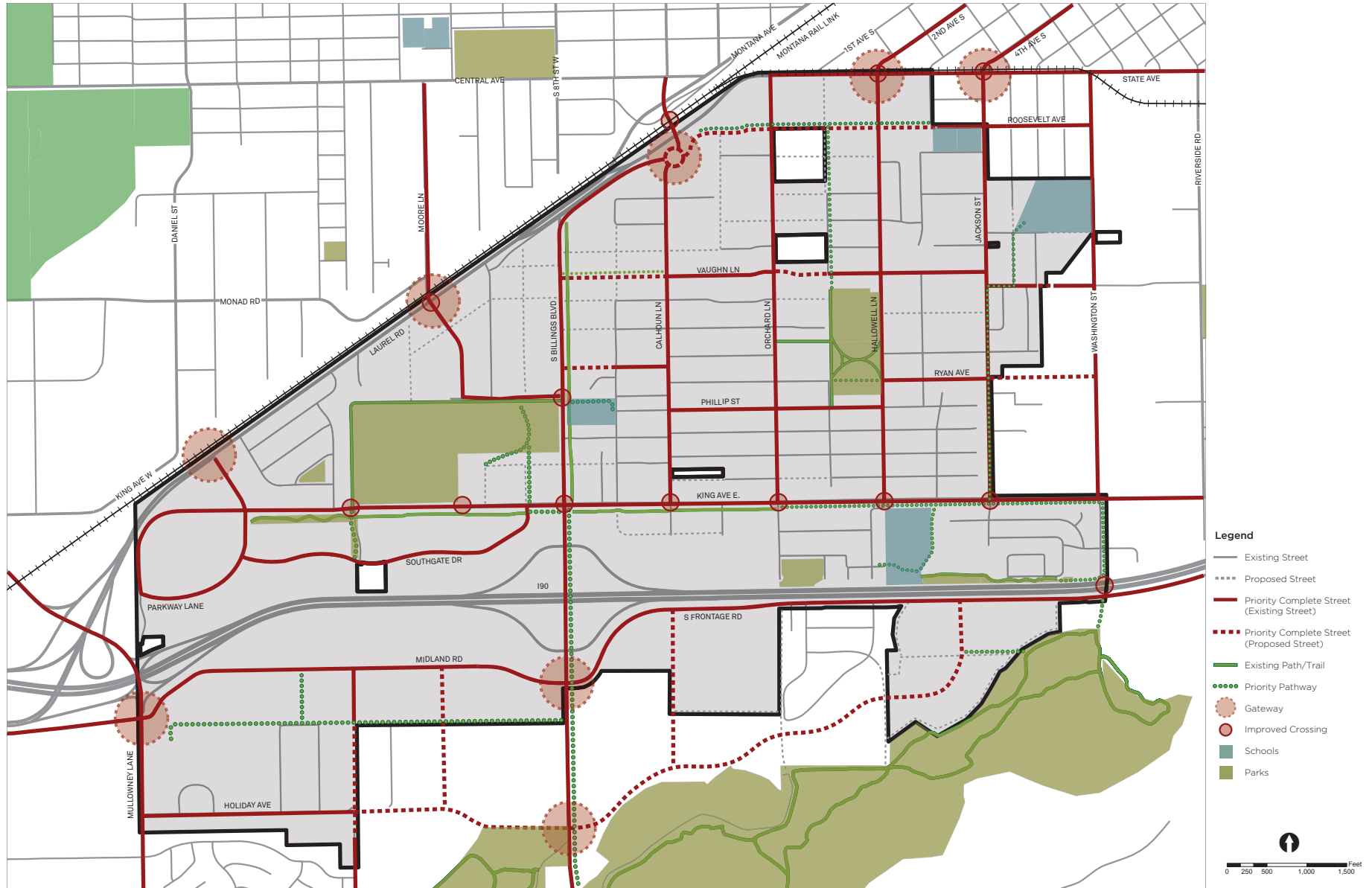
The proposed Planning Framework illustrates the neighborhood boundaries or “seams,” demonstrating that while there are distinct neighborhoods within the larger District, they remain connected. Two more distinct activity centers or nodes serve as focal points within the District (one has a regional focus, the other local). A critical overlay of the Planning Framework is the Proposed Connectivity Map, which illustrates recommended street, pathway, and public space connections and defined gateways and street crossings.

In reviewing and referencing this plan, it is vital to recognize that the policies, programs, and partnerships are of equal or greater importance in regenerating the neighborhoods as the proposed list of capital improvement, development, and conservation projects.

PROPOSED PLANNING FRAMEWORK



PROPOSED CONNECTIVITY



REALIZING THE VISION

The Vision, recommendations, actions, and implementation plan build upon existing assets. Priority and near term investments are targeted to opportunities that will grow the tax increment and benefit many while being responsive to the collective values of people who will be affected. Neighborhood demographics combined with a limited interest from investors suggests that active recruitment and retention programs are needed. Preservation of existing property values will help ensure that gains in tax increment are not reduced by a loss of existing property values. Recommendations are grouped into seven broad and at times overlapping categories that respond to established goals and issues summarized in Chapters 1 and 2. The integrated investment recommendations address:

- Connectivity and Access
- Utility Infrastructure
- Community Greening
- Land Use and Character
- Public Services and Facilities
- Community and Economic Development
- Community Health, Safety, and Resiliency

The following pages briefly describe the concepts and actionable recommendations associated with each category. Actions address projects, policies/additional planning, and programs and are therefore organized and presented under these headings. Chapters 3 and 4 capture the full range of opportunities discussed during the 9-month planning process. Chapter 5, Implementation, provides more focus and prioritization of projects based on market realities, public preferences, anticipated revenue, and established project goals.

Funding limitations will require ongoing prioritization of improvements. The District's present highest priority is to improve the condition of the streets and address infrastructure deficiencies. It is important to recognize that investing only in infrastructure will not build a vibrant District or maximize the tax increment.

A STRATEGIC,
DISTRICT-WIDE
VISION IS A
CRITICAL FIRST
STEP IN ORDER
TO FRAME THE
MASTER PLAN
AND GUIDE
INVESTMENT
PRIORITIES

CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS



Ideally all streets in the District will be complete streets, built to City standards and including paved surface, travel lanes, bicycle accommodations, boulevard sidewalks on each side, curb and gutter, storm drainage, water, sewer, and street signage as well as street lighting, tree planting, and landscaping.

A complete street network supports health by encouraging walking and biking. It improves environmental health by providing more direct connections, thereby reducing trips made in vehicles and reducing the length of each vehicle trip. Traffic is dispersed, and congestion and traffic volumes on streets are reduced.

PROJECTS

➔ Network of Priority Complete Streets

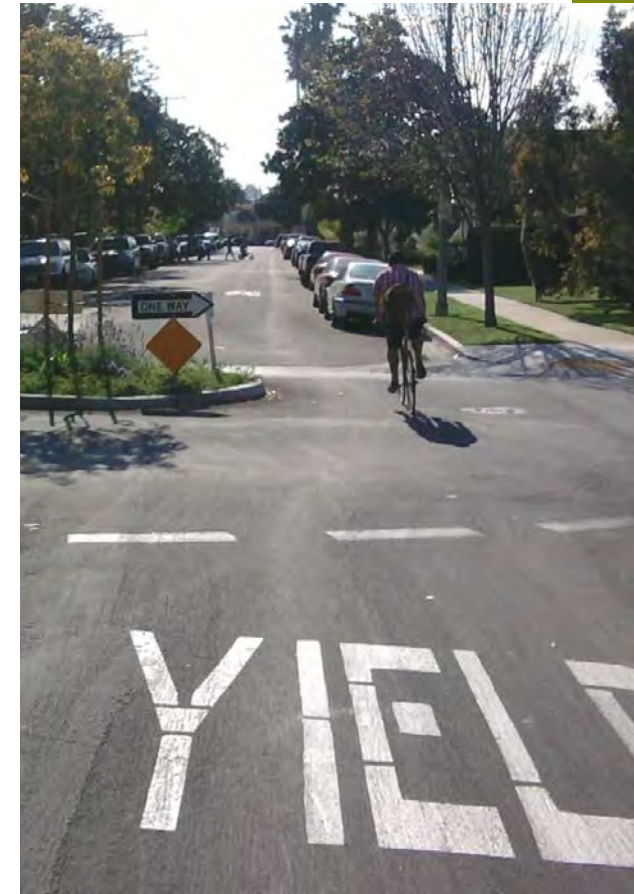
The Planning Framework illustrates a grid of complete streets, establishes a priority street grid located approximately one quarter mile on center, and recommends these as the streets with the highest priority for access and circulation improvements. The grid includes all streets designated as collectors and local streets used by buses, streets proposed as bicycle routes, and streets frequently used to connect residential neighborhoods to schools and services. These projects should be included in the City's CIP.

➔ Grid of Connecting Streets

The Planning Framework recommends and illustrates a secondary grid of connecting streets and alleys. As properties infill or redevelop, this grid of streets and rights-of-way should be created, preserved, and/or reestablished. In locations where street connections are or cannot be made, pedestrian pathways should be required. Potentially, these can be combined with utility easements.

➔ Grid of Connecting Priority Green Corridors with Pathways

Sidewalks and street trees should be included in all street reconstruction projects. Because pathways are less expensive to construct than complete streets and essential to creating walkable neighborhoods, the plan recommends construction of priority pathways in green corridors in advance of streets to complete the circulation connections and encourage walking. Establishing pedestrian corridors in existing rights-of-way or acquiring rights-of-way would also accommodate low impact management of stormwater and planting of trees. The result of the improved connections and green corridors would be a better connected and more legible neighborhood with the added benefit of water retention and infiltration (refer to proposed Street Cross Sections in Appendix D).



A grid of complete streets will improve connectivity in South Billings while enhancing the experience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

➔ Implement Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Projects

The City has completed and adopted an SRTS plan with a detailed project list identifying Phase 1 and Phase 2 improvements. TIFD funds may assist in accelerating the implementation of the plan and priority projects. A list of these projects is included in the prioritized project list in Chapter 5.

➔ Street Lighting Projects

Street lighting in the District is incomplete, and there appears to be some correlation between lack of street lighting and pockets of crime. Given that the cost of maintenance and power is passed onto homeowners, the extent of and levels of lighting should be addressed as each project is developed or be proposed as a neighborhood-wide improvement. Street lighting priorities should include intersections, school routes, crosswalks, and other areas identified by residents and property and business owners.

➔ Street Crossing Projects

Locations are shown on the Connectivity Map on page 52.

➔ Special Projects

- Sixth Avenue underpass improvements
- I-90 pedestrian overpass or underpass to improve access to the Yellowstone River
- Bicycle and pedestrian improvements to South Billings Boulevard at I-90 overpass
- Parking improvements at north end of Optimist Park
- Transit improvements - buses and benches

POLICIES/PLANNING

- Amend the CIP to include recommended grid of connecting streets.
- Amend adopted non-motorized and bicycle transportation plans to include recommended priority pathways.
- Explore the feasibility of encouraging tree protection as streets are reconstructed, even if it requires variances to standards.
- Establish policy on use of TIFD funds (appropriate match by owners) for improvement of local / residential streets; consider establishing an annual application process and budget to provide clarity on process and funding to improve these streets.
- Coordinate street maintenance, overlay, and utility improvement programs with TIFD programs to leverage funds and deliver more complete streets.

PROGRAMS

- Establish a loan or grant program to address the improvement or provision of utility service connections when streets are reconstructed.
- Work with MET Transit on routing and schedules to better support neighborhood transportation needs.
- Establish urban forestry program, perhaps in partnership with non-governmental organizations, Audubon Center, environmental agencies, corporate sponsors, and/or job training programs.



Street lighting should be improved in priority areas to address safety concerns.

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE



Generally, the public utility infrastructure (water and sewer) is in good condition and able to handle anticipated infill and expansion. Storm drainage is underdeveloped yet unlikely to be addressed independent of identified street and pathway projects. Participants have requested an analysis of the communications and technology network, believing that robust services will be needed to attract and retain businesses. Public and private utilities have been mapped and are included in the appendices.

PROJECTS

➔ Water and Sewer Connections to City Services

Some properties annexed into the City have not been connected to City water and sewer and are serviced by wells and septic systems. In many instances, the septic systems are failing. In some locations, sewage is draining into open ditches that ultimately drain to the Yellowstone River. These properties need to be connected to City services to address health, safety, and environmental concerns.

POLICIES/PLANNING

- Financial assistance programs and policies need to be developed and/or promoted as many residents are unable to afford the City utility connection fees. CDBG funds can be used as assistance.
- Improve coordination between street and utility projects.
- Combine TIFD funds with maintenance funds to provide complete street projects.
- Cost analysis of traditional, low impact, and/or a hybrid of stormwater management techniques to arrive at best practice for the District, assuming streets will include curb and gutter.
- Coordinate utility and infrastructure projects internally.
- Coordinate with private gas, electricity, communication, and technology providers.

PROGRAMS

- Initiate brownfield assessment and clean-up program to promote reinvestment. Focus on priority sites including underutilized property at Parkway Lane and Laurel Road that is a gateway to the District.
- Outreach and/or code enforcements programs supported by assistance should be initiated to address deficiencies.



Utility upgrades may include new sustainable stormwater management techniques, including vegetated planters.

COMMUNITY GREENING



Community greening refers to both the presence of trees, greenery, landscaping, and gardens as well as the stewardship of natural resources including water, air, soils, land, habitat, and biological resources. Although this section might also be expanded to include recommendations addressing energy conservation, carbon management, and waste management, these topics did not emerge as neighborhood priorities. Community-wide efforts are underway to address these important issues with policies and programs.

The District is fortunate to have abundant open spaces including undeveloped vacant land, small farms, and land used as parks, playfields, and gardens; however, only the parkland is protected as permanent open space. Unfortunately, the tree canopy in developed areas of the District is sparse and often non-existent. Many of the commercial and industrial properties were developed prior to the existence of a more stringent landscape code and, as a result, have little or no landscaping. Due to the District's proximity to the Yellowstone River and the amount of open land, it supports a diversity of birds and small mammals.

Residents want to preserve the existing mature trees and introduce more greenery and gardens. Greening of the District and improving the appearance and overall health of the neighborhoods will maintain property values and make the District more attractive to investors, thereby increasing and preserving the tax increment. Creative partnerships and programs could improve residents' access to healthy food, stimulate entrepreneurial activities, and improve the tree canopy and air quality as well as the overall appearance of the District.

PROJECTS

- ➔ Priority pathways-developed as greenways with landscaping and low impact drainage features.
- ➔ Street tree planting program.
- ➔ Laurel Road landscape enhancements.
- ➔ King Avenue East greenway landscape enhancement.
- ➔ Extension of Parkway Lane.
- ➔ Community gardens.
- ➔ Clean up drainages and creeks.

POLICIES/PLANNING

- Tree preservation.
- Inventory open land and assess suitability for interim gardens, nurseries, or orchards.

PROGRAMS

- Urban forestry programs.
- Community gardening and farming programs.
- Job training programs: As examples, urban horticulture, landscaping, and/or master gardener programs.
- Incentive programs: Design assistance or loans to comply with current landscape standards.



Existing vacant parcels could be redeveloped as nurseries, interim gardens, or orchards to improve the appearance of the District and provide business opportunities.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES



The District is home to three elementary schools, a middle school, two community parks, several neighborhood parks, and an established Boys and Girls Club. Residents feel underserved by the City, citing a lack of infrastructure, library, police, and code enforcement services. In addition to infrastructure improvements, participants in the planning process expressed a desire for multigenerational community centers, access to education, job training, health care services, daycare for children, and senior services in the District.

Several business owners confirmed the need for training, indicating that it is difficult to find employees who are trained for available jobs. Residents also see improvements to parks and the expansion of recreation programs and events in parks as opportunities to serve residents and attract both visitors and investors. Fire and emergency services were not discussed; however, given the access challenges, emergency access will need to be studied more closely as the District develops.

PROJECTS

- ➔ Multigenerational Community Center.

Potentially addressing the shortage of senior services and daycare and providing training opportunities. A center might also be the location of training programs, mobile health clinics and perhaps even limited banking services.

- ➔ Clean up and provide neighborhood park improvements to east end of Amend Park.
- ➔ Playground improvements in Optimist Park.
- ➔ Convert Amend Barn to community use, potentially community shop, tool lending, and/or garden shed.

POLICIES/PLANNING

- Policy to ensure that public investment in South Billings is equitable with other neighborhoods in the City.
- Feasibility study for community center addressing site, selection, program, and costs.
- Explore creative partnerships with health care providers, financial institutions, higher education providers, and government to create a multi-use community center where a range of services can be provided.

PROGRAMS

- Opportunities to expand mobile health clinics.
- Additional recreation programs.
- More events in community parks such as outdoor movies, festivals, and art and farmers markets.
- Expand mobile library services.
- Improve police presence by reinstating Cop Shop or adding community police officer or bicycle cop.



Programming in community parks could include outdoor movies, festivals, and art and farmers markets.

LAND USE AND CHARACTER



Recommendations in this section primarily address guiding principles for land use, describing desirable qualities, spatial patterns, and character of land uses in the District. More specific recommendations and opportunities are described in the individual Neighborhood Concept Plans (in Chapter 4) and recommended zoning amendments (in Chapter 5).

Land Use Principles

01

Build walkable neighborhoods and a safe “complete” community with opportunities for employment, housing, education, health, and commercial services within walking distance.

02

Establish a dense grid of connecting streets, alleys, and pathways.

03

Provide neighborhood services within walking distance of residential neighborhoods.

04

Provide a full range of transportation choices: Transit, vehicles, bicycle facilities, and pathways.

05

Improve access to health services and healthy foods.

06

Plan infrastructure and development to improve environmental outcomes including lower emissions, water resource protection, improved air quality, and reduced carbon-based fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

07

Promote crime prevention through environmental design, increase “eyes on the street,” block security programs, and visibility.



Zoning changes will protect established single-family neighborhoods by restricting permitted uses to only single-family and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

PROJECTS

- ➔ Enhancements of Gateways: Landscaping, wayfinding/signage amenities, lighting, and improvements at key corridors. Refer to Connectivity Map on page 52 for proposed locations.

LAND USE POLICIES/PLANNING

PARKING

Over time, reduce parking requirements. Revisit requirements and policies as the neighborhoods evolve considering parking maximums and minimums to encourage pedestrian-oriented development. In the near term, promote shared parking arrangements to reduce the amount of parking required and built.

ZONING CHANGES

Protect established single-family neighborhoods by restricting permitted uses to only single-family and accessory dwelling units (ADU). To encourage infill and new development in select areas, allow outright a broader range of housing types including live/work, accessory dwelling units, cottage housing (reduce minimum lot size), senior housing, and mixed-use development. Zoning changes to the entire District may be the most appropriate action given the emergence of better zoning policies.

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Carefully manage transitions between established traditional single-family neighborhoods and mixed uses or higher density infill.

MIXED-USE ZONING

Establish new mixed-use zoning districts, to achieve a diverse mix of vertical and horizontal land uses in neighborhood centers and to locate local services and employment opportunities in neighborhoods and near residential areas.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

Promote and incentivize retention, replacement, and construction of new affordable housing.

MODIFICATIONS TO REVIEW PROCESS

The current review process results in unpredictable outcomes. Investors are uncertain about the form and density that will be approved, and residents desire more certainty about the quality of design. In exchange for establishing a single-family sanctuary, zoning should allow greater density by right, and the regulations and neighborhood reviews should focus on design quality and successful neighborhood integration.

TEMPORARY USES

Promote temporary uses of vacant or underutilized land or structures including markets, nurseries, community farms, and gardens. This should also allow for moveable small structures such as kiosks or food carts.

PROGRAMS

- Housing rehabilitation programs: Promote and target established programs to this area.
- Demonstration of excellence in multi-family housing.
- Assistance with establishing owners/renters associations to improve blighted properties.



Zoning changes could allow live/work spaces and small shops to provide more economic opportunities to residents within their existing lots.

COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The above categories of recommendations include actions that might be considered community and economic development strategies. Recommendations under this topic focus on stimulating investment in the District and providing lifestyle, employment, and housing and transportation choices. The projects and programs listed here represent the full spectrum of opportunities that were discussed during the planning process. Chapter 5, Implementation, and the Market Conditions Study included in Appendix B describe the near term feasibility and recommended priorities.

PROJECTS

- ➔ Regional Retail Center: To attract national commercial use to Four Square.
- ➔ Neighborhood Services Center: Pharmacy, restaurants, beauty/ barber shops, durable medical supplies, health.
- ➔ Professional Services Center: Including financial services, dental, medical, vision, accounting, and legal.
- ➔ Housing Development: To address the need for senior, assisted living, multigenerational, and affordable housing and offer more diverse choices.
- ➔ Housing Rehabilitation: To improve and maintain existing homes.
- ➔ Training Center: Career and job training center(s) in neighborhoods to meet employers' needs for skilled trades and services.
- ➔ Indoor Recreation Facilities: Possibly including fitness center and sports-plex.

- ➔ Learning Center(s): To improve educational achievement through tutoring, classes, and General Educational Development (GED) attainment.
- ➔ New Business Park: Opportunities for interstate and river orientation.
- ➔ Micro Enterprise Zone: Focused on serving the immediate neighborhood with local start-up businesses.

POLICIES/PLANNING

- Zoning policy changes in support of the envisioned Planning Framework.
- Policy on use of tax increment funds to encourage new investment.
- Allocation of a percentage of CDBG funds to the District.
- Feasibility study and grant applications to realize vocational training programs and facilities.
- Market updates and targeted marketing plans for new investors.

PROGRAMS

- Programs focused on retention and recruitment.
- Implementation of District marketing program.
- Maintain up-to-date database of properties available for purchase or lease.
- Neighborhood stabilization programs.
- Workforce re-entry and job training programs: Focused on trade as well as secondary education.
- Form Business and/or Special Improvement District(s) to address focused improvements.
- Revolving loan fund to support local businesses.



Training and learning centers would train residents in trades while ensuring that employers' needs are met.

COMMUNITY HEALTH/ SAFETY/ RESILIENCY



RiverStone Health, in coordination with the City of Billings Planning Division, prepared a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the Growth Policy in June of 2008. The goal was to identify ways to make health a part of the decision-making process related to the growth of the community by predicting health consequences, informing decision makers and the public about health impacts, and providing realistic recommendations to prevent or mitigate negative health outcomes. The HIA identifies health as “a state of complete physical, social, and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” and recognizes that “health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capabilities.” Recommendations of the Growth Policy HIA address the following seven items. The eighth item, access to health care, was identified and added to the list during the SBBURD planning process:

1. Emergency preparedness
2. Nutrition
3. Pedestrian and bicycle safety and traffic
4. Social capital
5. Physical activity
6. Safety and crime
7. Affordable housing and living wage jobs
8. Access to health care

Most of the recommendations in this Master Plan overlap with these recommendations and are integrated within projects, policies, programs, partners, and planning recommendations of each neighborhood. One of the South Billings stakeholders, RiverStone Health, has also been awarded one of four HIA mentorship project sites by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to conduct a health impact assessment of the SBBURD Master Plan. Additional recommendations that further support implementation of this plan and illuminate the importance of active lifestyles and access to fresh foods within the community will be forthcoming as a result of this assessment.

PROJECTS

- ➔ Develop street, pathway, and transit connections to improve emergency access, encourage walking, and reduce accidents, vehicle miles travelled, and the associated health, safety, and environmental risks (see Connectivity and Access recommendations).
- ➔ Build environments that promote health and safety, and reduce crime (see Land Use and Character Recommendations, Access and Connectivity Recommendations, and Utility Infrastructure Recommendations).
- ➔ Encourage compact infill with a mix of uses including diverse and affordable housing (see Land Use and Character Recommendations).
- ➔ Create farmers markets, community gardens, orchards, and farms to improve access to healthy food (see Land Use and Character Recommendations, and Community and Economic Development Recommendations).
- ➔ Promote access to neighborhood health, dental, and vision clinics (see Community and Economic Development Recommendations).
- ➔ Provide community and recreation center(s) to promote social capital and physical activity (see Community and Economic Development Recommendations).



Improved pedestrian and transit connections will enhance the safety of users and encourage greater use, which will foster resident health.



Better access to neighborhood health, dental, and vision clinics was identified as a measure to improve the health of residents of South Billings.

POLICIES/PLANNING

- Land use policies that promote smart growth principles and SBBURD planning goals including housing, employment, recreation, and education opportunities in the District and within walking distance of residential neighborhoods. (Also see Land Use and Character Recommendations.)
- Policies supporting healthy built environment: See Land Use and Character Recommendations, Access and Connectivity Recommendations, and Community and Economic Development Recommendations.
- Neighborhood emergency preparedness plan.
- Coordination and joint promotion of the many programs already being provided.

PROGRAMS

- Stakeholder engagement: Continue to engage all stakeholders and task forces in developing and implementing the Master Plan.
- Neighborhood and home improvement programs: See programs in Land Use and Character Recommendations.
- Affordable housing: See Land Use and Character Recommendations.
- Improve employment opportunities: See Community and Economic Development Recommendations.
- Improve safety.
- Access to improved health care: See Community and Economic Development Recommendations.

PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

Results of the polling exercise conducted at the September 2011 public meeting (approximately 40 respondents) are summarized below.

- When asked which neighborhood should be given first priority, the responses were nearly equally split between all four neighborhoods, with Amend Village scoring slightly higher.
- When asked about the most critical ingredient for successful plan implementation, community support was selected by more (47%) of the respondents, followed by focused marketing (17%), and successful grant applications (13%). Only 3% selected innovative ideas.
- 90% of the respondents indicated a willingness to volunteer time.
- 54% expressed willingness to contribute financially as part of a special improvement district (SID), with 18% indicating no support.

- 71% indicated support for the identified District-wide investment opportunities, with 44% of the people selecting street repair as first priority.
- Commercial development, economic development, and new sidewalks were also high priorities. Residential development was not seen as a priority. Of the opportunities listed, community gardens were seen as a last priority.

CONCLUSION

Realizing this ambitious long-term Vision will require that the community commit, connect, invest, and encourage. Long-term commitment will be required of all stakeholders—the City leadership and staff, property and business owners, residents, employees and employers, community champions, educators, and service providers. The connections will be social and physical. Although access into and through the neighborhood is challenging, equally challenging will be keeping people with diverse interests, values, and perspectives connected and collaborating to realize opportunities. Investments will include commitments of fiscal and human capital to address the many social, economic, and environmental needs of the District. Encouraging and engaging all stakeholders in regenerating the District will be critical to achieving, celebrating, and sustaining success.

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04

NEIGHBORHOOD VISION



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Neighborhood Vision & Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 offers a strategic, District-wide Vision and Planning Framework as a basis for a Master Plan to guide decisions on future investments. The Vision provides guidance on near- and long-term infrastructure investments needed to support both the commercial and residential areas of the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District. Chapter 4, Neighborhood Vision and Recommendations, takes a closer look at each of the four distinct neighborhoods: the Amend Village, Optimist, Orchard, and Four Corners neighborhoods.

For each neighborhood, existing conditions are summarized, key concepts presented, and opportunities illustrated. The included site-specific sketches are illustrations of opportunities and do not represent specific development proposals.

During the planning process, participants offered suggestions on desirable amenities and new uses. The Neighborhood Concept Plans illustrate spatially where these improvements might be located to build upon and strengthen the existing District and neighborhood structure and serve as catalysts to regeneration.

The initial Neighborhood Concept Plans, Vision Statements, and opportunities were discussed with multiple stakeholders as they were being developed and in general, stakeholder input is embedded within each of the neighborhood concepts. In September, the draft long-range Vision, Neighborhood Concept Plans, and sketches were presented to the public at the open house, and presented to potential investors (developers, local banks, health care providers, and property owners) in one-on-one meetings.

The concepts were discussed with social service agencies, faith-based organizations, health providers, and with the Steering Committee during a meeting at the Boys and Girls Club. Stakeholder comments and priorities, and the results of a polling exercise conducted at the open house are summarized in this chapter.

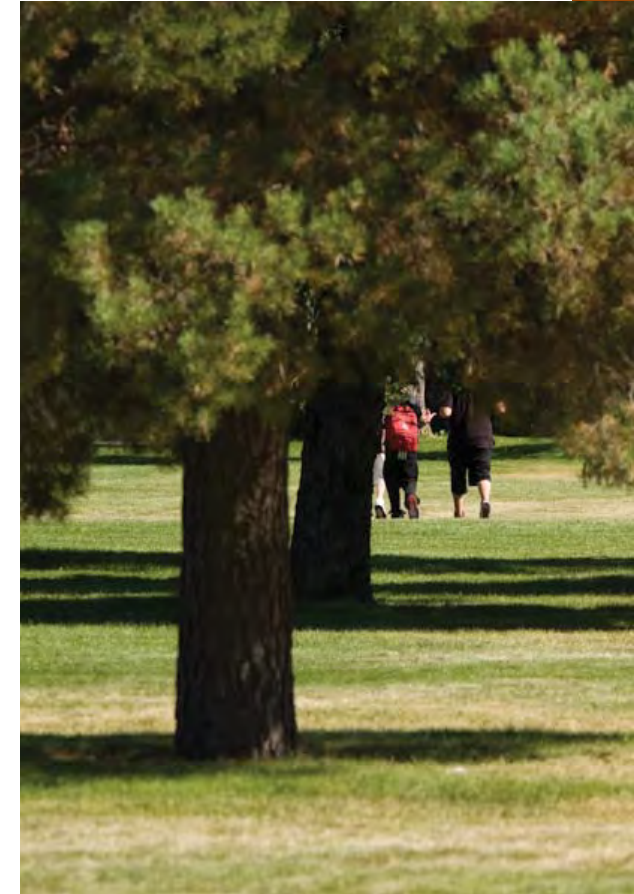
Amend Village Vision

Residents and businesses co-exist and complement one another in a mixed-use village oriented toward Amend Park. New and improved tree-lined streets, alleys, pathways, and greenways connect existing businesses, new housing, and attractive community amenities. Compact residential and neighborhood services facing Amend Park help activate its diverse, year-round, multi-generational recreational programs.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Amend Park is the prominent land use and community asset within the neighborhood, drawing residents from around the City and region to recreation events. Existing land uses surrounding the park include a mix of highway commercial and light industrial to the north, residential (single-family, duplex, modular/mobile homes) and schools to the east, and the somewhat isolated Streeter Subdivision to the west. These land uses are not oriented toward and do not take full advantage of the park. The east end of the park is unattractive, currently used as a storage yard rather than for the neighborhood amenities envisioned by the donors and neighborhood residents.

With its poor street connections and the sometimes incompatible mix of uses, the neighborhood is fragmented. The residential neighborhood feels isolated from the surrounding commercial and industrial uses. The street network is incomplete, and commercial property owners along Laurel Road believe its appearance and the large medians that limit access make this a less-than-desirable location. Businesses on Laurel Road are highway commercial and transient, focused on the sale of building materials, modular homes, RVs, and the like. Outdated truck stops and motels that have converted to affordable housing are remnants of a highway corridor that was more vibrant prior to the construction of the interstate.



Amend Park is a key community asset both for the neighborhood and the larger region.

AMEND MIXEDUSE VILLAGE



LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

This neighborhood will be strengthened by improved access to businesses, a mix of uses including more diverse housing along Amend Park and north of King Avenue, and complementary activities that attract people when soccer players are not present. Longer term, as properties redevelop, rights-of-way could be acquired to achieve a network of complete streets. New uses facing Amend Park will activate the park year round. Residents of new multi-family townhomes and cottage homes fronting the park will enjoy new pathways, community gardens, and neighborhood amenities in Amend Park, and proximity to recreation-oriented commercial areas to the south.

The commercially zoned land north of King Avenue bordering Amend Park sits on the seam of the Optimist, Four Corners, and Amend Village neighborhoods. It is a key development opportunity with the potential to define the District and serve the local community while also functioning as a regional draw. The undeveloped land south of the park could be developed with sit-down restaurants that overlook Amend Park and indoor recreation businesses such as billiards and bowling, sports bars, or fitness and health clubs. These establishments would serve the neighborhood, people attending events in Amend Park, and regional visitors who are in Billings for shopping, sports events, or conventions at the nearby hotels and convention centers.



AMEND MIXED-USE VILLAGE



NE CORNER OF KING - NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL CENTER



Also over the longer term, the northeast corner of King Avenue East and South Billings Boulevard could be redeveloped with mixed-use buildings potentially offering services for the neighborhood and seniors. In the near term, the market may support well-designed horizontal mixed use with a neighborhood commercial center near the intersection and multi-family housing farther east.

Working together to address the issues of access and appearance, property and business owners could make commercial properties along Laurel Road a more attractive location for businesses. Streetscape improvements such as street tree plantings along the property line or sidewalk planting strips will require a private easement due to limited right-of-way widths. Additionally, the community could partner with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to landscape the medians.

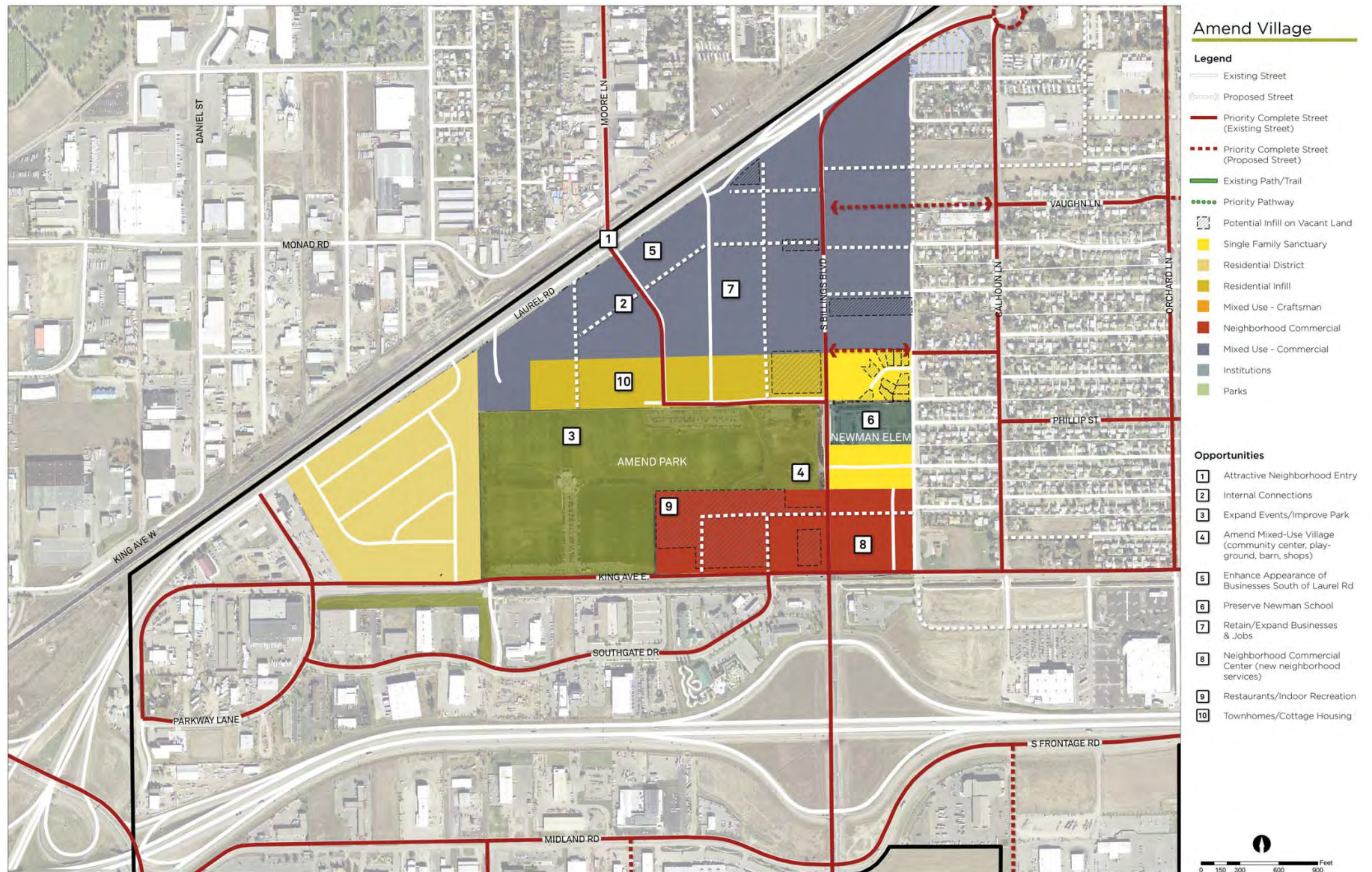
Modifications to Laurel Road to improve access to businesses will be difficult and costly. However, improving access to and between properties fronting Laurel Road might be achieved in the near term with a series of connecting lanes, parking lots, and alleys on the south side.



NE CORNER OF KING - NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL CENTER

Property at the northeast corner of King Avenue and South Billings Boulevard could be redeveloped as a mixed-use commercial center with neighborhood serving businesses. Long term, the commercial development may achieve a vertical mix of uses. In the short term, however, the mix of uses may be horizontal.

AMEND VILLAGE CONCEPT PLAN



KEY CONCEPTS

01

Protect the existing residential neighborhoods and expand housing choices. Encourage the expansion of higher density residential on the north edge of the park.

02

Improve the desirability of Laurel Road properties. Improve access, encouraging property owners to build new lanes or alleys and connect parking lots. As properties redevelop, build a grid of connecting streets focusing on improving east/west connections. In the longer term, work with Montana Departments of Transportation to redesign Laurel Road to improve its appearance, access, pedestrian friendliness, and signage.

03

Activate and improve Amend Park. Introduce more housing, provide neighborhood park and recreation amenities at the east side of the park, and encourage the Parks Department to host more programs in the park. Repurpose the Amend Farm Barn for community use (garden shed, community shop, community center, bike rentals, etc.).

04

Focus new commercial development toward the park, including local dine-in restaurants and/or sports bars in the commercial area southeast of the park where there are opportunities for outdoor patios overlooking the park.

05

Encourage recreation-oriented commercial uses near the park. Examples are a bike store with bike rentals, indoor recreation near the southeast corner of the park such as a fitness center, indoor play, electronic game center, bowling alley, skating rink, etc. Such uses could serve the neighborhood, local employers, hotels, South Hills, and the Josephine Crossing subdivision.

06

Improve access to community and commercial services through better streets and pathways and Safe Routes to Schools.

07

Improve access to the neighborhood. Redesign the north end of South Billings Boulevard and the Sixth Avenue underpass. Develop Foote Street as a primary neighborhood access point. Improve east-west connections, coordinating closely with property owners in both the near and long term and preserving important rights-of-way.

08

The choice to expand businesses versus introducing housing onto vacant and underutilized lands on the north edge of the parks should be discussed. As shown on the illustrative site plan, housing could be designed with garages and alleys as a buffer.

FEEDBACK ON PRIORITIES

PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

Results of the polling exercise conducted at the September 2011 public meeting (approximately 40 respondents) are summarized below.

- 80% of participants indicated support for the Vision, 10% opposed, 10% offered no opinion.
- 72% expressed support for the illustrations of opportunities.
- Strongest support was expressed for a community center, restaurants, and expanded events.
- The least supported idea was multi-family development on the north edge of Amend Park. Participants support the idea of uses focused on the park but oppose multi-family, citing the Jackson Street rowhouses as a typology they are concerned about and that needs to be avoided.

KEY STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

To date, the regional nature of Amend Park has not provided as much benefit to neighborhood users as it has to the larger Billings community. Therefore, many resident stakeholders communicated strong support for establishing neighborhood park uses and community facilities on the east end of Amend Park and across from the Newman School.

Interviews with City and social service stakeholders indicated that multi-family housing is strongly supported throughout the District as a mechanism to provide affordable housing, so long as design guidelines are developed to ensure that the resulting housing products capture the desired residential character of the area.

Bankers suggested that information on types and volumes of business conducted in the District would be useful for them to determine the feasibility of locating in the neighborhood. Medical service providers indicated that a near term solution would be to look at a less conventional way of providing services, using mobile clinics or perhaps co-locating with other providers of community and/or commercial services.

Four Corners Vision

Four distinct commercial/industrial areas (north and south of the interstate and east and west of South Billings Boulevard) provide diverse regional and local services and employment. Employees, I-90 visitors, and local residents enjoy access to and views of the Yellowstone River, well-developed trail systems, and commercial area amenities. Complete streets and pathways connect the four commercial areas and provide access to regional recreational destinations such as Amend and Riverfront parks.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

The four quadrants at the South Billings Boulevard I-90 interchange are disconnected and vary in commercial use, form, and character. Many of the streets in the established business parks are in poor condition and in need of resurfacing, proper drainage, and curbs and gutters. Sidewalks and landscaping are incomplete, leading to weak connections; wayfinding from all directions (particularly north and south) needs improvement. Because conditions vary for each quadrant, the context for each is described below.

Northwest

This is a stable, auto-oriented district with a mix of commercial, hospitality, and distribution uses, with the Geyser Park water slide and mini golf contributing as recreation destinations. Several vacant parcels are well served by streets and utilities. The area has good interstate and arterial access and interstate visibility; several hospitality-oriented uses (hotels and entertainment) attract visitors. The bike path along King Avenue East and existing landscape standards have resulted in a relatively consistent streetscape. Zoning

is entryway commercial, highway commercial, and Planned Unit Development (PUD), accommodating a range of uses. Current uses include hotels, commercial recreation, wholesale and distribution, and federal government (BLM) headquarters. Streets are in fair to good condition, and the area is served by two bus routes. Sidewalks within the Southgate subdivision are continuous; however, connections from surrounding neighborhoods to the north are poor, and pedestrian crossing points on King Avenue East are few. Internal street lighting is limited.

Northeast

This developing regional center includes national Sam's Club and Cabela's retail stores, draws outside visitors and contributes to the tax increment of the District. The area has excellent interstate access, visibility, and available commercially zoned land with services. Streets are in fair to good condition. However, street connections to the north, Calhoun and Orchard lanes, are in poor condition and lack sidewalks. The area is served by an inbound and outbound transit route. There is a separate path on the south



The Four Corners neighborhood is comprised primarily of auto-oriented commercial uses. Uses in the four quadrants are often disconnected and vary in form and character.

side of King Avenue East that terminates at Orchard Lane. Sidewalks along King Avenue East are continuous; however, connections from surrounding neighborhoods to the north and east are poor, pedestrian crossing points on King Avenue East are few, and circulation routes from King Avenue East to the stores are incomplete.

Southeast

To the southeast, existing land uses include a beverage distribution center, a large auto auction lot, and several undeveloped parcels. The existing established manufactured home park is under County jurisdiction and not within the District. Visibility is good, and access is currently only off of 1-90 South Frontage Road. Currently, all of the development is interstate focused and suburban in character, lacking a presence, a distinct character, or sense of place and failing to take advantage of nearby Yellowstone River. Several irrigation and drainage ditches could be developed as pathways; landscape and drainage features and lots toward the south could be developed with an orientation to the river.

Southwest

The area southwest of the interchange is an established, nearly built out, prosperous business park with a mix of industrial, distribution, and hospitality land uses. The relatively new City Operations Center has sidewalks and is well landscaped, in contrast to much of the rest of the District. At the far west end are the Billings Convention Center and Holiday Inn. Although both host a number of conferences and events, reinvestment is needed to bring these facilities up to more current standards and present a more appealing exterior image. South of the area is Josephines Crossing, a developing residential subdivision, agricultural land, the Audubon Conservation Education Center, and Riverfront Park. Street and pathway connections to these amenities are missing. Connections between the business districts do not exist except along the I-90 Frontage Road that is lacking a sense of place, except for the backdrop of the Yellowstone River.



The Yellowstone River is nearby, southeast of the Four Corners neighborhood. Currently there is limited access from the neighborhood.

SOUTHGATE

The gateway parcel at the corner of Laurel Road on the southwest corner of the neighborhood could be developed as an indoor sports-plex. New wayfinding and gateway elements could provide an enhance entry to the 4 Corners Neighborhood.



LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

Four Corners would benefit from a cohesive branding and marketing effort. These diverse quadrants need to be woven together and marketed as one neighborhood with distinct opportunities. The neighborhood would benefit from future street connections to the south and immediate pathway connections linking hospitality-oriented businesses to both the riverfront and the parks. Although new development is desirable, retention and reinvestment in existing established businesses are of equal importance as collectively the four quadrants offer diverse and complementary services.

NORTHWEST - SOUTHGATE

Nearly built out, this area would benefit from better access from the north. Extending the character of Parkway Avenue to Laurel Road, redeveloping the Laurel gateway parcel (see rendering to the left), and improving directional signage will draw visitors in from the north and give this business park a better presence from Laurel Road, as well as the interchange and nearby neighborhoods. Potentially, the gateway parcel could be developed as an indoor sports-plex (soccer, gymnastics, batting cages, etc.) as the community is accustomed to traveling to this area of town for sports. This Southgate Business Park is best suited for uses similar to what exists—warehouse, hotels, government offices, and those that benefit from interstate visibility and access.

NORTHEAST

In the near term, Cabela's and Sam's Club will benefit by infrastructure investments to improve access, growth in nearby residential neighborhoods, and attracting more commercial activity in the larger District. Improving King Avenue East crossings and pathway connections from Ponderosa Park, motels to the west, and residential neighborhoods to the north will encourage walking versus driving and

thereby keep some visitors in the neighborhood. Over time, the existing establishments will benefit by additional business and commercial activity throughout the District.

Expansion of businesses and regional attractions near this interchange will make this regional center more competitive with the nearby King Avenue interchange. Recreational services have been discussed as an advantageous niche for this neighborhood including stores that sell outdoor clothing and sports equipment. An outlet mall may also be an opportunity. Near term, the focus might be on recruiting regional businesses with this focus as well as national retailers such as REI, the North Face, and Columbia. National chain restaurants want visibility from the highway; research indicates that more large-scale retail and services would be needed to attract them. Therefore, near-term marketing should focus on recruiting national, regional, and local.

Land north of King Avenue East bordering the northern edge of the Four Corners and Optimist neighborhoods poses an opportunity for commercial development. This development, addressed in the key concepts for Amend Village, can tie together the two neighborhoods along this seam, offering desired local services and functioning as a regional draw. These opportunities are described in greater detail in the Amend Village and Optimist summaries.



RIVERSIDE BUSINESS PARK

Improved access to the Yellowstone River, directional signage, and the redevelopment of the gateway parcel will give the Southgate Business Park a better presence from Laurel Road and surrounding neighborhoods.

SOUTHEAST – NEW RIVERSIDE BUSINESS PARK

The area south of the interchange to Riverfront Park should be master planned with consideration of the surrounding County properties (see rendering to the left). Eventually, even the areas north of Riverfront Park (not within SBBURD) could be included in the area marketing plan. A focus on the Yellowstone River, recreation, rural character, and access to trails and recreation amenities may attract businesses that are looking for a distinct setting and identity. Rather than orienting solely to the interstate, the agricultural ditches, fields, and the nearby river and its floodplain should inform the character of the new business park development. Near term, improving the character and access and providing more variety in lot sizes may attract diverse distribution, office, and small manufacturing businesses.

Long term, multiple landowners could collaborate on a plan to provide a new access from South Billings Boulevard to South Frontage Road, providing an alternative and attractive route for travelers arriving from the north. Planning should also look at the feasibility of crossing over or under the interstate with a pathway and drainage improvements and perhaps even a roadway. This road would parallel the river, have a more attractive character than South Frontage Road, and also improve access to Riverfront Park and many recreational opportunities. Undeveloped land in this area may be particularly attractive to small manufacturers, professional offices, and small office/warehouse as there is no other business park in Billings that offers the ease of interstate access, views, and a natural setting with many recreation amenities.

This would be an ideal location for manufacturers and distributors, sporting goods and sports apparel, regional guide services for fishing and cycling, and outdoor adventures and offices who desire a premier setting. The area closest to the interchange may also be appealing to factory outlets.

SOUTHWEST

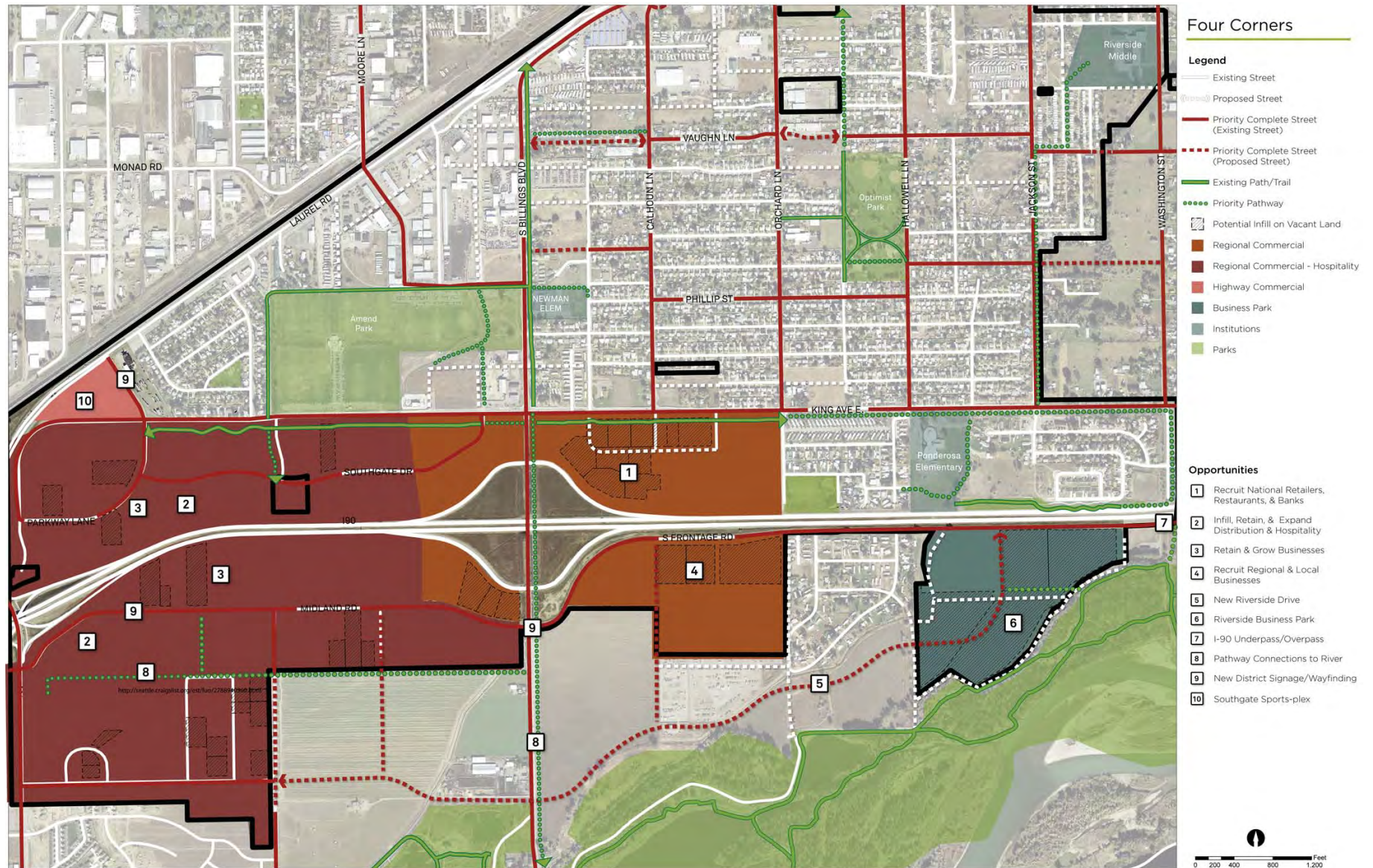
Retention, reinvestment, and expansion of existing businesses should be a focus in this quadrant of the Four Corners neighborhood. Improvements should include new investments in complete streets, public and private utilities, improved wayfinding, and offering incentive programs to expand businesses, improve properties, and complete sidewalks. Improvements to streets, drainage, sidewalks, and street-lighting are recommended in this area. New streets and walking and bicycling pathways could be developed to connect the business parks to each other and to connect the hotels southwest of the interstate to Riverfront Park and the Audubon Center. First-rate access to trails, bike paths, and parks could provide hotels a marketing advantage and attract businesses by providing employees improved access to these amenities. Hotels in this area would also benefit from access to restaurants, although they may be best located in other quadrants of this neighborhood near Cabela's, or undeveloped parcels in Southgate and Midland Road with better visibility from the interstate.

FOUR CORNERS WOULD
BENEFIT FROM A
COHESIVE BRANDING
AND MARKETING EFFORT



Development of a business park coupled with the retention, reinvestment, and expansion of existing businesses and investments in the infrastructure, will strengthen the neighborhood and improve connections to other areas.

FOUR CORNERS CONCEPT PLAN



KEY CONCEPTS

01

Develop a cohesive branding and marketing effort.

02

Connect to the Yellowstone River: physically, visually, and thematically.

03

Encourage retail, manufacturing, and distribution businesses with a recreation focus to locate within the northeast and southeast quadrants.

04

Retain existing businesses, focusing on those west of the interchange.

05

Improve the appearance of the interchange with landscaping.

06

Improve wayfinding with gateway and directional signage from the north, south, and west arterial streets.

07

Master plan City and County lands south of the District to improve street and pathway connections between commercial and residential neighborhoods and to the river.

08

Build upon assets and existing uses, as follows:

- Northeast: Recruit national retailers, restaurants, and banks to complement the more local retailers, credit union, and services north of King Avenue.
- Southwest: Infill vacant lots and retain, improve, and expand distribution and hospitality services.
- Northwest: Infill vacant sites with similar services and create a more attractive entry off of South Frontage Road.
- Southeast: Recruit regional and local businesses to the southwest.

09

Reinforce recreation as a theme and niche market.

FEEDBACK ON PRIORITIES

PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

Results of the polling exercise conducted at the September 2011 public meeting (approximately 40 respondents) are summarized below.

- 89% of participants supported, 4% opposed, and 7% expressed no opinion on the Vision Statement.
- 93% expressed support for the illustrations of opportunities, with 4% opposing and 4% offering no opinion.
- The strongest support was expressed for recruiting national retailers and recruiting regional and local businesses.
- Infill, retention, and expansion of distribution and hospitality; retaining and growing businesses; and new wayfinding and signage received nearly equal support.
- The idea with the least support was a pedestrian crossing of I-90 to improve access to the Yellowstone River.

KEY STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

General support of key plan concepts for Four Corners was provided by businesses that were reached for comment. One business owner made a strong plea to other property owners of the importance of personal investments in on-site improvements and local infrastructure as a means to attract future businesses to the area.

Comments from a local bank suggested that if the number of daily depositors and the nature and type of commercial businesses in the Four Corners neighborhood were better understood by the larger Billings business community (as recommended), then a market for potential satellite banks could develop in the neighborhood. Co-locating with other commercial services should be explored prior to a longer term commitment to a branch bank or credit union.

Optimist Vision

Residents enjoy high quality local living in a well-connected, walkable, diverse, safe, and affordable neighborhood. Tree-lined streets, community gardens, and urban agriculture sites provide functional amenities that encourage residents to walk and eat healthy, and activate local streets. The Optimist neighborhood accommodates small business entrepreneurs who want to work and live in the same setting, and people of various lifestyles, ages, incomes, and abilities.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing land uses include a mix of housing types (single-family, duplex, modular/mobile homes, multiplexes, and row houses), businesses, parks, and schools. The land use is predominately residential in the west, south, and east, with some commercial uses and local businesses along the north-south collector streets Calhoun and Orchard lanes. Light industrial, vehicle-oriented warehouse and distribution uses located northeast of Optimist Park encroach into the neighborhood. Optimist Park, the Boys and Girls Club, and schools are centers of activity and community. Zoning allows for a broader range of housing and higher density than currently exists.

This neighborhood is one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Billings, with a strong sense of community pride. A task force and a number of neighborhood nonprofit organizations and service providers, churches, and neighborhood activists are all engaged in neighborhood affairs. Although some residents resist change, most believe reinvestment is needed to promote positive transformation. Residents are justifiably concerned about maintaining property values, the character of established neighborhoods, and pattern of life.

Priority actions expressed at public meetings include timely investments in needed street and infrastructure improvements, actions to make the neighborhood more attractive, and crime reduction. Retention and improvement of community facilities and parks, and better access to food, health care, and neighborhood services are also important. Many residents support a broader range of housing choices, mentioning affordability and senior housing as priorities. Residents of established single-family areas are opposed to higher density development and are concerned about poorly maintained properties and absentee owners.



The Optimist neighborhood is predominantly residential and has a strong sense of community pride. Infrastructure investments, however, are needed to improve the area.

AN EMPHASIS ON
LOCAL LIVING COULD
MAKE THIS A UNIQUE
NEIGHBORHOOD IN
BILLINGS

LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

An emphasis on local living could make this a unique neighborhood in Billings. Building upon the strong sense of community and independence, this neighborhood could become “the place” for a small cluster of local businesses, independent health and service providers, local food, and perhaps a small business incubator being explored in the nearby Orchard neighborhood.

A new multigenerational community center, artist and farmers markets, small farms and nurseries, and film and music festivals—featuring local and ethnic offerings—could enhance neighborhood character and identity and provide new opportunities while celebrating diversity, improving food access, increasing activity in parks, and improving the overall health and safety of the neighborhood.

Building upon existing businesses, land uses, and programs, this neighborhood could continue to employ people in local businesses and small-scale agriculture, and provide new live / work opportunities for home occupations.



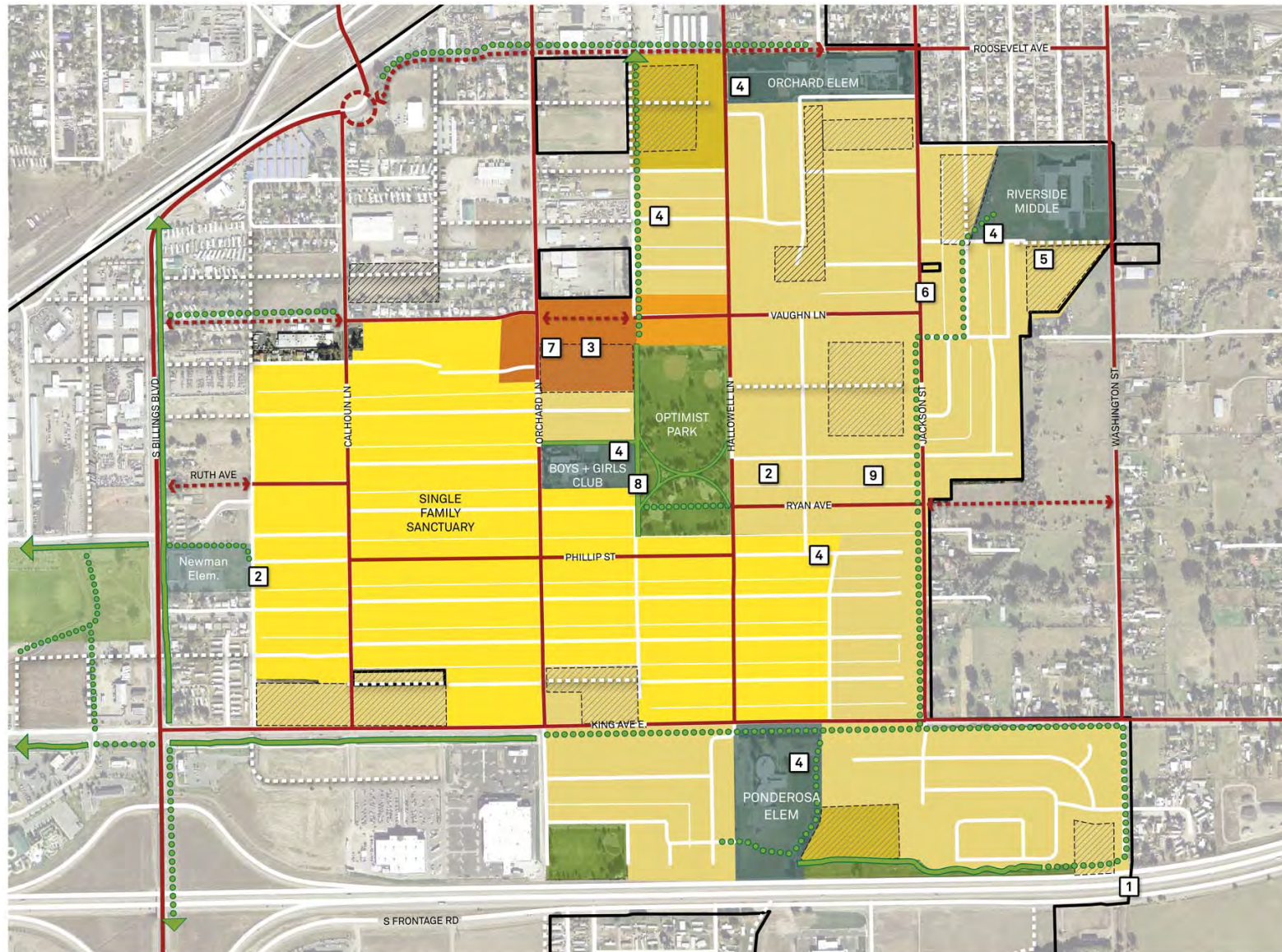
SITE PLAN

LUX LANE

Potential exists for the redevelopment of land adjacent to Optimist Park as a small cluster of local businesses and services and a new multi-generational community center that would improve the health and safety of the neighborhood. Longer term, a more traditional main street with vertical mixed use could be developed with live/work spaces.



OPTIMIST CONCEPT PLAN



Optimist

Legend

- Existing Street
- Proposed Street
- Priority Complete Street (Existing Street)
- Priority Complete Street (Proposed Street)
- Existing Path/Trail
- Priority Pathway
- Potential Infill on Vacant Land
- Single Family Sanctuary
- Residential District
- Residential Infill
- Mixed Use - Craftsman
- Mixed Use - Live Work
- Mixed Use - Commercial
- Institutions
- Parks

Opportunities

- 1** Underpass Pathway/Overpass
- 2** Connect to City Sewer
- 3** Lux Lane (new village center/ micro businesses)
- 4** Potential Farm/Garden
- 5** Potential School Expansion
- 6** Improve Police Presence & Code Enforcement
- 7** Job training /Incubator
- 8** Potential Community Center/Kitchen
- 9** Clean-up Drainages



KEY CONCEPTS

01

Protect and strengthen residential neighborhoods through investment and empowerment. Encourage homeowner and resident participation in planning and improving their neighborhoods. Address crime and deteriorating and vacant properties and infrastructure. Increase employment and training opportunities.

02

Protect property values by investing in needed gray, green, and social infrastructure (streets and utilities, environmental and aesthetic enhancements, neighborhood improvement, empowerment, and policing programs and projects).

03

Retain and enhance neighborhood character and quality of life. Protect existing trees and plant more trees. Preserve and enhance parks, schools, and neighborhoods. Improve safety by increasing police presence and improving street lighting in areas of high crime. Retain established single-family areas as single-family sanctuaries, directing higher density infill to areas targeted for infill and reinvestment.

04

Micro-entrepreneur district. In the near term on Lux or Vaughn lanes, think small shops and small houses for cottage industries. These could be modular so they are flexible and low-cost and eventually could be replaced with newer vertical live/work structures. In the near term, it is probably independent professionals retrofitting houses.

05

Improve access to community and commercial services through better streets and pathways, Safe Routes to Schools, improved transit, and more walkable neighborhoods. Carefully plan to introduce local services closer to residential areas.

06

Promote healthy lifestyles by improving access to healthy food, improving walkability, and providing services that support an active lifestyle (safe places, clean air and water, pathways, parks, gardens, farms, and orchards).

07

Develop green infrastructure through a network of complete streets, enhanced street tree plantings, stream and ditch corridors, and pathways connecting improved public parks, schools, community services, and new community gardens, nurseries, and farming sites.

FEEDBACK ON PRIORITIES

PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

Results of the polling exercise conducted at the September 2011 public meeting (approximately 40 respondents) are summarized below.

- 89% of participants supported, 8% opposed, and 4% expressed no opinion on the Vision Statement.
- 77% expressed support for the illustrations of opportunities.
- The strongest support was expressed for improving police presence, cleaning up drainages, and connecting to sewers.
- Desired facilities identified included a new village center and a community center/kitchen.
- The idea with the least support was a pedestrian crossing of I-90.

KEY STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Similar to other areas of the District, City and service agency and faith-based organization stakeholders strongly support multi-family housing as a mechanism to provide affordable housing. Interviews indicate that the current maintenance and public safety issues associated with the rowhouses east of Jackson Street and south of Riverside Middle School are negatively affecting the potential for the Optimist area to redevelop. Further, the rowhouses have given a negative association with multi-family housing across the District. Strong support was given to the development of design guidelines for multi-family housing to ensure that the resulting housing products support the desired residential character of the area.

Stakeholders such as ConocoPhillips, Montana State University-Billings, health agencies, and other service providers indicated significant interest in building a multi-purpose community facility and/or job training facility in this neighborhood (or the Orchard neighborhood) that addresses: (1) the gap in a trained workforce for the local openings of immediately available living wage jobs, (2) the need for flexible community meeting spaces, and (3) the need for health services.

Overall, the proposed Optimist neighborhood concepts were supported, with the understanding that implementation of the proposed concepts is stakeholder-led where possible. Key neighborhood activists commented on the importance of empowering neighborhood residents to play a vital part in the revitalization of their own community, as opposed to having others do it for them. Empowerment is seen as critical to the success of revitalization and breaking the cycle of poverty and resulting passivity.

Orchard Vision

The Orchard neighborhood has evolved to a walkable, vibrant neighborhood with a broad mix of local and neighborhood-oriented businesses, diverse housing choices, and many neighborhood amenities. Job training programs, a business incubator, retirement housing, community gardening programs, a multigenerational community center with community kitchen, and the adaptive reuse of existing buildings have created employment opportunities. Well-designed residential areas provide a variety of exciting housing choices for seniors, singles, traditional, and multigenerational families.

EXISTING CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

The neighborhood is framed by Vaughn Lane, Hallowell Lane, Sixth and State Avenue, and Newman Lane and defined by the Moose Lodge, Orchard School, stable single-family homes, and a mix of neighborhood businesses along State Avenue. The State Avenue IGA and Casino next door have cafes and are community gathering places. A number of commercial services, significant neighborhood pride, and several sizable vacant lands provide opportunities for future infill.

The State Avenue corridor includes a variety of small businesses, including hardware and grocery stores. Calhoun Lane, north of Vaughn Lane, includes several (non-conforming) small businesses. Orchard Lane north of Vaughn Lane includes several large undeveloped or underutilized properties; some are still unincorporated and in the County.

Some of the industrial uses generating traffic are somewhat incompatible with the neighborhood. The railroad to the north is a significant barrier to neighborhood access, but some vehicle and pedestrian crossings do exist. There are many unpaved streets, a weak block structure, and poor connectivity throughout the area (particularly east and west.)



Large commercial services and small businesses characterize Orchard. There is a need, however, for significant investment in infrastructure including improved streets, connections between blocks, and better pedestrian and vehicle/railroad crossings.

LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

Many community and neighborhood partners are working together to carefully guide change in South Billings. The Salvation Army, several churches, social service agencies, and neighborhood task forces all have initiatives focused on this neighborhood, as well as greater South Billings. Economic development and social enterprise opportunities will be realized in partnership with neighborhood residents, business owners, and service organizations. Local, neighborhood-serving businesses should be encouraged to remain, expand, and participate in training programs.

There is significant opportunity within the Orchard neighborhood to provide additional employment opportunities. Over time, highway-oriented industrial and highway-oriented businesses could be encouraged to relocate but remain within the District. Underutilized existing buildings could be adapted to new uses. In addition, small-scale infill and new master planned development could provide more diverse and compact housing, such as senior retirement and assisted living, artist cooperatives, affordable cooperatives, multi-family, live/work, and multigenerational options. This neighborhood is also well suited for a “craftsman district,” where entrepreneurial opportunities for existing residents to live and work within the same parcel would be encouraged. Properties with longer parcels could accommodate shops for skilled trades, artisans, small builders, and service providers.



CRAFTSMAN DISTRICT



A craftsman district could encourage existing residents to live and work within the same parcel for entrepreneurial opportunities. Enterprises may include small fabrication and repair shops, artists studios, small service businesses, and/or small gardens or landscape businesses.

SITE PLAN - CRAFTSMAN DISTRICT

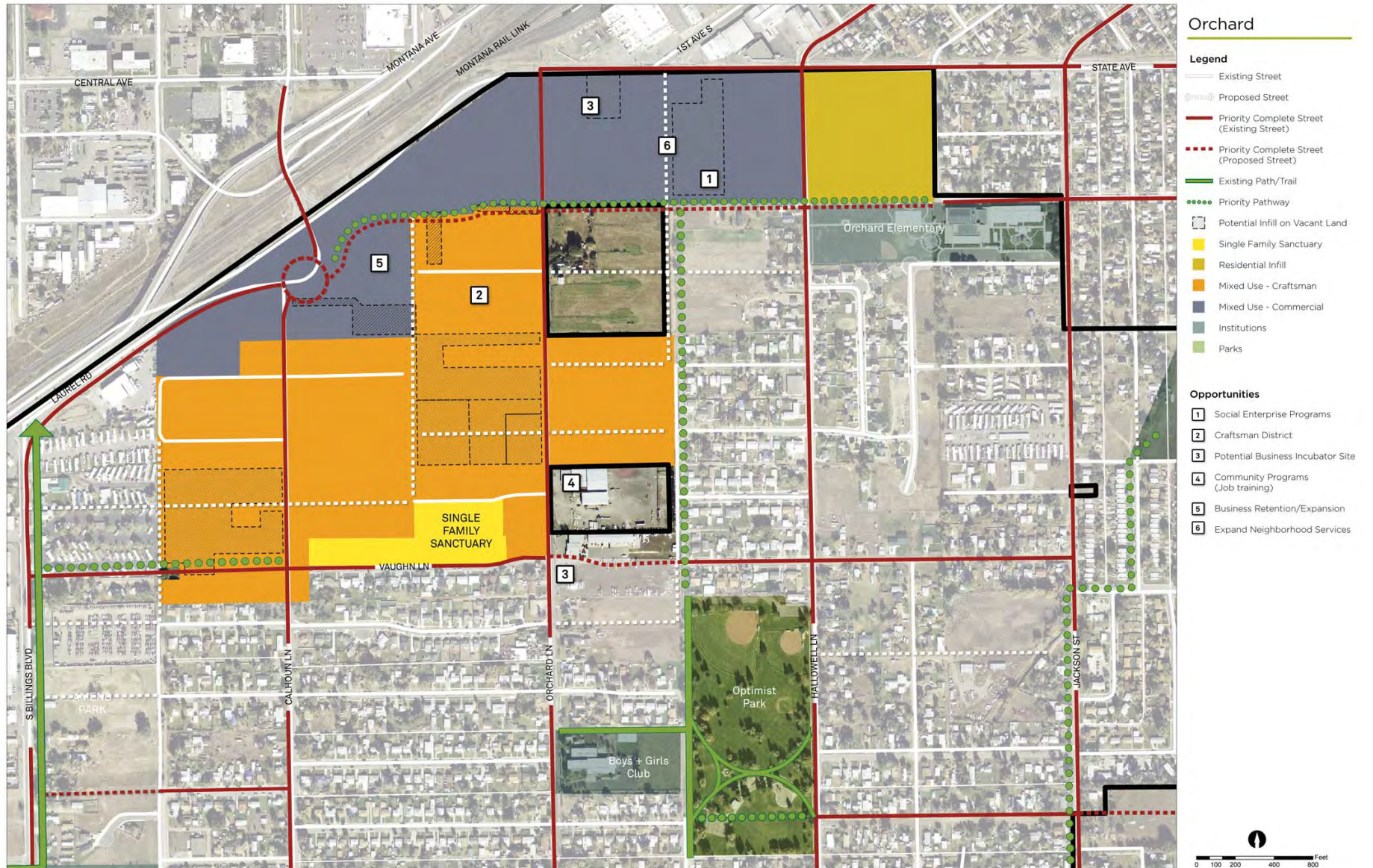
Existing longer parcels provide entrepreneurial opportunities. They could accommodate infill housing or shops for skilled trades, artisans, small builders, and service providers.



Building upon existing businesses, land uses, and programs, this neighborhood could continue to employ people in local businesses and small-scale agriculture, and provide new live/work opportunities for builders, artists, and home-based businesses. Business incubator and training programs could be introduced into underutilized commercial buildings and on open lands on Orchard Lane, north of Vaughn Lane. Job training programs, community gardening and tree planting programs, and business incubators may provide training and space for start-up businesses, encouraging residents to become neighborhood entrepreneurs and business owners.



ORCHARD CONCEPT PLAN



KEY CONCEPTS

01

Improve access from the Sixth Avenue underpass by extending Roosevelt Avenue west through the neighborhood and from the north across State Avenue.

02

Traditional neighborhood services could be expanded at the north end of the District near State Avenue where grocery and hardware already exist.

03

Promote development on the vacant and highway-oriented lands south of State Avenue with a variety housing choices, including senior-oriented housing lane.

04

North of Vaughn, between Orchard and Newman lanes (where lots are deeper, larger, and zoned controlled industrial, community commercial, and residential), there may be an opportunity to develop a craftsman district that will allow trades and artists to live and work.

05

Orchard and Calhoun lanes will continue to have small local businesses along the street. Street improvements will include landscaping and pathways to present a more cohesive appearance, manage parking, and improve connections.

06

Work collaboratively with neighborhood service providers and mission-based organizations on economic development initiatives that encourage local businesses and retailers and social enterprise. Explore the feasibility of the current proposal to introduce a business incubator with training programs into underutilized commercial buildings or undeveloped parcels on Orchard Lane.

05

IMPLEMENTATION

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Implementation

The comprehensive Vision articulated in the South Billings Master Plan is ambitious, envisioning new uses and the transformation of the District from disconnected auto-oriented uses to a collection of diverse, attractive, and walkable neighborhoods. The transformation will be realized over many years through capital projects, policy changes, new programs, and partnerships.

Chapter 5, Implementation, provides guidance on implementation strategies and outlines specific actions, providing both an overview and enough detail to inform capital improvement plans, annual work plans, and refinement of targeted marketing efforts. This chapter includes the following elements:

- Funding sources
- Potential partnerships
- List of project priorities
- Overview of phased implementation strategy
- Next steps for implementation

Realizing this ambitious long-term Vision will require that the community commit, connect, invest, and encourage participation of multiple stakeholders. Investments will include commitments of fiscal and human capital to address the many social, economic, and environmental needs of the District. Implementation will require a focused strategy for achieving near term success (1–10 years). Additional detail is available in the appendix material.

FUNDING SOURCES

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a widely used economic development tool that can be used to finance public infrastructure and stimulate private development within designated urban renewal areas. Urban renewal is a state-sanctioned program that can be adopted by cities, towns, or city-county consolidated governments in Montana to help them, through partnerships with the private sector, implement adopted plans that revitalize specified areas within their jurisdiction.

Urban renewal, through the provision of tax increment financing, can provide for capital improvements such as parks, streets, and transit systems that stimulate private investment and attract new businesses, jobs, and residents. It can also assist with development activities that are approved in an Urban Renewal Plan, such as financing for affordable housing or mixed-use transit oriented development and feasibility studies that lead to built projects.

The City of Billings has previous experience with urban renewal and tax increment financing districts. The Billings Downtown Core Tax Increment Financing District (TIFD) was established in the 1970s and expired in

March of 2008. During its life, tax increment funds were leveraged for a variety of renewal projects, including storefront improvements, housing grants, building rehabilitation, streetscape improvements, and others. Private owners invested an estimated \$40 million in improvements in the Downtown district between 1998 and 2008. Billings currently has two other tax increment finance districts: the East Billings Urban Renewal District and the N. 27th Street Urban Renewal District.

TIF is the primary funding tool used within TIFDs. The tax increment revenue is generated within a TIFD when a designated area is established and the taxable value within that area is frozen. For a period of time, the taxable value in excess of base (the increment) is directed into improvements in the district. Increases may result from property value increase through either appreciation or new taxable development. Taxing jurisdictions continue to collect tax income and to release property tax revenue from the increment value to the TIFD.

The property taxes collected by the TIFD from incremental value are known as TIF revenues. The TIFD can then spend tax increment

revenues directly, or can issue bonds secured by future tax increment revenues to pay for identified public improvements and/or investments in private projects that are in the public interest.

TIF FORECAST

Appendix B presents a full description of the methods for forecasting TIF. The key assumptions used in the forecast of TIF revenues are:

- The assessed value of the parcels in the SBBURD.
- Appreciation of assessed property value.
- The amount and value of new construction in the District.
- Tax rates and exemptions.

From 2010 through 2022–23, TIF revenue to be generated in SBBURD is forecasted to be \$16.2 million, with a revenue stream of roughly \$1,000,000 per year. The total SBBURD TIF revenue is reduced by \$280,000 per year to determine the amount of TIF revenue for new projects, which is committed to paying debt service on public infrastructure investments made to support commercial development

in Miller’s Crossing. This TIF revenue for new projects is estimated to be \$953,222 in Fiscal Year 2012–13, and climb to \$1.7 million in Fiscal Year 2022–23.

The City could spend TIF as it accumulates annually, or borrow money to undertake larger projects sooner. Waiting until funds accumulate will slow the growth of tax-generating projects because infrastructure improvements would be delayed and TIF may not be available to narrow the financing gap on development projects, thereby encouraging investment. Alternatively, the City can borrow money through Tax Anticipation Notes (TAN) or a line of credit, which could be applied to infrastructure projects and assist with development projects sooner. Borrowing and starting projects sooner will generate tax increment sooner.

For example, the City may be able to issue a 3- or 5-year TAN for about \$3 million to \$5 million in FY 2012–13. The City would pay the TAN off by the end of the period. They could issue a bond, possibly as large as \$8 million or \$9 million (depending on the structure of the TAN and the bond). Depending on the life of the bond, borrowing could require extending the life of the District to pay debt service.

KEY FINDINGS OF TIF FORECAST

The City has choices about how and when to spend the TIF revenues. The City will need to decide what priorities to fund, how much TIF revenue to dedicate to infrastructure projects, when to spend the revenues, and whether to borrow to make revenues available sooner.

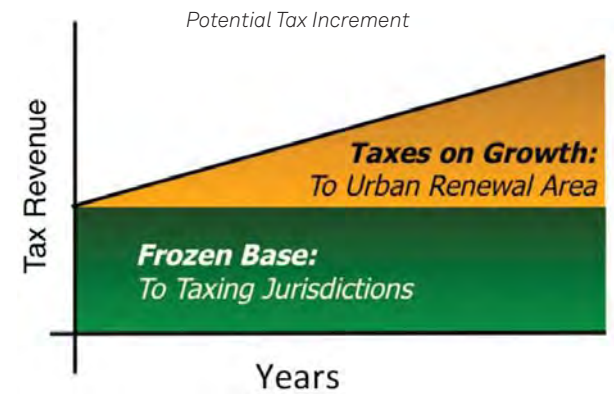
The cost of the projects identified in the Master Plan is \$47.6 million, with streets and utilities representing roughly \$37.4 million.

Some of the infrastructure costs identified will be funded through the City’s Capital Improvement Plan.

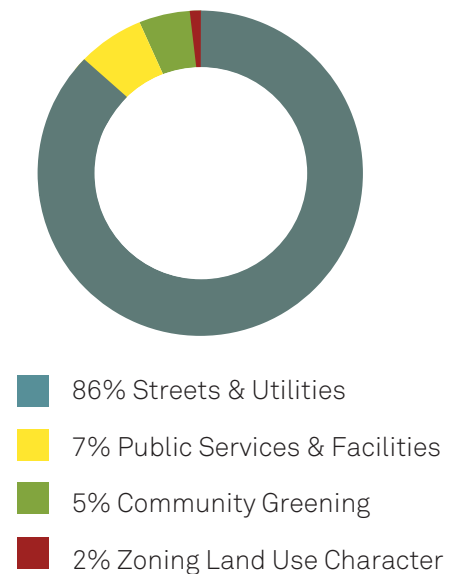
About \$16.2 million of TIF revenue would be available for infrastructure costs or other projects identified by the City.

The gap between the costs of infrastructure and the amount of TIF revenue available through 2023 is approximately \$31 million.

The City will need to look to other sources of funding, such as those described below and in Appendix B, to fill the funding gap for infrastructure and other projects in the District.



Breakdown of Estimated Project Costs



OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

Other sources of funding will be needed to implement the Master Plan, which includes recommendations on community and economic development needs, public facilities and services, and investment in social infrastructure as well as public streets and utility infrastructure. Regeneration of the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District will require funding from sources other than TIF revenues and the creation of strategic partnerships. This section identifies other funding sources that South Billings is eligible for. Appendix B describes these programs in more detail, and provides information about economic development agencies and nonprofit agencies in Billings and Montana.

- **Tax Anticipation Notes (TAN)**

Short-term, tax-exempt, low interest loans used by state and local governments to finance immediate projects that will be repaid with future tax revenues. TANs are sometimes used in TIFDs to provide up-front funds for projects in situations where the district does not have adequate annual funds nor is it able or desirable to issue long-term bonds for those projects.

- **New Markets Tax Credits**

The New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program enables tax credits to be secured for qualified economic development projects within designated areas. NMTCs, which are processed through Community Development Entities (CDEs), can help fund new development or redevelopment of job-creating projects by providing very low interest rate equity investments or loans for a 7-year period. NMTCs have been used for a variety of qualified projects including: hotels, mixed-use projects, performing arts facilities, office buildings, and industrial developments. In limited circumstances, the equity/loan can be forgiven.

- **EB-5**

EB-5 is a federal program designed to enable foreigners to obtain a U.S. visa leading to citizenship by making a \$500,000 investment, at low interest rates, in American economic development projects. Each \$500,000 investment must create 10 jobs for U.S. residents. These can be primary jobs (directly part of the business or project), and/or secondary jobs (those that are indirectly associated with the business/project as well as

induced by it). Common EB-5 projects include senior housing facilities, hotels, office buildings, industrial facilities, and retail and infrastructure projects (when these are linked to any of the preceding). Montana does not yet have an EB-5 regional center.

- **Low Income Housing Tax Credits**

Federal tax programs provide tax credits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, and new construction of rental housing targeted to lower income households. At least 20% of residential units must be restricted to low income residents with income less than 50% median gross income of the area—or at least 40% of the units must be restricted to low-income residents with income of 60% or less of the median gross income of the area.

- **HUD 221 (d) (4) Loan Program**

This program provides a financing guarantee for up to 80% of development project costs for new construction or rehabilitation of market-rate multi-family housing, which reduces the amount of equity a developer needs to raise and brings down the overall cost of financing.

- **HUD 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly**
Provides interest-free capital advances to private, nonprofit sponsors to finance housing development for low-income seniors.
- **HUD 108**
This is the loan guarantee provision of the CDBG program. Section 108 provides communities with a source of financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and large-scale physical development projects. Section 108 loan capacity is determined by the annual CDBG allocation to the City.
- **Public 63-20 and Nonprofit 501c3 Bonds**
Allow public agencies (e.g., state universities, public hospitals) and nonprofit corporations (e.g., museums, Y's, nonprofit development entities) to issue tax-exempt bonds to finance up to 100% of the cost of a facility for a tax-exempt purpose, such as a training facility or medical clinic.
- **SBA 504 Loan Program**
Administered by a Certified Development Company (CDC), the Small Business Administration 504 Loan Program is a long-term financing tool for eligible small

businesses to use for major fixed assets, such as land and buildings. In Billings, the Big Sky Economic Development Authority (BSEDA) currently administers this program.

- **SBA 7(a) Loan Program**
Administered by a CDC, the Small Loan Advantage and Community Advantage 7(a) Loan Initiatives are aimed at expanding access to capital for small businesses and entrepreneurs in underserved communities to help drive economic growth and job creation.
- **Traditional Funding Sources**
Traditional funding sources include the general fund, utility and street repair and maintenance funds, park improvement and maintenance funds, special improvement districts, state and federal loans and grants, and grants and donations from nonprofits and partnerships.

REGENERATING
SOUTH BILLINGS
WILL REQUIRE
THE CREATION OF
STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIPS
AND FUNDING
SOURCES OUTSIDE
OF TIF REVENUES

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

- **Economic development agencies**
BSEDA will be a key partner in the redevelopment of South Billings. They have access to SBA loans and other grants. They can blend their resources with the City's resources (e.g., TIF) and other resources for redevelopment.
- **Local lenders**
The City should work with local lenders to educate them about financing opportunities and specific projects in South Billings. Lenders may not be aware of available financing tools (e.g., TIF revenues, New Market Tax Credits, EB-5 funds, etc.). The City will need to demonstrate how these tools work, what roles the City and lenders can play with these tools, and how the tools can be applied to specific projects.
- **Private developers**
The City should meet with private developers on a regular basis to build closer relationships and to make sure that the City is aware of what projects the developers are pursuing, as well as what resources the City can bring to bear for key redevelopment and economic development projects.
- **Local nonprofits and foundations**
Nonprofits and foundations may have access to financial resources that the City does not. Nonprofits, with the City's help, can issue 501c3 bonds. Bonds could be used for nonprofit medical clinics, an office facility for a group of nonprofits, or a nonprofit trade training and incubation center.
- **Public housing authority and nonprofit housing providers**
These organizations can assist with redevelopment through building affordable, workforce, and senior housing. They can access federal programs, such as low-income housing tax credits and HUD 202 low-interest loans. In addition, housing authorities and nonprofit organizations can both issue bonds.
- **Education resources**
The City should work with Montana State University-Billings and any existing trade schools to increase access to trade and other types of training. The purpose of this partnership would be to align the training opportunities with the City's economic development goals by identifying gaps in existing training programs. These partnerships would be key in starting a trade training and business incubator. Partnerships with MSU-B could lead to the development of other programs to serve the community. The City's role in this partnership would vary, depending on the City's goals, and could be simply providing funding for the project.
- **Hospitals**
Partnering with the two local hospitals is an option for securing a medical clinic in South Billings. The purpose of the partnership would be to bring medical services to South Billings, fulfilling part of the City's Vision of development in South Billings. The hospitals can issue bonds (63-20 bonds). Preliminary discussions suggest that non-conventional methods of delivery (mobile clinics, tele-medicine, physician assistants, and space sharing with other organizations) should be explored. The City's role in this partnership would vary, depending on the City's goals, and could be simply providing funding for the project.
- **Businesses**
Businesses in the District provide jobs, invest in properties, and significantly contribute to the tax base. Businesses can contribute to workforce training, building and maintaining public improvements, and promoting the District and recruiting new investors.

PROJECT LIST

Exhibit 5.1 is comprehensive list of projects discussed during the planning process and described in Chapters 3 and 4. Exhibit 5.2 is a comprehensive list of programs, policies, and planning actions focused on Master Plan implementation.

Both charts show the estimated costs, priorities, implementation lead, and potential partners. Recommended actions in each exhibit are organized to follow the discussions in Chapters 3 and 4.

Priorities were determined by rating each project relative to established goals and the decision-making criteria developed during the planning process. The condensed charts are included in this chapter as Exhibits 5.1 and 5.2. The expanded spreadsheets, included in Appendix A, illustrate the priority rating process and are provided to the City as working files to be used for annual updates in response to changes in funding, priorities, and/or costs.

Feedback at the November 2011 meeting included the suggestion that prioritization should also consider the willingness of property owners to contribute to a Special Improvement District (SID). The priorities do not take this into account as it is not possible to determine this without an extensive outreach process.

Exhibit 5.1 South Billings Capital Improvement Projects includes recommendations that a program be created that allocates a specified amount annually to improve residential streets. A group of property owners could apply and provide matching funds as an SID.

PRIORITIES WERE
DETERMINED BY
RATING EACH
PROJECT
RELATIVE TO
ESTABLISHED GOALS
AND DECISION -
MAKING CRITERIA
SET THROUGH THE
PLANNING
PROCESS

EXHIBIT 5.1 SOUTH BILLINGS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (ESTIMATED COST AND PRIORITY)

Item	Project	Estimated Cost	Priority	Lead	Funding											Potential Partners										
					Eligible for TIF Funds*	General Fund	City street/utility improvement/maint fund	State & Federal Grants & Loans	Special Improvement Districts	Business Improvement Districts	New Markets Tax Credits	School District	TIFD	Community Development Block Grants	City	MET	Housing Authority	Property Owners	Businesses	School Districts/Higher Education	Developers & Realtors	Health Providers	Service Providers	Montana Department of Transportation	BSEDA	NonProfits/Faith Organizations
	<p><i>Note:</i> Project list represents full range of opportunities explored Priority ranking considers the goals and prioritization criteria developed during planning process. Refer to Appendix A for detailed evaluations. Priorities will be evaluated as the Capital Facilities Plan is developed and priorities may change based on funding opportunities and partnerships. Programs, Policies, and Planning are addressed separately.</p>		<p>High: 25-28 Medium: 18-24 Low: 18</p>																							
U	Utility Projects	\$ 1,462,500																								
U-1	Water & sewer replace/upgrades (see street connectivity)	In Street \$	H	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
U-2	Connect to City water & sewer services (Assume 275)	\$ 962,500	M	Public Works	Y		x	x																x	x	
U-3	Street lighting improvements- 8 blocks (internal)	\$ 500,000	L	Providers/ P. Wks	Y		x		x																	
U-4	Street lighting at key intersections & pedestrian crossing	TBD	L	Providers/ P. Wks	Y		x		x																	
C	Connectivity & Access	\$ 35,916,510																								
C-1	Improve collectors 1/4 mile network complete streets	\$ 22,120,000	H	P. Wks/Planning	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
1	Newman Lane improvements	\$ 380,000	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
2	Calhoun Lane	\$ 2,200,000	H	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
3	Orchard Lane	\$ 2,750,000	H	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
4	Midland Road	\$ 2,810,000	H	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
5	Vaughn Lane (Lux)	\$ 2,050,000	H	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
6	Hallowell Lane	\$ 2,750,000	M	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
7	Southgate	\$ 1,830,000	M	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
8	Phillip	\$ 2,300,000	M	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
9	Ryan	\$ 1,000,000	M	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
10	Holiday	\$ 1,300,000	M	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
11	Jackson	\$ 2,750,000	M	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
12	S. 12th Street	TBD	L	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
13	Roosevelt	TBD	L	Public Works	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
C-2	Priority green corridors with pathways, LID & Trees	\$ 700,500																								
1	Vaughn Lane extension (Lux) 1200 LF	\$ 84,000	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
2	South Billings Interchange	\$ 67,500	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
3	Orchard Lane	\$ 159,000	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
4	Southgate Drive	\$ 120,000	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
5	Phillip Street	\$ 135,000	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
6	Roosevelt extension	\$ 135,000	L	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
C-3	Improve pedestrian crossings	\$ 846,500																								
1	Sixth Avenue underpass	\$ 67,500	M	P. Wks/Planning	N		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
2	King Avenue (7 crossings)	\$ 175,000	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
3	S Billings Blvd crossings	\$ 105,000	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y																					
4	State Avenue crossings (3)	\$ 99,000	L	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
5	Internal Complete Streets crossings resid (Assume 12)	\$ 300,000	L	P. Wks/Planning	Y		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
6	Internal streets S of I-90 (Assume 4)	\$ 100,000	L	P. Wks/Planning	Y																					
C-4	Implement Safe Routes to Schools	\$ 1,078,300																								
1	Newman	\$ 295,300		P. Wks/Planning																						

*Footnote: Projects eligible for TIFD funding must be located within the TIFD on public property and/or within the public right of way. Final TIFD funding will ultimately depend on the project scope.

EXHIBIT 5.1 SOUTH BILLINGS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (ESTIMATED COST AND PRIORITY)

Item	Project	Estimated Cost	Priority	Lead	Funding										Potential Partners											
					Eligible for TIF Funds*	General Fund	City street/utility improvement/maint fund	State & Federal Grants & Loans	Special Improvement Districts	Business Improvement Districts	New Markets Tax Credits	School District	TIFD	Community Development Block Grants	City	MET	Housing Authority	Property Owners	Businesses	School Districts/Higher Education	Developers & Realtors	Health Providers	Service Providers	Montana Department of Transportation	BSEDA	NonProfits/Faith Organizations
	<i>Note: Project list represents full range of opportunities explored Priority ranking considers the goals and prioritization criteria developed during planning process. Refer to Appendix A for detailed evaluations. Priorities will be evaluated as the Capital Facilities Plan is developed and priorities may change based on funding opportunities and partnerships. Programs, Policies, and Planning are addressed separately.</i>																									
G-4	King Avenue greenway enhancements	\$ 510,000	M	Pub Works/Parks	Y		x	x	x																	
G-5	Priority pathways as greenways	\$ 455,000	M	Planning/Parks	Y		x	x																		
G-6	Brownfield PH 1 assessment -Laurel/Parkway Site	\$ 10,000	M	Planning	N				x																	
G-7	Key gateway enhancements \$19300 ea (8)	\$ 154,400	M	Planning/Parks	Y		x	x	x																	
G-8	Landscape key gateways \$7200 ea (9)	\$ 64,800	M	Planning/Parks	Y		x	x	x																	
G-9	Expand community gardens	\$ 20,000	M	Planning/Parks	Y																					
P	Public Services & Facilities	\$ 7,150,000																								
P-1	Gymnasium addition to Riverside School	\$ 150,000			Y																					
P-2	Improve East Amend Park	\$ 1,150,000	M	Pub Works/Parks	Y	x																				
P-3	Multi-use/generational community center(s)-feasibility study	\$ 150,000	M	School District	Y																					
P-4	Multi-use/generational community center(s)	\$ 5,000,000	M	P. Wks/Planning	Y				x																	
P-5	Replace cop shop	TBD	M	Police	Y	x																				
P-6	Playground improvements Optimist Park	\$ 200,000	L	Parks	Y	x			x	x																
P-7	Convert historic Amend barn to community use	\$ 500,000	L	Parks/ Partner	Y	x			x																	
LU	Zoning, Land Use, Character	\$ 920,000																								
LU-1	Improve character of gateways	\$ 920,000																								
1	Laurel Road median landscape	\$ 450,000	M	P works/parks	Y		x	x	x	x																
2	Calhoun Gateway @ Sta improvements	\$ 20,000	M	P works/parks	Y				x	x																
3	State Ave gateways (3) 1st, 2nd, 4th	\$ 60,000	M	P works/parks	Y		x	x	x																	
4	at Calhoun, Orchard, Hallowell and Jackson	\$ 80,000	M	P works/parks	Y																					
5	Laurel Road gateway (3) Moore, Parkway & S. Billings Blvd	\$ 60,000	M	P works/parks	Y				x	x	x	x														
6	Parkway streetscape, landscape & wayfinding improvements	\$ 250,000	L	P works/parks	Y				x	x	x	x														
E	Economic and Community Development	\$ 80,000																								
E-1	Feasibility study for business incubator/job training center	\$ 80,000	M	Planning	Y	x			x																	
E-2	Job training center	TBD	M	Planning/ BSEDA	Y				x																	
H	Health, Safety and Resiliency	TBD-Partners																								
H-1	Built environments that promote health & safety	TBD-Partners	H	Collaboration	N	x	x	x	x																	
H-2	Address environmental concerns- pollution	TBD-Partners	H	Planning	Y				x																	
H-3	Improve access & transport choices	TBD-Partners	H	P. Wks/Planning	Y																					
H-4	Mobile Clinics - health, dental, vision	TBD-Partners	M	Providers	N				x																	
H-5	Improve access to nutritious foods-markets & gardens	TBD-Partners	M	Health	N				x																	
H-6	Recruit service providers to District	TBD-Partners	M	Planning	N																					
H-7	Improve recreation and education opportunities	TBD-Partners	M	Parks	N	x																				
H-8	Compact infill-housing choice and nearby services	TBD-Partners	M	Planning	N																					
H-9	Health care in District	TBD-Partners	M	Planning/TIFD	Y																					
		\$ 47,611,960																								

EXHIBIT 5.2

SOUTH BILLINGS PROGRAMS, POLICIES & PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Item	Programs, Policies, and Planning Actions	Budget	Related Actions or Plans	Priority	Score	Lead	Funding										Potential Partners																															
							General Fund	City Street/Utility Imprv't & Maint Funds	State & Federal Grants & Loans	Special Improvement Districts	Business Improvement Districts	New Markets Tax Credits	School District	TIFD	Community Development Block Grants	City	MET	Housing Authority	Property Owners	Businesses	School Districts / Higher Education	Developers & Realtors	Health Providers	Service Providers	Montana Department of Transportation	BSEDA	Non Profits / Faith Organizations	Foundation																				
Notes: List represents full range of opportunities explored Priority ranking and scoring considers the goals and prioritization criteria developed during planning process Refer to appendix for detailed evaluations and scoring Priorities will be evaluated annually as work plans are developed and priorities may change based on funding opportunities and partnerships Capital projects are addressed in a separate list.																																																
High= 25-28 Medium= 18-24 L <18																																																
U Utility Infrastructure																																																
1	Inventory/plan for communication & technology service	Min	Private Utility Plans	M	24	Providers											x																															
2	Financial assistance programs for owners/renters	TBD	CDBG	M	20	City		x	x							x	x																															
C Connectivity & Access																																																
1	Policy - Use of TIFD w/ SID for local street improvements	Staff-Min	Devel Policy	H	25	Planning / TIFD		x									x																															
2	Amend TIP, CIP & transport plans for priorities	Staff-Min	TIP	H	25	City		x									x																															
3	Improve transit service	TBD	TIP	M	22	MET Transit				x								x																														
G Community Greening																																																
1	Green job training programs	TBD	Econ Devel Plan	H	26	BSEDA / Educators/NP			x							x																																
2	Community gardens, farming & forestry programs	TBD	Health, Parks	M	22	Non Profits/ Parks		x								x	x																															
3	Assistance to bring landscape up to standards	TBD	Devel Code	M	18	Planning		x		x						x	x																															
P Public Services & Facilities																																																
1	Improve code enforcement	TDB	Zoning Code	M	21	City Planning		x									x																															
2	Increase police presence	TBD	Public Safety	M	21	City Police		x									x																															
3	Feasibility/site selection study community center	\$60,000	Parks & Rec	M	20	City Planning		x									x																															
4	Improve library services	TBD	Library Master Plan	M	18	City-Planning		x									x																															
5	Expand activities & recreation programs in parks	TBD	PRPL Master Plan	M	18	City Parks		x		x							x																															
6	Retain schools - coordinate community & school planning	Min-staff	School Plan	M	18	SD#2 w/ City Planning										x	x																															
LU Zoning, Land Use, Character																																																
1	Zoning Changes	\$75,000	Zoning Code	H	28	City Planning		x		x							x																															
2	Manage & rehabilitate deteriorated properties	Workshop	Housing Plan	H	28	City Planning										x	x																															
3	Improve compatibility of land uses-zoning & guidelines	zone chg	Growth Policy	H	26	City Planning		x									x																															
4	Zoning for use by right to improve predictability	zone chg	Development Regs	H	26	City Planning		x									x																															
5	Expand live-work opportunities	zone chg	Housing Plan	M	24	City Planning		x		x							x																															
6	Increase housing choices	zone chg	Growth Policy	M	23	City Planning		x		x							x																															
7	Workshop/programs to engage and support renters	\$25,000+	Housing Plan	M	22	City Planning		x		x						x																																
8	Temporary use of vacant properties	TBD	Zoning Code	M	21	City Planning																																										
9	Encourage small, local micro-business zone	zone chg	Economic Devel	M	20	City Planning		x								x	x																															

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A targeted and coordinated implementation strategy is necessary to overcome market conditions and other barriers to redevelopment in South Billings. Implementation is likely to take 15 to 20 years, possibly longer. This time frame is typical for areas such as South Billings.

The figure on the next page gives an overview of the approach to implementing priorities identified in the SBBURD Master Plan, identifying key strategies and actions based on available funding, community goals and priorities, and market realities.

Implementation of the Master Plan will depend, in part, on building upon successful projects within the District. Redevelopment may be gradual over the first 3 to 5 years, and increase as conditions within the District improve. The figure shows the key principles of investments and partnerships that apply throughout the District. These include:

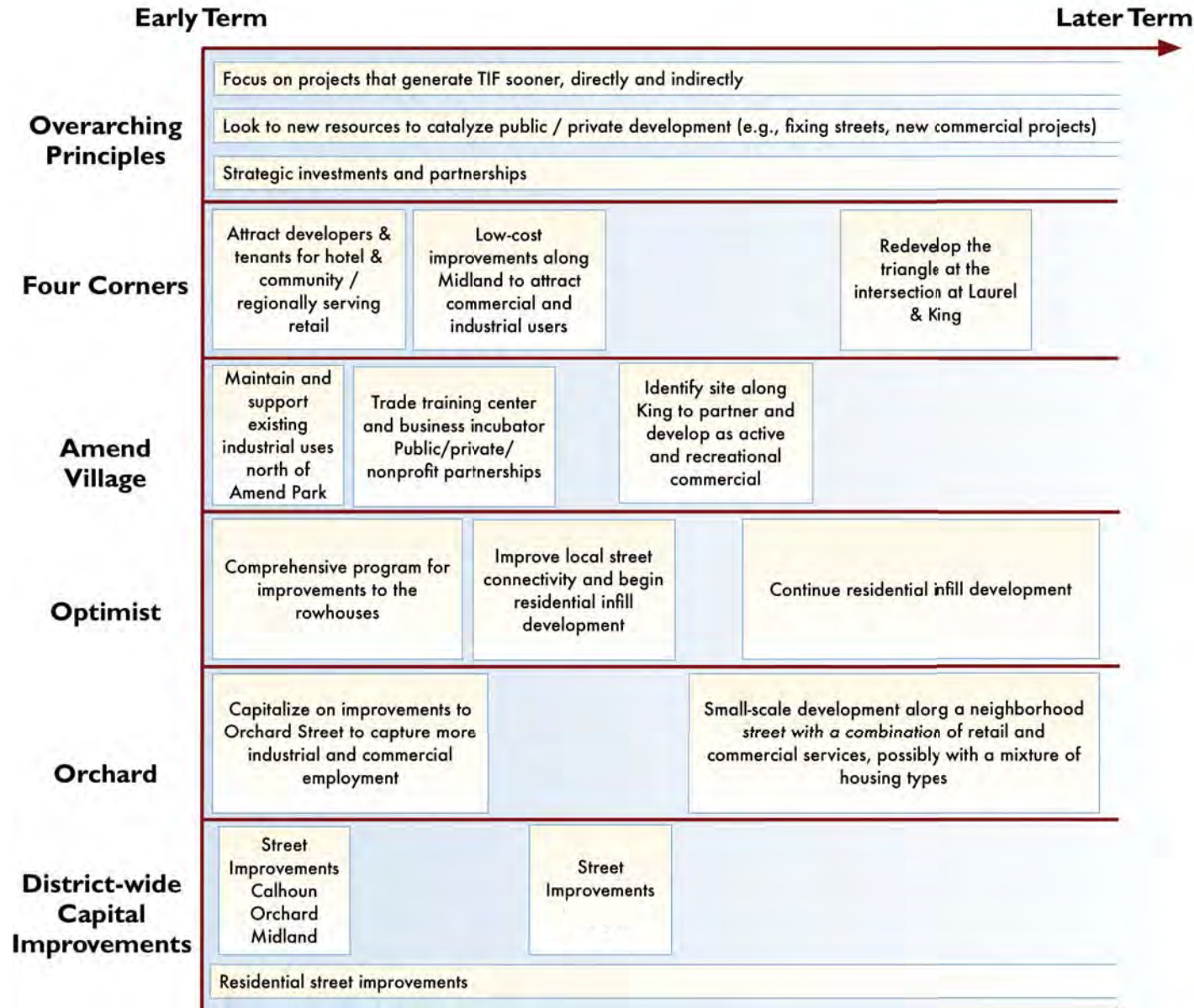
- Focus on projects that generate TIF. The increment generation in the District right now is not sufficient to cover all of the projected infrastructure costs. Further, homestead/comstead exemptions and

other details of the property tax structure in Montana affect the timing and amount of increment, and limit the revenue benefits associated with certain types of development (especially owner-occupied residential). Strategic investment in private projects that generate TIF, especially in the early years, will benefit the entire District. Commercial and industrial development will generate the most TIF. Well-designed, quality multi-family housing will generate more TIF than single-family housing.

- Look to new resources to catalyze development. South Billings residents and businesses have expressed a desire to attract a range of new development. Commercial facilities such as full-service restaurants, a branch bank, and new hotel are often cited. Service facilities such as medical and dental clinics, branch library, and training centers are among those desired. While South Billings offers good locations for many of these uses, the market on its own is unlikely to support them without public assistance. The District has access to TIF, a very helpful resource, but one that will need to be further leveraged to help the area achieve

more of its goals. To reduce the risks for private developers/investors, and to close the gap between construction costs and achievable rents, alternative financing tools will need to come into play. Some of these tools are available only in areas that meet certain conditions (e.g., levels of unemployment or poverty). South Billings as a whole or in part should be eligible for a number of these financial assistance programs. These sources include tax credit programs (e.g., new market tax credits, affordable housing tax credits), HUD Section 108, and EB-5, as described above. Each of these has the potential to provide either lower interest rate loans, or in some cases less expensive equity, that can make projects more economically viable. Appendix B lists potential funding sources for South Billings, in addition to TIF revenues.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY



The figure to the left also shows implementation strategies for each of the four neighborhoods, from actions that should be taken early in the implementation process to actions that could be more effective later in the process.

EARLY TERM PROJECTS

FOUR CORNERS

The area near the intersection of King Avenue and South Billings Boulevard probably has the greatest development opportunities in the District, and has attracted the most attention from potential investors and developers. The area has large sites that are assembled, excellent transportation access and visibility, and has already benefited from TIFD resources for infrastructure improvements.

A key strategy will be increasing commercial uses in this area. Working with developers and potential tenants in the near term on ready-to-go sites to secure a greater mix of uses that include community and regionally serving commercial uses will further improve the development opportunities on adjacent sites.

Midland Road presents opportunities for expanding existing or attracting new commercial and industrial uses. These include distribution facilities, energy-related support industries, and various transportation

and parts businesses. Some relatively low-cost improvements, such as completing the sidewalk network or streetscape improvements, are possible investments that could give the area a stronger business/industrial park image and competitive advantage. This should attract a broader range of new industrial users along and around Midland Road. Industrial and commercial development, while still subject to various tax deferrals, is a good generator of TIF. Ideally, infrastructure improvements would be directly linked to commitments from the private sector to expand existing facilities and/or build new ones. Relatively small investments in the early years of implementation could bring not only jobs, but also increase the revenue available in the District for other future projects.

AMEND VILLAGE

This area offers opportunities for continued industrial uses, as well as opportunities to capitalize on recreation and other public uses in the park.

The area north of Amend Park is an active, functional industrial area, with many parcels and multiple land owners. Keeping this area functioning for employment uses, including industrial uses, will be important, as a way to support existing businesses and give new businesses a potential area to grow in. Existing



A key strategy is to increase commercial uses while also expanding existing or attracting new commercial and industrial uses.



Improving street connectivity is a key short-term action.

businesses can be supported through various loan programs provided by the BSEDA; if they choose to physically expand and create required numbers of new jobs, they may be eligible for low interest loan programs such as EB-5.

OPTIMIST

The neighborhood's primary opportunity is to retain its residential character but improve the quality and variety of new housing on some of its infill sites.

Making improvements to the rowhouses in the neighborhood is an important starting point for redevelopment. Interviews have revealed that the current maintenance and other issues with the rowhouses are negatively affecting the potential for the Optimist area to redevelop. We recommend a comprehensive program to address this, potentially in partnership with the adjacent middle school and other service assistance providers, which could include: increased code enforcement, workshops with residents and owners, support for the formation of a homeowner's association, low-interest loans or grants for rehabilitation of and improvements to individual units, and increased access to social services for tenants and owners of units.

Improving local street connectivity will be important for continuing residential redevelopment. The Optimist neighborhood has opportunities for residential infill development, which could include new single-family housing and duplexes, as well as possible multi-family units for seniors.

ORCHARD

This neighborhood offers potentially the most diversity of land uses, providing diverse live/work opportunities and a balance of jobs, services, and housing choices. The City should focus on infrastructure improvements and changes to zoning to encourage and regulate the envisioned mix of uses. The City should consider the use of Floor Area Ratios (FAR) as a regulating tool to encourage the construction of smaller housing units. Additionally, parking requirements could be reduced for smaller units and affordable housing to remove obstacles to development. Complete street improvements are a priority, making the neighborhood more accommodating to commercial and industrial businesses and at the same time attractive to residents.

Training Center or Business Incubator. There is considerable interest in the District in starting a trade training center and business incubator. This center would offer job training

to better prepare the workforce in South Billings and the metro area for actual jobs, and would also foster growth of emerging businesses, a number of which should locate in South Billings after their incubation period. Developing such a center can be challenging. Needs would include: (1) securing agreement among public and private partners on the functions and size of such an operation, (2) acquiring a viable site, and (3) finding funding for capital and operations. Potential partners to create and operate such a center include MSUB-BSEDA, the City and County, private businesses, and faith-based organizations interested in training and business incubation. The City could help start the center by making available at viable terms publically owned land to construct the center, with the east end of Amend Park or a portion of Optimist Park being possible locations.

Rezone areas in the northern portions of the Orchard neighborhood along Laurel Road of Controlled Industrial (CI), Community Commercial (CC), Residential (R-60), Highway Commercial (HC), and Residential 9600 (R-96) to Planned Unit Development (PUD) .

MID/LATER TERM PROJECTS

FOUR CORNERS

A key, highly visible redevelopment opportunity in this neighborhood is the triangle parcel at the intersection of Laurel Road and Parkway Lane. This site offers longer term redevelopment opportunities, as the District becomes more attractive to businesses because of improvements to infrastructure and increased economic activity. This site is relatively large and readily accessible by cars along Laurel Road. It is, however, isolated from residential areas and not suited for many industrial uses. The triangle could be viable for commercial uses that require excellent automotive access and good visibility, such as a market or another combination of service and retail uses. It could also be developed for community uses, preferably in combination with some commercial activities. Near term, a brownfield assessment should be conducted and if contamination is present due to its former use as a service station, clean up efforts should be a near-term focus.

AMEND VILLAGE

The recreational activity centered on the park offers opportunities for creating an active and recreational commercial center in this neighborhood. Doing so would require

identifying sites in the neighborhood along King Avenue East for development that incorporates opportunities for neighborhood services and active recreation. Over the longer term, there is the additional opportunity for a mixed-use neighborhood commercial center at the northeast corner of King Avenue East and South Billings Boulevard.

OPTIMIST

Later-term activity in the Optimist neighborhood will likely consist of continued residential infill development, with perhaps more emphasis on nicely designed, good quality, well-managed multi-family units.

ORCHARD

As the neighborhood redevelops, developing a small-scale commercial center may be possible in the residential area in the Orchard neighborhood, perhaps along Orchard or Calhoun Lane. The concept for this area is illustrated in the Optimist Neighborhood Concept Plan. This area could include a mixture of uses, such as neighborhood-serving retail, church, community center and services along the street edge with more dense housing options where the parcels have more depth.

NEXT STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The next steps for implementation build on the work in the Master Plan.

INVESTMENTS

- Make strategic investments to leverage the capacity of the TIF through combining it with other sources of revenue. Key investments should be ones that catalyze additional development. For example, talk with commercial brokerage firms and property owners about what infrastructure improvements on Midland Road would best catalyze new commercial and industrial development. For improvements that serve residential as well as commercial interests such as Orchard Lane, using TIF to secure enhancements like sidewalks and streetlights may make these areas more inviting for redevelopment.

REDEVELOPMENT

- Identify and secure the most viable and robust economic development/redevelopment tool kit. One of the City's first steps should be exploring how to secure and use other key funding sources. A few examples are listed below:

- Explore the viability of New Markets Tax Credits to South Billings. The entire District is not eligible for these tax credits. The City should contact the Montana Community Development Corporation to identify eligible census tracts, and how NMTCs can be blended with TIF and other tools for projects in South Billings.
- Work with BSEDA, the Montana Community Development Corporation, and the State to evaluate what it takes to establish an EB-5 regional center in Montana.
- Once the financing tool kit is complete, the City should meet with lenders and developers to discuss the tools, how they can be blended with private resources, and what kinds of projects they can be applied to.
- Meet with key developers, large institutions (e.g., MSU-B and the hospitals), and other key stakeholders about the Master Plan's objectives and to explain the financing tool kit. Find out how the City and the stakeholders can assist each other in identifying and developing projects in South Billings.
- Talk with key property owners in the Four Corners area, including the entity that developed the Sam's Club and Cabela's sites, about how the remaining land could be developed and what kinds of development might be possible there. There may be opportunities to integrate some community-desired uses such as a bank branch and/or medical clinic into the mix. Share information about the development tool kit with these entities and explain how it can help them achieve their goals and the City's.
- Conduct feasibility studies addressing a training center, business incubator, and multi-generational community center. The studies should gauge the need, including what types of programs and/or training should be offered and what types of businesses would benefit. The studies should also identify capital and operating costs as well as other challenges, identify potential partnerships for developing/operating the center(s), and include an evaluation of potential sites.

ZONING

The following provides a summary of the most significant zoning modifications that are proposed to support and implement the District and neighborhood visions described in Chapter 4. For reference, see the Existing Zoning Map on page 30 in Chapter 2. The zoning districts within the study area are overly diverse and, in some areas, inflexible to meet the needs of evolving markets related to housing products and compatible mixes of uses.

The following recommended modifications to the existing zoning map would reduce the number and variety of zoning districts within the study area to simplify the current regulatory process for the benefit of public administrators, property owners, developers, and residents. The establishment of a form-based code (FBC) for the District is not desired by the City at this time but should be considered as resources become available for all or part of the District.

1. Rezone R- 70 to R-70R

The majority of R – 7000 (R- 70) zoning would be rezoned as R – 7000 Restricted (R- 70R), which would not permit multi-family housing.

Objective – Establish a “residential sanctuary” as identified in the Optimist Neighborhood Vision and that responds to feedback from existing residents.

2. OPTION 1: Rezone areas of CI, CC, R-60, HC, and R-96 to PUD

Rezone areas of Controlled Industrial (CI), Community Commercial (CC), Residential (R-60), Highway Commercial (HC), and Residential 9600 (R-96) to Planned Unit Development (PUD) in the northern portions of the Orchard and Optimist neighborhoods along Laurel Road. These areas, identified on the Recommended Zoning Changes map, will overlay the following new zoning district concepts:

- **Mixed Use Craftsman District (MUCD)**

This underlying zone of the PUD would allow existing residents the right to build a small office/shop on their existing lots, run a business out of their home, or redevelop the lot to provide space in the same or separate buildings for local entrepreneurial opportunities that require shop space. Refer to the illustration of the craftsman district on page 105 for the general intent of this zone. Examples of the potential employment opportunities include crafts such as plumbing, electrical, carpentry, landscape, and local art, among others.

- **Mixed-Use Live Work (MU-Live Work)**

This underlying zone of the PUD would allow existing residents the right to run a business out of their existing home or the redevelopment of housing in this area to provide space in the same building for local retail or services for area residents. Refer to the illustrated concept of Lux Lane for the intent of this zone on page 99. Potential home-based businesses include daycare, professional services, cafes, craft stores, or other independent retail businesses.

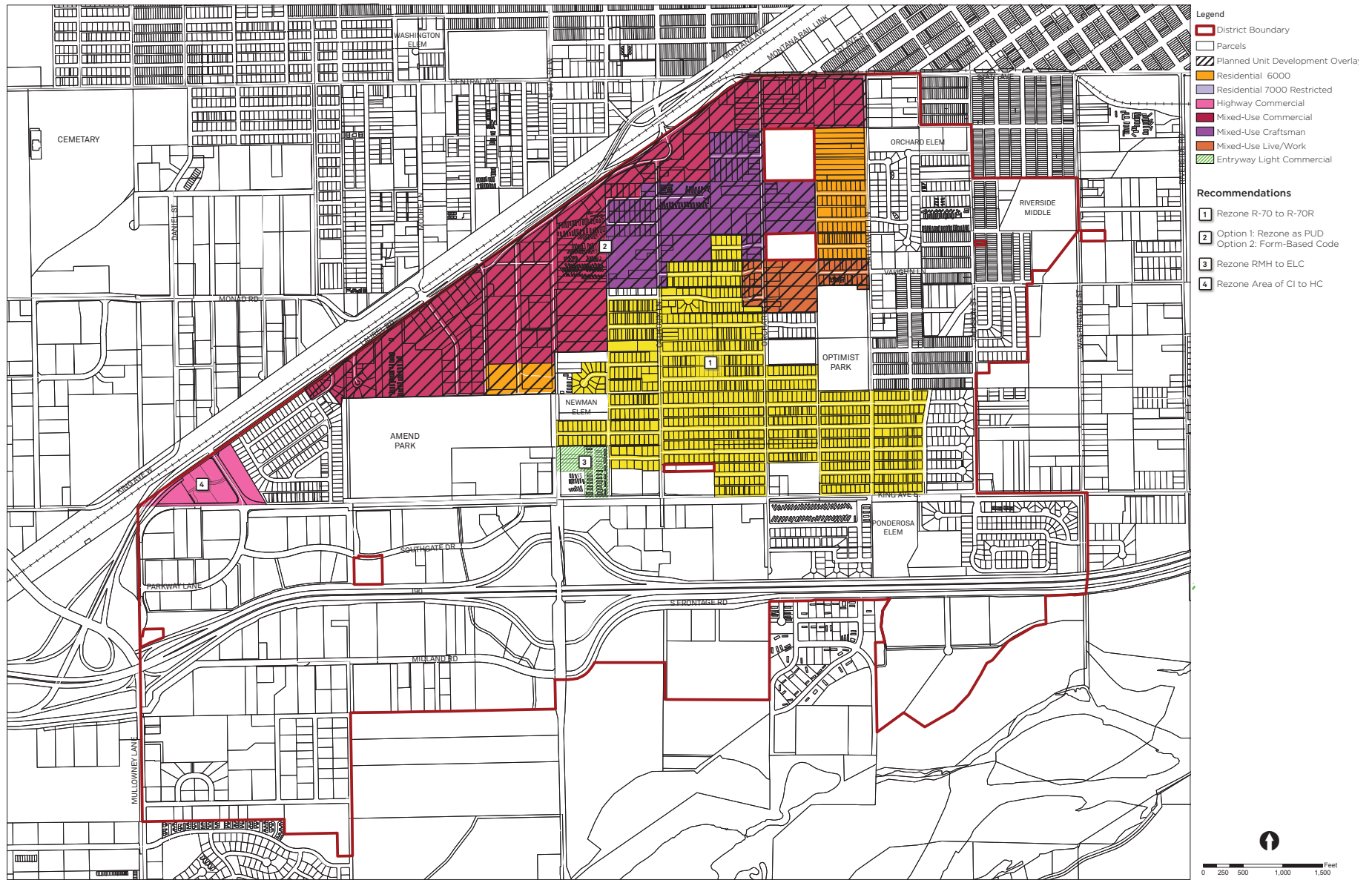
- **Residential 6000**

The R-60 underlying zone of the PUD would continue to encourage residential uses, but provide greater flexibility to cater to the current market demand for a mix of multi-generational housing options, including senior housing, cottage housing, multi-family apartments, and other housing prototypes (refer to the north parcels of the Amend Mixed Use Village illustration on page 80 for one concept of the intent of this PUD zone).

- **Mixed-Use Commercial (MU-Commercial)**

This underlying zone of the PUD would encourage a mix of commercial and residential uses within the same zone as the market dictates. A floor area ratio (FAR) should be used within this zone to allow some flexibility in permitted building

RECOMMENDED ZONING CHANGES



design, while achieving a hard limit on at least one measure of overall size. One advantage to fixing this parameter, as opposed to others such as height, width, or length, is that floor area correlates well with other considerations relevant to zoning regulations (parking, number of units, etc.). Many uses within the current Controlled Industrial zone could continue to be permitted where no conflicts occur with housing and where appropriate buffers are provided.

Objectives – Provide market flexibility, a mix of uses that support smart growth, and quality control assurances with the PUD process of the final built form in the Orchard and Optimist neighborhoods. Establish mixed-use areas unique to the local setting that allow a diversity of housing types and home enterprises to reflect the illustrative concepts and the intended mix of land uses as identified for the Optimist and Orchard Neighborhood Visions.

3. OPTION 2: Develop a Form-Based-Code (FBC) as an Alternative to PUD Rezone

The City should consider an FBC as a strong alternative to a PUD rezone in this area as resources allow. While rezoning to PUD was seen as the most straightforward method to allow greater flexibility and improve design

standards in the Orchard neighborhood, the result of the urban form will ultimately be driven by property owners. An FBC would provide more continuity in form and character and have less emphasis on use - allowing for more market flexibility, but often requires significant more time and resources to develop. An FBC would also depart from the existing regulatory framework and result in a “hybrid” code to fit within Billings zoning regulations and context.

4. Rezone RMH to ELC

Rezone Residential Manufactured Home (RMH) to Entryway Light Commercial (ELC) to allow urban form and land uses to reflect the illustrative concept identified for the southwest corner/gateway to the Optimist neighborhood.

Objectives – Allow for a concentrated area of higher intensity commercial and residential uses at the South Billings Boulevard/King Avenue East gateway that is compatible with adjacent residential areas as identified in the Optimist Vision. Refer to the illustrated concept of a neighborhood commercial center on page 82 for the intent for this zone.

5. Rezone an area of CI to HC

Rezone Controlled Industrial to Highway Commercial in the southwest corner of the Amend Village neighborhood.

Objectives – Reduce industrial land use conflicts with adjacent residential areas. Allow for a concentrated area of contiguous higher intensity commercial uses along King Avenue that is compatible with the neighboring residential areas as identified in the Amend Village Vision.

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06

CONCLUSIONS



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Conclusions

THE OPPORTUNITY

The South Billings Boulevard Urban District Master Plan is a vehicle for creating a healthy, sustainable, and livable District that offers diverse housing, employment opportunities, transportation choices, and better access to commercial and community services. Reinvestment in the District will improve the health, safety, character, economic vitality, and livability of South Billings.

Regeneration of South Billings will show that opportunities can be provided not only for the privileged, but for all residents. Improving the built environment—including access to healthy food, jobs, daycare, medical care, and job training—will address existing barriers to opportunities. Collaborating with the residents, owners, and other stakeholders to address these issues will encourage reinvestment, retain property values, and improve the overall quality of life.

The Master Plan recognizes that successful outcomes will be realized through partnerships and thoughtful and sustained investment in the social infrastructure as well as physical infrastructure.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The way South Billings is planned and ultimately shaped has an immense impact on the health and prosperity of the people living, working, and playing within its bounds. Individuals make decisions based, at least in part, on their environments. If residents live in an area where it is uncomfortable to engage in daily physical activity because they feel unsafe due to traffic speeds, noise, a lack of appropriate infrastructure, or perceptions of crime, they are less likely to participate in the physical activity needed to live a healthy life.

Investments in complete and connected streets, and utility upgrades are a high priority and an appropriate target for use of tax increment funds. Addressing infrastructure deficiencies will reduce blight, protect water resources, improve access to services, and improve connectivity between neighborhoods. The investment will improve the character and livability of the neighborhoods and encourage reinvestment, thereby improving the District's economic vitality.

SUCCESSFUL
OUTCOMES WILL
BE REALIZED
THROUGH
PARTNERSHIPS
AND SUSTAINED
INVESTMENT IN
THE SOCIAL AND
PHYSICAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

OPPORTUNITIES
FOR IMPROVED
ACCESS TO SER-
VICE AND JOBS
WILL BE REALIZED
THROUGH PART-
NERSHIPS AMONG
LOCAL OWNERS,
RESIDENTS, AND
ORGANIZATIONS

PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES AND JOBS

Ideally, the needed and desired community and commercial services will be available in the District and within walking distance of each residential area. Lack of access to convenient and affordable health care, training, libraries, child care, or senior services may mean that these needs may go unmet and employment opportunities may not be realized. In the near term, access to these important services may be improved by increasing the awareness of and coordinating new and/or existing programs.

Shared facilities, mobile clinics, book mobiles, weekly farmer's markets, and improved transit services are near-term, less conventional options to address these needs. The need for skilled trades and service workers combined with unemployment statistics suggest this area could also benefit from improved jobs training programs. These opportunities will be realized through partnerships among local owners and residents and public, for profit, and nonprofit organizations and education providers.

INTEGRATED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the master planning process and within the Master Plan document, the issues and recommendations are framed in seven categories: utilities; access and circulation; community greening; land use; public facilities; community and economic development; and health, safety, and resiliency. In reality, there is much overlap and synergy between these categories, and a single project or program may touch on many needs and provide multiple benefits. As examples, community and economic development opportunities are embedded in infrastructure construction as well as community forestry or gardening programs. Each of these offers opportunities for employment, job training, and environmental improvement, and each contributes to economic vitality by protecting or improving property values.

PLACEMAKING

South Billings is already a District with assets and with a mixture of uses. An adopted Master Plan and the availability of resources to make improvements to the District will make the area more attractive to investors, residents, and businesses. Primary factors influencing business location and investment decisions include:

- Land cost, configuration, characteristics, availability, and entitlements
- Infrastructure access, capacity, and condition
- Financial incentives and taxes (i.e., availability of low-interest loans or tax exemptions)
- Mix of businesses, industry clusters, and mix of other development types

Other factors include:

- Labor availability
- Quality of life
- Innovative capacity
- Access to materials
- Access to markets

Some of these factors don't seem as present in South Billings as in the rest of the City, such as a trained labor force that fits the industry mix

in South Billings or quality of life factors that would make the District an attractive place for people to live and work including good quality rental units, sufficient good restaurants, pathways, and local services. Neighborhood opposition to even well-designed and managed multi-family or rental housing, restrictive zoning, and/or an unpredictable development review process potentially will slow new residential investment; they may also affect commercial investments when success depends upon the presence of residents, tourists, and employees to support service businesses. The existing business and industrial parks are stable, revenue-generating uses. Employment including retention, expansion, and planning to accommodate local and smaller businesses and shops in a live-work setting may be one of the District's more unique opportunities.

The market analysis concluded that while South Billings has some advantages (i.e., interstate access and visibility, access to the river, vacant land, and relatively low land costs), the market is not choosing South Billings as the location for new businesses because of its disadvantages. The exception, of course, is that businesses are choosing to locate

in the Four Corners area, the area with the most advantages and fewest disadvantages. Building upon Cabela's, available land with services, proximity to Amend Park and the river, and existing recreation-oriented businesses near the interchange, it may be possible to position this commercial area as a destination and commercial center focused on recreation.

The availability of funding including TIF, New Markets Tax Credits, potentially an EB-5 center in Montana, and programs like 221(d)(4) to stimulate market-rate rental housing will make the District more attractive to investors. TIF funds can be used primarily for physical improvements. New Markets Tax Credits apply to the eastern part of the District, and an EB-5 center in Montana could be both used for economic development. South Billings can use programs like 221(d)(4) to stimulate market-rate rental housing, a use that some residents in South Billings will oppose although developers are expressing interest.

LEADERSHIP

Sustained and committed leadership is needed to realize the Vision. Although Billings is expected to grow, where and how it grows is a matter of market choices and leadership. Market choices can be influenced by public investments, positioning, and marketing. The City and economic development agencies have a crucial role in the success of this District, partnering with neighborhood champions, residents, and property and business owners.

The Master Plan includes a project list and estimates the costs of needed infrastructure (streets, utilities, and sidewalks), which significantly exceed the revenue generated by the TIFD. The Master Plan also includes a list of needed and desired community facilities, services, and amenities that will require other sources of funding and partnerships. Choices and trade-offs need to be made related to the location, type, amount, timing, and phasing of public and private investments. Leadership will be called upon to set priorities and address policies related to implementation and funding, such as:

Timing of Public Investment

Should the City borrow against current increment to implement infrastructure projects sooner, potentially realizing more increment and thereby being able to make more improvements?

Should a portion of the TIFD funds be used as incentives to new development?

Should the City Rezone

To protect some established single-family neighborhoods in the Optimist neighborhood?

To encourage live-work opportunities in the Orchard neighborhood?

To encourage the creation of a local neighborhood center and micro-entrepreneur zone?

To better accommodate aging in place and accommodate multigenerational living arrangements?

To encourage vertical mixed use?

How Should Infrastructure Priorities be Built and Paid for?

At what percentage should improvements along collector streets require matching funds?

What is the appropriate level of contribution from adjacent property owners for collector streets? For residential streets?

Will City policy require property owner participation in an SID a requirement for improving residential streets? Will this policy apply to unpaved residential streets?

What Type of Housing?

In response to a diversity of stakeholder opinions, market realities, and technical analysis, should the City actively pursue more diverse housing in the District?

Should the City position, through policy and zoning, to take advantage of funding sources for market-rate rental housing?

Should the City fund more planning and programs to improve deteriorated properties?

What are Other Priority Investments?

What amount of TIF funds, if any, should be allocated to priorities other than streets and utilities?

Of the many priorities identified, how will those most beneficial to the District be identified and prioritized?

What are the Tradeoffs?

Recognizing that neighborhood services (banks, healthcare, restaurants, stores) require more homes and businesses to support them than currently exist, would stakeholders prefer to live with fewer services or accept more intensity and diversity of housing in some areas to attract the desired services? Recognizing that the existing public infrastructure has the capacity to support more development, will the City's growth policies direct growth to this District or new subdivisions requiring infrastructure expansion?

Will the City Encourage Entrepreneurs and Innovation?

Will the City create unique zoning district(s) or PUDs to allow new living and working arrangements, such as areas for home-based businesses with shops or studios allowed? Vertical live-work? Cottage industries? Clustered cottage housing? Co-housing? Accessory dwelling units? Modular retail?

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

On November 18, 2011, the Draft Master Plan was presented at a public meeting. Electronic Polling equipment was used to poll preferences of the approximately 40 people in attendance. Many of these questions were posed. The polling results are summarized below to provide some guidance to City leadership. It is important to recognize that the 40 responses represent only one half of 1% of the approximately 8,500 people living in the District.

CITY ACTION TO ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURS

In response to the question "What are your top two preferences for how the City should encourage entrepreneurs and innovation?" 38% of the attendees selected "Zoning changes to provide more options for live / work arrangements." Other choices included: Projects such as shared workshop space or community kitchens, Providing small modular facilities or kiosks (well planned and limited) to encourage collaboration/announcements, farmers and artist markets, and training programs focused on the neighborhood (forestry, housing rehab, energy conservation).

The second and third most supported ideas were training programs and farmers markets.

SUPPORT FOR ZONE CHANGES

In response to the question "Do you support zoning modifications to encourage vertical mixed use (shop with living above)?" 80% of the participants indicated support. When asked "Do you support zoning modifications to 1.) Provide more flexibility for shops/ repair services to work out of homes or on the same lot in the Orchard Neighborhood?" 66% indicated support. 2. "To provide more flexibility for professional services/retail to work out of homes or on the same lot in the Optimist neighborhood? 67% indicated support. 76% of the respondents were supportive of amending zoning to allow existing non-conforming "businesses" (laundry, telecom, etc.) on Calhoun and Orchard to stay? 90% of the respondent support zoning to "Encourage a mix of uses (residential and service and retail areas integrated together) with design and quality controls?" 73% would support zone changes to "Allow additional apartments or townhomes in select areas if a process was developed to ensure they look attractive, fit the neighborhood character, and are safe and well-managed."

TIMING OF INVESTMENTS

33% preferred City “Take an approach to invest as TIF funds are collected (fewer & delayed improvement)” and 67% preferred the City “Leverage through bonding to start building sooner (more Increment dollars to work with, improvements built sooner).”

TRADE OFFS

In response to the question “Recognizing that neighborhood services (banks, healthcare, restaurants, stores) may require more homes and businesses to entice them to locate in the District, would you prefer to live with fewer services in the District or accept more development?” 58% are willing to accept more growth, 32% prefer to live with fewer services, and 10% were undecided.

When asked to provide top two preferences in response to the question “Recognizing that many are in need of affordable housing within the District, how should the City best support it?” 48% selected encourage multi-family housing in specific areas, 32% selected Smaller single family lots, 16% selected Allow Accessory Dwelling units off alleys, and 3% selected Creative arrangement such as Co-Housing.

ADDRESSING FUNDING GAPS

Several questions were posed to the community regarding funding gaps. The questions and responses are presented below:

Given the gap between costs and TIF revenue, how should infrastructure priorities be built and paid for? Only TIF (7%), TIF plus matching public funds (66%) and TIF plus property owner contributions (through participation in SID) 28%.

How much, if any, of the tax increment should be allocated to improvements other than streets and utilities? 0% was selected by 27% of the respondents, 5% as selected by 12% of the respondents, 10% was selected by 31% of the respondents, and 15% was selected by 31% of the respondents.

This question followed the presentation of the costs showing that streets and utilities accounted for 86%, Public Facilities and Services (7%), community greening (5%) and investment in character enhancements (2%).

WILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE

In response to the question “What is your willingness to contribute financially (special improvement district) towards improvement in the South Billings District?” 4% responded High, 19% responded Moderate, 38% responded Low, and 38% indicated No Support. These responses are significantly less supportive than the polling responses from the September public meeting. However 81% indicated a willingness to donate time with 19% indicated they were unwilling.

PROGRAMS

Participants were asked to select their top three of eight proposed programs. The choices and responses are shown below. In general, the response rates demonstrated broad support for the majority of the programs proposed throughout the Master Plan.

CHOICES	1st	2nd	3rd
Trees & Gardens	18%	3%	7%
Build Pathways	18%	24%	11%
Recruitment & Retention	29%	14%	7%
Programs for Youth	7%	14%	29%
Public Facilities	11%	7%	25%
Marketing the District	4%	24%	7%
Job Training Center	14%	7%	11%
Facilities for Entrepreneurs	0%	7%	4%

CONCLUSION

The Master Plan advocates for the creation of a District with four distinct healthy, safe, and livable neighborhoods. Implementing the recommendations will require stakeholders to commit, connect, invest, and engage. Collaboration, incremental progress, and a sustaining collective focus on actions by all stakeholders will ensure that South Billings becomes a place where everyone has an equal opportunity to choose healthy behaviors and pursue safe and prosperous lifestyles for themselves and their families.