

PREFACE

The Joint Northside/Westside Neighborhood Plan identifies neighborhood strengths and attributes (in order to preserve them) and identifies neighborhood weaknesses and needs (in order to address them). It is a neighborhood directive recommending strategies and policies for future development and preservation (throughout the document, the term “neighbors” is used to refer to neighborhood residents, property owners, business owners, and other participants in the planning process). It is a compilation of the efforts of local citizens, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board and the staff of the Missoula Office of Planning and Grants. Missoula City Council is the ultimate authority on the final policies of the Plan.

The Plan is designed to guide development and growth in the area for some twenty (20) years into the future or until such a time as the goals and recommendations no longer meet the neighbors’ objectives, and the Plan is updated or amended. General review of the Plan should occur every five (5) years and neighborhood review should occur annually.

The Joint Northside/Westside Neighborhood Plan is an amendment or addition to *The Missoula Urban Comprehensive Plan*. A comprehensive plan addresses community-wide issues of growth, development and land use in a general way. Neighborhood plans elaborate the comprehensive plan with a tighter focus, consistent with community-wide objectives yet specific enough to address local issues peculiar to individual neighborhoods. This neighborhood plan changes some land use designations within the plan area from those presently found in the comprehensive plan; after adoption, these changes will show on the comprehensive land use map of *The Missoula Urban Comprehensive Plan*. All other parts of *The Missoula Urban Comprehensive Plan* not specifically addressed by this plan remain in effect and unchanged.

The Plan provides a strategic vision for future community development in the Northside and Westside neighborhoods. This vision is designed as a general guide for implementation actions that will follow in the form of specific programs, ordinances and resolutions, funding decisions and other initiatives. Some implementation steps will be done by neighborhood residents, individually or in groups. Others will be done by neighbors in conjunction with public or private organizations. Others will require City legislation.

The Plan is used by City departments, outside agencies, members of the business community and, most importantly, the local citizens. Elected officials use the document to guide specific land use decisions, and may use it also to inform legislative decisions, strategic plans, budget allocations, and needed policy changes. City departments use the goals and actions in the Plan to review new development proposals and to plan for future public capital improvements in the area. The Plan provides the general public and the business community with information to assist with planning the future of the area and of the distinct “Activity Centers,” as well as other projects – cultural, human service, etc.

Adoption of the Plan does not necessarily commit the City to immediately carry out each policy to the letter, but it does put the City on record as recognizing the desirability of the goals and proposals and the decisions or actions they imply. Agencies responsible for many of these actions must also take into consideration safety and budget constraints and other community-wide needs. Actions from this plan must also follow established city processes for implementation which means, for example, being incorporated into Transportation Improvement Plans and Capital Improvement Plans. Needs of neighborhoods and communities change over time and it is

not the purpose of these actions to limit options which may be recognized in the future. Adoption of plan recommendations does not imply prioritizing these particular neighborhoods' needs over other neighborhoods' needs or over the community's general needs.

Governmental implementation of plans occurs, in part, through subdivision, zoning, and other land-use regulations. Such regulations have the force of law and should be considered for revision or modernization after a plan is revised, because if plan goals are found to be in conflict with existing regulations, the regulations take precedence.

In particular, the "Design Guidelines" presented in the appendices to this plan will lack the full force of law unless they are implemented by City zoning regulations. Such implementation might take the form of overlay zones. An overlay zone is a set of standards imposed in a specific area over and in addition to the existing underlying zone. The underlying zone addresses use and density restrictions (what can be built and where), and some standards such as setbacks and height. The overlay zone addresses how the development happens by customizing particular aspects of the underlying zoning districts. The design guidelines in this plan set the stage for elements that may be included in an Overlay Zone if one is adopted, although not all guidelines may become part of such a zone. Other recommended actions that are specific to these areas may also be considered in developing an Overlay Zone. On the other hand, some of the guideline proposals may be suitable for application in city-wide zoning ordinances, in which case there would be no need for them in local overlay zones. Overlay zoning districts are being considered (1) for the entire joint neighborhood and also, more specifically, (2) for Historic Districts, and (3) for the Activity Centers. The drafting and approval of overlay zoning is part of a separate planning process.

The Parts of each Chapter

Purpose: Each chapter in the Plan begins with a statement of what will be found in the chapter and poses a few key questions that neighbors were trying to answer through the planning process.

Goals: Overarching goals for each subject area are listed in each chapter. These goals reflect the collaborative planning process.

History: The Northside and Westside neighborhoods have a rich and varied history that makes neighbors aware of their surroundings and shapes their hopes for the future. For this reason, each chapter includes a history of key trends and developments over the past century.

Existing Conditions: Existing conditions are described in each chapter to provide the quantitative and qualitative background needed to set goals and to evaluate progress toward these goals.

Vision: The vision section of each chapter, written with a neighborhood voice, identifies the hopes and opportunities for the neighborhood's future. It also identifies barriers to achieving this vision.

Supporting Links: At the head of each goal/action chart, the Plan presents a list of linked goals and action items from other chapters. These links can be cross-referenced to give the reader a comprehensive understanding of how actions relate to the plan goals, and each other.

Actions: The actions recommended in each chapter are the cogs and the gears of the joint Plan. They articulate the detailed steps that neighbors, government, and other partners will need to take to address the goals and vision in the Plan.

Guidelines: The Neighborhood Plan includes references in several action items to the need for design guidelines. The guidelines established in this document help to guide new construction and exterior remodeling in a way that is responsive to the goals of the Northside and Westside Neighborhoods. As such, the guidelines are suggestions, and not mandatory. For more information see [Appendix A](#).

Community Resources (Plus Acronyms)

Lead agencies or organizations are identified at the end of many of the action items. These agencies consist of either government, private or community based organizations that are key to implementing the plan. It is important to acknowledge possible assistance in these action items in order to move the plan from a written state to an implementation state. Although specific agencies or organizations are identified, this should not preclude other agencies from taking an active role in implementation. Groups such as Habitat for Humanity, MUD and WORD are examples of possible lead agencies or organizations. Other groups may also exist. For a list of potential lead agencies and their acronyms, see [Appendix F](#).

Related Planning Documents

Several Missoula-area planning documents have direct relevance to the goals and actions contained in this neighborhood plan. Reference to the following plans throughout this document attempts to provide a broad context for the current planning effort.

Urban Renewal Plan: Downtown Missoula Redevelopment Program, 1978

Urban Renewal District II Plan, 1991

Missoula Downtown Riverfront Plan, 1991

Guidelines for Creating a Non-Motorized Travel Network in the Greater Missoula Area, 1994

[Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan, 1995](#)

Missoula Transportation Plan Update, 1996

[Missoula Urban Area Comprehensive Plan Update, 1998](#) (and Growth Management Themes)

[Missoula Consolidated Plan for FY 2000-2004](#)