



MRA Board Memo Cover Sheet

Urban Renewal District: URD III

Name of Project: Midtown Master Plan

Applicant: Missoula Midtown Association

Project Location: See attached graphic

TIF Funding Request: \$370,000

Other Funding: \$200,000 provided by at least 36 individual entities, 30 of which are private businesses

Project Description: Development of a Midtown Master Plan encompassing all of URD III and surrounding areas of importance in Midtown. A map of the planning area is attached to this staff memo.

Funding Breakdown: \$370,000 in TIF funds will be used exclusively to pay the consulting team chosen to help develop the Midtown Master Plan. The preliminary budget consists of \$50,000 for project management, \$50,000 for a community engagement consultant and \$470,000 for a Master Plan consultant team consisting of multiple disciplines.

Advancement of City of Missoula Strategic Plan Goals & Public Purpose

Refer to the staff memo for more detail.

Strategic Plan Goals:

- Safety & Wellness – housing for a broad spectrum of citizens, including our houseless population; safe transportation infrastructure.
- Community Design & Livability – promotion of equitable and sustainable growth; framework for investment of public funds to meet the City's Strategic Plan.

Public Purpose

- Creates a framework for development of housing, employment opportunities, business opportunities, equity, multi-modal transportation enhancements, connectivity, and green infrastructure that will benefit the entire community.



MEMORANDUM

TO: MRA Board of Commissioners

FROM: Ellen Buchanan, Director *EB*

DATE: November 12, 2021

SUBJECT: Midtown Master Plan Request for Funding

At the June 17, 2021 MRA Board meeting, Emily Brock and Mel Brock made a presentation about the efforts of the Missoula Midtown Association (MMA) to create a vision for Midtown in the form of a master plan. Midtown is seeing growth that is unprecedented since the development of the area in the 50s and 60s. It is an area that is challenging on many levels and the MMA recognizes that this growth can be directed to achieve the City's goals or can happen in the same haphazard way that created the city's first tier of suburban development. In 2020, the MMA had adopted strategic goals calling for the creation and implementation of a Midtown Master Plan (MMP). They created a white paper committee to develop a path to make that goal a reality. They reported that the group had created a foundation to accept tax-deductible donations, with a goal of raising approximately \$550,000 by the end of the summer. The Board was advised that the intention was to raise as much funding as possible and come back to the MRA Board to request the funding needed to meet their goals. The group had hoped to have the bulk of the fundraising identified in time to come to the MRA Board sooner, but fundraising has been challenging, particularly in light of the abundance of fundraising efforts currently underway. Their goal was to raise \$200,000 before coming to the MRA to close the funding gap. The MMA under the leadership of Mel Brock has been diligently and successfully raising the needed funds. MMA is short of their \$200,000 goal by only \$18,550 and believe that they can raise those funds through continued outreach. MMA has identified a funding gap of \$370,000 which they are requesting MRA to fund.

MMA's approach is patterned after the highly successful Downtown Master Plans. Much like the original Downtown Master Plan, the MMP will build on the planning efforts that MRA has undertaken and supported over the last two decades. These include the ULI study, Midtown Missoula, the 2011 Curb & Sidewalk Needs Assessment, various studies around Brooks Street, including the 2016 Brooks Street Corridor Plan sponsored by New Mobility West. Both the ULI and the New Mobility West projects involved robust public processes. The Brooks Street Corridor Plan envisioned that corridor becoming a transit-oriented street which would support the type of mixed-use density that Missoula so badly needs. That effort has led to the current concept around Brooks that is a totally transformed urban street with center lane bus rapid transit (BRT), accommodations for cyclists, enhanced pedestrian crossings

and amenities, connectivity both east/west and north/south and ample opportunity for reinvestment and redevelopment along the corridor. This creates the spine of Midtown, around which the master plan will be built.

MRA was a significant funding source for both of the Downtown Master Plans. \$100,000 in TIF funding was contributed to the first plan and \$75,000 to the most recent one. As you are aware, those investments have paid off many times over by providing predictability for investors in the downtown area, whether it be the purchase of the Macy's property which led to the development of the Mercantile Hotel, the construction of Park Place and the new First Interstate and Stockman Banks and office buildings or the new housing that we see developing in and around downtown. To its great fortune, the downtown had several agencies, such as the Parking Commission, the Downtown Association and the Business Improvement District, with resources and who benefitted from the guidance provided by the Master Plans. These groups were able to make significant financial contributions to the planning effort. Midtown does not have the luxury of having that type of infrastructure in place yet, so the ask from the MRA is predictably larger. Fortunately, URD III, which covers the core of the Master Plan study area, is the most financially sound of the urban renewal districts in Missoula and has the capacity to make this kind of investment in the future of Midtown. Given that URD III will sunset in 2040, it is important to have a plan that will help guide where MRA and the City invests public funds to best achieve the City's goals.

Strategic Plan, Public Purpose, Financing

Strategic Plan Goals – The creation of a master plan to guide the future of Midtown is essential if we want to achieve the City's Strategic Plan goals. The City's first strategic goal is Safety and Wellness which talks about providing for our homeless population and designing transportation infrastructure to support a safe, healthy and active community. The second is Community Design and Livability which talks about infrastructure development that promotes equitable growth and promotion of sustainable growth. A guiding document, like the MMP, provides that framework that informs development and guides growth and the investment of both public and private funds in a way that achieves the City's strategic goals as well as the goals set out in the Urban Renewal Plan for URD III. Foundational goals of the MMA are the intention to reach out to citizens who do not typically participate in public process and an aspiration to foster new development patterns with the goal of minimizing gentrification. This is very much in keeping with the City of Missoula's Strategic Plan with respect to equity and inclusiveness.

Public Purpose – Missoula is facing a crisis due to a lack of housing in all price ranges to address the growth in the city. There is tremendous opportunity in Midtown to not only provide much needed housing for our service sector employees and others, but to provide employment centers and retail opportunities for local businesses by converting massive parking lots into mixed use, residential developments, office buildings and the connectivity needed to make this a very desirable place to live, work, shop and play. One of the identified needs in Missoula's housing market is what is termed "missing middle housing". Midtown presents a unique opportunity to convert some of those transitional areas between the density that will likely occur on Brooks and established lower density residential neighborhoods to create that missing middle housing rather than housing vehicles or large buildings that had outlived their usefulness. This is not likely to occur without a plan that is part of the City's Growth Policy.

Lack of connectivity is a major issue in Midtown both because of the geometry of the streets and the nature of Brooks Street itself. Brooks is a barrier for both pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as motorists trying to navigate east and west. Safe connections across Brooks, to the Bitterroot Trail and to schools and activity and employment centers will benefit the public at large as well as the current residents of the area. A Midtown Master Plan will guide the City and the MRA with respect to the best investment of scarce resources in ways that maximize public benefit. Because a master plan, by its nature, must look at the big picture and how all of the pieces must fit together in order to maximize return on investment, it will guide both public and private investment for at least the next decade. Since services and basic infrastructure already exist in the area, it presents one of the most cost efficient and sustainable opportunities in Missoula for new development and reinvestment.

Financing - URD III has over \$6.6M in unobligated funds in the FY22 Budget. While the Brooks Transit Oriented Development project will require a very large allocation of TIF funds to be successful, having the Midtown Master Plan to guide development around this spine of the district is timely and essential and will only enhance our ability to be competitive for Federal dollars for this bigger infrastructure project. This investment in the Master Plan is also an investment in achieving our goal of transforming the Brooks Street corridor into a mixed-use, high-density Transit Oriented Development district through the addition of a permanent center lane bus rapid transit route.

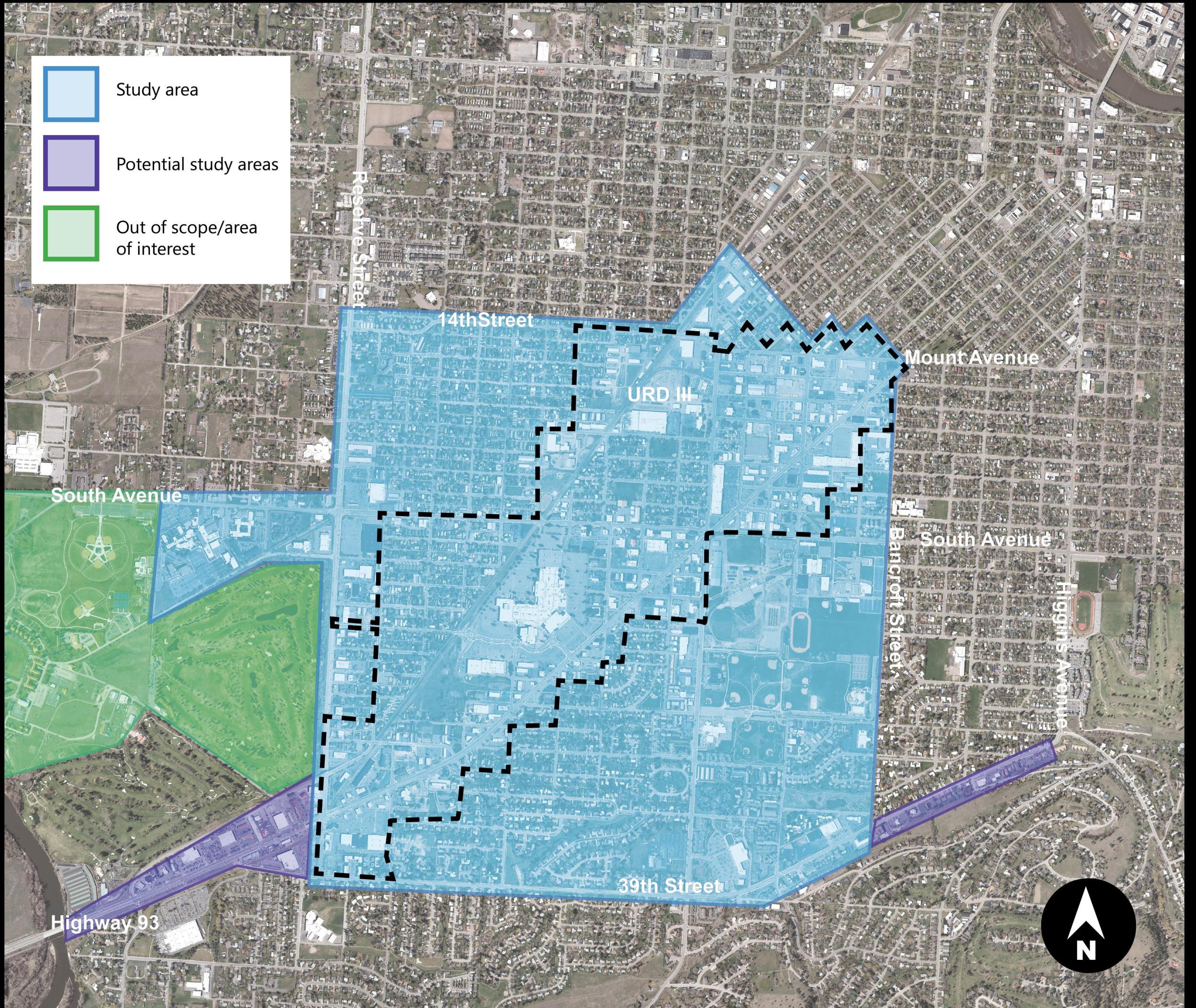
I have attached a copy of the letter from the Missoula Midtown Association requesting the TIF funding support. It goes into much more detail about the goals and aspirations of the plan, the budget, scope and priorities. It also provides a schedule and management structure for the planning process. It is impressive and speaks volumes that over 36 individual local entities see the value of a master plan for this transitioning center of our city and have provided funding from often strapped budgets even as we navigate a pandemic.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the MRA Board approve the request from the Missoula Midtown Association to provide funding for the creation of a Midtown Master Plan in the amount of \$370,000 and authorize the Chair to sign the required agreements.

Study area

Potential study areas

Out of scope/area of interest



November 12, 2021

Ellen Buchanan
Missoula Redevelopment Agency
140 W Pine Street
Missoula, MT 59802

RE: Midtown Masterplan

Dear Ellen:

The Missoula Midtown Association is pleased to submit this request for \$370,000 for assistance funding a growth plan for our area. We are proud to report that we have fundraised almost \$200,000 from over 36 individual local entities and have only \$18,550 left to raise (outside of this request) to meet our goal to fund the plan. We are hopeful that MRA will join this coalition as our largest funder and continue to provide mentorship and guidance to Midtown Master Planning (MMP). Funding from MRA would go directly towards a planning and engineering consultant.

The plan dovetails extraordinarily well with other efforts underway for Midtown, particularly the Brooks Street Corridor project. It is universally acknowledged that Brooks Street is a hindrance to smart growth and robust economic development in what has become the geographic center of Missoula. The Association was pleased to support the City of Missoula's application for a USDOT RAISE grant that will identify all that is required to make bi-directional, fixed-route, center-running bus-rapid transit successful on Brooks Street. We believe that project will merge seamlessly with our broader exercise. The MMP differs from other efforts in that it will approach Midtown holistically, recognizing our area as a loved place people already enjoy, and folding previous work into a comprehensive vision that embraces current residents and workers.

The Association began to lay out a path to make the Master Plan a reality in 2020, after recognizing the pressing need for cohesion around a vision that embraces Midtown's existing character, encourages equitable development, and promotes healthy urbanism. A well-developed plan, created through an inclusive process, will offer predictability, preserve the qualities we love about Midtown, and encourage growth that contributes to a vibrant and people-oriented place. While the haphazard approach we have been experiencing will continue the trend of auto-oriented development, lead to frustration for developers and local officials, poor outcomes for current residents, and potentially gentrification that pushes people out of Midtown altogether.

Meaningful participation from all residents will be a vital component of the MMP and we have developed a unique approach to ensuring the voices of residents lead the effort. The study area is the heart of several neighborhoods and includes portions of four neighborhood councils that will be included in all stages of the process. The scope of work for the project reflects a heightened emphasis on participation from traditionally marginalized stakeholders. The goals of the MMP explicitly state our intention for it to remain affordable and include current residents in the process in new ways. In a sense, the process of leading a discussion about the future of Midtown is also the product – while not everyone will agree on every aspect of the MMP, they will rally around Midtown as a place.

Goals

Provide a voice for the people who live in, work in, and utilize Midtown. Create a space for residents, workers, and users to articulate why they love Midtown, identify the unique characteristics that should be preserved, and envision improvements that will make it better as it inevitably grows.

Promote equitable development. Ensure neighborhood balance with factors that promote healthy urbanism like affordable housing and retail, nearby groceries, healthcare, manufacturing and other living-wage jobs, business incubation space, green infrastructure, clean indoor and outdoor environments, quality education and growth opportunities, social gathering spaces, recreational opportunities, and mobility for all people and modes with reliable and safe connections.

Promote a sense of belonging. Nurture the social fabric of Midtown by promoting positive and diverse human interaction. Hone and promote the Midtown brand to drive right-sized business in the area. Maintain existing and attract new businesses that meet the needs of a safe, clean, and connected neighborhood.

Create predictability for private investment. Attract and retain development that meets the community vision for Midtown. Provide a clear path forward so developers have fewer hurdles when approaching design, permitting, zoning, and regulatory agencies.

Leverage local dollars to attract Federal infrastructure funding. Position Midtown for large capital grants to build transformative infrastructure, such as transit, which serves new and existing populations. Improve east-west connectivity in Midtown. Improve the Brooks Street Corridor to meet the multimodal transportation pressures of growth in Midtown, Miller Creek, and the Bitterroot Valley while improving – and not sacrificing – livability.

Build on other planning initiatives. Incorporate previous and ongoing work. Several studies have been done of the area, each building on the previous effort. This will be the most ambitious scope of work-to-date and should incorporate work from the last two decades, including the Urban Renewal District III Plan, the ULI Report, the Brooks Street Corridor Transit-Oriented Development Infrastructure Study, the recently adopted a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Tourist Business Improvement District is initiating a tourism plan, and the City of Missoula has applied for a RAISE grant to design bus rapid transit for the Brooks Street corridor. The City of Missoula is also embarking on a comprehensive code reform project that will lead to an overall modernized, innovative, and aligned set of land use regulations merged into a unified development ordinance, which will be informed by an audit of the community policies relating to regulations and with a lens for equity in land use.

Budget

We expect the budget to be about \$570,000.00. The \$370,000 from the Missoula Redevelopment Agency would be earmarked for planning and engineering consultants.

Revenue	Number of individual contributors	Cash in hand	Pledged	Total Committed	Pending
Private businesses	30	\$ 67,450.00	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 89,950.00	\$ 18,550.00
Public partners	6	\$ 31,500.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 91,500.00	\$ 370,000.00
Subtotal		\$ 98,950.00	\$ 82,500.00	\$ 181,450.00	\$ 388,550.00
Total				\$ 570,000.00	

Expenses	Actual	Projected
Masterplan management	\$ 3,660.90	\$ 50,000.00
Community engagement	\$ 0	\$ 50,000.00
Planning/engineering consultant	\$ 0	\$ 470,000.00
Total	\$ 3,660.90	\$ 570,000.00

Scope of Work

The scope will require a multidisciplinary team of land-use planners, civil and traffic engineers, parking specialists, architects, economists, housing specialists, and community engagement specialists. The deliverable will be an all-inclusive Master Plan in a multi-media format that accomplishes the project goals. In addition, planning will incorporate a comprehensive strategy to engage public and private businesses, citizens, and stakeholders, emphasizing disenfranchised populations. This will require innovative approaches to working directly with groups who are left out of traditional public processes.

We believe that community outreach, especially to underrepresented people, should be a separate contract from the planning/engineering team. Making it a small piece of a project for planning/engineering firms subjugates its importance. While planning firms try mightily, they are not set up to reach all the people we hope to hear from and the contractor with the skills we need should not be beholden to their oversight. We would like to meet this moment and take the opportunity to do things differently with this project. Community engagement is a project, in and of itself, and should be resourced and staffed as such.

There are also multi-jurisdictional agencies interested in Midtown, including the City of Missoula, Montana Department of Transportation, Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization, Mountain Line, Missoula County, and potentially the Parking Commission to name a few. Therefore, the MMP must be developed in close coordination with these agencies, as its success requires their backing, and in some cases, their adoption.

Evaluate existing conditions. We will begin by gaining a complete understanding of the existing conditions, including conducting a review and inventory of all previous planning efforts for the area. The effort will analyze the infrastructure's ability to handle future land use and provide recommendations for improvements that include rough order of magnitude cost estimates. Work will include, but is not limited to, building off Brooks Street Corridor Transit-Oriented Development Infrastructure Study other previous efforts, with an emphasis on east-west multimodal connections, parking, and land use conditions; identifying historical and cultural amenities; conducting an economic conditions analysis and evaluating trends; conducting environmental assessments for former industrial properties; conducting a review of the current applicable zoning and land use designations; conducting a housing and demographic analysis.

Develop a vision. The existing conditions assessment will dovetail with articulating a community vision for the area, utilizing traditional design charrettes, and inventing new ways to engage all populations. Further discipline studies may be called for and can be negotiated into the contract as needed. We will develop a draft of the vision and collect and incorporate community feedback about it – continuing to roll out iterations and collect feedback as needed. The MMP will be incorporated into governing policies and should identify regulatory and other barriers and potential incentives to encourage desirable growth.

Finalize the MMP. We will ensure the community is informed about the MMP and has engaged in the process - utilizing renderings, new media, one-on-one meetings, and focus groups to paint a picture as much as possible. We plan to take special care to use tools to articulate the vision for people unfamiliar or intimidated by traditional planning documents (such as short videos, infographics, influencers, etc.). we will develop a clear strategy to implement the MMP, having the consultant team provide recommendations for regulatory changes, if needed. The MMP will interface with the process for comprehensive code reform and should look for ways to integrate information and recommendations from the MMP process into the comprehensive code reform project.

MMP adoption. We will assist in preparation of presentations for agency and board adoption as well as the adoption of the plan as an amendment to the City's Growth Policy. If necessary, our consultant team will assist agencies to incorporate the MMP into the format their processes and policies require.

Implementation. Finally, we will create and manage an ongoing implementation team to lead the community in prioritizing and tackling various action items.

Priority Areas of Study

People & Equity. Demographic analysis of who lives, works, and plays in Midtown. Develop strategies to maintain their presence, improve the quality of life for existing residents, and welcome new residents and users. Explore opportunities to welcome visitors.

Land Use. Evaluate the accessibility of public and private spaces, including hotel, food, commercial, mixed-use, residential, office, medical and institutional, educational, arts and entertainment, housing, parks, trails, and recreation opportunities.

Connectivity. Assess transit, street design, Brooks Street Corridor circulation (taking care not to duplicate efforts underway), east-west connections, north-south connections, slant street, Reserve Street and downtown connectivity, shared mobility, pedestrian circulation, bicycle circulation, and wayfinding. Evaluate consistency of transportation infrastructure and design with desired land use or redevelopment.

Infrastructure. Measure the availability of sewer, water, storm sewer, communication and broadband, electricity, lighting, trees, and other green infrastructure. Develop strategy to prioritize future investments.

Green Infrastructure. Evaluate and identify strengths and gaps in trails and park facilities and connections. Identify ways to connect these assets to each other and key destinations outside of the study area.

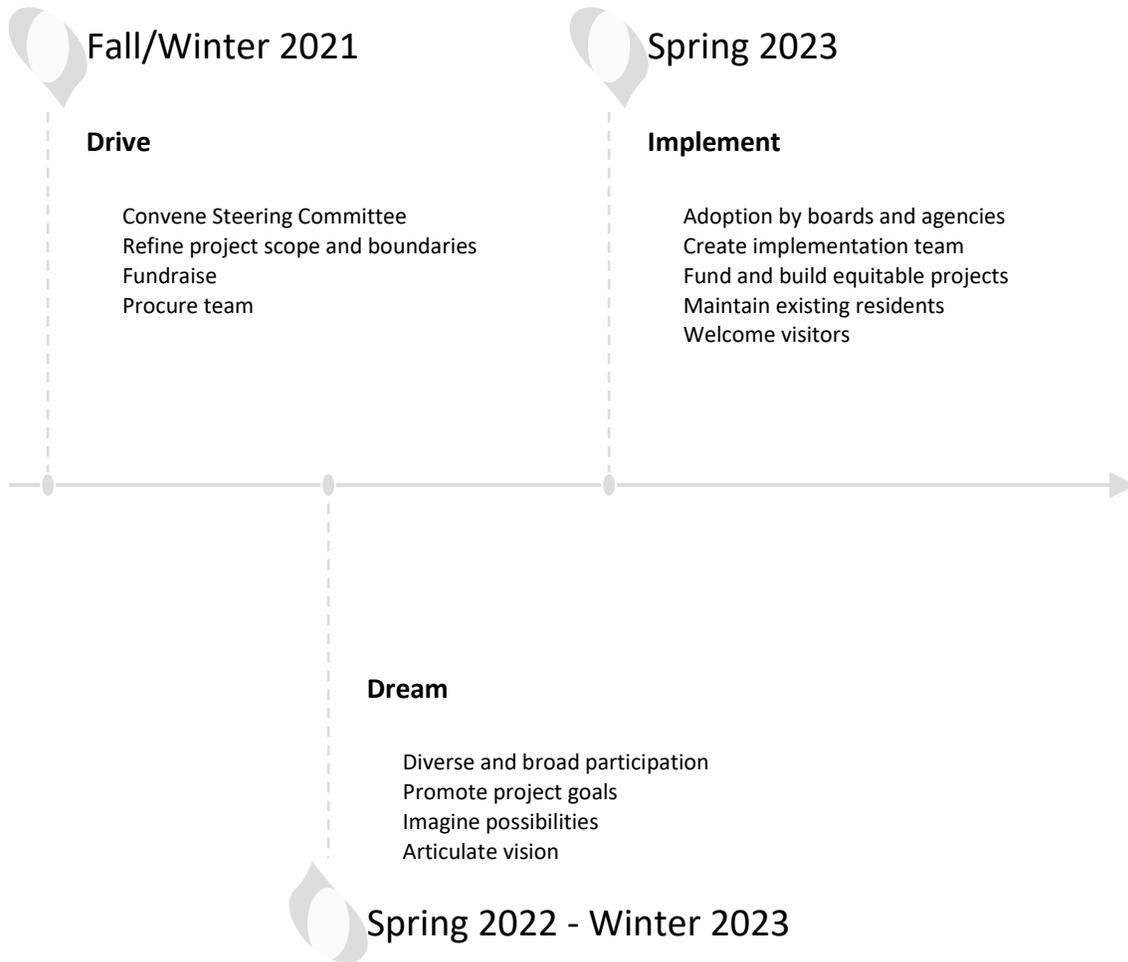
Parking. Measure availability of parking and develop a strategy which allows the conversion of expansive parking lots into viable mixed-use developments. Analyze the possibility of managed, either public or private, parking to support growth in housing and commercial sectors.

Business & Nonprofit Health. Support existing retail, commercial, nonprofit, medical, and other businesses and deploy development strategies to retain and attract suitable new businesses to the area.

Housing. Affordability analysis, evaluate work/live models, equitable and complete neighborhoods. Recommend strategies to improve quality of life while avoiding gentrification.

Culture, Arts, & History. Identify and celebrate Midtown's historic features. Assess existing arts and cultural amenities and make recommendations for additional opportunities.

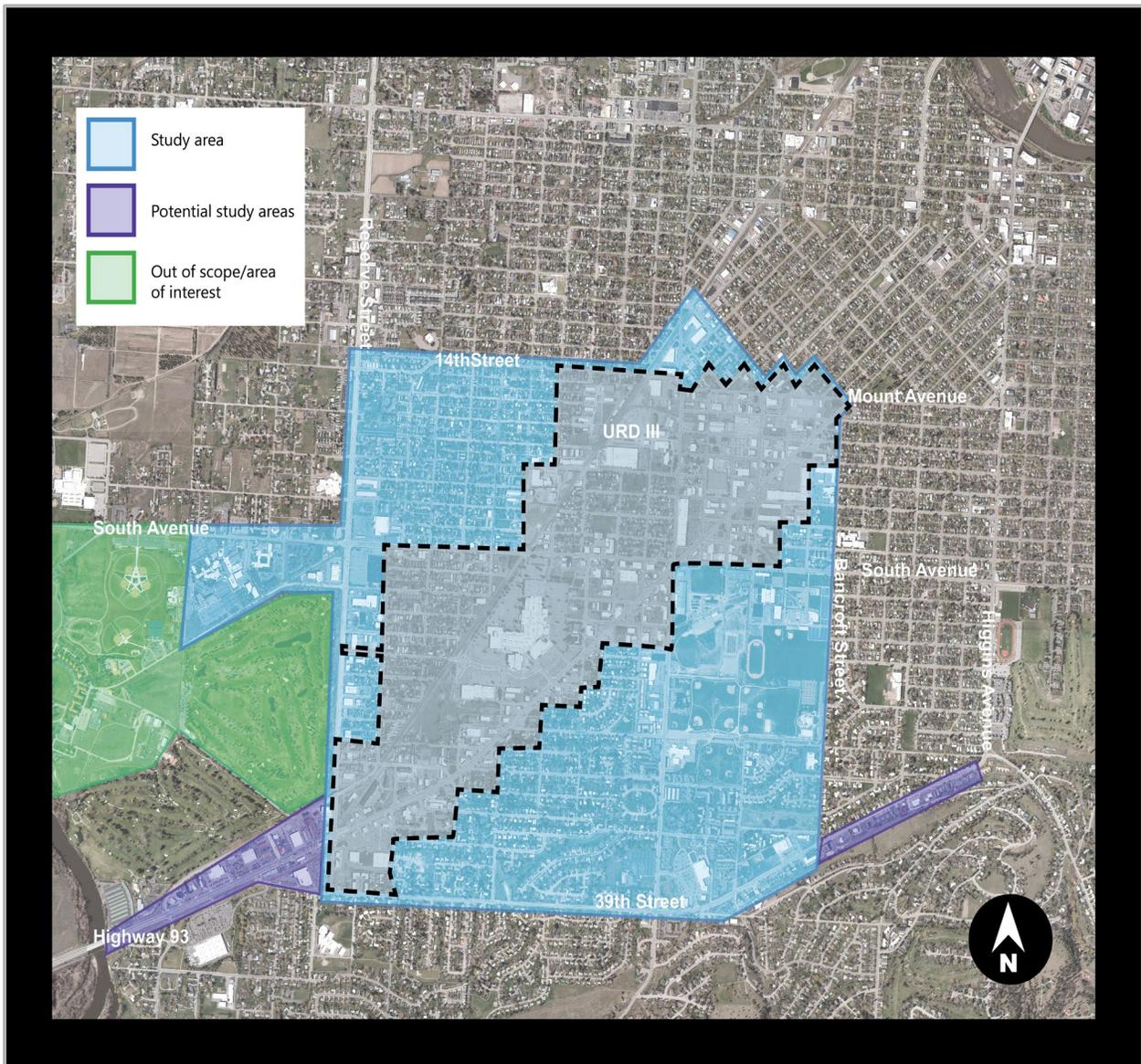
Timeline



Mission Statement: The Missoula Midtown Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion, enhancement, and accessibility of the midtown area as it relates to business, residents and the community. Its goals are to provide resources and information related to the success and growth of a healthy business community and to enhance the quality of life and quality of place for visitors and residents alike.

Project Area

The Association recognizes that Midtown is a large area and that project boundaries may require adjustment according to budget realities. The area in black in the map (below) are the boundaries the steering committee feels are important to include. The areas in blue may also benefit from being in the MMP and may be included on advice from the planners. The area in green deserves its own planning effort and is outside the scope of this project. However, having such a significant impact on Midtown, it must be recognized by the MMP. The study area for the MMP is intentionally large to include neighborhoods, the area called “Central Park” (Playfair Park/Fairgrounds/YMCA/ Missoula County Public Schools) and an emerging medical district, near Community Medical Center, that may come to define much of the South Reserve Street corridor.



Mission Statement: The Missoula Midtown Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion, enhancement, and accessibility of the midtown area as it relates to business, residents and the community. Its goals are to provide resources and information related to the success and growth of a healthy business community and to enhance the quality of life and quality of place for visitors and residents alike.

Project Management

The Missoula Midtown Association (Association) is a 501(c)6 organization dedicated to the promotion, enhancement, and accessibility of the midtown area as it relates to businesses, residents, and the community. Its goals are to provide resources and information related to the success and growth of a healthy business community and enhance the quality of life and place for visitors and residents alike. All businesses, interested parties, and individuals are eligible for membership in the Missoula Midtown Association and can join at any time. Suitability is not based on geographic location.

The Missoula Midtown Foundation (Foundation) is a 501(c)3 organization with a close relationship with the Missoula Midtown Association. The Foundation researches issues associated with the ongoing development, infrastructure, historic preservation, and planning of Missoula Midtown for the benefit of all citizens of Missoula County, and assists in providing the public with education regarding these important community issues. The Foundation and the Association share resources and consultants as needed.

The MMP will be managed through the Association. While the Association is generally focused on Midtown, the MMP will provide benefits to the entire community. The Association has appointed a steering committee who specialize in land use planning and development, public process, community organizing and outreach, and fundraising to advise on the process. The project will be managed by its acting Executive Director (Melanie Brock) and the steering committee chair (Emily Brock), in consultation with the MMP steering committee, and under the governance of the Association Board of Directors. The Missoula County Fairgrounds, as the leading public event location in Midtown, will play host to the planning effort by offering space and staff support to planning activities. There will also be a technical advisory committee made up of local subject area experts to help draft and implement the MMP. Steering committee members include:

Ellen Buchanan	Missoula Redevelopment Agency
Gwen Jones	Missoula City Council Ward 3
Corey Aldridge	Mountain Line
Emily Brock	Missoula County
Eran Fowler Pehan	City of Missoula
Grace McKoy	Anderson Zurmuehlen
Jim Bachand	Missoula Organization of Realtors
Lauren Hutchison	First Security Bank, MMA President
Dirk Visser	Allegiance Benefit Plan Management
Nate Richmond	Blue Line Development
Amber Sherrill	Missoula City Council Ward 4
Josh Kendrick	Opportunity Resources
Skye McGinty	All Nations Health Center

The pandemic has shown a spotlight on how unplanned growth can impact equity and livability in Missoula. Long-term trends such as population growth, housing demand, and reduced housing inventory were exacerbated during COVID, putting acute pressure on, and driving up the cost of renting and owning a home. Without a community vision for Midtown, we risk being caught flatfooted when demand for development increases beyond our community capacity to manage it appropriately.

Midtown's everyday retail, affordable homeownership, and available parking are qualities associated with a different experience than anywhere else in Missoula. New development should preserve and enhance this character with features like gathering spaces to nurture social connectedness, transit, and bike/pedestrian networks to allow physical connections, and access to green infrastructure to reduce heat islands, noise, and air pollution. The equitable MMP that we envision will help Missoula take care not to attract development for prosperity's sake alone, but to improve all outcomes for those working and living in our community.

We believe that we have developed a thorough, thoughtful, and innovative approach to create a space for Midtowners and Missoulians to engage in a planning process unlike any before. We have the right mix of grassroots and community leaders at the table to tackle a project of this magnitude. With your continued guidance and financial support, we can put Midtown on the map as an extraordinary place and Missoula on the map as a leader in innovative planning and engagement.

With thanks,

Lauren Hutchison

Lauren Hutchison
Midtown Association President, First Security Bank