

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Growth Policy Amendment Staff Report and Referral

CASE PLANNER:	Madson Matthias, Associate Planner
REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY:	Laval Means, Community Planning Manager
PUBLIC MEETINGS AND HEARINGS:	Planning Board (PB) hearing & recommendation: June 20, 2023 City Council (CC) Consent Agenda: June 26, 2023 Land Use and Planning (LUP) brief presentation: June 28, 2023 City Council hearing & decision: July 10, 2023
AGENDA ITEM:	Adopt the 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan as a Neighborhood Plan of the Our Missoula City Growth Policy 2035
APPLICANT & REPRESENTATIVE:	Missoula Midtown Association PO Box 2376 Missoula, Montana 59806
LOCATION OF REQUEST:	The plan area is generally located north of 39th Street, west of Reserve Street, south of 14th Street and Mount Avenue, and east of Bancroft Street.
LEGAL AD:	The legal ad was published in the <i>Missoulian</i> on June 4 and 11, 2023.
GROWTH POLICY:	The applicable regional plan is <i>Our Missoula: City Growth Policy 2035</i> .

RECOMMENDATIONS

PB p/h:	That Planning Board resolves the 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan, as shown in Attachment 2 for the area shown in Exhibit A, be recommended to the City Council for adoption as a Neighborhood Plan of the Our Missoula City Growth Policy 2035, based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the staff report.
CC Consent Item:	Adopt a resolution of intent to adopt the 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan, as shown in Attachment 2 for the area shown in Exhibit A, as a Neighborhood Plan of the Our Missoula City Growth Policy 2035, and refer this item to the Land Use and Planning Committee for presentation on June 28, 2023.
LUP:	Discussion only – pre-public hearing
CC p/h:	That City Council adopt a Resolution to Adopt the 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan, as shown in Attachment 2 for the area shown in Exhibit A, as a Neighborhood Plan of the Our Missoula City Growth Policy 2035, based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law in the staff report.

MISSOULA CONSOLIDATED PLANNING BOARD
Adopt the 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan as a Neighborhood Plan of the
Our Missoula City Growth Policy 2035

June 20, 2023

Agenda Item

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan (Attachment 2) is a Neighborhood Plan document that establishes priorities for public-sector action while providing direction for complementary private sector decisions and serves as a tool to evaluate new development proposals, direct capital improvements, and guide public policy over the next 10 years, as it advances goals for a connected, cohesive area and furthers the overarching goals of the City Growth Policy. According to state law, a Growth Policy may include multiple neighborhood plans, which must be consistent with the Growth Policy (MCA 76-1-601 (4)(a)) but address a smaller geographic scale than the comprehensive area covered in the Growth Policy. Neighborhood Plans are identified in the 2035 Our Missoula City Growth Policy as one of the primary actions for implementing the goals and objectives of the Growth Policy while allowing depth for specific issues and ideas to preserve and improve neighborhoods.

The Missoula Consolidated Planning Board is required to review proposed amendments (including neighborhood plans) and provide a recommendation to City Council.

The Midtown study area, about 1,550 acres, is generally located north of 39th Street, east of Reserve Street, south of 14th Street and Mount Avenue, and west of Bancroft Street (shown in Exhibit A). This area is centrally located, home to major transportation corridors, regional destinations, and employment centers. The plan area is home to nearly one in five residents of Missoula and draws in many visitors to work, shop, and recreate. Midtown is a key part of Missoula's community and economy, for which this plan provides connected and complete vision to reach its full potential.

The Midtown Master Plan was initiated by a grassroots effort championed by the Missoula Midtown Association as a way to leverage the area's underutilized assets to serve the community. The Plan has been led by the Missoula Midtown Association (MMA), guided by ECONorthwest planners, and in cooperation with the City of Missoula and other key partners. It overlaps boundaries with various active planning efforts including the Urban Renewal District III Plan (2000), Missoula County Fair Master Plan (2010), Brooks Street Corridor Study (2016), and Transforming the Brooks Street Corridor (2020); the Plan also overlaps with the study area of the 1995 Reserve Street Area Plan, but this plan had an intended lifespan of 10 years which ended in 2005. The 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan also anticipates concurrent planning initiatives around the Brooks Street BRT detailed planning study and Our Missoula Code Reform project. The project team for the Midtown Master Plan has communicated with the both of these ongoing projects at various points in the process to create consistency and leverage community-wide efforts.

The purpose of the growth policy amendment and neighborhood plan adoption is to refine the goals, objectives, and actions in the Growth Policy as they pertain to Midtown specifically. They are an opportunity to strategically plan for ways to address neighborhood needs and priorities and help to inform other city processes.

Staff has reviewed the 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan and bases the recommendation of approval for the Growth Policy Amendment and Neighborhood Plan adoption on the following findings of fact:

II. GROWTH POLICY AMENDMENT REVIEW CRITERIA

Findings of Fact:

General, Current Conditions

1. State Law (MCA 76-1-601 (4)(a)) states a Growth Policy may include one or more neighborhood plans, so long as those plans are consistent with the adopted Growth Policy.
2. This is a request to amend the City Growth Policy to adopt and include a new neighborhood plan for the area shown in Exhibit A (the study area).
3. The study area, roughly 1,550 acres, is bounded by 14th Street and Mount Avenue to the north, Reserve Street to the west, 39th Street and Southwest Higgins to the south, and Bancroft Street to the east.
4. The study area comprises a variety of residential development, including single detached dwellings, duplexes, and multi-dwelling buildings. The area includes both public and private property.
5. The study area includes City Council Wards 3, 4, 5 and 6.
6. The study area is inside the Urban Growth Area, Wastewater Facilities Service Area, and is served by City Water and Sewer.
7. The study area is located within an established services area for Emergency Services, including City Fire, City Police, and the Community Medical Center hospital.
8. The Our Missoula: City Growth Policy 2035 currently recommends the Residential, Mixed-Use, Employee-Based, and Special Purpose land use designations for the study area.
9. The Residential land use designations applicable to the study area are Residential Medium Density, Residential Medium-High Density, and Residential High Density. These three categories of residential land use are urban in nature and are expressed in three gross acre density ranges: medium density at 3 to 11 dwelling units per acre, medium-high density at 12 to 23 dwelling units per acre, and high density at greater than 24 dwelling units per acre. These designations are intended to provide dense residential development compatible with a higher-intensity, more urban neighborhood character and support and encourage the establishment of auxiliary uses.
10. The Mixed-Use land use designations applicable to the study area are Community Mixed-Use and Neighborhood Mixed-Use. These are intended to serve as a transition from the Urban Center toward primarily residential neighborhoods and as transition between commercial or industrial areas and residential neighborhoods.
11. The Employee-Based land use designation applicable to the study area is Regional Commercial and Services. This is intended for areas within the community that provide for most of the job base and encourages a range of business, commercial, and industrial intensities to meet the demand of current and future market conditions while maintaining a mix of residential uses.
12. The Special Purpose land use designations applicable to the study area are Public and Quasi-Public and Parks and Open Lands. These are intended to address land use patterns where major private development activity is discouraged due to constraints on the land and that complement the community's development activity with spaces like large parks, conserved lands, public facilities, and large school lands.

Proposed Plan

13. The 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan includes four sections: an Introduction and Background, a Vision and Framework, Recommendations, and a Conclusion with Appendices. The Recommendations are focused specifically on Land Use (and Infrastructure), Housing, Business & Economic Development, Mobility & Connectivity, Parks and Open Space, and Equitable Development (and Character Areas & Design).

14. The Plan Framework includes a map identifying existing and proposed conditions for the study area, including transformation areas, transition areas, open space and transportation networks, and gateways entering and exiting the study area.
15. The Plan includes a Land Use Recommendations Map with proposed land use recommendations that are consistent with the assigned land use designations within the Future Land Use Map, a part of the City Growth Policy.
16. The Implementation Strategy for the Plan (Attachment 3) contains thirty-six actions organized into six framework areas that tie directly back to the Recommendations Section of the Midtown Master Plan. The recommendations are identified as the joint responsibility of the Midtown Missoula Association, government agencies, private sector partners, and community stakeholders.
17. In explaining the reasons for considering a Neighborhood Plan Adoption or Amendment, the City Growth Policy cites *“The plan must be modified to fit the Neighborhood Plan Template.”* The Neighborhood Plan Template in Appendix F of the Growth Policy requires a Neighborhood Plan to be guided by the following sections: (1) Introduction; (2) Establish a Vision; (3) Identify Assets, Issues, and Opportunities; and (4) Identify Priority Issues and Recommendations. The structure of the Midtown Master Plan fits within the structure required by the Growth Policy by containing all four sections within the Plan.
18. In explaining the reasons for considering a Neighborhood Plan Adoption or Amendment, the City Growth Policy cites *“The plan will not address changes to land use, however, the plan may continue to provide greater detail that guides and remains consistent with the Future Land Use Map that is a part of the City Growth Policy.”* The Plan does not change any land use designations or relatable zoning districts and provides greater detail that guides and remains consistent with the Future Land Use Map that is part of the City Growth Policy.
19. In explaining the reasons for considering a Neighborhood Plan Adoption or Amendment, the City Growth Policy cites *“The plan must address the Residential Allocation associated with the area.”* The Residential Allocation Map referenced in the Growth Policy identifies the Midtown Study Area, generally, as a place with extensive capacity to accommodate residential growth. Since 2015, City staff have shifted focus to allocating development through intentional land use policy and regulations. These policy recommendations include a “focus inward” approach to the core of Missoula. The *Land Use and Infrastructure* recommendations from the Midtown Master Plan advocate for infill development and an increased diversity of housing development. As a sizeable area with large, underutilized parcels, Midtown is a critical place to achieve the Growth Policy’s principle of focusing inward in order to preserve natural beauty and support sustainable urban development.
20. In explaining the reasons for considering a Neighborhood Plan Adoption or Amendment, the City Growth Policy cites *“The plan shall address sustainability measures.”* This criteria is also supported by the goals outlined in the *Livability* section of the City Growth Policy which state that: “Missoula will make thoughtful decisions about land use planning that support the needs and values of residents in regard to neighborhoods and community character, parks, trails, and natural resources” and “Neighborhoods should have easy accessibility to amenities and local services to meet the needs of an expanding diverse population.” The Midtown Master Plan’s *Mobility and Connectivity* and *Parks and Open Space* recommendations and related actions consistently elevate active transportation improvements, support public transit expansion, and call for improvements and increased access to parks and trails.
21. The *Economic Health* section of the City Growth Policy outlines a goal to “Support and provide resources for business retention, expansion, and relocations to the Missoula area.” The requested amendment supports these goals by building on the area’s strong ecosystem of businesses and entrepreneurs.

22. The *Community Design* section of the City Growth Policy outlines goals which aim to: “Protect and enhance Missoula's strong sense of place by connecting, supporting and protecting the community’s existing distinctive qualities including natural resources, the vibrant diverse community, distinct neighborhoods, and downtown” and “support future development that enhances the unique character of Missoula.” This section includes specific land-use goals to “reflect new building trends and best practices for the 21st century while also protecting common values and encouraging new growth,” “plan proactively for the development of future infrastructure,” “strive for a more compact development pattern,” and “support a transportation system planned in concert with land use goals.” The requested amendment supports these goals by recommending an increased, diverse, accessible mix of uses, both commercial and residential, with a priority on active pedestrian experiences and connected transit systems. The *Character Areas and Design* recommendations further this effort by supporting designing a placemaking theme for Midtown.
23. The *Housing* section of the City Growth Policy outlines goals to: “Provide for the diverse housing needs while protecting the strong sense of place in the community and neighborhoods through compatible residential developments.” This section includes specific location and efficient-housing goals to support “a transportation system that reduces the cost of living through land use patterns that lower commute times and through increased options for public transit” and “increase the proportion of residents who have access to a multi-modal transportation network that provides accessibility for pedestrians, bicycles, transit and as well as vehicles.” The requested amendment supports these goals by recommending a development code that encourages a variety of affordable housing, including high-density and mixed-use developments, as well as opportunities for home repair and housing stability, in the *Land Use and Infrastructure* and *Housing* actions. The *Mobility and Connectivity* actions call for improvements to the pedestrian environment and enhanced connectivity and crossings across Brooks and along the greenway network.

Growth Policy Amendment Conclusions of Law:

1. The plan must fit the Neighborhood Plan Template;

1. The plan fits the Neighborhood Plan Template included in the Growth Policy.

2. The plan will not address changes to land use, however, the plan may continue to provide greater detail that guides and remains consistent with the Future Land Use Map that is a part of the City Growth Policy;

1. This plan does not address changes to land use and provides greater detail that guides and remains consistent with the Future Land Use Map that is a part of the City Growth Policy.
2. The plan is consistent with the Our Missoula: City Growth Policy 2035.

3. The plan must address the Residential Allocation associated with the area;

1. The plan addresses Residential Allocation associated with applying the lens of focusing inward.

4. The plan shall address sustainability measures;

1. The plan addresses sustainability measures.

III. AGENCY & PUBLIC COMMENT

The Midtown Master Plan included a robust engagement process with extensive public outreach. Over 1,000 individuals engaged with this planning process through in-person and virtual opportunities including public workshops, pop-up events, an online survey, and written comments. Input from a Technical Advisory Committee composed of public agencies and key partners also helped to guide the plan through comments and revisions to the Midtown Master Plan and milestone documents throughout the process. The Community Engagement Summary contained in Attachment 4 below provides a comprehensive overview of public engagement and findings.

IV. ATTACHMENTS

1. Exhibit A. 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan Study Area (Legal Map)
2. [Link A. 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan Draft](#)
3. [Link B. 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan Implementation Strategy](#)
4. [Link C. 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan Appendices](#)

Exhibit A. 2023 Missoula Midtown Master Plan Study Area (Legal Map).

