

City of Helena

RAILROAD DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

November 2024



City of
Helena



SCJ ALLIANCE
CONSULTING SERVICES

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0. Executive Summary

Helena’s Railroad District (also known as the 6th Ward or Midtowne) is as old as the city, forming around the railroad depot as people and goods came to settle the town. The transportation system – formed by the railroad, the local town streets, and the streetcar running along Helena Avenue – brought life and activity to the district in its early years. As the town grew, the transportation system which energized the district evolved. US Highway 12, North Montana Ave, and the freight-only rail service changed the ways in which people access Helena, creating a web of high-capacity corridors which essentially divide the heart of the Railroad District from the rest of town.

While these transportation corridors still provide access to the Railroad District, they also can make it difficult. High automotive

and freight volumes can make it difficult to access the district on foot or by bike, and the transportation management techniques necessary to smooth traffic flows can even make accessing the district by car difficult.

Still, the district has retained much of its historic character and has nurtured a mix of businesses, institutions, and housing which make the Railroad District unique – both a reminder of Helena’s path and a contributor to Helena’s future.

This subarea plan is rooted in Helena’s Growth Policy, capturing the vision of a neighborhood center and applying it to the Sixth Ward. The Growth Policy prioritizes planning for several neighborhood centers, and Helena chose to plan first for the Railroad District.

Figure 1: The Railroad District Today



The neighborhood centers are intended to stimulate new types of activities in Helena's neighborhoods, introducing small-scale storefront retail, new housing options, and community spaces to emphasize local identity and redirect public and private investment into the community's more historic neighborhoods.

Helena values community engagement, and the public voice underpins this plan. The plan's vision is consistent with Growth Policy direction and is shaped by the community's priorities and aspirations. Further, the subarea plan's goals and objectives dovetail with those of the Growth Policy, adding detail and direction for the Railroad District as suggested by the community conversation running throughout this process.

The plan (based on community engagement described in Chapter 3) guides growth and revitalization through its policy direction and its implementation strategies. It focuses on the district's vibrant neighborhood center to retain its unique identity and eliminate barriers to investment. The plan's land use and transportation initiatives are designed with a relatively soft touch, suggesting notable revisions to zoning to encourage a new mixing of uses, new twists on using the historic landscape, and tailoring the local streets and trails to truly welcome autos, trucks, cyclists, and pedestrians into and through the district. The plan identifies distinct neighborhoods within the district and suggests specific actions for each, all of which work in concert to guide reinvestment, honor historic uses, preserve and expand housing options, and create a safe, attractive, and accessible transportation network.

Chapter 4 presents the plan's vision. In this vision, the Depot District will be the vibrant commercial core, with the historic train depot as its focus. The Trades District will mix small-scale manufacturing, arts, and warehousing uses with housing. The residential areas of 6th Ward North and South will retain their neighborhood scale

and character, mixing in parks and, in the south, the school facilities which provide the entire district a space for multi-generational connection. The Corridor District along Montana Ave will gradually transform into a mixed-use gateway. And the Recreation District will enhance recreational amenities and access, anchored by the Centennial Trail and the existing context of warehousing and light manufacturing uses.

Several goals and objectives (detailed in Chapter 5) underpin this plan and respond to the 12 major issues challenging this subarea. The goals include:

1. Keeping and **enhancing the neighborhood's identity and history**
2. **Improving safety**
3. **Improving access** and connections
4. **Bolstering housing opportunities**
5. **Supporting the business community**

The scale and focus of a subarea plan allow a closer examination of the opportunities and implications the plan promises. Chapter 6 lists a series of land use, transportation, utilities and infrastructure, and economic development implications of the plan's goals and objectives. Chapter 7 then zooms in to the subarea plan's neighborhoods, referencing the various plan implications and exploring how the plan may guide new investment.

Key implementation priorities (listed in Chapter 8) include constructing the roundabout at Montana Ave and Lyndale, extending the Centennial Trail into and through the district, establishing a business improvement district, updating zoning, and initiating targeted infrastructure and streetscape improvements.

This plan links the 12 issues revealed in this process to the plan's goals and implementation actions, as illustrated in the table on the following page.



Table 1: Railroad Neighborhood District Plan - Goals and Implementation Actions

#	Issue	#	Goal	#	Implementation Action
1	Montana Ave/Lyndale Ave Intersection	2	Improving Safety	3	Montana Ave Improvements
		3	Improving Access		
		5	Supporting the Business Community		
2	Access to Boulder Ave	2	Improving Safety	3	Montana Ave Improvements
		3	Improving Access		
3	Commercial District Vitality	1	Neighborhood Identity	2	Streetscape Plan
		4	Bolstering Housing Opportunity	4	Centennial Trail Extension
		5	Supporting the Business Community	5	Zoning Updates
4	TIF Investment Strategy	5	Supporting the Business Community	1	BID Formation
				2	Streetscape Plan
				4	Centennial Trail Extension
5	Vehicle / Outdoor Storage	1	Neighborhood Identity	1	BID Formation
		4	Bolstering Housing Opportunity		
		5	Supporting the Business Community		
6	Housing Attainability	4	Bolstering Housing Opportunity	5	Zoning Updates
7	Neighborhood Character Preservation	1	Neighborhood Identity	2	Streetscape Plan
		5	Supporting the Business Community	5	Zoning Updates
8	Rail Crossings	2	Improving Safety	2	Streetscape Plan
		3	Improving Access		
		4	Bolstering Housing Opportunity	3	Montana Ave Improvements
		5	Supporting the Business Community		
9	Stormwater Management	2	Improving Safety	2	Streetscape Plan
10	Zoning and Intensity	1	Neighborhood Identity	5	Zoning Updates
		4	Bolstering Housing Opportunity		
		5	Supporting the Business Community		
11	Zoning and Built Character	1	Neighborhood Identity	5	Zoning Updates
		4	Bolstering Housing Opportunity		
12	Placemaking	1	Neighborhood Identity	1	BID Formation
		3	Improving Access	2	Streetscape Plan
		4	Bolstering Housing Opportunity	4	Centennial Trail Extension
		5	Supporting the Business Community	5	Zoning Updates



With collaboration between the City, businesses, residents, and partners, the plan provides a roadmap to fulfill the Growth Policy’s objective to create vibrant neighborhood centers in Helena. The Railroad District Neighborhood Plan will guide investment and action to revitalize this historic area as a unique destination and integral part of the city.

Figure 2: The Railroad District 2045



1.0 Introduction

This project’s aim is to create a vibrant, dynamic neighborhood center within the context of a larger residential neighborhood and to eliminate impediments to investment while still ensuring quality developments.

The 2019 Growth Policy’s principal growth strategy is to focus the city’s development into “neighborhood centers,” forming and promoting these dense, multi-use areas to create unique urban spaces supported by one or more of Helena’s residential neighborhoods. In the Railroad District, this strategy is also supported by the plan underpinning the 6th Ward Urban Renewal District (URD). The URD’s plan contains goals to revitalize the area by improving economic vitality, creating jobs, and encouraging investment in targeted neighborhoods.

Residents, stakeholders, business owners, and the City of Helena are seeking to spur economic activity in Helena’s historic Railroad District and create the type of interconnected, dynamic, unique, and identity-rich neighborhood center the Growth Policy envisions. This is consistent with the results of the engagement activities incorporated into this subarea planning process, integrating the voice of the neighborhood’s residents and businesses into the larger policy context and shaping a plan tailored to the 6th Ward’s needs and aspirations.

1.1 Neighborhood Planning and Policy

1.1.1 Importance of Neighborhood Planning

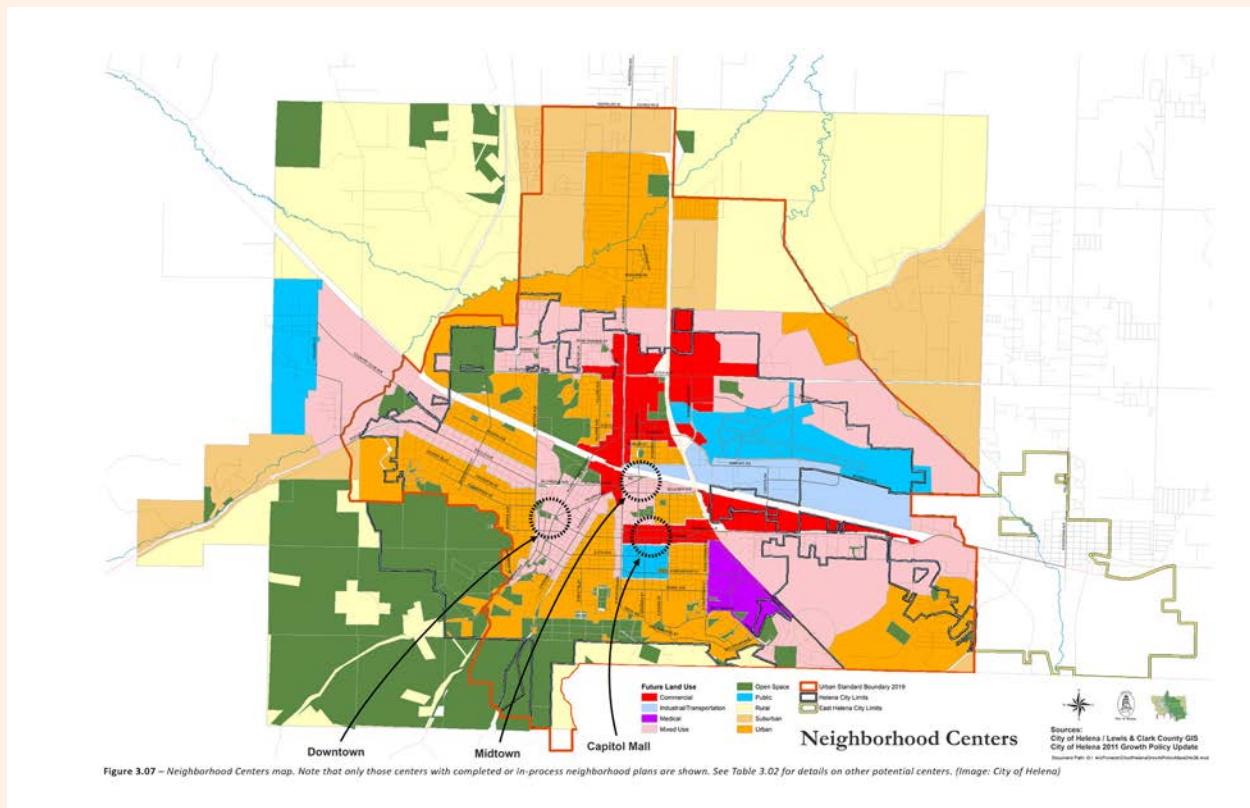
Helena’s Growth Policy underscores the importance of neighborhood planning, particularly as a key to determining the location, scale and type of change anticipated or hoped to occur in the community’s neighborhoods. As noted in the Growth Policy:

“The concept of mixed-use development is an important growth management strategy for Helena. If properly planned and developed, Neighborhood Centers will enjoy higher densities, a mix of activities, more transportation options, and convenient shopping and services. When combined with improved multi-modal transportation opportunities, Neighborhood Centers can reduce reliance on automobile travel and the need for costly street improvements while benefiting air quality, slowing sprawl, and providing a greater variety of housing types. Neighborhood Centers located at the west, north and east areas of town may also enhance the experience of entering the city.”



The Growth Policy identifies three areas where mixed-use neighborhood centers can develop, assuring the neighborhoods are involved in determining their character and appropriateness. The Growth Policy’s storefront studio focused community conversation about these mixed-use neighborhood centers. And the community responded, understanding what a compact, mixed-use center can bring to a neighborhood and suggesting those places in town where this type of transformation would be welcomed.

Figure 3: 2019 Growth Policy Neighborhood Centers



The Railroad District emerged as the highest priority candidate for a neighborhood plan. There is already an urban renewal district formed in the area, a tax-increment financing district exists, and the district’s small business district, street grid, and mix of uses already establish a pattern suited for a mixed-use neighborhood center. This type of project can align the City’s zoning ordinance and development regulations to meet the district’s unique circumstances and suggest strategic action to stimulate appropriate and effective change- all consistent with the neighborhood’s specific needs and aspirations.





Photo #1: The Storefront Studio captured the community's desires for neighborhood centers as ways to encourage infill development and enhance neighborhood quality of life.

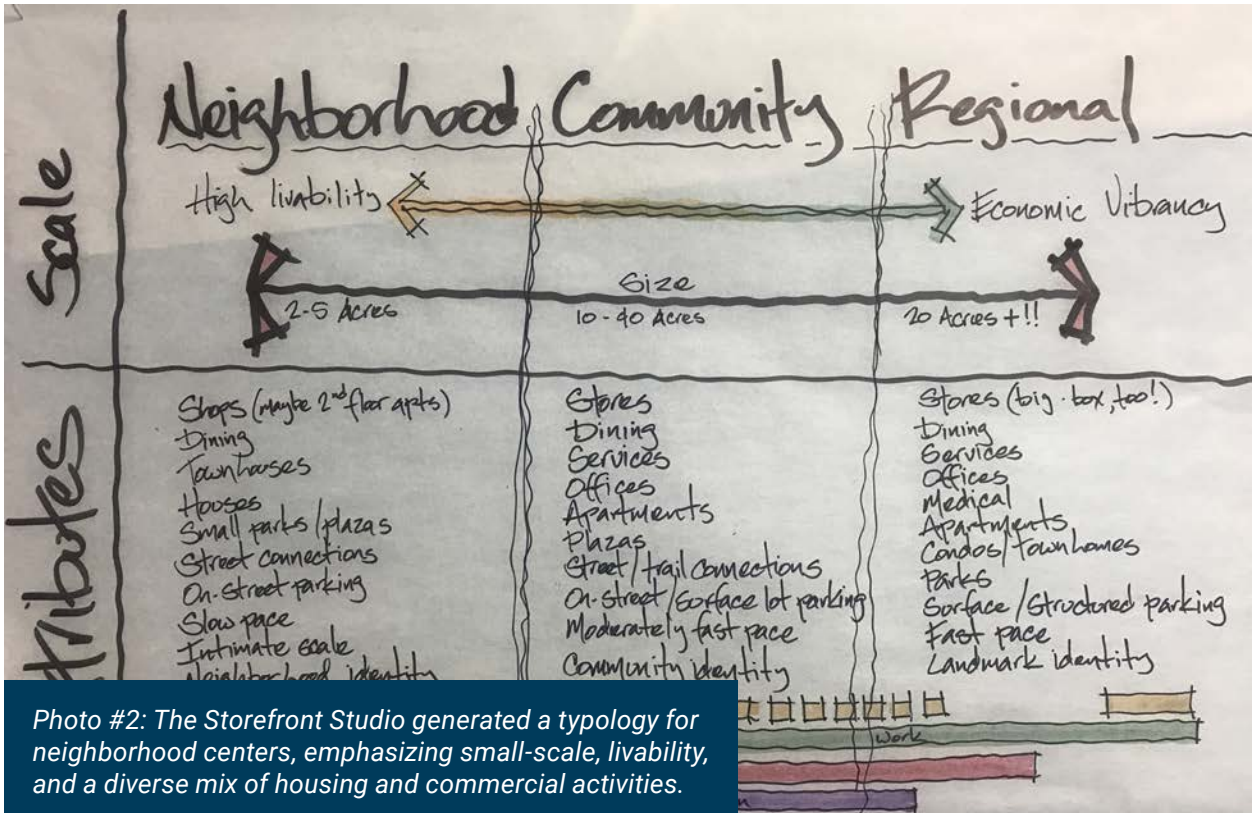


Photo #2: The Storefront Studio generated a typology for neighborhood centers, emphasizing small-scale, livability, and a diverse mix of housing and commercial activities.



1.1.2 Direction from the Growth Policy

The 2018 Growth Policy establishes the foundation for this subarea plan, acknowledging the importance of Helena’s neighborhoods and seeking reinvestment in time and energy to guide their development. Goal 10 and Objective 45 of the Growth Policy calls for this effort, as follows:

- [Goal 10] Plan for and establish types and quantities of land uses in Helena supporting community needs, Neighborhood Centers, aesthetics, and the City’s long-term sustainability.*
- [Objective 45] With local and regional jurisdictions, identify key transportation corridors and work to differentiate arterial roadway design, emphasizing neighborhood centers as points of community importance and focus.*

This subarea plan implements several action items included in the Growth Policy:

- (Action 34) Develop and adopt Neighborhood Plans that address appropriate economic and implementation strategies for Neighborhood Centers.*
- (Action 35) Create a Neighborhood Center process to:*
 - ♦ *Identify Neighborhood Center locations;*
 - ♦ *Develop strategy for development of center;*
 - ♦ *Develop implementation methods to achieve those goals;*
 - ♦ *Amend map reflecting Neighborhood Center locations.*
- (Action 38) Develop design standards for:*
 - ♦ *Neighborhoods, as appropriate; Historic property and historic districts;*
 - ♦ *Transportation Corridors;*
 - ♦ *Strip development;*
 - ♦ *Neighborhood Center development.*
- (Action 39) Monitor existing Urban Renewal Plans in Helena to optimize chances for implementation and overall community benefit.*

The Growth Policy’s relevant objectives are included in Appendix B, illustrating how they align with and support this subarea plan.



1.2 Relationship to the Urban Renewal District

The Urban Renewal District (URD) receives revenue from within the TIF district boundary. According to MCA 7.15.42, the URD is entitled to receive a percentage of property tax revenues based on the difference between the tax collected when the district was formed and the tax collected as property values increase. This “increment” flows to the URD, who is then obligated to reinvest these funds to improve conditions in the district. A URD exists for no more than 20 years, expected to act

relatively quickly to encourage reinvestment and improve conditions within the district.

Forming a URD requires several actions, two of which include a finding of “blight” within a defined geographic area and then the preparation of a plan to improve blighted conditions. The URD is then bound to act within the plan’s framework, investing its funds consistent with the plan’s policies and in line with identified implementation strategies. The area incorporated within the TIF district, however, is slightly smaller than the area addressed in this subarea plan, only because the area within the TIF district boundaries had to meet criteria for blight. There are properties within the subarea plan which are not blighted but still contribute to the identity, character, and function of the 6th Ward.

Figure 4: Railroad District Urban Renewal District Boundaries





The Railroad District Urban Renewal Plan contains several policies relevant to this subarea plan, generally consistent with the City’s Growth Policy and with the direction this subarea plan takes. Specifically, the Urban Renewal Plan promotes a vision for the district where:

“The Railroad District will be a destination district in the City of Helena, with a strong neighborhood identity based on the district’s historic core, unique mix of uses, including workforce housing, manufacturing, and the railroad after which the district is named. The Railroad District will be a vibrant place to work, live, and visit with shops, restaurants, and diverse commercial businesses. It will be uniquely different from the city’s other main nearby destinations – downtown, Great Northern Town Center, and the Capitol area. People will easily access the Railroad District by vehicle, and pedestrian and bike-friendly connections.”

This vision easily extends beyond just the TIF district boundary, capturing the essence of the larger planning area, too.

As with the objectives from the Growth Policy, those Urban Renewal Plan policies aligning with and supporting this subarea plan are included in Appendix B. The plan includes six goals, all of which align with and support this subarea plan’s preparation, as follows:

1. **Emphasize** the District’s Historic Importance,
2. **Increase** Property Utilization and Function,
3. **Expand** and Diversify the District’s Economy,
4. **Create** an Inviting Venue,
5. **Address** Public Infrastructure Needs, and
6. **Provide** for Public and Environmental Health.

1.3 Planning Area

The 6th Ward boundaries are Last Chance Gulch to the West, Cedar to the North, Highway 287, Butte Avenue to the South, and 13th Street to the Southwest corner. The 6th Ward can be broken down into seven smaller neighborhoods (Corridor District, 6th Ward North, Railyard, Recreation District, Depot District, Trades District, and 6th Ward South), each section has its own character, interconnected through history, community, and a shared interest in Helena’s prosperity.



Figure 5: Railroad District Planning Area



1.3.1 Why It Was Chosen

The Railroad District is the City of Helena’s first subarea planning effort since the 2018 Growth Policy’s adoption. The Growth Policy identifies the 6th Ward as a district where a neighborhood center is to be located, and the City chose this neighborhood for this effort as its first for multiple reasons.

- ◆ **Accessibility** – Neighborhood Centers should have the capacity to be accessed by a variety and volume of transportation.
- ◆ **Institutions & Mix of Uses** – Neighborhood Centers should be placed at those intersections unique to cities where a mix of uses can be found.
- ◆ **Placemaking Opportunity** – Neighborhood Centers should be encouraged in places benefiting from an enhancement of their urban form.
- ◆ **Development and Redevelopment Opportunity** - Neighborhood Centers should be encouraged in places benefiting from city attention.
- ◆ **Planned Infrastructure Expansion** – Neighborhood Centers should be encouraged in places which already have or are planned to soon have the infrastructure capacity to handle an intensification of use in the area.

The RR District was of interest because of its accessibility possibilities, its diverse institutions and mix of uses, the obvious placemaking opportunities provided by its historic character, and its redevelopment opportunity. Infrastructure is already mostly in place, and the City is already conducting studies to enhance its water and storm drain systems.



The neighborhood also already has an established commercial center, the heart of the district's identity and scaled consistently with the district's historic character and role. It is central to the entire district, seen by those who live there as an anchoring civic, social, and cultural place and easily accessible by foot, bike, or car from surrounding residential neighborhoods.

1.4 Planning Process and Engagement

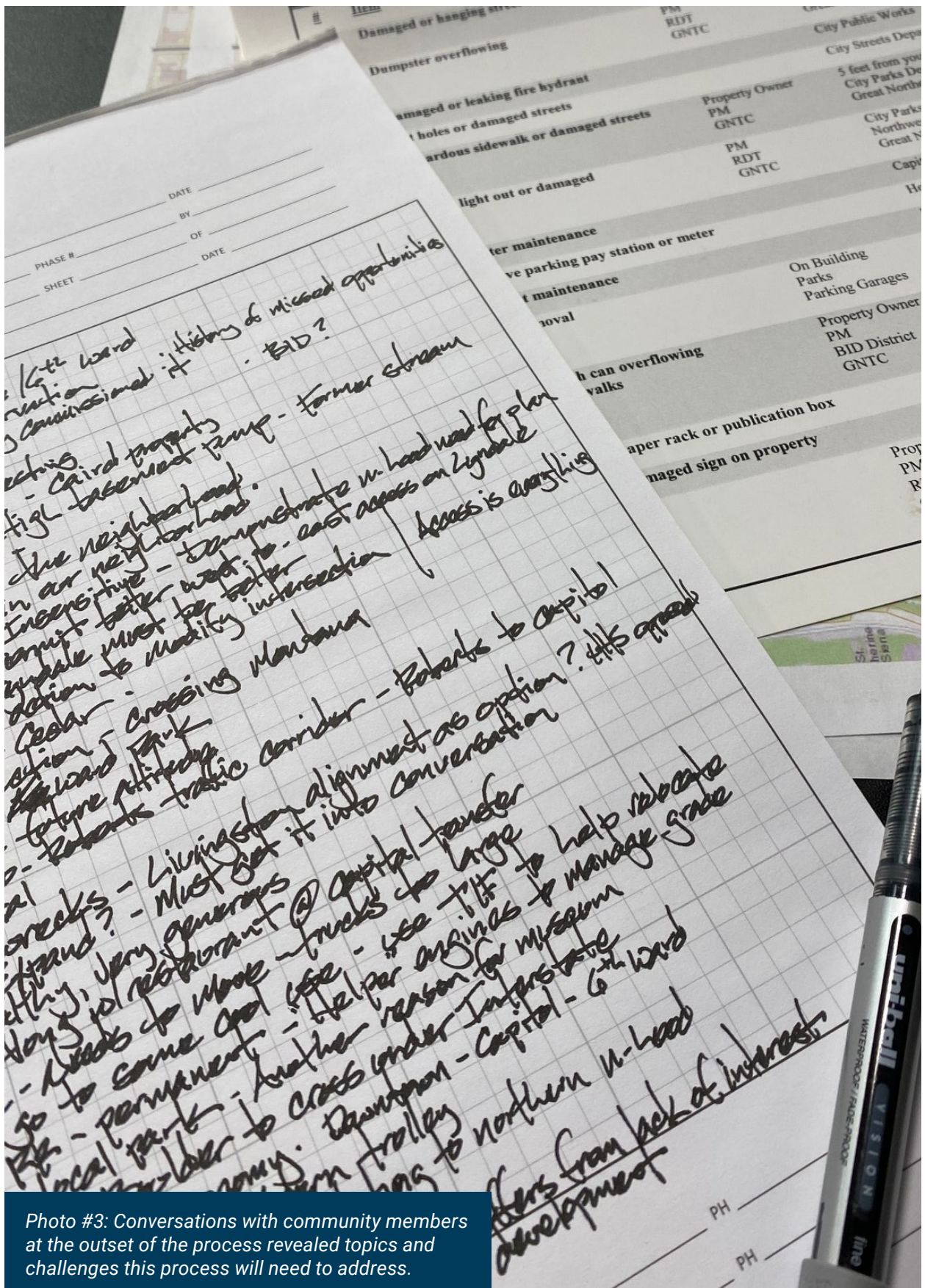
The process to develop the plan centered on meaningful community conversation and adherence to the Growth Policy's overarching guidance on neighborhood center character and function. This translated to a public engagement program eliciting community expression of hopes, concerns, and aspirations anchored in a solid technical understanding of the community's context, constraints, and opportunities.

The public conversation drew from the community's imagination to consider alternatives for the Railroad District, and then collaborated on identifying recommendations for action. This approach is also consistent with the City of Helena's public participation policy, underpinning the critical role a meaningful public dialogue plays in policy development.

1.4.1 Interviews

A set of November 2022 orientation interviews set the stage. These interviews invited individual community members to speak with the consultants one-on-one, introducing the consultant team to the neighborhood in an intimate, open, and easy way. The interviews set out to identify the topics and issues on the community's mind via two and a half days of one-on-one conversations with community members and agency staff. The interviews covered a range of topics and revealed issues this planning process must address. Appendix D provides a complete summary of the interviews, including a list of those interviewed.





PHASE # _____ DATE _____
 SHEET _____ OF _____ DATE _____

high water
 Commissioned it - History of missed opportunities - BID?
 affecting - Caird property
 high basement pump - former stream
 the neighborhood
 in or near neighborhood
 insensitive - tamponette in head used for plan
 permit better west to - east access on Lyndale
 update must be better
 action to modify intersection | Access is everything
 Cedar - crossing Marbana
 toward Frank
 future affects
 Roberts traffic corridor - Roberts to Capital
 alignment as option? it's good
 must get it into conversation
 Livingston alignment as option? it's good
 very generous @ capital transfer
 trucks to large
 needs to move - see title to help relocate
 go to some cool use - see title to help relocate
 permanent - helper engines to manage grade
 local park - Another reason for museum
 trolley - Davenport - Capital - 6th ward
 to northern n-head
 development

Photo #3: Conversations with community members at the outset of the process revealed topics and challenges this process will need to address.



1.4.2 Studio

The interviews set the stage for the “storefront studio” conducted in March. During the studio, those interested in the 6th Ward – many of whom were business owners or residents – considered the subarea’s long-term vision and three different scenarios to help attain it. Each scenario explored different sets of priorities, emphasizing tradeoffs and providing examples of how each may favor certain actions or investments.

- Scenario 1 focused on recreation, emphasizing investment and action to enhance the district’s family friendliness.*
- Scenario 2 focused on revitalizing the commercial core, emphasizing new housing construction near the retail center and welcoming local and regional patrons to the district’s shops, restaurants, and offices.*
- Scenario 3 focused on implementing the transportation improvements identified in the City’s 2020 “Five Points” study, accommodating – among other things – a railway underpass at North Montana Ave and a roundabout at the intersection of Lyndale, Montana, and Helena.*



Photo #4: The City hosted a studio session in the Railroad District at NAMI’s offices. More than 70 residents, business owners, and community members participated.



Studio participants also took time to comment on the “6th Ward Jam Board” to identify specific concerns, make suggestions, and offer solutions. Notes on the “Jam Board” and on the scenarios influenced the plan’s final recommendations, balancing the priorities of the three scenarios and clarifying what the plan’s policy options should be.

1.4.3 Rollout

The subarea plan’s rollout allowed the community to review the draft plan’s recommendations and, importantly, verify the plan accurately captures the community’s identity and honestly reflects the suggestions participants offered during the planning process.

1.4.4 Plan Adoption

The Railroad District Subarea Plan is adopted as part of the City’s Growth Policy, offering policy direction and implementation actions specific to this part of town. The plan augments policy the City has adopted in the Growth Policy and Urban Renewal Plan, offering new policy to add detail and specific implementation actions to guide investment and assist decision making. The subarea plan will become an appendix to the Growth Policy, one of several subarea plans the City anticipates incorporating into the Growth Policy in similar fashion.

The City’s adoption process will include review and recommendation by the joint Helena/Lewis and Clark County Planning Commission and then adoption by the Helena City Commission following a series of public hearings, consistent with the requirements of 76-1 Part 6 of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA).

1.5 Policy

The Growth Policy and Urban Renewal Plan establishes a policy framework within which this subarea plan operates. Appendix

B lists the relevant policies from each of those two documents, presenting the policy “sideboards” shaping this process and the plan’s recommendations. This plan does, however, offer new policy to augment what the City has already adopted, suggesting new initiatives reflecting this process and the more specific look into the dynamics of the Railroad District and a deliberate incorporation of the community’s ideas. Section 5 details this plan’s new objectives, formatted to be consistent with and adopted as part of the overarching Growth Policy.

1.6 Actions

Because Helena’s recent Growth Policy and the Railroad District’s Urban Renewal Plan provide such clear and appropriate policy guidance, this planning process was able to target specific policy adjustments and focus on implementation. Priority initiatives are:

1. Adopt specific strategies to address community decay and vacant properties, guide TIF investment, and **form a business improvement district (BID)**.
2. Create **streetscape plan** and design to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor.
3. Implement **Montana Ave traffic calming** between Lyndale and Cedar, design and construct the roundabout at Malfunction Junction, and install the RRFB for the Centennial Trail crossing of Montana Ave.
4. Confirm **Centennial Trail alignment** through the district, design it, and improve it.
5. **Update zoning throughout the subarea**, particularly in the Depot District, Trades District, and Corridor District to encourage and facilitate mixed-use development.



2. Context

The 6th Ward neighborhood is rich in history, much of which dates back to Helena's founding. The small commercial district near the historic train depot played an important part in Helena's development, and the industrial and residential areas surrounding it – on both sides of the tracks – share in the district's legacy of rail, commerce, working-class family living, and connection to community. Appendix A presents a comprehensive statement of community condition, describing demographic, economic, transportation, land use contexts.

2.1 What Makes the Railroad District Special

The Railroad District is a historic neighborhood, important in the eyes of residents and those who appreciate Helena's establishment and evolution. The community members who participated in this process indicate they wish to see the district's historic charm return. Participants appreciate the specific elements which

speak to the district's past, and they have expressed desire to build on them to create a contemporary version of the 6th Ward which is every bit as vital and compelling as the place of the early 1900s. The historic elements establish a visual and cultural context, reminders of how long the district has been part of Helena.

Also generally known as the 6th Ward or Midtowne – the Railroad District remains a window into the community's railroad-based history. It includes a small commercial district at its core, an intimate relationship with the rail yard, an inventory of small workshops and warehouses, and a turn-of-the-century neighborhood plat pattern. The small clapboard and brick houses near the rail yard were built to serve those working the trains or the businesses supporting them. Though the past 100 years have brought US Highway 12 through the district, added schools, created the Montana Avenue commercial corridor, and seen road-based transportation supplant rail, much of the neighborhood's historic character remains.

There are several specific attributes which set this area of Helena apart from others.



2.1.1 The Railyard

Covering more than 170 acres, the railyard is a large, busy, noisy presence in the neighborhood. It serves an important rail transportation function, splitting and moving freight trains over the grades to the east and west of town. The yard employs more than 100 workers and – according to participants in this plan – processes up to 18 trains per day.



Photo #5: The railyard is a highly visible and noisy part of the subarea – and those who live here appreciate it.

2.1.2 The Business Core

The 6th Ward’s business district is more than 120 years old, initially developed to serve the railroad, its commerce, and its passengers. While the buildings and businesses have changed over the years, its historic scale and general character remain.

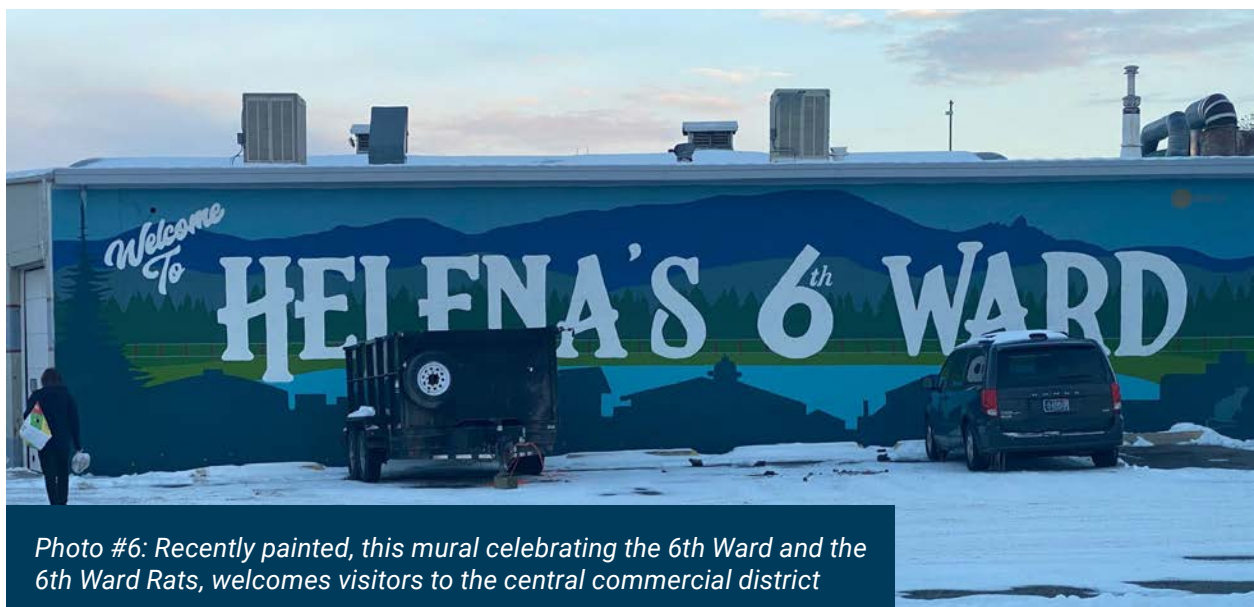


Photo #6: Recently painted, this mural celebrating the 6th Ward and the 6th Ward Rats, welcomes visitors to the central commercial district



2.1.3 The Warehouses

The landscape south of the tracks and east of the commercial core is a mix of workshops, warehouses, storage, studios, and housing, reflecting a long history of adaptive use of the land near the district’s major transportation infrastructure.



2.1.4 Helena Avenue

Once a trolley connection between the depot and downtown, the Helena Ave corridor now is an arterial street cutting at an angle through the city’s plats. Mt Helena is its “terminal view” to the west, and the historic depot sits at its eastern terminus, creating a unique urban design opportunity with opportunities for historic reference.



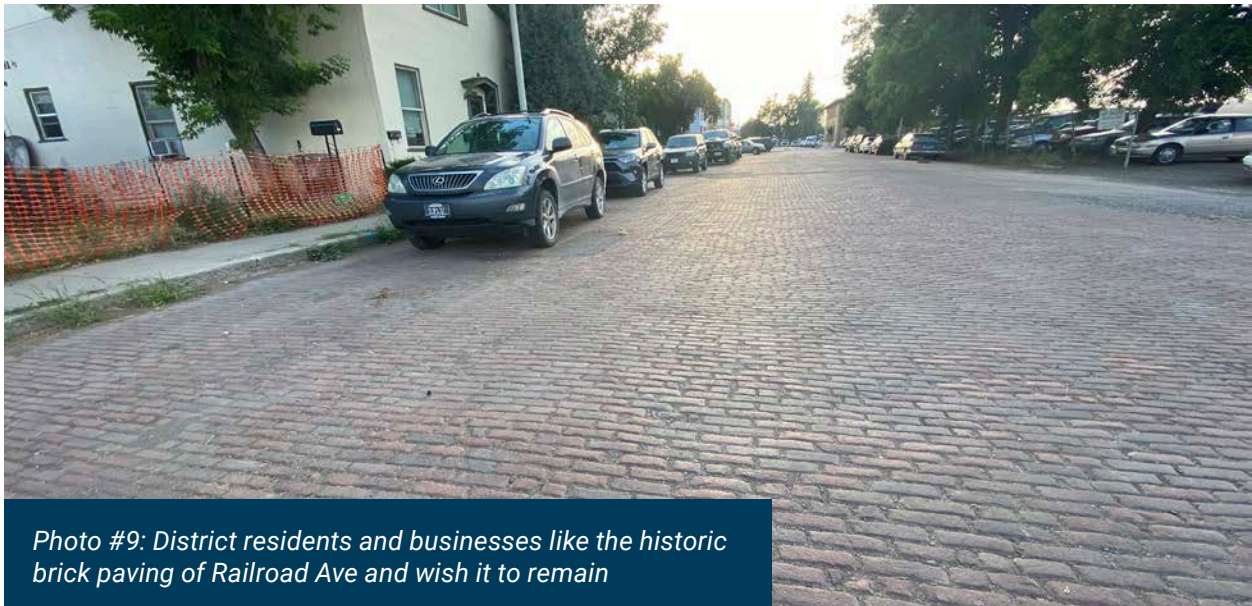


Photo #9: District residents and businesses like the historic brick paving of Railroad Ave and wish it to remain

2.1.5 Railroad Avenue

Railroad Avenue, owned by the railroad, is a brick-paved street, cited by participants in this process as key to the district’s identity. Portions of it have been paved in asphalt, but much of the brick remains, particularly in front of the depot and some of the commercial core’s oldest storefronts.

2.1.6 The Residents

6th Ward residents report they like living in the neighborhoods. They appreciate its historic legacy, its modest housing on small lots, the family atmosphere, and the proximity to services, shopping, and work. Residents are a mix of Helena’s demographic, with people whose families have lived in the district for generations neighbors to newcomers, attracted to the district for a variety of reasons. While the population is mostly white at 84%, information from the American Community Survey indicates this is one of Helena’s most economically and socially diverse places. Residents say they feel part of this community, valuing the district’s local

businesses, churches, events, and schools.

2.1.7 The Businesspeople

Like the district’s residents, the local businesspeople indicate appreciation for the district’s uniqueness, historic character, and scale. The local businesses are drawn together as a community, embracing their image as an “underdog” district, where the railroad legacy creates an attitude blending individuality and community.

2.1.8 The Schools

Residents indicate a deep connection to the district’s schools and are engaged in student activities from elementary grades through high school. Bryant Elementary, Helena Middle School, and Helena High School are all within walking distance of the district’s neighborhoods, and, according to participant comments, the proximity enhances parental involvement in the schools’ educational, athletic, and social programs. Helena College also plays an important role, making advanced academic and vocational education accessible to neighborhood residents and employees.





Photo #10: Houses north of Lyndale Ave are generally older than those developed to the south, reflecting development for railroad and commercial district employees.



Photo #11: Newer homes, built to more of a suburban style, are more popular south of Lyndale.



Photo #12: Bryant Elementary School serves the entire Railroad District area, with students from both the north and south side of the tracks.





Photo #13: The Helena Middle School is located in the southwest portion of the planning area, near the alignment of the historic Helena Ave trolley line.



Photo #14: Helena College, affiliated with the University of Montana, is located adjacent to Helena High School and offers a range of college level and vocational courses of study

2.2 District History

The historic train depot was constructed in 1904, replacing the smaller original and creating a visual centerpiece for the commercial district surrounding it. By that time, the rail yard and the nearby residential areas had already been established to support Helena’s growing economy. Gold mined nearby and then exported via rail fueled the community’s growth, and the station at the center of the Railroad District was the focus of the movement of ore out, and the movement of goods – and people – in.

The rail station was linked to the city center by Helena Avenue and its trolley line, allowing people to travel easily between the commercial and industrial bustle near the train station and the community’s civic and cultural center to the west. The Railroad District evolved to serve the needs of freight

movement, with housing nearby to house rail workers of all levels and a commercial district responding to the needs of those workers and others with business near the depot. It was a contrast to the more wealthy, Victorian character of the development nearer the city’s center, but it was busy and a critical part of early Helena’s prosperity.

As the region’s resource-based economy changed, freight movement shifted to favor truck over rail, and passenger rail service ended, the district’s core economic activity declined. US Highway 12 worked east-west through the district, accommodating vehicle travel, and commercial development moved to line the highway corridor in response. The district gradually transformed, retaining its historic neighborhood subdivision pattern and commercial building stock but adapting to the new economic, functional, and social context emerging around it. In some cases, this led to disinvestment, vacancy, and poverty.





Photo #15: The original train depot was replaced in 1907 to serve growing rail demand.

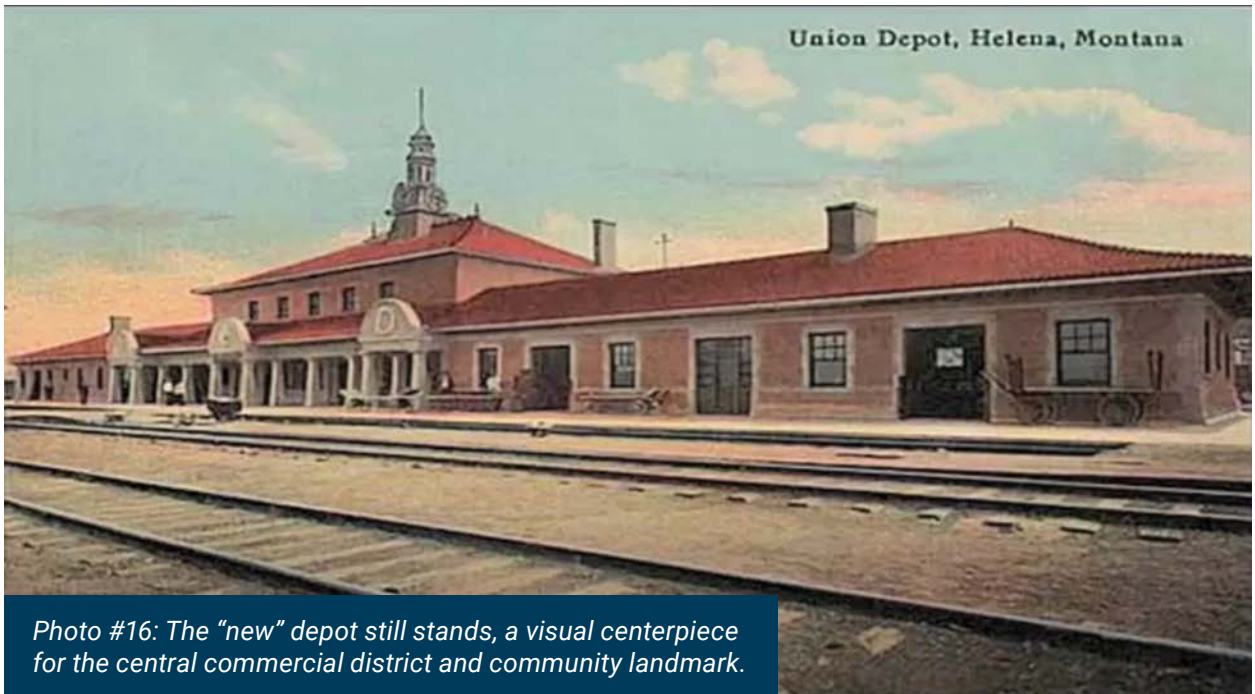


Photo #16: The "new" depot still stands, a visual centerpiece for the central commercial district and community landmark.



The district’s working-class roots, however, remain. Many of those who participated in this process reflected warmly on the identity of the “6th Ward Rats,” an affectionate term applied to those who live in the district by those who live in the district, incorporated into a recently painted mural on a downtown building. The neighborhoods in the district are still some of Helena’s most affordable, with modest and aging houses on small lots. Most residents appreciate the sounds of the working rail yard, the sense of community the district engenders, and convenient access to schools, parks, jobs, and the small commercial center.

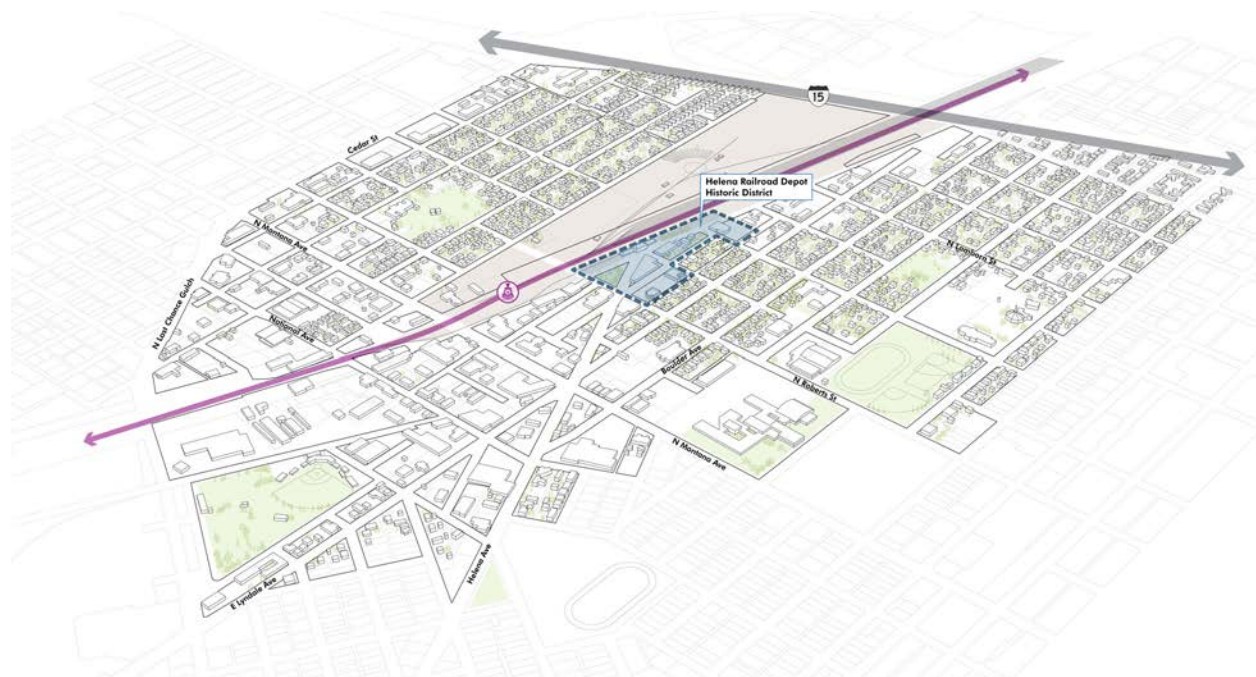
While the subject of an urban renewal plan, the district is enjoying a bit of resurgence. The commercial district is attracting new businesses looking to build on the district’s identity or explore entrepreneurship. The school district rebuilt Roberts Elementary School, and Helena College is expanding. Local businesses and the City of Helena are also investing in the commercial district’s streetscape, enhancing the district’s identity and implementing new storm

water management techniques. These investments speak to renewed interest in the neighborhood, rooted in the community’s enduring sense of identity and commitment to those unique characteristics and stories which define the 6th Ward.

2.3 Railroad District Business Outlook

The Railroad District has three distinct commercial spaces, each with different attributes defining their scale, business types, customer bases, and operational characteristics. While the district is relatively compact, it possesses a diversity of business activity. Local businesspeople see the district’s potential and are investing in it, establishing and expanding new retail and dining options and working collectively to advance district objectives. They see a niche for this type of commercial district, true to its railroad heritage and dynamic enough to attract visitors from elsewhere in Helena.

Figure 6: Railroad Depot Historic District and Community Facilities



Local non-profits, professional offices, and tradespeople are also in the district, comprising a mix of businesses representing the mix in the larger metro area and underscoring the economic diversity embedded in this relatively small space.

2.3.1 Montana Ave Corridor

The North Montana Ave corridor runs north-south, with the segment between 11th Ave and Lyndale Ave serving as a portion of US Highway 12. Businesses along the corridor generally orient to the corridor, serving customers who travel by auto. Restaurants, auto repair, warehousing, transportation, and light manufacturing businesses proliferate here, where convenient access to a busy arterial provide specific advantages.

2.3.2 Central Businesses

The cluster of activities in the district near the depot do not rely on direct highway access and include dining, professional office, service commercial, entertainment, and institutional operations. These tenants generally occupy traditional storefronts

or small-scale stand-alone structures, relying on on-street parking and sometimes benefiting from the proximity of other businesses or services nearby.

2.3.3 Warehousing & Rail

Located to the east of the central business district and south of the rail line, the warehousing district features light manufacturing, warehousing, trades offices, and artist studios intermixed with residential uses. These operations often rely on access to storage for vehicles or goods and the ability for those around them to tolerate noise, early morning operations, or outdoor equipment storage.

In general, the vacancy rates and trends by sector in the Railroad District appear to reflect what the rest of Helena is experiencing, with fluctuations in retail occupancy, warehousing, and light manufacturing on par with the rest of the City's business environment. Participants in this process, however, indicate increasing demand for storefront space in the central business area as the district's image as an inviting place for small-business startups is growing.

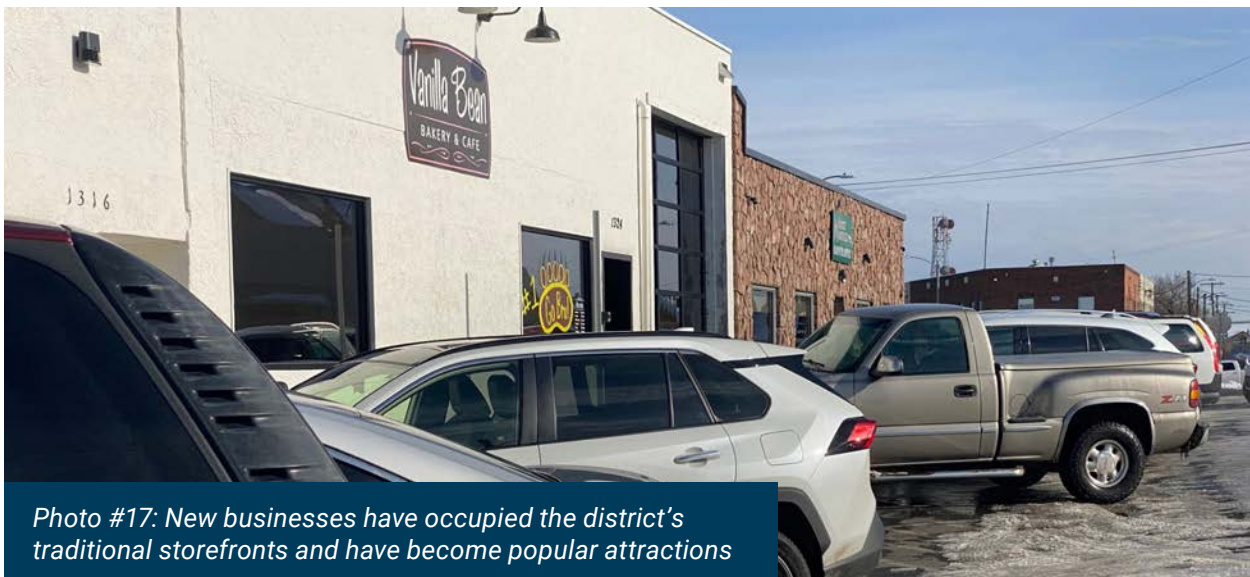


Photo #17: New businesses have occupied the district's traditional storefronts and have become popular attractions



Photo #18: Historic uses also remain in the central commercial district, enjoying a type of cult status and appreciation.





Photo #19: New uses are also adapting to disused warehouse space, bringing new activities to old places.

From 2010 to 2017, Helena’s retail trade industry declined by more than 20%. These declining trends in the retail industry appear to be reflected in the saturation of available office and retail spaces for lease (Appendix A). This is a relatively high inventory for Helena, possibly due in part to trends of allowing work-from-home and the rise of e-commerce in response to the Covid pandemic. This may mean retail and office spaces are less in demand, but it also may indicate increased availability of cheaper office or storefront space for business startups. In the Railroad District, this dynamic appears to be playing out.

Helena’s warehousing sector is changing, too. Recent trends indicate both a rise in Helena’s “wholesale trade” employment and a balancing decrease in “transportation, warehousing, and utilities” employment. This suggests existing warehousing space is being repurposed to serve the growing “wholesale trade” sector. It may be a source for new opportunities in the 6th Ward’s own warehousing district, repurposing or intensifying the use of warehouse space near the rail line.

The diversity of business types in the district presents opportunities and challenges. Increased diversity may make the business environment more resilient to changes in any one sector, with some businesses possibly prospering while others struggle. It can present challenges, though, in requiring a more adaptive and generalized policy approach, with investment or business development strategies capable of reflecting the diversity and distributing benefits equitably.

2.4 Housing

The Railroad District has a mix of residential housing types, with single-family units predominating. Many of the single-family units, particularly in the northern neighborhood, are modest and sited on relatively small parcels, consistent with the railroad worker housing style of the early 1900s. Based on a 2022 housing inventory, approximately 4% of the residential land in the Railroad District was developed with units determined to be in poor or worse condition.



2.4.1 Population and Growth in Helena

The City of Helena relies on population data provided by the U. S. Bureau of the Census and Montana State’s Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce prepares the population forecasts for cities and counties to use in Comprehensive Planning. Lewis and Clark County's population reached 70,973 full-time residents in 2020, reflecting an increase of more than 7,578 since 2010. About 3,900 people or 10.6 percent of this growth, occurred in the City of Helena.

From 2010 to 2024, Helena grew at an average annual growth rate of approximately 1.9 percent. Lewis and Clark County grew at a rate of approximately 1.5 percent, and the state of Montana grew at a rate of approximately 1.1 percent. The Montana

Department of Commerce forecasts Helena to grow to 58,214 by the year 2045. If the Railroad District continues to house approximately 10 percent of Helena’s residents, then the district will grow to a population of approximately 5,821.

2.4.2 Railroad District Demographics

The railroad district constitutes a portion of the City of Helena, with 3,495 residents in 2022. There are approximately 1,735 households in the district, with a median annual household income of \$46,232. Of those residents, the median age is 37.7 years old, with 16.2% holding a bachelor’s degree or higher. The number of housing units is almost equally split between the neighborhoods on either side of the tracks.

Table 2: Lewis and Clark County and Helena Population Projections (2024-2045)

	2010	2024	Population Increase	Percent Increase (2010-2024)	2045 Projection
State of Montana	989,415	1,142,746	153,331	15.5%	1,373,587
Lewis and Clark County	63,395	76,490	13,095	20.6%	123,056
City of Helena	28,190	35,540	7,350	26.1%	58,214

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Montana Department of Commerce



2.4.3 Housing Type

City of Helena had 15,032 housing units in 2022 according to the American Community Survey, Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units. About 8,413 of these homes or about 56 percent of all housing units in the city of Helena are owner-occupied. In the Railroad District, approximately 34% of the units are owner occupied, with renters occupying 61% of the district’s housing units, and approximately 5% are vacant

Table 3 and Figure 7 on the following page summarize the types of housing in the city of Helena in 2022. Table 3 also identifies owner-occupied and rental housing for the occupied units in the city of Helena.

Structure Type	Occupied Housing		Owner-Occupied Housing		Renter- Occupied Housing	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Total Occupied Housing Units	15,032	100%	8,413	100%	6,619	100%
1-detached	8,276	55%	7,090	84%	1,186	18%
1-attached	1,033	7%	529	6%	504	8%
2 apartments	976	6%	77	1%	899	14%
3-4 apartment	1,864	12%	244	3%	1,620	24%
5-9 apartments	743	5%	76	1%	667	10%
10+ apartments	1,689	11%	60	1%	1,629	25%
Mobile Home/Other	451	3%	337	4%	114	2%

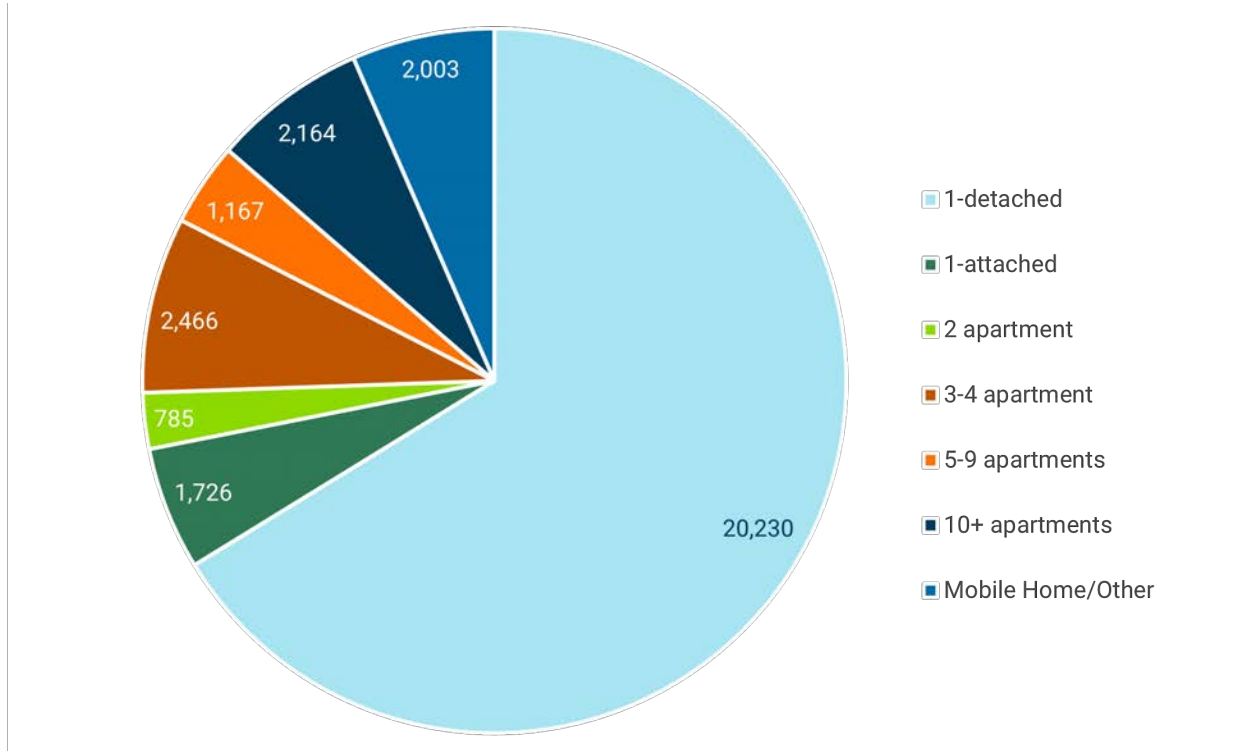
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Montana Department of Commerce

2.4.4 Housing Age and Condition

Most of the houses in the heart of the Railroad District were constructed before or shortly after 1900, with homes in the southern portion of the district generally newer, larger, and in better condition. The condition of most of the older houses is considered average with just a few being considered poor or very poor. The houses in the northern portion of the 6th Ward were also mainly constructed near the turn-of-the-century. The condition of most of these houses is also considered average with some homes considered poor or very poor. The maps here illustrate those properties with poor or very poor housing condition, scattered across the entirety of the planning area but concentrated near the center and in the north.

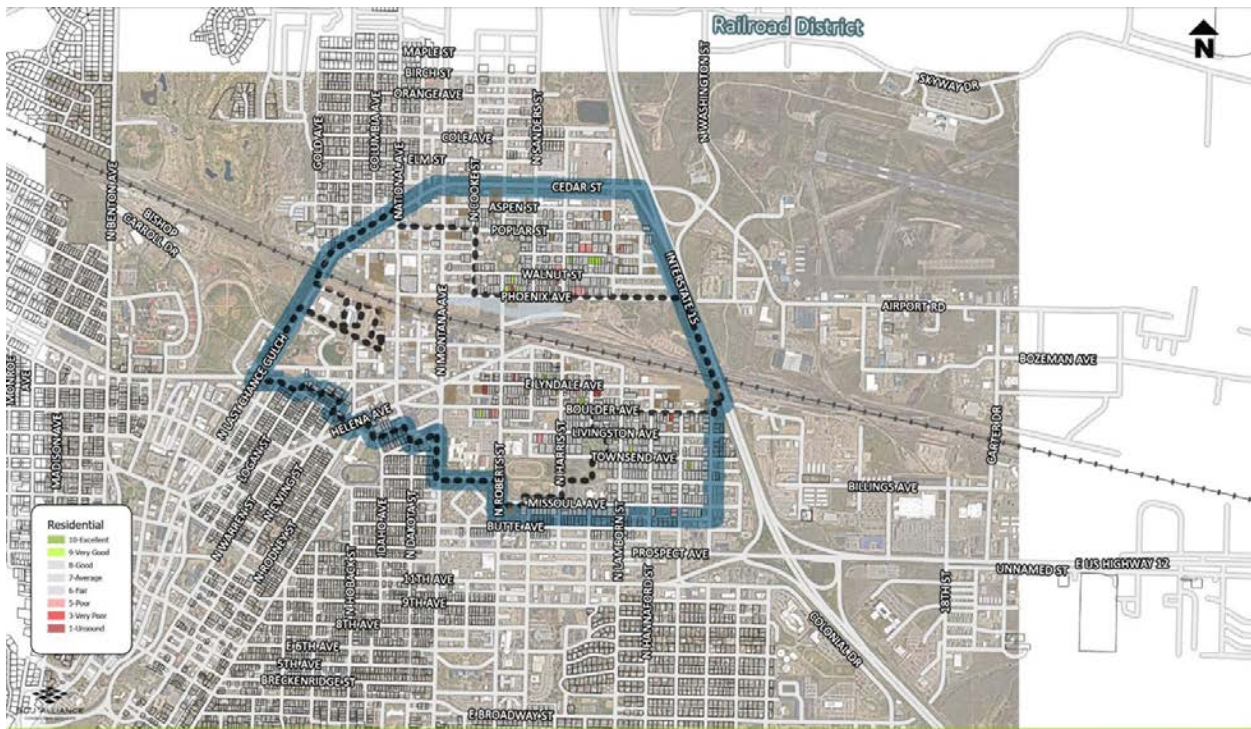


Figure 7: 2022 City of Helena Housing Types



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables

Figure 8: Map of Housing Condition



2.4.5 Affordability in the Railroad District

A median-income earning household (\$46,232 in 2022) in the Railroad District could afford to purchase a \$175,000 home, based on dedicating no more than 30% of gross income to cover a mortgage and related expenses. Even though the district's housing stock is generally older, the \$270,690 median home value exceeds a household's ability to afford it by almost 55 percent.

Households renting their housing pay a median rent of \$810. This is closer to the affordability limit, but the relatively high rent makes it a challenge for those householders to enter the homeownership market.

Attempts to increase housing affordability here will likely need to concentrate on producing units below median value and with rents below the current median rent. This may be difficult to do under market conditions given current construction costs and existing zoning density limitations.

2.5 Access, Circulation, & Parking

The railroad spawned the 6th Ward's development, bringing economic vitality to the district and transforming this part of Helena to serve the railroad's needs. As transportation technology evolved and the railroad's importance diminished, the community had to adapt to new transportation investments and the social, economic, and development changes which came with them. While the railroad remains a significant physical and operational element in the district, US Highway 12, and Helena's arterial streets influence the district's function and character, as well.

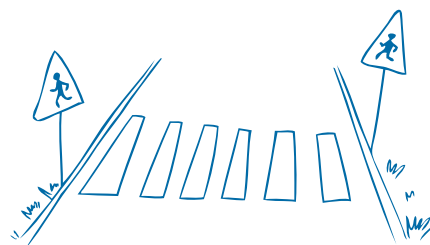
The Railroad District is located at a regional mobility hub. East-west vehicular traffic on US 12 works its way through the district along North Montana Avenue and Lyndale Avenue, making a right-angle turn at the intersection with Helena Avenue. North Montana Avenue continues north from intersection with Lyndale and Helena to access the growing Helena Valley, interrupted by its at-grade crossing of the BNSF railroad tracks. This context of a busy US highway, regional arterials, and a railroad creates a set of constraints and considerations to which transportation and land use planning in the district must adapt.

2.5.1 Roadways

Helena's roadways are governed by city, county, and state entities. Helena's Transportation Systems department works in close conjunction with the county and state. Currently, two plans are acting as guiding documents:

- ◆ *Greater Helena Area Long Range Transportation Plan – 2014 Update*
- ◆ *City of Helena Multimodal Traffic Study Five-Point Intersection & Corridor Connection*

Traffic volumes, speeds, and roadway geometries inhibit pedestrian and cyclist use of the arterial corridors. The priority is to accommodate regional traffic flow, consistent with the highway and arterial designations these roadways possess. The result, however, is a disconnection between the Railroad District and the rest of Helena, where US 12 and North Montana Ave effectively separate the district from the residential neighborhoods to the west.



The design of the five-point intersection at North Montana, Lyndale, and Helena further restricts access to the district from the west, requiring those wishing to enter the district to do so via Helena Ave and not from Lyndale Ave. The City commissioned a detailed study of its five-point intersections, one of which is this intersection. The study also examined non-motorized transportation within the same area, making recommendations for the Centennial Trail and its approach to an intersection with North Montana Ave. The study examines roadway and trail geometry, crash histories, physical constraints, and multimodal needs, making recommendations to satisfy regional mobility needs and increase pedestrian and cyclist safety.

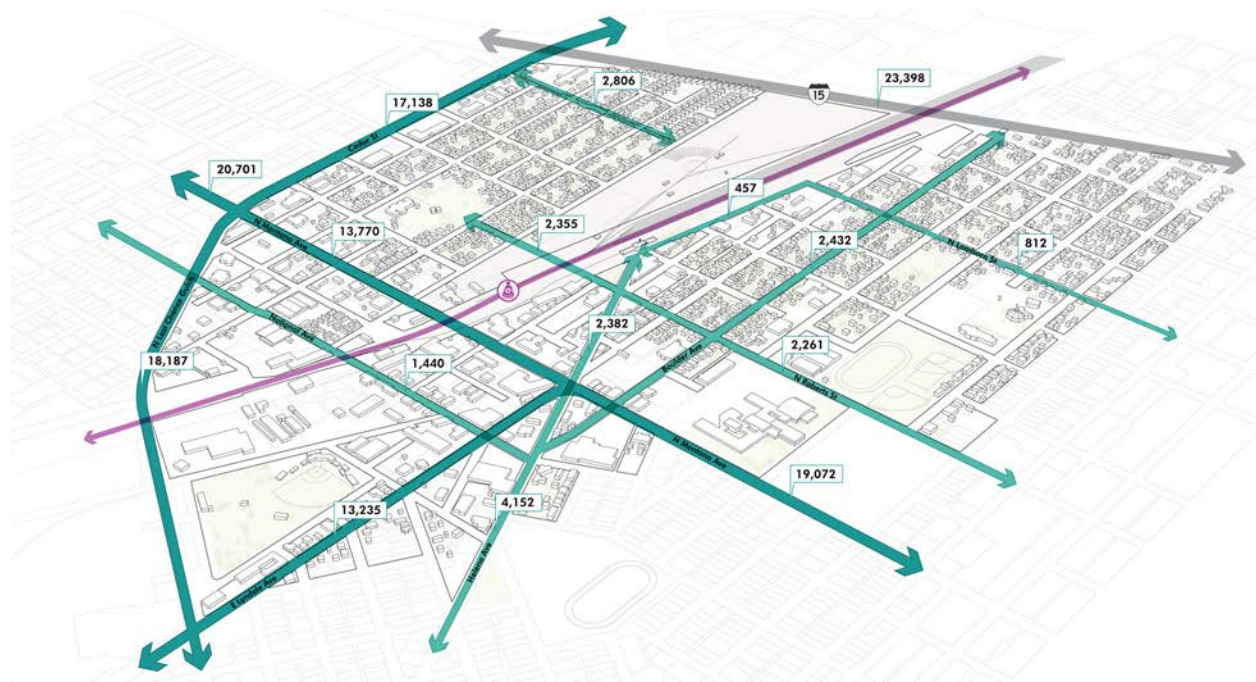
The recommendations include a new roundabout at the North Montana, Lyndale, and Helena intersection, a grade-separated railroad crossing with North Montana going below the rail lines, and an at-grade Centennial Trail crossing at North Montana, controlled by a pedestrian-activated beacon

or crossing signal. The study makes several other recommendations to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety at crossings along Helena Ave. A full summary of the study’s recommendations is provided in Appendix C.

While the study offers a detailed examination of the various proposed improvements, the combination of a roundabout at Montana/Lyndale/Helena, a Centennial Trail crossing, and a grade-separated railroad crossing create conflicts not easily reconciled. There is too little horizontal distance to accommodate all three improvements with the grading the railroad crossing requires. And a grade-separated rail crossing would eliminate access to North Montana from Bozeman St, Argyle St, and Phoenix Ave, implications the Five Points study did not fully explore.

There are other roadway-related transportation issues influencing this area, too, not mentioned in the Five Points Study. They are noted below and expanded upon in the following section on “issues.”

Figure 9: Railroad District Transportation Corridors and Traffic Volumes



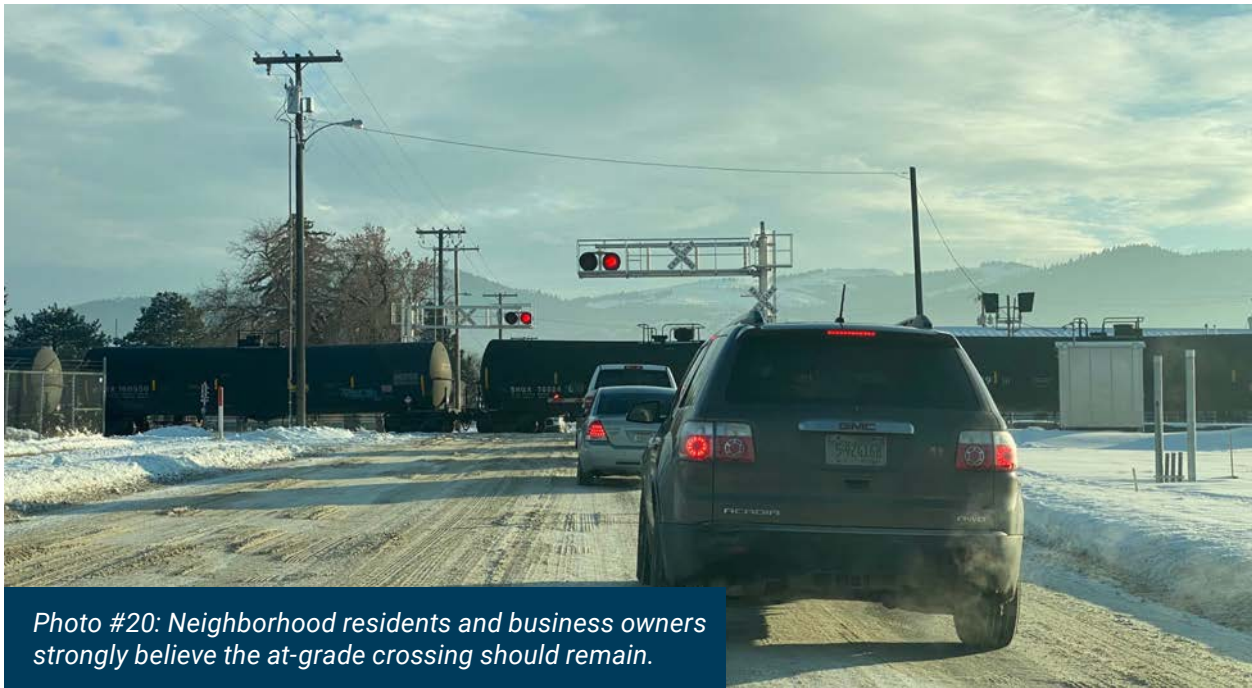


Photo #20: Neighborhood residents and business owners strongly believe the at-grade crossing should remain.

Roberts Street Crossing

This at-grade railroad crossing is critical to district residents, connecting northern neighborhoods to the commercial core and the schools and parks south of the tracks. Retaining the crossing – while not necessarily the railroad’s preference – allows district residents to access local businesses and services without relying on North Montana Ave, an important element to reinforce the local lifestyle residents cherish and to alleviate traffic congestion on North Montana Ave.

Boulder Avenue Access

The left turning movement from southbound North Montana Ave to eastbound Boulder Ave is used by school buses and others wishing to access the district from the north. Because of this intersection’s proximity to North Montana Avenue’s intersection with Lyndale Ave, the dedicated left turn lane can accommodate only three vehicles.

This causes congestion on southbound North Montana Ave as the left turn queue fills up and waiting vehicles spill into the southbound travel lane.

Railroad Avenue Ownership

One of the district’s more defining elements is the brick paving on Railroad Ave. This street also provides access to several local businesses with storefronts and on-street parking on Railroad Ave. The street, however, is not a public right of way. The railroad owns Railroad Ave and has control over its maintenance and its continued use as a street.

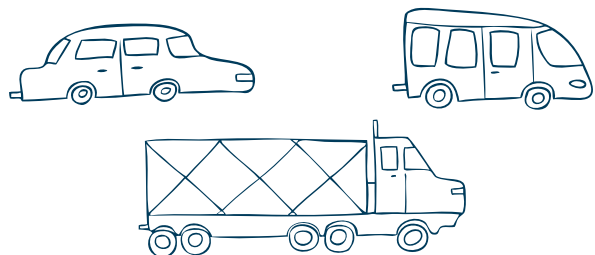




Photo #21: The Centennial Trail now terminates near Kendrick Field in the district's northwest. It begins again near I-15, running toward East Helena.



2.5.2 Rail

Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway has acquired Montana Rail Link Trainmaster and owns the railyard and operating rail line rights as a result. The rail now serves only freight traffic traveling through the region. Helena’s rail yard is considered a “helper” station, where longer freight trains are separated into smaller sections for easier movement over mountain passes both east and west of Helena. The yard – once a critical component of the local economy – now facilitates regional freight movement, and much of the space within it has fallen into disuse.

Passenger rail service to Montana ended in 1979, though there has been recent activity to consider reviving passenger service linking Billings, Bozeman, Helena, and Missoula.

2.5.3 Trails

The City of Helena’s Centennial Trail enters the Railroad District from the west and terminates before reaching North Montana Ave. It then reappears on the east end of the district along Boulder Ave to continue under the I-15 underpass and continue to East Helena. The Centennial Trail Master Plan calls for the trail to be continuous, but this will depend on reaching and then crossing North Montana Ave and then determining an alignment through the rest of the Railroad

District. The trail is limited to non-motorized use and follows a former rail right of way to the point where the right of way was deeded to adjoining property owners at National Ave.

2.6 Zoning Assessment

Helena’s zoning ordinance and zoning map apply land use and dimensional standards by zoning district throughout the city. The designations applied in the Railroad District are much like those found elsewhere in the city, with a variety of residential, commercial, and institutional district designations. This means land use development here is regulated much the same way as it is in other neighborhoods, even though the district’s history and existing development condition are different than what is found elsewhere in Helena.

This results in a sense of misalignment between what zoning permits, what now exists, and what subarea residents, institutions, and businesses appear to want. Each zoning district in the subarea now misses the mark to some degree when compared to the Growth Policy’s objectives (to both retain the district’s character and to facilitate new investment in a compact, neighborhood center type) or the Urban Renewal Plan’s objectives (to mix a wider variety of uses in the district’s commercial core).

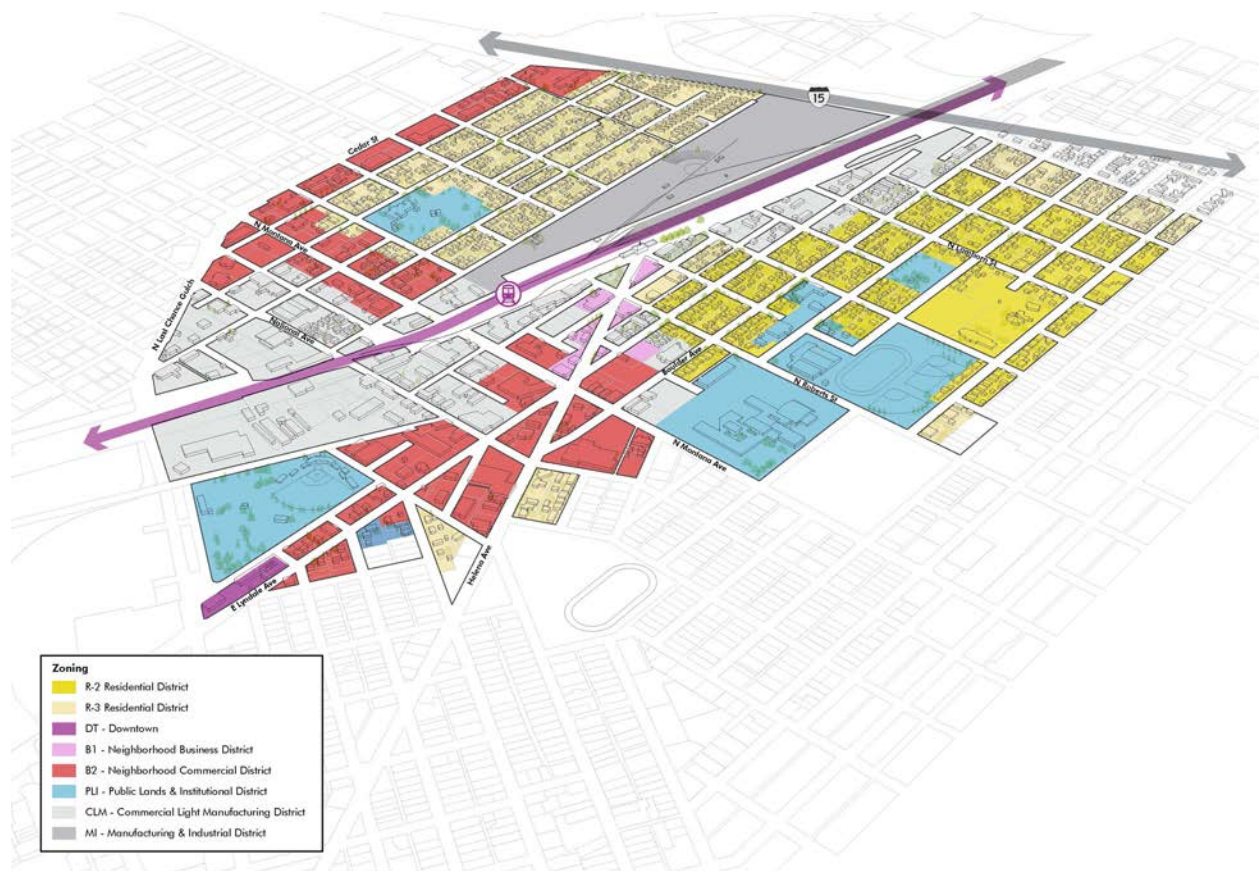


Existing zoning in the R-2 and R-3 districts require setbacks which are too large to permit construction on the area’s narrow lots. The CLM district fails to permit residential uses near the small commercial core where the opportunity to do so would help implement City policy. The code also mandates off-street parking where it may not be warranted, particularly where on-street parking in the retail core may be abundant. Zoning also applies an overlay district (R-3/T-25) with standards difficult to decipher. Nonconforming structures proliferate in all zoning districts, limiting ability to reconstruct or reinvest. And existing standards limit the ability of new development to target residential or business needs City policy

calls for. Seeking remedies through variances or conditional use permits is not an effective solution, discouraging development at any scale.

The individual zoning districts and their potential disconnect from 6th Ward application are described in the plan’s land use recommendations and in Appendix E as part of a more detailed zoning critique. Plan implementation focuses on the Depot District, the Trades District and the arterial corridors. It introduces new districts tailored to the Railroad District’s unique needs, encouraging the type of compact, diverse, and identity-rich development 6th Ward residents and business owners desire.

Figure 10: Existing Zoning



3. Public Engagement

Inclusive, responsive, transparent, and meaningful public engagement is fundamental to any planning process, and it is essential when developing a plan for as distinct an area as the Railroad District. The district's residents, businesspeople, and service providers are eager to see their neighborhoods succeed, and they have insight into this area which shapes the plan and expectations which will determine this plan's success.

The engagement program sought to involve the community in a variety of ways and to work with community members to identify issues the plan must address, consider alternative courses of action, and determine specific priorities for action to set the plan in motion. It began with a set of orientation interviews and concluded with a celebratory roll-out meeting, with touchpoints in between.

3.1 Introductory Meetings

Individuals representing a variety of perspectives participated in the orientation interviews conducted at Helena College from November 14 through 16, 2022. The interviewees were subarea residents, business owners, employees at various local institutions, and agency partners. They joined the consultant to offer an introduction to this part of Helena, speaking

to their own relationships to the space, their understanding of the area's history, the dynamics influencing the neighborhoods, the folks the process must involve, and what might make this project most successful. These meetings allowed individuals to speak freely, absent the pressure of a public meeting or disagreement to openly discuss their hopes, concerns, and aspirations.

3.1.1 Topics

The interviews over the three days generated comprehensive conversations about the 6th Ward and the topics this plan may need to address. Participants raised at least 65 topics in these early conversations associated with neighborhood character, the economy, transportation, housing, or local institutions. Expectedly, many topics relate to more than one of these five overarching considerations. Appendix D provides a detailed summary of the topics raised and how each one relates to the plan's subject areas.

3.2 Storefront Studio

Conducted March 20 – 27, 2023 in the NAMI conference room, the storefront studio invited community members to drop in, speak with the consultant team, and consider three alternative visions for the district's future.



3.2.1 Scenarios

The studio presented three alternative visions for the 6th Ward, offering three different sets of priorities to guide the plan's direction and implementation. They were intended to highlight community desires voiced in the orientation interviews and in preceding policy work, asking participants to wrestle with and reconcile the tradeoffs each scenario presented. Each of the three scenarios presented a vision for the district everyone could support, but the community's resources to achieve all of what the three scenarios promise are limited.

Conversations with community members helped to tease out how one scenario differed from the others, illustrating how the set of priorities embedded in one might make satisfying the priorities embedded in the others more difficult. For instance, investing in making regional mobility faster and more efficient might make it more difficult to satisfy desires for pedestrian crossing of Montana Ave or encouraging the uniqueness and access to the district's commercial core.

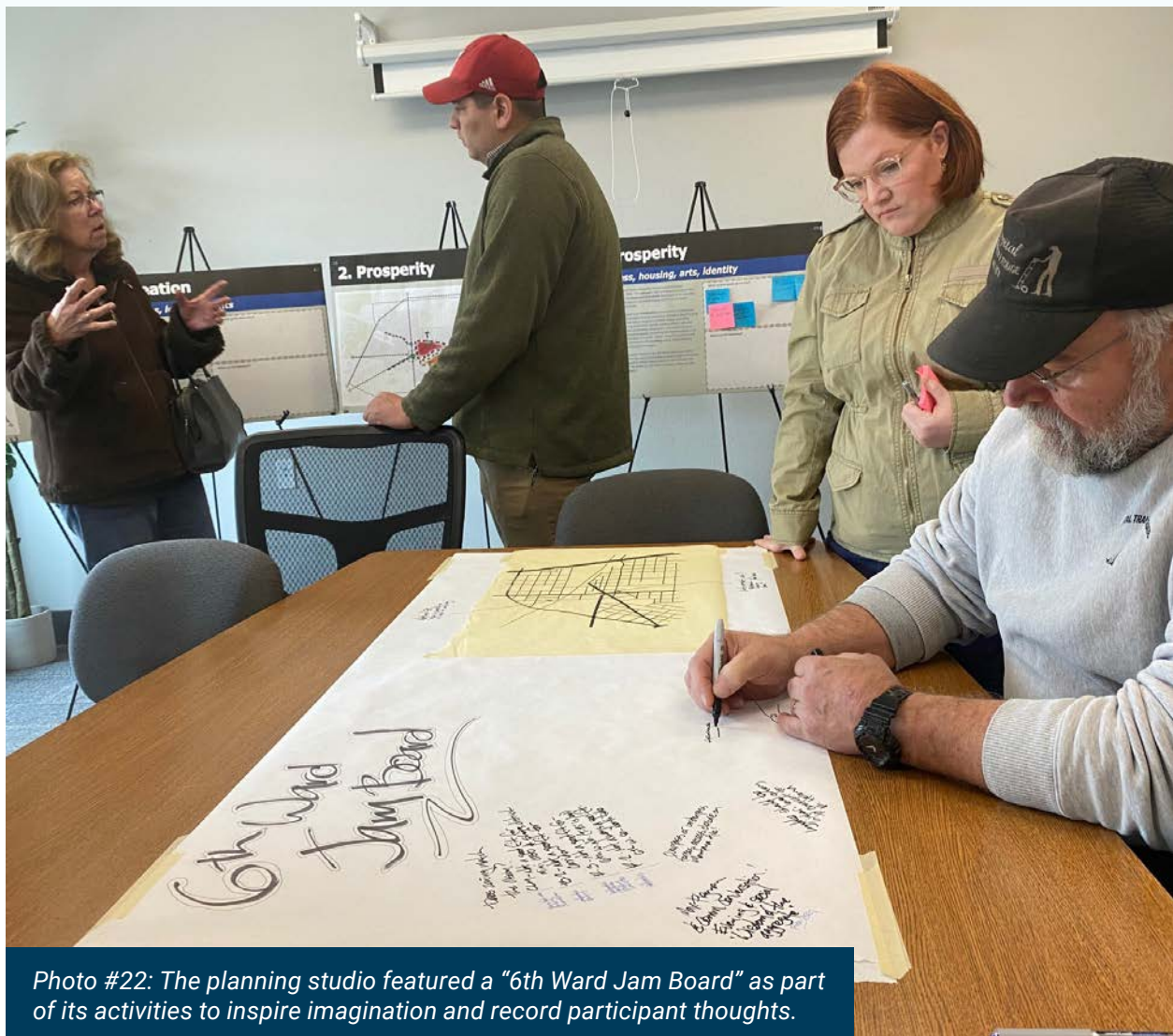


Photo #22: The planning studio featured a “6th Ward Jam Board” as part of its activities to inspire imagination and record participant thoughts.

Recreation Emphasis

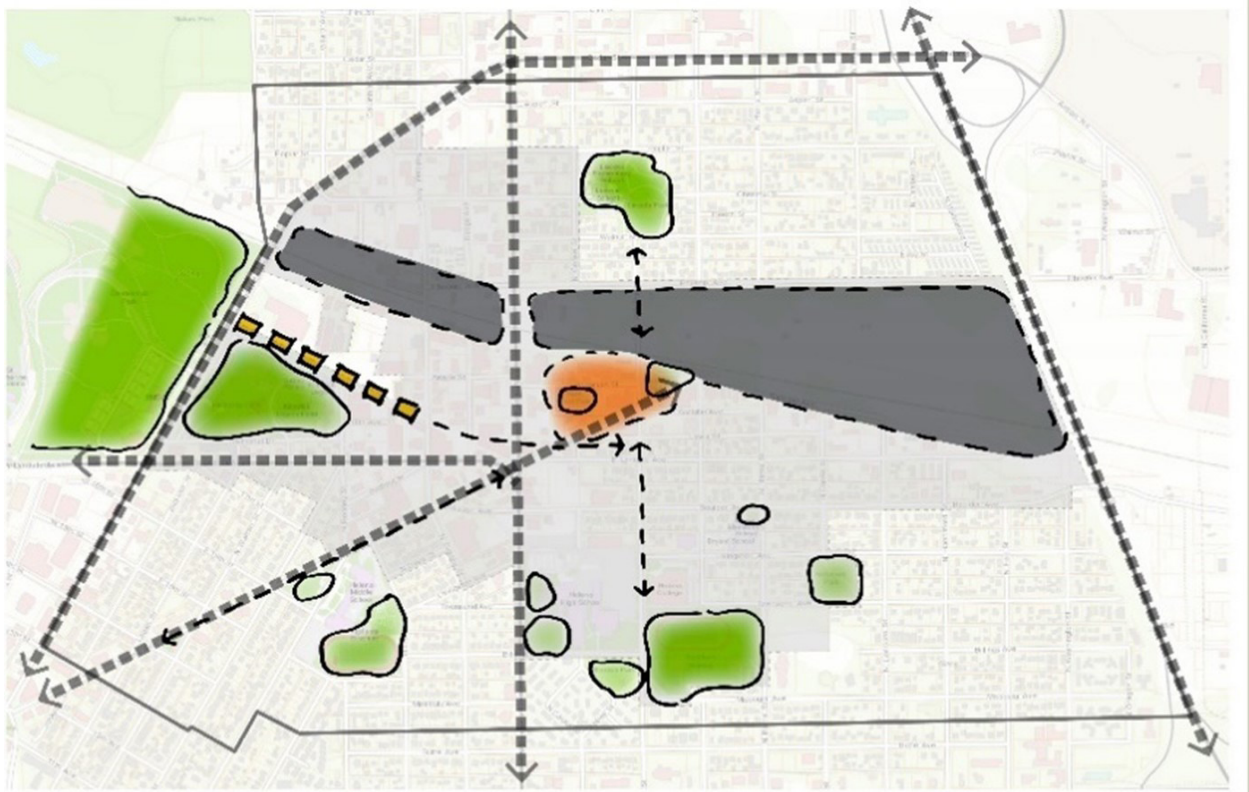
Helena's 6th Ward has 11 community parks, seven community churches, six recreational businesses, and four educational institutions. There are various local businesses located here, too.

This scenario emphasizes connections to parks and creates a family-friendly atmosphere with public events supporting local festivals, concerts, and other outdoor activities. Community-sponsored events encourage more connection to existing recreational activities. The

existing community institutions - such as churches, local businesses, and educational institutions - catalyze and sponsor neighborhood events, establishing and nurturing community pride.

Scenario 1 seeks collaborative neighborhood inclusion, possibly involving neighborhood art projects, public art, and increased community engagement in the district's schools. Community-sponsored events and entertainment may be key to bringing the community together, generating a shared sense of identity and commitment to all of the 6th Ward's neighborhoods.

Figure 11: Scenario #1 - Recreation Emphasis



Prosperity Emphasis

The railroad's 1880 arrival put Helena on the map, and the link between the depot and downtown developed as an essential corridor connecting the commercial and warehousing district to the town's commercial and institutional center.

This scenario supports the continued revitalization of the district's commercial core, emphasizing new housing adjacent to it and fueling interest in the emerging Trades District. 6th Ward businesses range from artisan shops, consulting services, food markets, financial institutions,

hotels, medical offices, personal services, restaurants, recreational activities, retail stores, and vehicle services. Strategies in this scenario will spur civic programming events, welcoming 6th Ward residents and outside visitors to support and grow economic vitality. Part of the commercial district's draw is its history, expressed in the buildings that remain and the railyard culture that defined the place's origins.

This scenario brings back economic vitality to the 6th Ward, but it is reshaped to reflect today's economy and to honor the scale, uniqueness, and flavor for which the 6th Ward is known.

Figure 12: Scenario #2 - Prosperity Emphasis

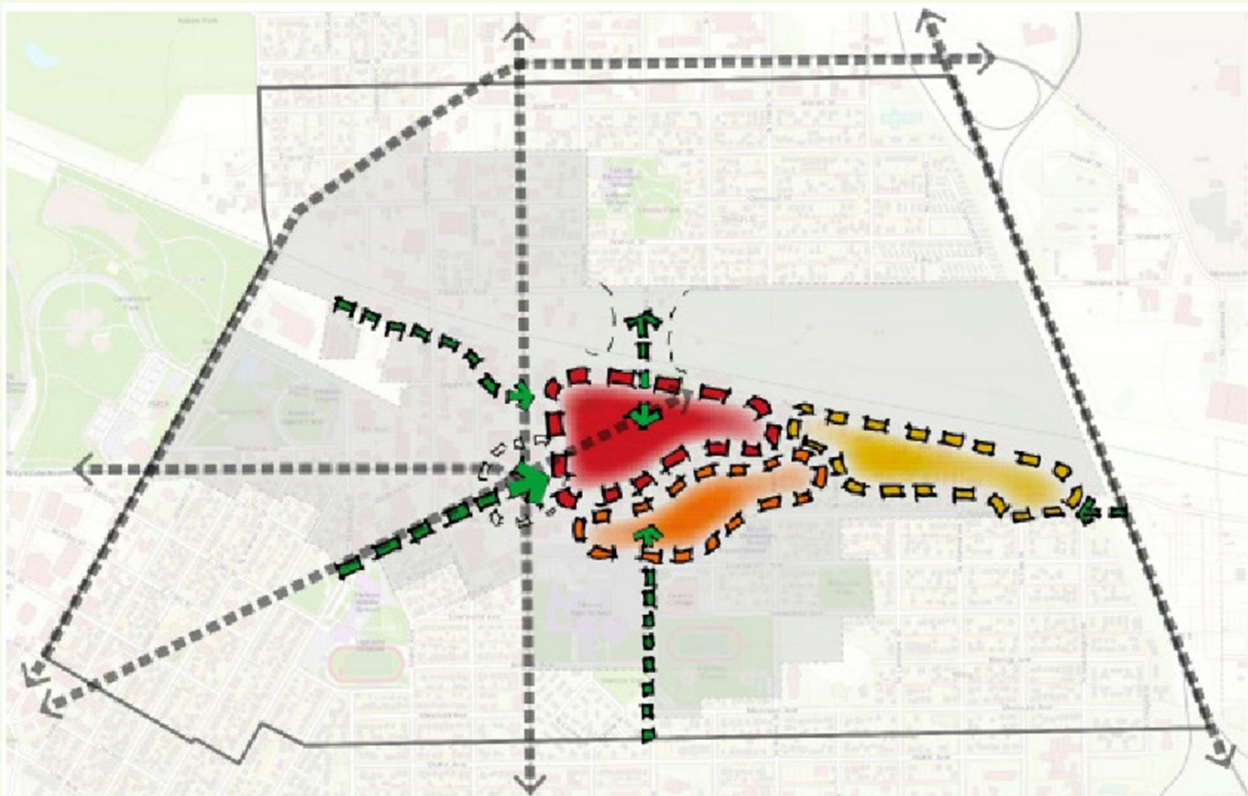
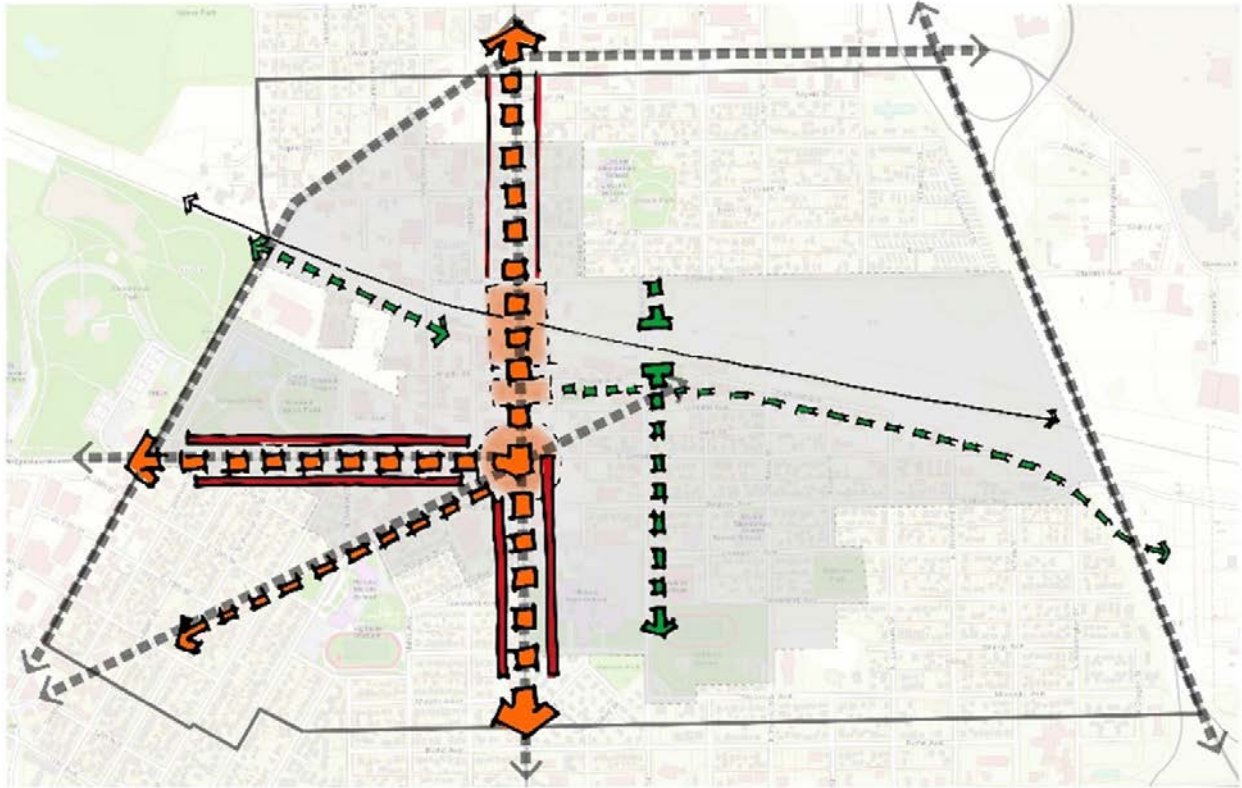


Figure 13: Scenario #3 - Mobility Emphasis



Mobility Emphasis

Navigating the 6th Ward on foot or by bike can be challenging. The transportation priority has been on moving freight and autos, with the railroad and US Highway 12 both transiting the district.

Helena commissioned a study on its five-point intersections a few years ago, with recommendations largely incorporated in this scenario. The big-ticket items of an underpass at the railroad and a roundabout at Malfunction Junction lead the list, with the emphasis continuing to be on efficiency, smoothness, and capacity for freight and autos. Some improvements address walking and biking, but they adapt to the roadway nature of the transportation network, with crossings at established intersections and non-motorized corridors generally following roads and tracks. The roadway underpass

would also require railroad participation, and that may cause the Roberts St. crossing to close.

An emphasis on mobility will also likely further limit access to properties adjoining US 12 and Montana Ave and may further reduce access to Boulder Ave. This will reshape the character of development along the roadways, pushing buildings further back and focusing access to a limited number of driveways or street intersections.

After reviewing the scenarios and discussing the premises and implications of each, participants noted what they liked and what might need to be improved upon for each one, resulting in a rich array of comments on the scenarios. Appendix D captures comments for each scenario and indicates where the comment may apply to more than just the scenario where it appeared.

Participants posted 72 comments across the three scenarios, emphasizing the importance of several broadly held priorities:

- ◆ **The trolley's history is important**, perhaps important enough for it to be reinstated in some way or honored in urban design treatments.
- ◆ There is a need for a **historic reference in the center of the district**, possibly a square or plaza, to celebrate the historic context.
- ◆ **Sidewalks** are a public good and should be installed in the district to facilitate safe pedestrian travel for all.
- ◆ The **brick surface of Railroad Avenue should be retained**, even if it means coordinating with the railroad to keep it that way.
- ◆ Increasing the number of available, **affordable housing units near the commercial center** is essential.
- ◆ **Malfunction Junction needs to be fixed**, either through a roundabout or other treatment to improve access to the district.
- ◆ Increasing the amount of **available parking on street** will help retail tenants

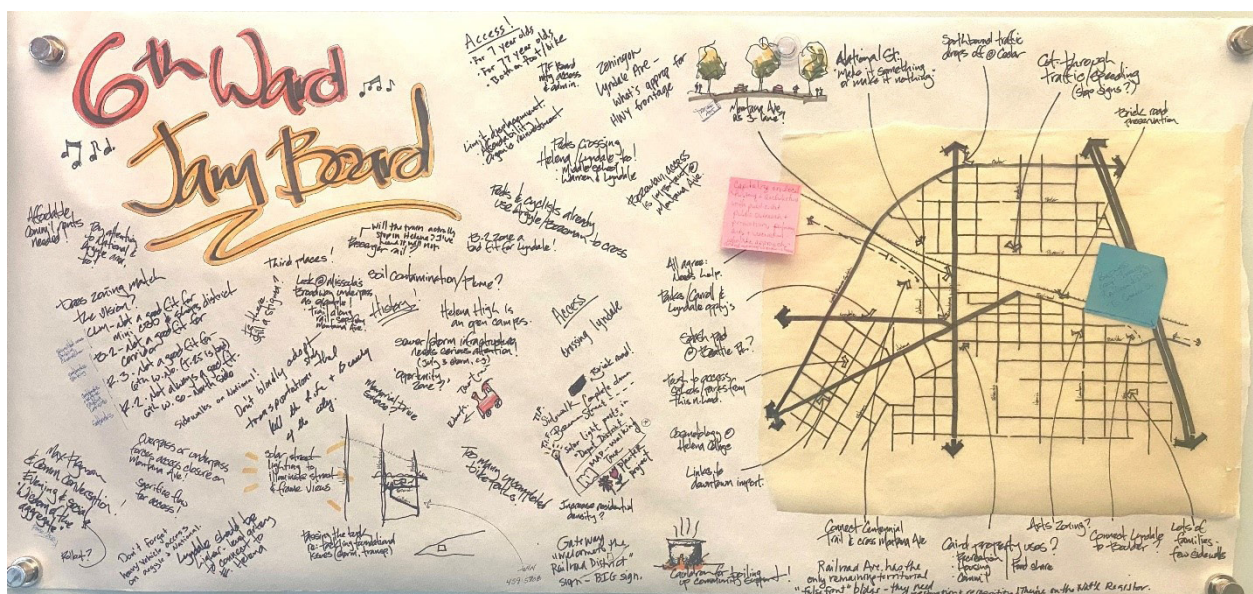
prosper – as will having storefront employees parking elsewhere.

- ◆ The **Roberts St rail crossing must remain open**, providing a convenient link for area residents and a necessary one for district school kids who live in the northern area of the district.
- ◆ It is essential to **connect the Centennial Trail through the district**.
- ◆ **Facilities for bikes and pedestrians need improvement**, particularly to cross North Montana Ave and to access the district's schools and parks.

3.2.2 Ward Jam Board

Studio visitors could also raise issues they believe important to the district, defining its identity, addressing persistent challenges, or taking advantage of opportunities just now beginning to materialize. The “Jam Board” tabletop worksheet invited a range of comments and suggestions, evolving during the studio’s course to reflect participant conversations and ideas. A detailed listing and analysis of public comments is provided in Appendix D.

Figure 14: 6th Ward Jam Board



The preferred scenario references these conversations and comments, resulting in a “mash-up” of the three scenarios and presenting a unified direction. The district’s spatial vision reflects this unified direction, as do the policy recommendations incorporated in the plan. The hybrid of the three scenarios also reconciles what might be conflicting priorities, reflecting on the studio’s discussions, existing City policy, and the urban renewal plan to produce clarity in the implementation strategy.

The plan’s direction emerges from responses to several key topics and issues. Several themes recurred in conversation, the Jam Board, and responses to the three scenarios, listed in Appendix D, and summarized here.

- ◆ **Safe pedestrian crossing Montana Ave and Lyndale Ave.**
- ◆ **Maintaining the Roberts St rail crossing**
- ◆ **Historic importance** of district
- ◆ **Rebuilding trust and connection with City**
- ◆ **Infrastructure investment** to stimulate development
- ◆ **Potential for passenger rail**
- ◆ **Need for additional public amenities** in the district

3.3 Rollout

To be completed after the community rollout meeting.

3.4 Ongoing Conversation - Commitment to Keep Listening

Helena intends to treat this plan as a living document, maintaining conversation with Railroad District residents, businesses, and institutions to ensure the plan’s objectives and initiatives are being implemented. While the plan-creation process ended at adoption, the plan implementation has just begun.



4. Vision

Existing Growth Policy objectives, policy direction incorporated in the Urban Renewal Plan, community engagement in this process, and analysis of the subarea's conditions revealed a general agreement for what the Railroad District's vision should be. The vision should:

- ◆ **Promote and honor the district's past**, using its history as a keystone in the district's identity and a unique advantage to help its businesses prosper.
- ◆ **Spur investment in the district's transportation network**, with strategic investments to smooth traffic flow where smoothness is sought, to enhance district access, and to increase safety and comfort for those walking or rolling.
- ◆ **Forecast new housing construction**, welcoming new residents of all income levels into the district, particularly near the commercial core.
- ◆ **Support local business efforts** to succeed, expand, hire, and thrive.
- ◆ **Recognize the critical role the district's schools, parks, and other public or institutional uses** play in sustaining the community's quality of life.
- ◆ **Promote public safety** throughout the district.
- ◆ **Honor the role each neighborhood** has in defining the district's character and contributing to its social and economic activity.

The vision forecasts a snapshot of the subarea in the year 2045, describing what the 6th Ward will look like, how it will function, who will live and operate businesses here, and what they will value. It is the future the community wishes to attain, and it is the basis for every goal, policy, and implementation recommendation this plan includes. It builds on the Growth Policy and Urban Renewal Plan. It also reflects on the community's suggestions, focusing on what makes the district livable and what attributes may change to suit those who live here, run a business, or manage a school.

Known affectionately as the 6th Ward "Rats," residents embrace this identity, seeing the district's rough edges as an honest expression of this part of Helena's roots. While there's a general call for new investment, there is also some hesitancy about going too far in transforming the 6th Ward and erasing what makes it a special, unique place.

This vision attempts to reconcile this tension, targeting improvement where necessary to support the district's business core and tempering recommendations elsewhere to retain the feel, function, and community connectedness the neighborhood's business owners and residents cherish. Its overall statement addresses persistent blight while still sensitive to the quirkiness making this neighborhood different from others in town. Set for the year 2045, This plan's vision also makes special note of the planning area's "sub-districts" or neighborhoods, places which have unique circumstances and specific functional expectations setting them up for different futures.



Figure 15 envisions what the build-out future may look like in the 6th Ward if the vision becomes reality, with reinvestment along the US 12 corridor and, importantly, in the Depot District and Trades District, providing additional housing opportunities and stimulating increased business activity.

Figure 15: Railroad District 2045

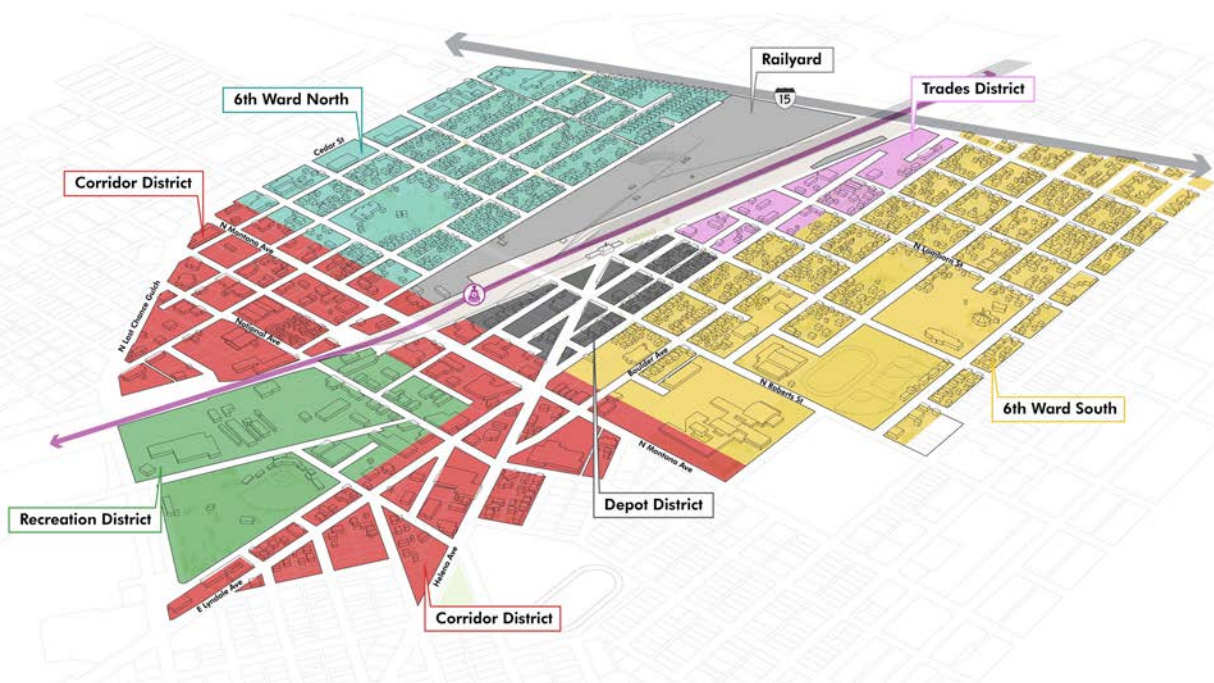


4.1 Vision for the Railroad District: The Year 2045

The Railroad District will grow as a neighborhood center, becoming a destination in the City of Helena, with a strong neighborhood identity based on the district’s historic core and unique mix of uses. It includes workforce housing, manufacturing, and the railroad after which the district is named. The Railroad District will be a vibrant place to work, live, and visit, with shops, restaurants, and diverse commercial businesses. It will be uniquely different from the city’s other main nearby destinations – downtown, Great Northern Town Center, and the Capitol area, mostly because of the contributions each neighborhood within the district make. People will easily access the Railroad District by vehicle, on foot and by bike, with safe, convenient, and effective access. Several unique neighborhoods contribute to the Railroad District’s Vision:



Figure 16: Railroad District Neighborhoods



4.1.1 Depot District

The commercial district remains anchored by the historic train depot, with restaurants, bars, hotels, merchants, and warehouses radiating east, south, and west. More contemporary retail, dining, entertainment, and professional office uses fill in the historic storefronts, and new apartments occupy the upper floors. The district becomes vibrant with new morning, day, and evening activity, retaining its quirkiness and character. It remembers its railroad roots, while offering a mix of social, cultural, commercial, and artistic activities unique to this part of town. Improvement of the roundabout at Montana and Lyndale enhances visibility and access into the core, and the Centennial Trail connection welcomes visitors on foot and by bike. Higher-intensity residential areas along the district's south edge bring customers close, within an easy walk of the core's retail and civic spaces.



4.1.2 Trades District

South of the railyard and east of the Depot District lies the Trades District. This area mixes small-scale warehousing, trades workshops, artists' studios, and bungalows, with space available for live-work structures, small apartments, and cottages. This is a creative space, with a wide and surprising mix of activities, enjoying its proximity to all of what the Railroad District has to offer. It becomes a vibrant space for artists who wish to live and work where they exhibit, where the retail galleries smell of the furnaces, kilns, and paints used in the creative processes. While the Depot District emerges as the retail center, the Trades District is a working district, where trucks unload, things get made, and visitors to the place expect a degree of roughness and hardscrabble authenticity. The streets are improved to emphasize this industrial character, while still accommodating visitors with on-street parking. The Centennial Trail continues through this district, too, connecting it through Helena to Carroll College, the West End, and, ultimately, to the Archie Bray Institute – a companion artists community.

4.1.3 6th Ward North

The northern neighborhood retains its rail worker housing scale and character, with small bungalows and “shotgun” houses serving households of all sizes and economic conditions. Folks who live here appreciate the neighborhood’s edgy vibe, compact form, walkable streets, and easy access to Cedar Street’s commercial corridor to the north and the Depot District to the south. Not much changes here during the planning period, except new houses and apartments get built in forms, scales, and styles similar to those which exist today.

4.1.4 6th Ward South

The southern portion of the planning area is emerging as a center for education and recreation. There are houses here, too, enjoying proximity to the schools, parks, and college and to the commercial districts and Capitol complex further south. There is little to change here during the planning period. But enhancements to Lyndale Ave and Roberts St facilitate non-motorized access to the local schools and the bustling Depot District. The upgrading of Lyndale Ave east of the new roundabout relaxes traffic pressure on Boulder Ave, enhancing the pedestrian experience along this important east-west corridor and accommodating the Centennial Trail east of the Trades District.

4.1.5 Corridor District

Montana Avenue and Lyndale Street west of the new roundabout are the axes for the corridor district. Much of it also serves as US Highway 12, linking the Railroad District to the east-west highway route. This corridor's new roundabout and "gateway" character set the stage for new types of mixed office, retail, and residential development. The corridor is still predominantly auto and freight oriented, but it is becoming more welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists as improvements are made, new buildings are constructed closer to the sidewalk, and parking is located to the rear, away from the street edge.

4.1.6 Recreation District

Helena's Centennial Trail runs east-west, connecting Helena's western neighborhoods to East Helena. A key portion of the trail runs through the Railroad District, linking Memorial Park and Carroll College to Kindrick Field, the Depot District and Trades District. The Trail connects the Railroad District's business and civic heart to the rest of Helena. Still a warehousing district at its core, the Recreation District also includes evening-oriented activities which are compatible with the warehousing character and scale.

The new vision underpins the plan's goals and objectives, which, in turn, add detail to those which already exist in Helena's adopted Growth Policy.



5.Goals & Objectives

Helena’s Growth Policy establishes goals and objectives for the city, setting priorities and guiding local decision making of citywide consequence. The Growth Policy acknowledges the importance of the community’s smaller commercial districts and sees the potential for the evolution of “neighborhood centers” to enhance the identity of these places and build them up to support local businesses, create community cohesiveness, reduce reliance on the car, and enhance Helena’s local quality of life. One of these “neighborhood centers” is the 6th Ward.

The City also prepared an urban renewal plan for this area, establishing the tax increment

district and setting out goals and policies which apply to this area. Their focus is on the ways in which investment of tax increment funds can generate additional economic activity in the district and improve living conditions.

Appendix B summarizes the Growth Policy and urban renewal plan policy direction, comparing it to the subarea plan’s priorities and identifying how the subarea plan goals and policies relate to what Helena has already adopted. This plan essentially augments the Growth Policy, adding detail specific to this subarea and consistent with the citywide perspective the Growth Policy offers.

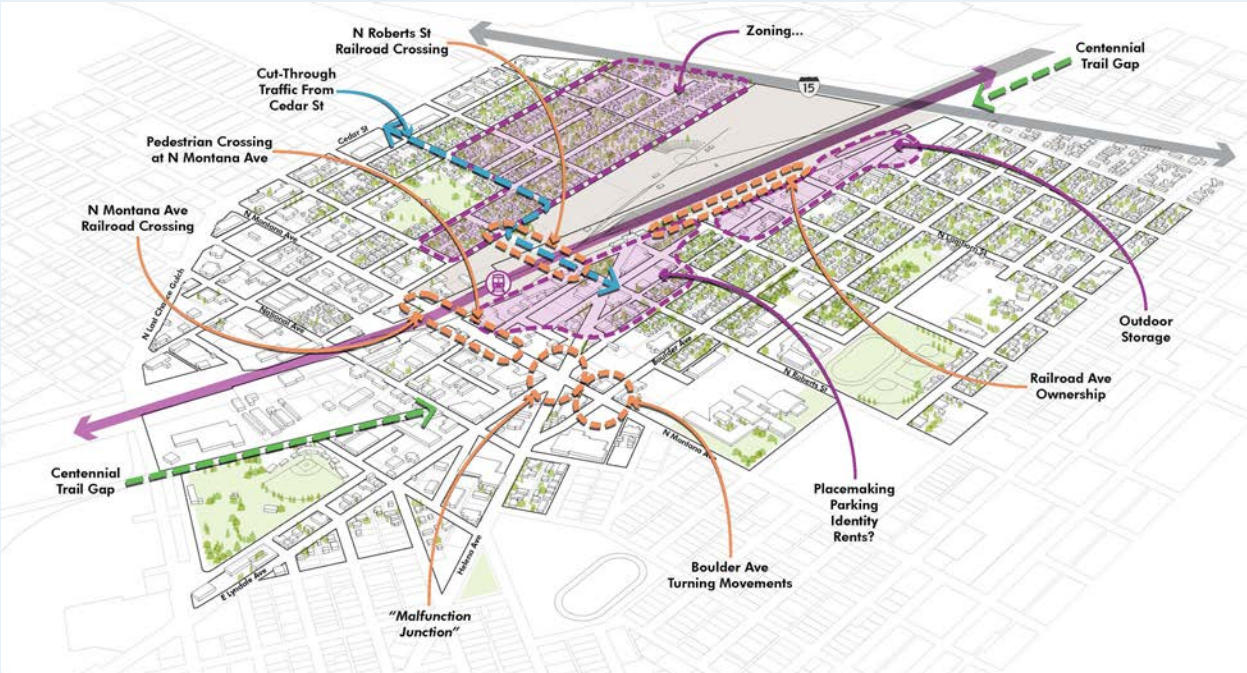


5.1 Issues

The following issues – as derived from the orientation interview conversations, review of previous studies and plans, and the studio workshops – give this planning effort a sense of direction, provide urgency for the community’s priorities, and serve as a touchstone for the rest of the process, ensuring it stays focused on what is most important. As with the topics, additional issues may surface as the conversations continue, and additional information will help refine these to facilitate resolution.

The implementation action items presented in Chapter 8 reference these issues, too, to ensure they are fully addressed in the plan’s priority recommendations.

Figure 17: Spatial Summary of Planning Issues



Issue #1: Montana/Helena/Lyndale Intersection

The issues at this intersection stem from the irregular roadway alignments, the state highway designation, and the relatively high traffic volumes on the regional arterials coming together here. According to the interviews:

- ◆ It is difficult to access areas east of Montana Ave when approaching the intersection from Lyndale Ave.
- ◆ It is difficult to cross Montana Ave on foot or by bike at this intersection, with irregularly configured crosswalks, confusion, long crossing distances, and no mid-crossing pedestrian refuge.
- ◆ The US Highway 12 designation limits local discretion in how to manage the intersection.
- ◆ Limited rights of way narrow design options for potential solutions.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
2	Improving Safety
3	Improving Access and Connections
5	Supporting the Business Community

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
3	Implement complete streets policy for Montana Ave between Lyndale and Cedar, design and construct the roundabout at Malfunction Junction, and verify alignment of and construct the Centennial Trail crossing of North Montana Ave.



Photo #23: The intersection of Montana/Lyndale/Helena avenues can be difficult to navigate, and it impedes access into the Railroad District from the west.

Issue #2: Boulder Access

Boulder Ave is an important access corridor for the southern 6th Ward but getting to it from the north and west is difficult.

- ◆ The proximity of Boulder Ave to Lyndale Avenue limits the length of its protected left-turn lane, making it difficult for school buses, freight, and vehicular traffic to access the southern 6th, Ward.
- ◆ Traffic flows and the priority to maintain mobility on US Highway 12 restrict full access at Boulder Ave.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
2	Improving Safety
3	Improving Access and Connections

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
3	Implement complete streets policy for Montana Ave between Lyndale and Cedar, design and construct the roundabout at Malfunction Junction, and verify alignment of and construct the Centennial Trail crossing of North Montana Ave.

Issue #3: Commerical District Identity/ Vitality

The historic commercial center is more than a century old, and it appears to be enjoying new energy. The district's enthusiasm seems to be generated by folks who've newly discovered the place, investing in buildings, properties, and businesses in pursuit of opportunity in a place where the history, character, and economics support their actions.

- ◆ The revitalization depends on a relatively small pool of local businesses, driven by the passion of local entrepreneurs but reliant in the longer term on early success and effective succession planning.
- ◆ New investment may influence the character and feel of the 6th Ward and threaten change that some may not accept.
- ◆ Incoming businesses and increased popularity may result in rising rents, potentially displacing businesses that have been in the district for generations.



Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
1	Keeping the Identity of the Neighborhood in Focus
4	Making Housing Attainable
5	Supporting the Business Community

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
2	Create streetscape plan and design consistent with complete streets policy to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor.
5	Update zoning throughout the subarea, particularly in the Depot District, Trades District, and Corridor District.



Issue #4: TIF Board Investment Strategy

The TIF has been in place since 2016 and has begun making investments to elevate business activity in the district. The TIF district’s young age, however, means available revenues are still slim. Investments to date have been small and targeted to easy wins.

- ◆ The TIF Board’s investment has taken advantage of opportunities and now may be the time to coalesce TIF strategy around longer-term objectives and draw from broad community consensus on priorities, criteria, and tradeoffs.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
5	Supporting the Business Community

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
1	Adopt specific strategies to address community decay and vacant properties, guide TIF investment, and form a business improvement district (BID).
2	Create streetscape plan and design consistent with complete streets policy to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor

Issue #5: Vehicle Storage

The neighborhood has practiced a “live and let live” lifestyle, allowing households and businesses to operate as they please, as long as they don’t create a nuisance or safety hazard. With increasing attention – and increasing desires to promote an active and exciting commercial district – long-standing habits of storing commercial or abandoned vehicles on neighborhood streets or vacant lots are coming under increased scrutiny.

- ◆ Vehicle storage impacts the visual attractiveness of the 6th Ward, inconsistent with many residents and business owners’ hopes for an emerging neighborhood identity – at least in the core commercial area.



Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
1	Keeping the Identity of the Neighborhood in Focus
4	Making Housing Attainable
5	Supporting the Business Community

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
1	Adopt specific strategies to address community decay and vacant properties, guide TIF investment, and form a business improvement district (BID).



Issue #6: Housing Attainability

This has been one of Helena’s more affordable close-in neighborhoods. But property values are rising. With Helena College expanding to attract students from outside the region, demand for student housing nearby will increase.

- ◆ As local housing demand and property values continue to rise, households who may have been able to afford to purchase or rent in the neighborhood may need to find housing elsewhere.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
4	Making Housing Attainable

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
5	Update zoning throughout the subarea, particularly in the Depot District, Trades District, and Corridor District.





Issue #7: Neighborhood Character Preservation

New investment in housing or the construction or remodeling of existing structures may influence the feel, scale, and experience of the 6th Ward. Existing zoning and design controls may not generate the types of results neighborhood residents or business owners want.

- ◆ The City’s development regulations are not consistent with neighborhood hopes or needs.
- ◆ The historic district is not effectively utilized or presented, receding in its prominence.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
1	Keeping the Identity of the Neighborhood in Focus
5	Supporting the Business Community

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
2	Create streetscape plan and design consistent with complete streets policy to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor
5	Update zoning throughout the subarea, particularly in the Depot District, Trades District, and Corridor District.



Issue #8: At-Grade Rail Crossings

The two crossings at Montana Ave and Roberts Ave are important to the 6th Ward. Both are also important in the regional context, with Montana Ave providing access to Helena’s regional commercial districts and the valley and Roberts providing an alternate, parallel route for those who choose not to use Montana Ave. Train traffic blocks one or both crossings up to 20 times per day, sometimes for as long as 25 minutes. The city has grade-separated rail crossings at Last Chance Gulch and Interstate 15, both of which can provide alternative crossing opportunities within minutes of the crossings at Montana and Roberts. Still, traffic backs up at the at-grade crossings, complicating flows at nearby intersections.

- ◆ Creating a grade-separated crossing at Montana Ave is expensive, will impact multiple commercial properties, and is unfunded. The City has begun a feasibility study to investigate design options.
- ◆ The local and regional community relies on both crossings, even with their occasional interruptions, and will have difficulty adapting if either one is closed.
- ◆ There is now no definitive commitment to the future of the two crossings, leaving the neighborhood, the railroad, the larger community, and the state Department of Transportation without a resolution on what to do or how to adapt. The current feasibility study may provide some answers.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
2	Improving Safety
3	Improving Access and Connections
4	Making Housing Attainable
5	Supporting the Business Community

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
2	Create streetscape plan and design consistent with complete streets policy to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor
3	Implement complete streets policy for Montana Ave between Lyndale and Cedar, design and construct the roundabout at Malfunction Junction, and verify alignment of and construct the Centennial Trail crossing of North Montana Ave.



Issue #9: Stormwater Management

There was a small stream that used to flow through this area, generally to the northeast through the core of the commercial center. A stormwater system now manages the flow, but it can be vulnerable to winter rain-on-snow events when the storm inlets are covered by ice and snow. Recent flooding has damaged ground floor spaces in businesses along Helena Ave and Gallatin Ave.

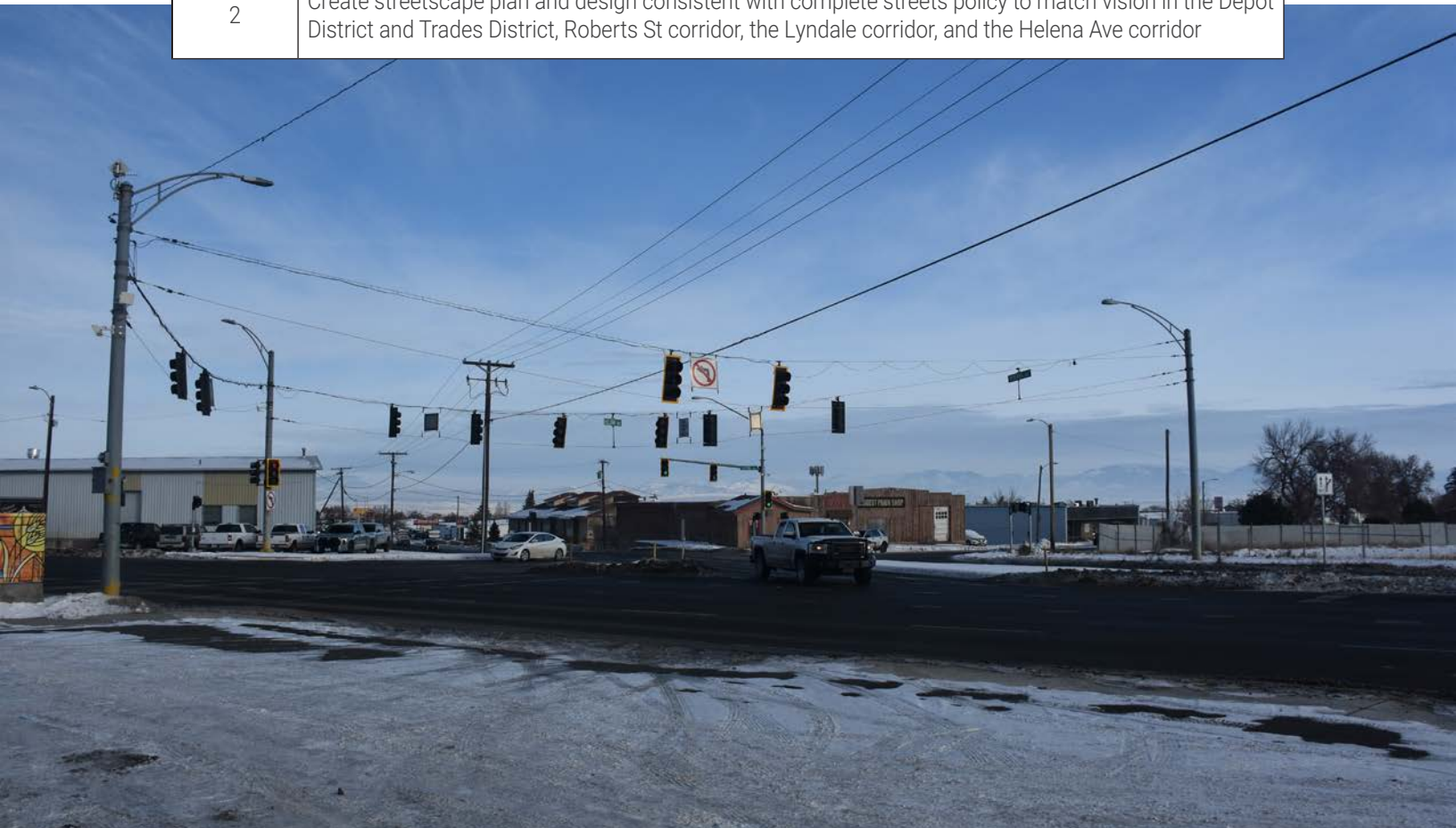
- ♦ The stormwater system periodically fails to convey surface water, resulting in flooding and damage in the commercial district.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
2	Improving Safety

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
2	Create streetscape plan and design consistent with complete streets policy to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor



Issue #10: Zoning and Intensity

The area’s zoning may not reflect long-term objectives for land use and economic development in this part of town, making it difficult to permit the type of development the neighborhood hopes for and allowing what the neighborhood might not appreciate. Zoning may not contribute to housing attainability, business diversity, or employment objectives.

- ◆ Some of the current zoning is not consistent with neighborhood objectives, rendering much of what exists today as non-conforming because of land use, setback, or lot coverage requirements, particularly north of the railroad, and because of land use and off-street parking requirements in the proposed Depot District and Trades District neighborhoods.
- ◆ Development conforming to current standards in the R-2 and R-3 residential districts (like setbacks and coverage requirements) is different in character from historic structures surrounding it.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
1	Keeping the Identity of the Neighborhood in Focus
4	Making Housing Attainable
5	Supporting the Business Community

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
2	Create streetscape plan and design consistent with complete streets policy to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor
3	Implement complete streets policy for Montana Ave between Lyndale and Cedar, design and construct the roundabout at Malfunction Junction, and verify alignment of and construct the Centennial Trail crossing of North Montana Ave.



Issue #11: Zoning and Built Character Compatibility

Even though residents and business owners in the 6th Ward believe their neighborhood is unique, the zoning standards that apply here are the same as those applicable in other parts of town. The residential, commercial, and industrial zoning districts move toward a more homogenous Helena, something this neighborhood may not appreciate.

- ◆ Today’s zoning applies the same development and design standards to this neighborhood as to others in Helena under the same designations, ignoring in some cases those characteristics which make the 6th Ward unique.

Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
1	Keeping the Identity of the Neighborhood in Focus
4	Making Housing Attainable

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
5	Update zoning throughout the subarea, particularly in the Depot District, Trades District, Corridor District, and R-2 District.

Issue #12: Placemaking

Newer business and property owners in the district’s commercial core hope for street trees, lighting, wayfinding, and parking improvements, creating a “place” that attracts attention, facilitates pedestrian activity, and draws people from other parts of town for shopping, dining, recreation, and employment. The effort to make the commercial core a place argues for change, improving its looks, emphasizing its connection to the rest of Helena, and altering its functions to serve a larger audience.

- ◆ There is no guidance on what type of place the central commercial area should be, leading to individual initiatives that may act at cross-purposes.
- ◆ The transformation of the commercial district to become something different than what it has been is not accepted by all.



Related Goal(s):

Number	Goal
1	Keeping the Identity of the Neighborhood in Focus
3	Improving Access and Connections
4	Making Housing Attainable
5	Supporting the Business Community

Related Implementation Action(s):

Number	Action
1	Adopt specific strategies to address community decay and vacant properties, guide TIF investment, and form a business improvement district (BID).
2	Create streetscape plan and design consistent with complete streets policy to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor.
3	Implement complete streets policy for Montana Ave between Lyndale and Cedar, design and construct the roundabout at Malfunction Junction, and verify alignment of and construct the Centennial Trail crossing of North Montana Ave.
4	Confirm Centennial Trail alignment through the district, design it, and improve it.
5	Update zoning throughout the subarea, particularly in the Depot District, Trades District, Corridor District, and R-2 District.





5.2 Goals

This subarea plan proposes five goals, each with a series of objectives intended to complement those already found in the Growth Policy or Urban Renewal Plan. They consolidate a community response to the issues identified above and establish the foundation for the implementation priorities presented in Chapter 8.

Goal #1: The Railroad District optimizes its historic and contemporary ties to the rest of Helena.

Keeping the identity of the neighborhood in focus.

The historic train depot, the old retail storefronts, original warehouses, and Railroad Ave's brick surface remain a physical reminder of this district's past importance to Helena. They are assets in the district's reinvestment, contributing to the district's identity. They are also adaptable to the district's new role, offering opportunities for a renewed place in Helena's economy.

Objectives:

- ♦ **Objective 1:** Preserve and promote the Depot District's and Trades District's history and historic features through design guidelines, public art, and preservation-oriented programs.
- ♦ **Objective 2:** Enhance and promote existing historical artifacts and features – like the brick paving on Railroad Ave, the historic train depot, and the district's older buildings – through signs, partnership with property owners, and publicity.
- ♦ **Objective 3:** Collaborate with community representatives to establish the 6th Ward's brand identity consistent with the contemporary and historic character of the area (i.e. Flag, colors, logo).
- ♦ **Objective 4:** Support the creation of historic landmarks and online mapping.
- ♦ **Objective 5:** Promote publicly funded art pieces in the 6th Ward reflecting the present and historic neighborhood character.
- ♦ **Objective 6:** Facilitate to the extent within the City's control community events highlighting and incorporating past historical events, themes, and pastimes shaping Helena's character (idea: neighborhood block party in railroad district on June 13th, important anniversary remembrance of when passenger train service came into town).



Goal #2: The district is a safe place for all, whether they're running a business, living here, or visiting.

Improving safety.

Safety is a priority, ensuring the streets encourage safe movement and access for all modes, public spaces are designed, built, and maintained to be inviting and comfortable, and development applies best possible practices to ensure public safety for the long term.

Objectives:

- ♦ **Objective 1:** Connect the Centennial Trail through the district, incorporating a safe pedestrian crossing at North Montana Ave as determined by the Centennial Trail Master Plan and the feasibility and design process for the North Montana Ave/railroad crossing.
- ♦ **Objective 2:** Consider new approaches to Roberts Street as a multi-modal corridor connecting the district's neighborhoods to its schools and public spaces.
- ♦ **Objective 3:** Locate and design public spaces to ensure safety of their users, inviting frequent and popular activities.
- ♦ **Objective 4:** Pursue code enforcement and building rehabilitation programs, identifying and remediating structures posing hazardous conditions.
- ♦ **Objective 5:** Support neighborhood watch programs to build community and augment local policing.

Goal #3: The district's transportation system reconciles regional mobility with local access needs.

Improving access and connections

US Highway 12 runs through the district, and Montana Ave extends northward to serve some of Helena's high growth areas. These corridors are busy, accentuating the conflicts between regional mobility and access to local businesses and property. This goal calls for reconciliation, accommodating regional flows but in a manner compatible with the district's prosperity and livability.

Objectives:

- ♦ **Objective 1:** Support transportation programs oriented for vulnerable populations, coordinating with MDT and the MPO as appropriate.
- ♦ **Objective 2:** Establish multi-modal transportation network routes connecting 6th Ward neighborhoods to each other and greater Helena, coordinating with City accessibility and sidewalk improvement programs.
- ♦ **Objective 3:** Coordinate with local and regional partners in creating and implementing a region-wide transportation plan.
- ♦ **Objective 4:** Improve pedestrian and cyclist safety by adding bike-oriented navigation signs and improving bike lanes along popular corridors.
- ♦ **Objective 5:** Install missing sidewalk infrastructure in established multi-modal network routes.



Goal #4: The district's neighborhoods are liveable and affordable.

Making housing attainable.

These neighborhoods are some of the oldest in Helena, with a variety of housing types, sizes and conditions making it rich in character and diverse in population. It's an attribute the community cherishes, and this goal advances policy to keep it that way while enhancing its overall livability. Infrastructure investment, pedestrian and cyclist safety, and access to parks and schools are priorities.

Objectives:

- ◆ **Objective 1:** Promote higher density and variety of housing units in the Depot and Trades districts.
- ◆ **Objective 2:** Enhance walkable design infrastructure between centers of residential, commercial, and recreational activity.
- ◆ **Objective 3:** Mix residential uses with retail, office, and light industrial uses in the Depot District and Trades District.
- ◆ **Objective 4:** Promote infill development with new zoning districts allowing for additional housing types, higher density units, reduced setbacks, or reduced parking requirements.
- ◆ **Objective 5:** Promote neighborhood health and livability by investing in park amenities and park improvements.
- ◆ **Objective 6:** Collaborate with contractors and local developers to identify and reduce unnecessary regulatory roadblocks.
- ◆ **Objective 7:** Collaborate with Helena's Citizen Council (HCC) on community initiatives and neighborhood projects.
- ◆ **Objective 8:** Promote the connectivity between the residential neighborhoods, unique attractions, and historic assets.



Goal #5: The Railroad District has a prosperous, unique, and identity-rich core.

Supporting the business community.

This goal speaks to the ascending prominence and activity in the Railroad District's core, nurturing a stock of home-grown businesses and institutions with close ties to Helena and the district. The business district's prosperity also relies on increasing residential intensity within a five-minute walk of the core, a close relationship to the new Trades District to the east, and ease of access between this core commercial district and Helena's other neighborhoods.

Objectives:

- ◆ **Objective 1:** Encourage a mix of retail, professional office, maker spaces, small-scale shops, light industrial, and residential uses in the Depot District and Trades District through the creation of new zoning districts.
- ◆ **Objective 2:** Encourage live-work development in the Trades District by amending zoning and other

development regulations to permit it (as in Appendix F)

- ◆ **Objective 3:** Encourage higher development intensities within a quarter mile of the Depot District and Trades District by amending relevant zoning text and district boundaries to permit it (as in Appendix F and shown in the proposed zoning map)
- ◆ **Objective 4:** Coordinate closely with the TIF Board to develop and implement an investment strategy to leverage private development.
- ◆ **Objective 5:** Encourage formation of a business improvement district in the Depot District and Trades District to facilitate business coordination and target investment to enhance the district's identity.
- ◆ **Objective 6:** Enhance connections between the Depot District, Trades District, and nearby schools, parks, state Capitol, and other community institutions through the application of complete streets principles.
- ◆ **Objective 7:** Coordinate with Helena High School and Helena College to foster student employment opportunities and inform educational curricula.
- ◆ **Objective 8:** Preserve and promote the Depot District's and Trades District's historic features through design guidelines, public art, and preservation-oriented programs.



6. Implications

The subarea plan's goals and objectives establish a framework for how the concepts for the district can be achieved. They guide various land use and transportation initiatives within the context of the Growth Policy and Urban Renewal Plan, in response to the community's desires, and informed by the analysis performed as part of this work.

The sections below describe the plan's implications to the land use and housing, transportation, utilities, and economic development environments across the entire planning area, with a more detailed neighborhood-by-neighborhood examination following. The neighborhood examinations advance this plan's implementation, illustrating the specific zoning and public realm changes necessary to achieve the plan's objectives and providing a tangible set of recommendations at a discernable location in response to specific community need.

These changes may cause discomfort at first, including shifts in development expectations, additional City investment to modify zoning regulations and the Centennial Trail master plan, initiating and managing street construction projects, and supporting and nurturing a new business improvement district. Chapter 7 explores specific implications, challenges, and initiatives by neighborhood, identifying how each neighborhood can contribute to achieving the district's overall vision.

6.1 Land Use Implications

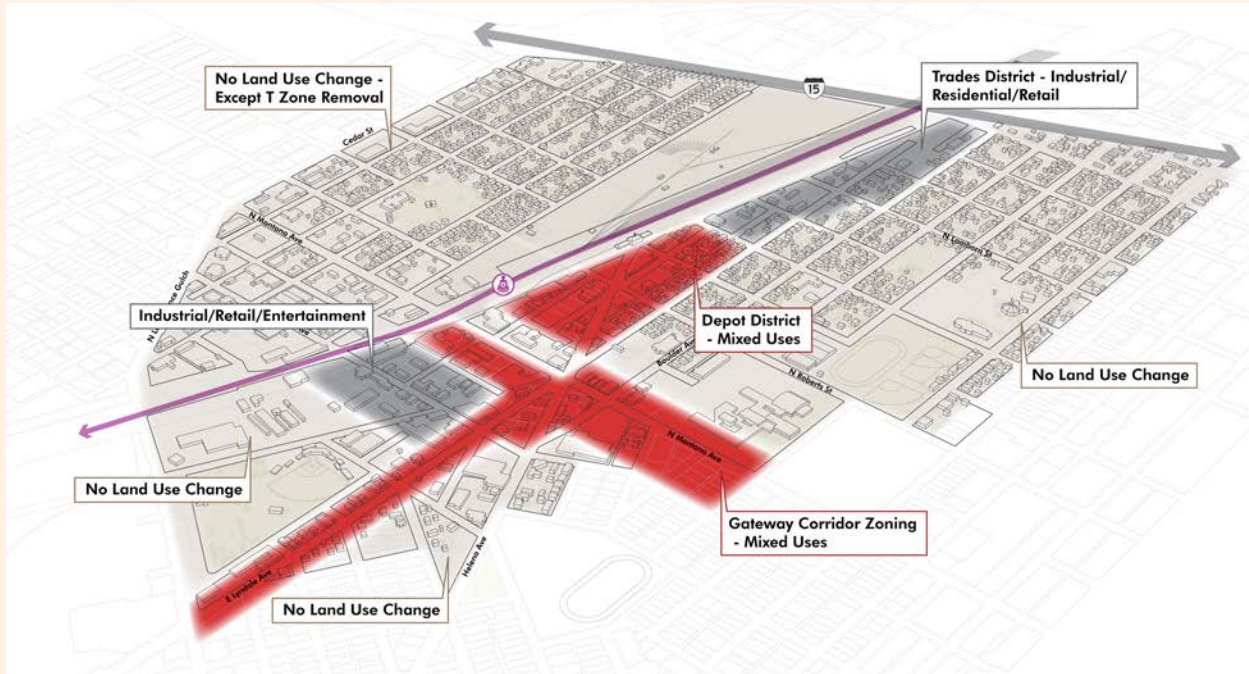
Subarea plan policies suggest land use transformation, concentrating intensity in and around the Depot District and facilitating redevelopment and mixing of uses along the US-12 and North Montana Ave corridors. Elsewhere, the district's land uses will remain largely the same, reinforcing the existing neighborhood character and accommodating incremental reinvestment as the housing stock improves.

Land use and development non-conformance underlines the immediate importance of acting on zoning amendments. The subarea plan's policy direction emphasizes it even more, calling for the reshaping of the 6th Ward's zoning environment to be more compatible with those neighborhoods which are intended for reinvestment and transformation and those which are intended to remain essentially as they are.

Plan implementation includes updates to the zoning ordinance to accomplish these changes, focusing on the Depot District, the Trades District and the arterial corridors. They introduce new districts tailored to the Railroad District's unique needs, encouraging the type of compact, diverse, and identity-rich development 6th Ward residents and business owners desire.



Figure 18: Land Use Changes



6.1.1 More Housing Near the Core

Constructing new housing in and near the existing commercial core will add to “built-in” demand for the blossoming retail district. The Land Use and Zoning Implications diagram illustrates where new residential intensity could be located, and the Zoning Updates section adds more detail on how development regulations can be amended to allow it.

6.1.2 New Development Standards for the Commercial Core and other Zoning Districts

A new look at the district’s zoning designations will encourage street-front retail, entertainment, and office development with the inclusion of residential uses wherever possible. Appendix E provides a comprehensive assessment of existing zoning and potential zoning alternatives to achieve plan objectives, identifying more specific changes to zoning district requirements and permitted land uses.

6.1.3 A New “Trades District”

Expanding the list of permitted uses from the existing CLM zoning district to permit residences and “maker” spaces, focusing on the new Trades District to encourage diversity, creativity, and a working, artistic experience.





This new district will facilitate a wide variety of uses to house artisans, small-scale manufacturing, galleries, live-work spaces, trades offices, and small warehouses, creating a space in the Railroad District which emerges as a unique destination and one accessible by the Centennial Trail extension.

6.1.4 Enhancing the US 12 and North Montana Ave Corridors

Creating a new zoning district to implement new development standards along the arterial corridors can facilitate mixed uses and acknowledge the changing character of the highway and Montana Ave as the district evolves. These new characteristics will seek to provide a complementary transitional flow from the heavy traffic of Highway 12 to the existing historic neighborhoods, something 6th Ward residents say they want.

6.1.5 Specific Zoning Changes

Figure 19 shows the Railroad District's current zoning pattern. Figure 20 shows how the zoning may change to implement this plan more fully. Along with the redesignation of some properties, particularly those surrounding the business core and along US Highway 12, the plan suggests modifications to some of the zoning district standards.

Appendix E provides a zoning analysis, describing how the existing districts may need to adjust to better achieve the plan's objectives. While some of the zoning districts may serve the planning area well, others may need a new look – or be applied to different areas – to create the type of mixed-use, identity-rich Railroad District residents and businesspeople seek. Some of the potential zoning changes are discussed below, with additional detail in the Appendix.

Figure 19: Existing Zoning

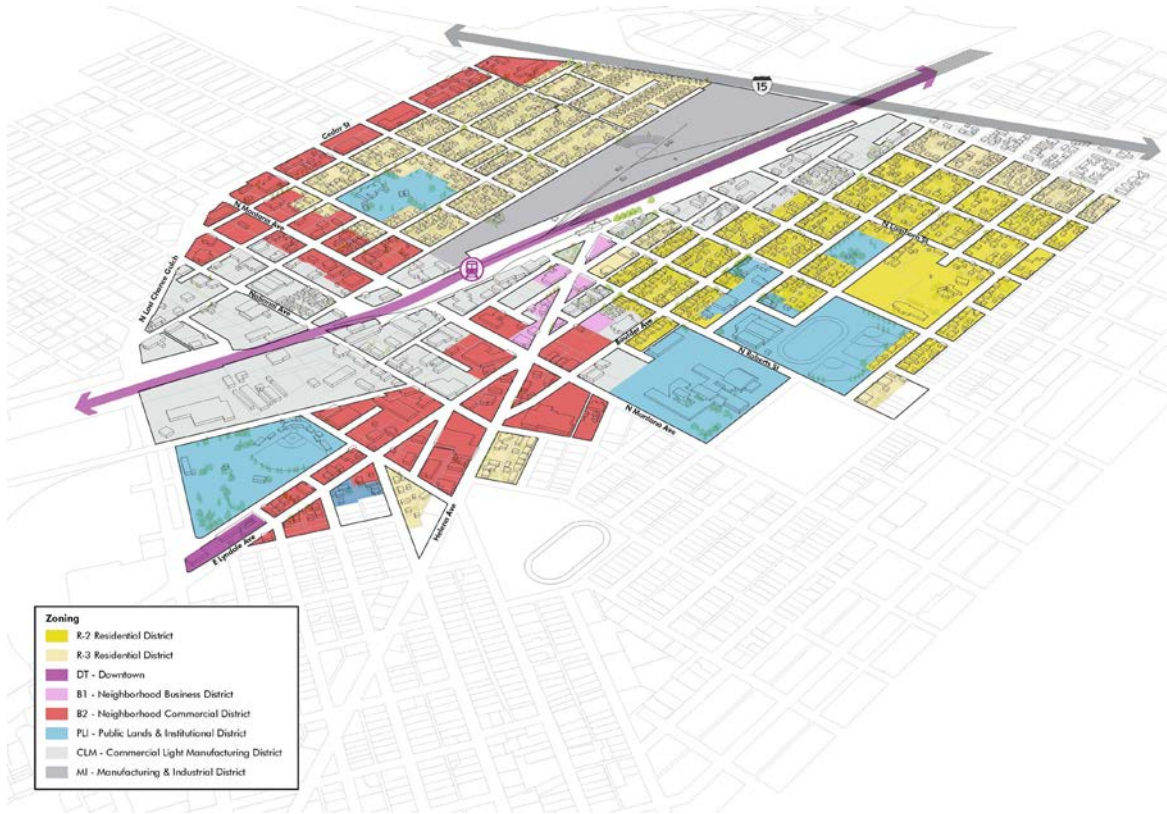
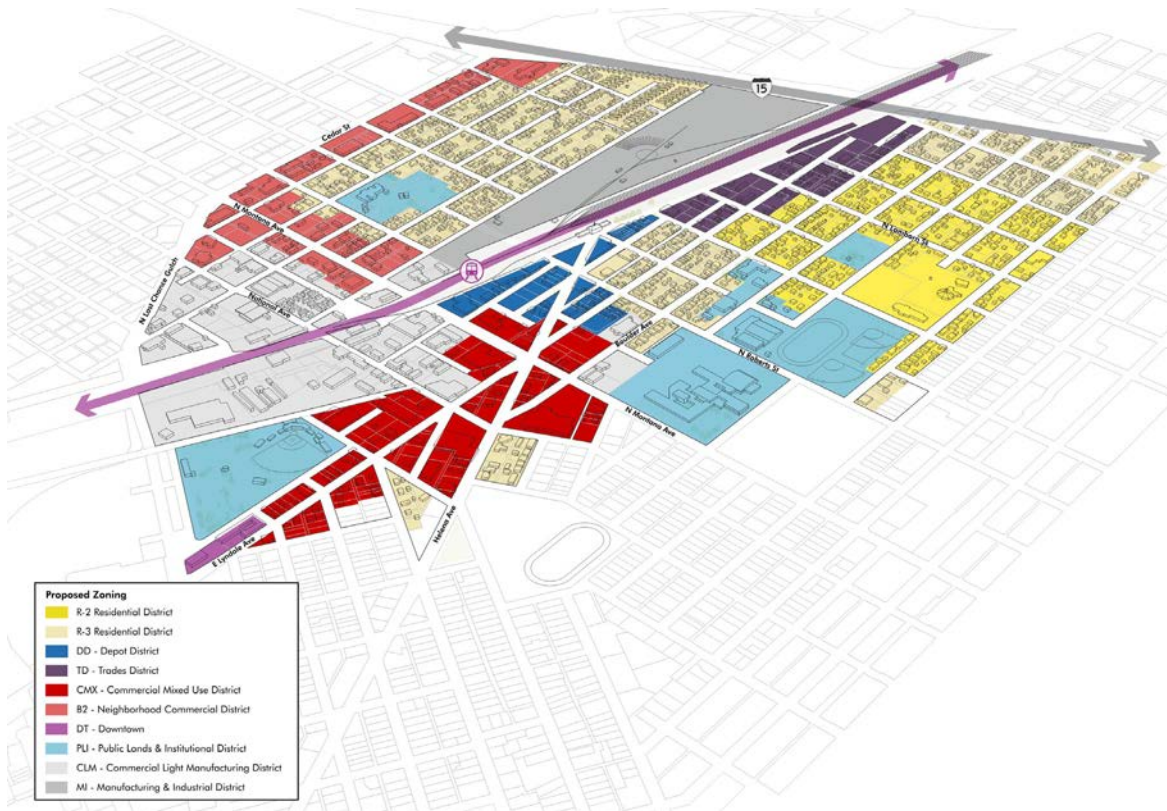


Figure 20: Proposed Zoning



R-2 Residential Zone

The R-2 zone is now limited to single-family and duplex housing types, limiting density which is unlikely to create enough nearby demand to support the 6th Ward's commercial core. Most of the R-2 area lies to the south of the proposed Depot District and Trades District in areas generally characterized by this type of lower-intensity residential development. The proposed zoning changes will reduce the land zoned R-2, replacing those parcels adjoining the Depot District with R-3.

R-3 Residential Zone

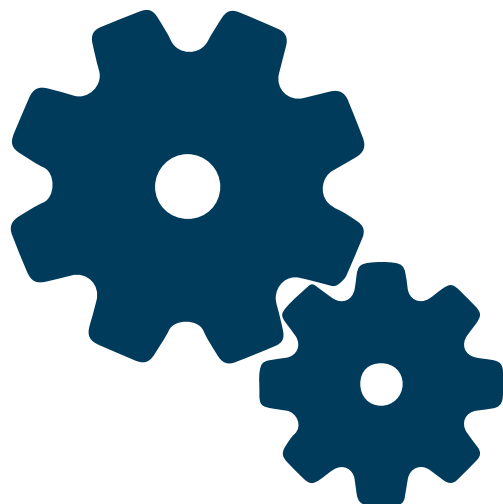
The R-3 zone allows for single family, duplex, multi-family housing types, permitting moderate density for more residential units needed to support the existing commercial core of the 6th Ward. The zoning district also permits some non-residential uses under certain circumstances. The higher residential intensity and opportunity for occasional ground-floor commercial uses make this district a good choice to surround the proposed Depot District, adding the potential for more residents within a convenient walk of the commercial core and providing for diversity in street-level land uses. Proposed changes to the development standards would reduce required setbacks and increase maximum permitted lot coverage, making it possible for single-family development in the R-3 district to resemble the historic structures already there and eliminating the need for the "Transition" overlay now in place.

The City may wish to customize these R-3 development regulations changes to the 6th Ward. They may not necessarily be appropriate for all other R-3 areas in the City.

B-1 Neighborhood Business Zone

The B-1 zone allows for a mix of housing types with a moderate density of residential units. Even so, it does not articulate aspirations or prescribe standards unique to the 6th Ward's commercial core. The proposed Depot District zoning designation is intended to apply to a larger area than what the B-1 district now encompasses, reducing minimum lot size and eliminating off-street parking requirements. Creating a new Depot District here will allow the existing B-1 zoning district to remain as-is in other areas of Helena, where its standards may be more appropriate.

The Depot District zone is fundamentally a mixed-use designation, with standards to encourage storefront retail or dining and the development of multi-family units – either as condominiums or apartments – above. Residential density in the proposed Depot District may exceed 25 units per acre, with actual development intensity limited by building height requirements and the market's demand for parking.



B-2 General Commercial Zone

The B-2 zone allows for a mix of housing types with a higher density of residential units, potentially adding support for the district's commercial core businesses and those businesses located along the US-12 corridor.

The plan proposes the B-2 designation be replaced by the new Corridor Mixed-Use (CMX) zoning district along most of the US 12 corridor and North Montana Ave south of the railroad, closely aligning this corridor's land use and development standards with the structure and theme of the City's downtown zoning. The new CMX district would reduce setback requirements, reduce off-street parking requirements, and increase maximum permitted building height to encourage mixed use development consistent with the US 12 "gateway" theme. Residential density would likely not exceed 25 units per acre, with development intensity limited by building height, parking availability, and parcel depth and orientation. The B-2 district would remain in place unchanged along North Montana Ave north of the railroad.

CLM Commercial Light Manufacturing Zone

The CLM zone supports the community's commercial and light manufacturing uses, with most 6th Ward CLM parcels now located south of the Railyard east of Harris Street and North of Boulder Avenue.

The subarea plan proposes the CLM district be almost completely eliminated in

the Railroad District south of the railroad, replaced mostly by the new Depot District and Trades District (TD) zoning district and, near Boulder and Cooke, by the amended R-3 district. CLM would remain in place and unchanged along the rail corridor and in the Recreation district, permitting continued rail and warehousing operations. This change welcomes new residential development in the 6th Ward and makes way for the inclusion of the new Trades District.

M-I Manufacturing and Industrial Zone

The MI zone supports heavy and intense manufacturing and industrial uses which are not conducive to retail businesses and residential activities. MI zoned parcels in the 6th Ward are in the Railyard, and the subarea plan proposes no changes to the zoning map or the land use and development standards in the district.

6.2 Transportation Implications

The transportation environment in the 6th Ward is similarly targeted for change, with improvements to the US-12 and Montana Ave corridors generally consistent with the Five-Points Intersection study, enhancements to the pedestrian experience, and an appreciation for the district's connectivity within the 6th Ward and to nearby parts of town. Consultation with the Montana Department of Transportation is required for any transportation initiatives along or impacting US Highway 12.

Specifically, this plan recognizes and calls for:



6.2.1 Montana Ave Roundabout

The Five Points study recommends the roundabout at Lyndale/Helena/Montana. The community moderately supported it in the studio engagement, hoping it be sized appropriately to allow for pedestrians to cross safely. The roundabout appears in the Long-Range Transportation Plan, and MDT has committed to building the roundabout, encouraging access into the Depot District and reducing concerns of traffic backing up to the railroad crossing. This plan recommends the roundabout's design emphasizes the district's access from the west, both for vehicles and for those on foot, and that it accommodates additional turning movements onto Lyndale given the anticipated closure of Boulder Ave's left turn access.

In addition, the City is studying the feasibility of a grade-separated rail crossing at North Montana Ave. The study's outcomes may influence the roundabout's design, potentially shifting the Centennial Trail's Montana Ave

crossing to locate at the roundabout and increasing the need for the roundabout to provide access to the 6th Ward's commercial core along Helena Ave.

6.2.2 Centennial Trail Extension

The City is designing the extension of the Centennial Trail across Montana Ave and into the core of the 6th Ward at its intersection with Argyle St/Bozeman St. As of this plan's writing, the crossing is planned to be controlled by rectangular rapid-flashing beacon (RRFB) and include a median "refuge" to facilitate safe non-motorized transit across Montana Ave. This subarea plan anticipates a channelized trail alignment through the Depot District and then along Lyndale Ave in the Trades District. The trail would then extend along Lyndale and either curve along an easement on railroad property or follow existing City rights of way to join Boulder Ave near the highway underpass. Wayfinding signs – designed to promote district branding – can be located within the Depot District to help trail users navigate the three blocks of dispersed routing.

Figure 21: Transportation Initiatives

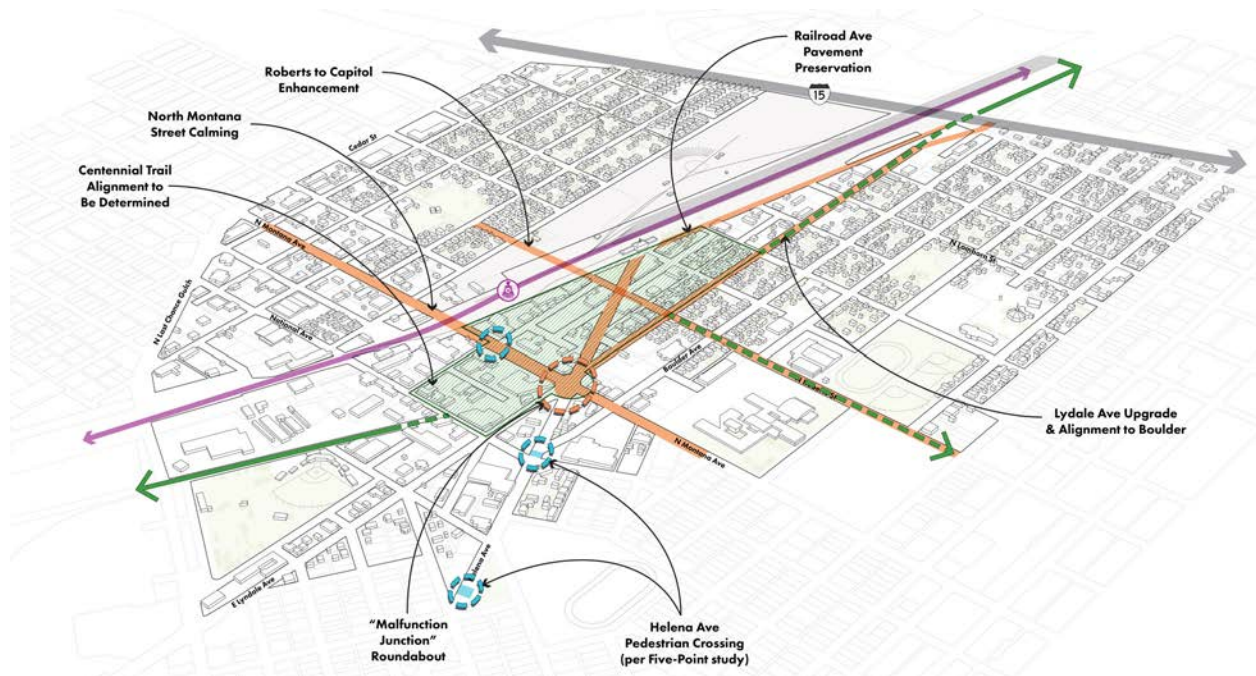
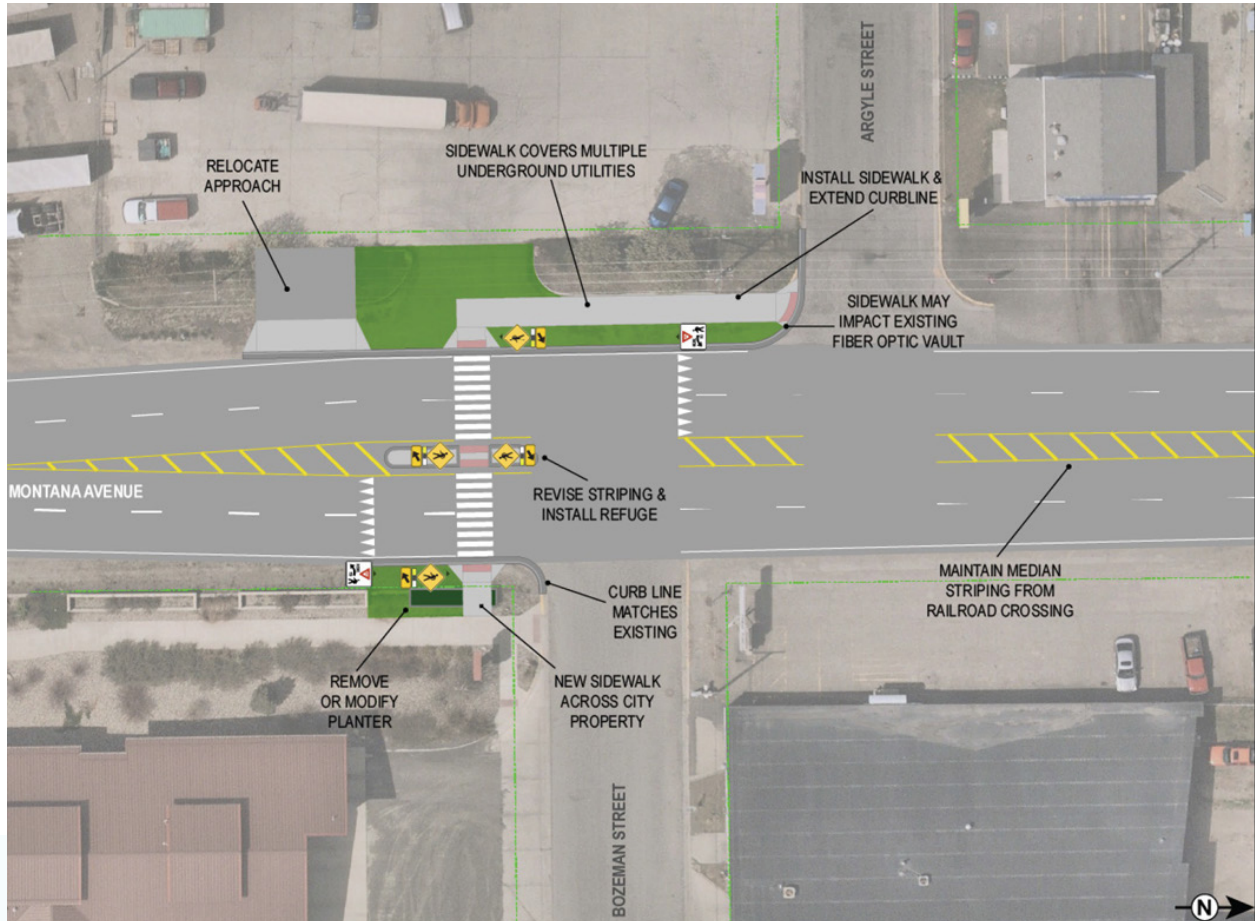


Figure 22: Montana Avenue Proposed Pedestrian Alignment



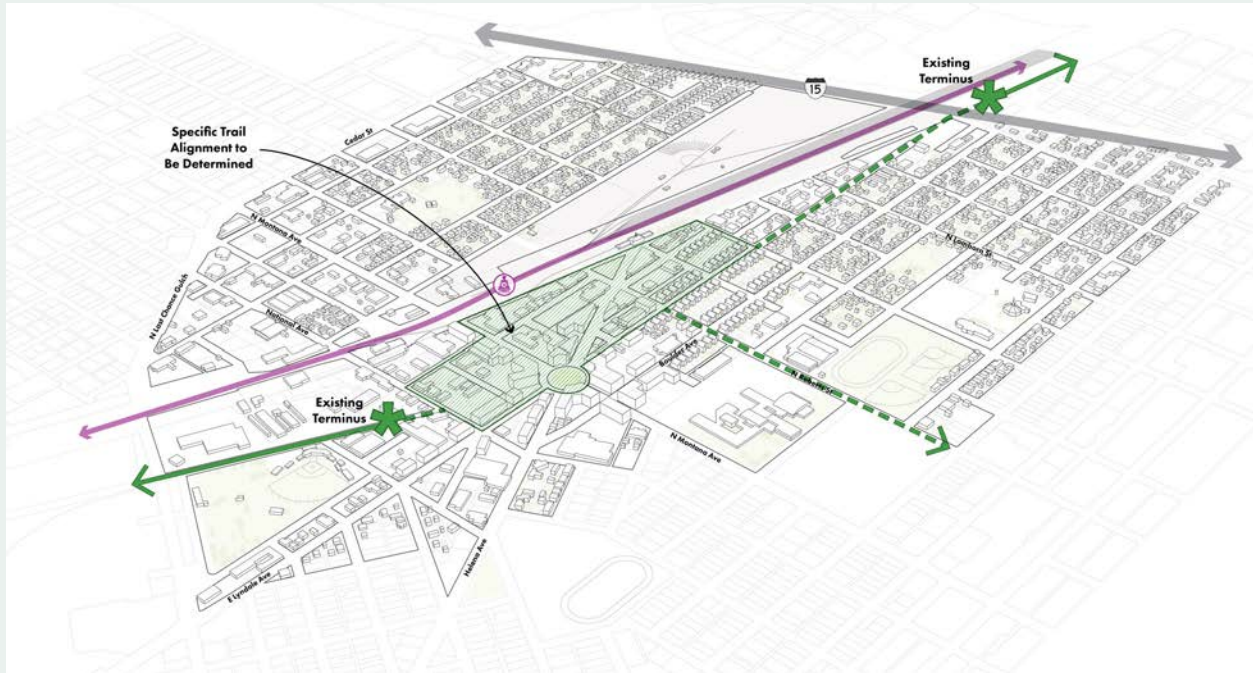
Depot District streets can be designed for shared use, accommodating pedestrians, cyclists, and autos, with reduced speeds and on-street parking to enliven retail storefronts, promote safety, and enhance the district's identity. Figure 22, above, shows the proposed trail crossing.

The City's current effort to study the feasibility of a grade-separated Montana Ave crossing of the railroad, however, may shift the trail crossing to coincide with the proposed roundabout at Lyndale and Helena or move north to coincide with the rail crossing. This will influence the way the trail enters the district from the west, shaping the trail's alignment and design approach.

Centennial Trail access to and through the Depot District will encourage trail users to meander through the commercial and creative districts, integrating the trail and Depot District experience at an intimate level. While the trail will be channelized through the district, its design and wayfinding can encourage access to the neighborhood's perpendicular streets to visit the Depot District and Trades District businesses, community spaces, and institutions. There are opportunities to manage the trail's alignment and design through the Railroad District to encourage trail users to linger, while still accommodating through-traffic for those whose primary interest is to get somewhere else.



Figure 23: Proposed Centennial Trail Alignment



6.2.3 Roberts St Enhancement

Enhancing Roberts St through the entire district will effectively link the northern neighborhoods, the schools, and the Capitol along a multi-modal corridor. These street enhancements – to be consistent with the City’s complete streets standards – will ensure sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, pedestrian lighting, landscaping, and wayfinding signs work together to create an attractive, safe, and active corridor.

The conceptual street sections here illustrate two possible approaches to designing Roberts St. The designs can be made consistent with the City’s complete streets policy, incorporating pedestrian and bike facilities and facilitating the movement of students between the district’s neighborhoods and schools.

Roberts St north of Lyndale would have

a more commercial character, while still providing for on-street parking and efficient multi-modal travel. This street design would run from the railroad crossing to Lyndale, with an urban sidewalk treatment, grated street trees, and striped bike lanes.

South of Lyndale, the street design will become more residential, with a landscaped parkway consistent with its current condition. The street geometry north and south of Lyndale will be the same, but the landscaped parkway will communicate a more residential feel.

Full achievement of the Roberts St corridor as an access to the capitol also will rely on upgrades to the crossings of Roberts St and the US 12 corridor couplet south of the Railroad District planning area. The Roberts St intersections with Prospect Ave and 11th Ave are now signaled with crosswalks. The intersection designs, however, now prioritize vehicular movement and make no special allowance for cyclists.



Figure 24: Roberts St (North) Concept Cross Section



Figure 25: Roberts St (South) Concept Cross Section

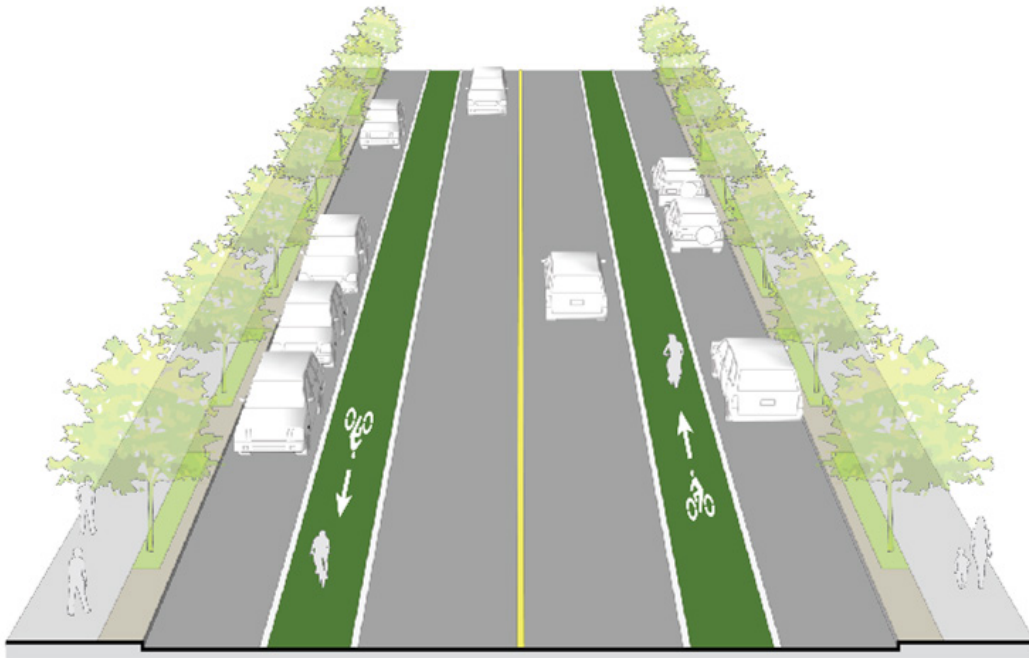
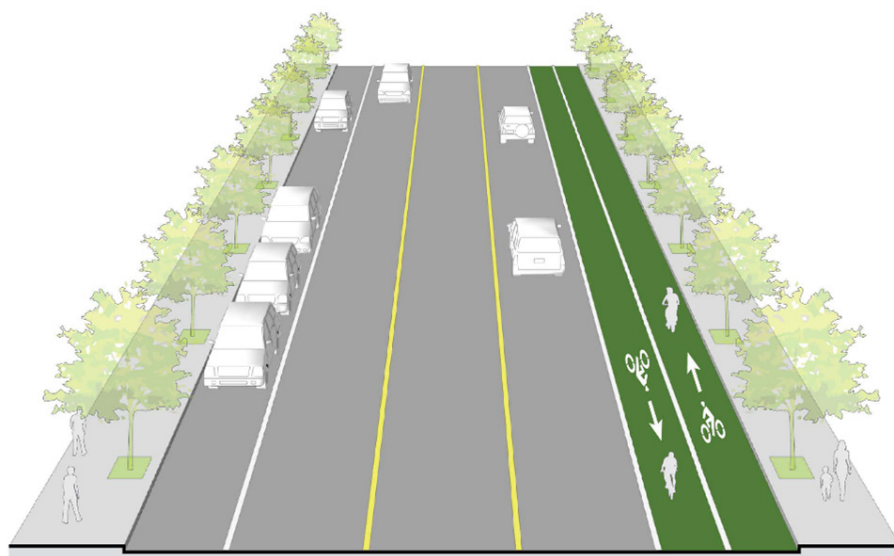




Figure 25: Lyndale Avenue Concept Cross Section



6.2.4 Lyndale Ave Enhancement

Lyndale Ave will emerge as the primary east-west corridor through the district, facilitating school bus movement from Montana Ave to Roberts St and improving overall access to the growing Depot District. These street enhancements will include sidewalks, crosswalks, a two-way bicycle track, pedestrian lighting, landscaping, and wayfinding signs. The street can have two travel lanes, one in each direction, a center turn lane, on-street parking on one side, and the two-way bicycle track to accommodate the Centennial Trail extension. If the

Centennial Trail is incorporated into the roundabout at North Montana Ave, the Lyndale street design will also need to include the trail alignment for its entire length from North Montana Ave east through the 6th Ward.

6.2.5 Brick Road

This plan calls for coordination with BNSF to retain and rehabilitate Railroad Ave’s brick surfacing. Community comment reinforced how important this feature is to the district, and this plan seeks to retain it as a crucial identity-defining element. This may be able to be partially funded through historic preservation grant opportunities.



6.2.6 Streetscape Enhancements

Upgrading the Depot District's streetscape along Lyndale Ave, Helena Ave, Roberts St, and Railroad Ave will enhance the area's beauty and historic prominence as a lively and livable district.

The City is already proceeding with a redesign of Helena and Gallatin to accommodate additional on-street parking. Further enhancements on Helena can accentuate the terminal view the historic depot offers upon entering the district and establish the corridor as the district's principal gateway from the west. The Five Points study identified Helena Ave as a primary entry into the 6th Ward's business district, and the creation of a grade-separated railroad crossing at North Montana will emphasize its importance. Grade separation would eliminate Depot District access from Bozeman St.

Figure 26: Proposed Angled Parking Exhibit

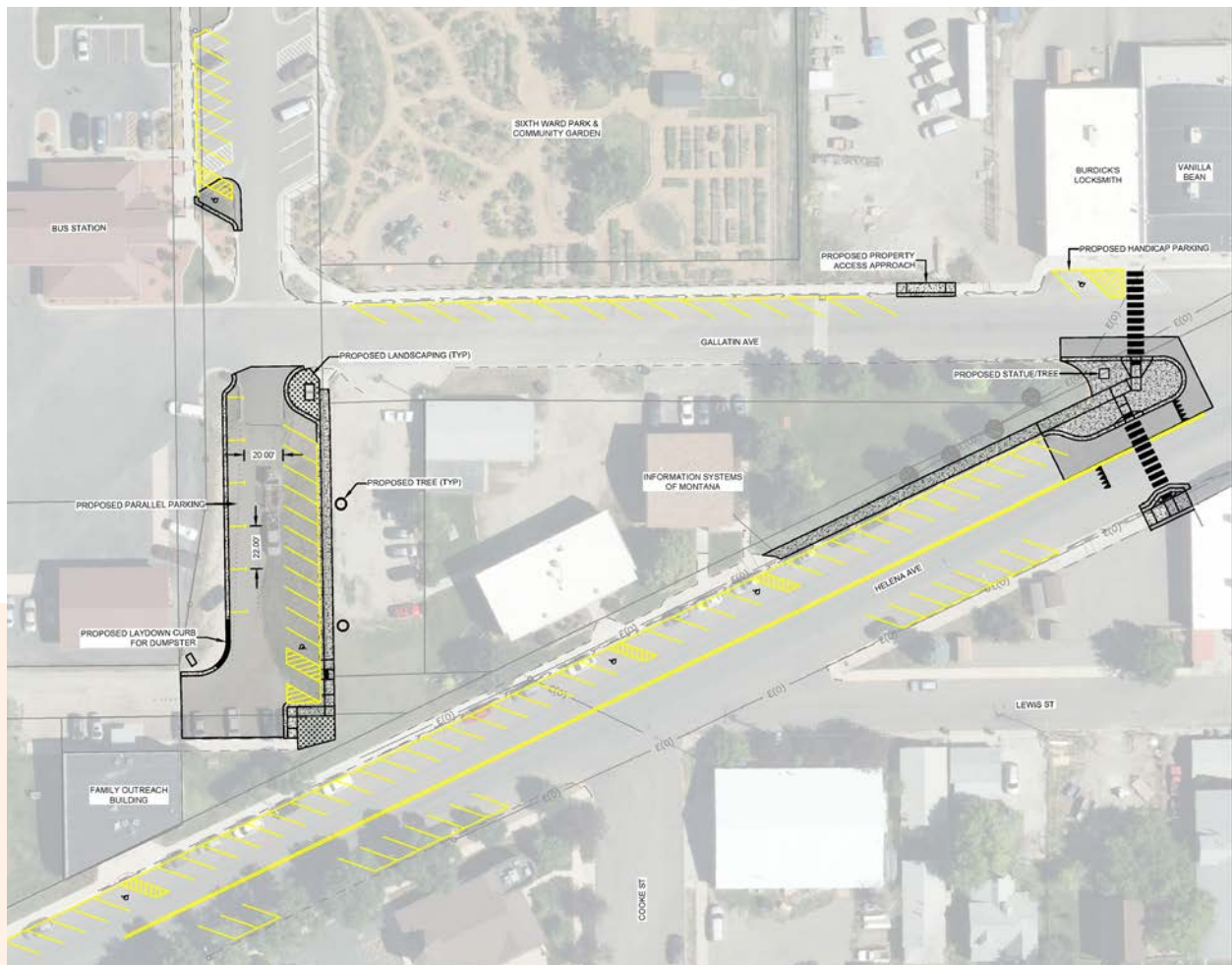


Figure 27: Helena Avenue Conceptual Corss Section

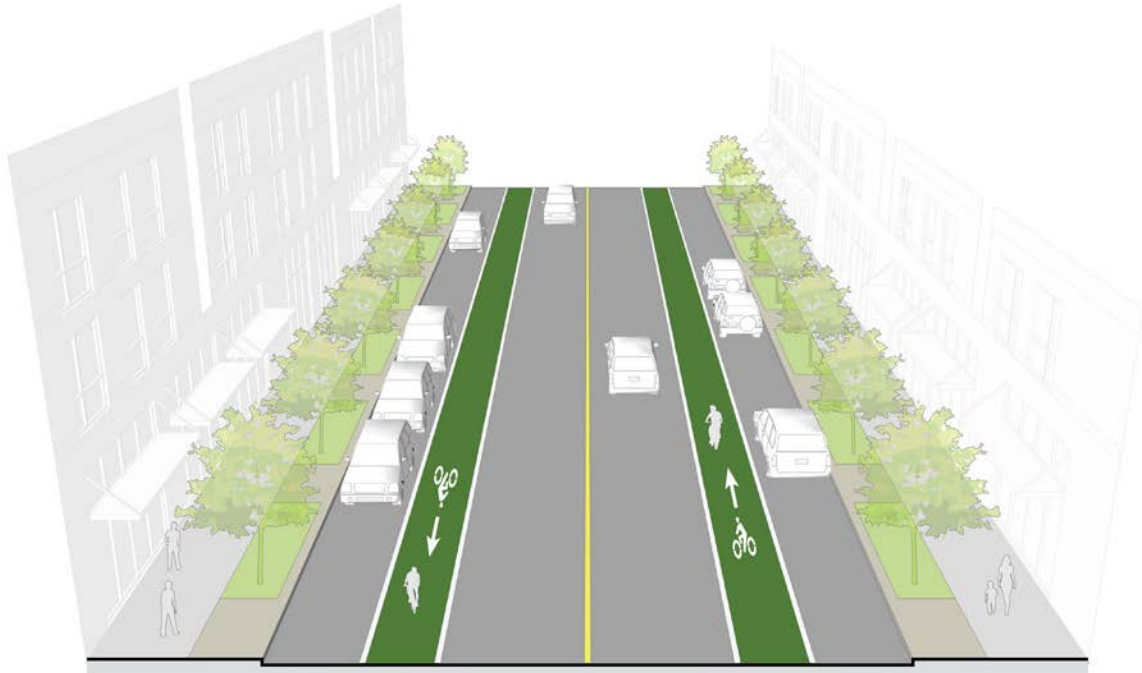
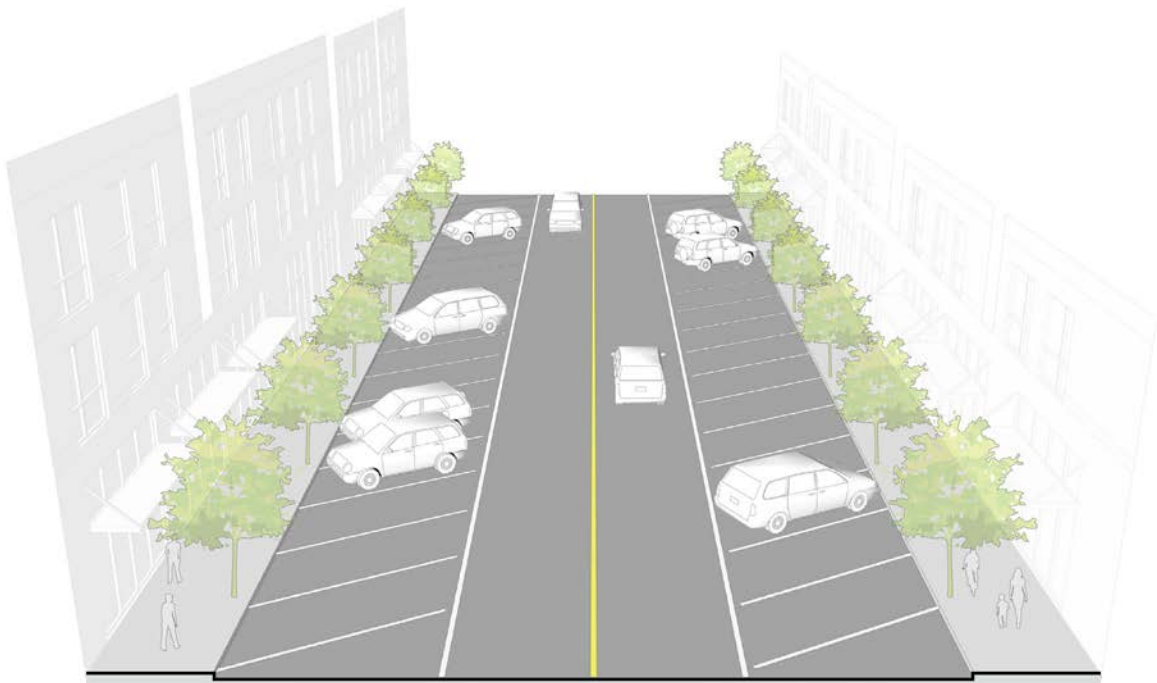


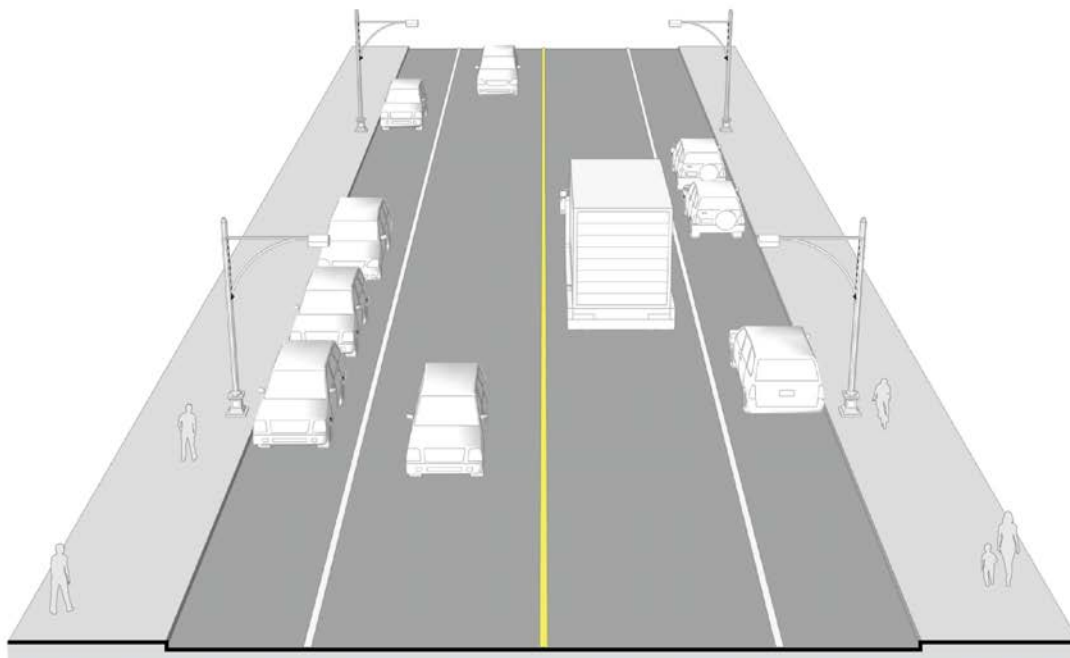
Figure 28: Helena Avenue Conceptual Cross Section (Parking Focused)



Future enhancements to streets in the Trades District can also help communicate the character and feel of the mixing of uses anticipated there. A relatively austere street design, consistent with the warehousing and trades offices uses can accommodate freight delivery and goods movement, while also being consistent with an emerging makers and artisan context. These streets will feel utilitarian, but the provision of on-street parking will also accommodate visitors and add to the feeling of safety for those who will be traveling through the Trades District on foot or by bike.

The design of these streets is intended to be industrial in nature, but the scale of the lane widths, the presence of on-street parking, and the character of street lighting softens the impact. This is consistent with the plan's recommendation for live-work spaces, artisan studios, galleries, and other, similar uses where projecting an image of rough creativity is important.

Figure 29: Trades District Cross Section



6.2.7 At-Grade Rail Crossings

Retaining the at-grade rail crossings at National Ave, Montana Ave, or Roberts St responds to the participants' collective preferences, maintaining a local access alternative for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. The neighborhood vocally opposes the closing of Roberts St, confirming its function as an essential local route for accessing the district's schools, parks, and services. The community similarly voiced support to retain the at-grade crossing at National Ave. There was not unanimous support to retain the at-grade crossing at North Montana Ave, however, with the community divided over the best option.

The City is studying the feasibility of a grade-separated crossing at North Montana and, in coordination with the MPO and MDT, may proceed with design.

6.2.8 Boulder Ave Turn Restrictions

Elimination of left-turn access to eastbound Boulder Ave from southbound Montana Ave will favor access from Lyndale Ave via the new roundabout and reduce traffic conflicts at the Boulder Ave/Montana Ave intersection. While the Five Points study analyzed and ultimately did not recommend restricting left turns at Boulder, subsequent decisions by MDT have concluded the restrictions should be implemented. The roundabout design at Lyndale/Helena may also confirm the need to close left-turn movements at Boulder.

6.2.9 Grid Pattern

Maintaining the district's overall grid connectivity, accommodating incremental change in and intensification of the district's commercial, residential, and educational uses is an important consideration. There are no recommendations to close streets, retaining optimal connectedness and diverse routing options as people move through and within the district. A grade-separated rail crossing at North Montana may impact this, however, eliminating local street access to North Montana along the segment where the grade separation prevents it.

6.2.10 Holistic Parking Strategy

This plan suggests a comprehensive parking strategy, relying on mixing uses to reduce overall parking demand, relaxing required off-street parking requirements to optimize available curb space for on-street parking throughout the Depot District, Trades District, and 6th Ward South, and studying the feasibility of a public parking lot on otherwise underutilized land near the railroad.

6.2.11 Transit Friendliness

Creating a built form compatible with transit services is a foundational principle for a compact business district and neighborhood, particularly here to complement more intense development in the Depot District and Gateway Corridor. This approach to transit-friendly design may encourage less reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and create benefits even before the transit system matures to serve it.

6.3 Utilities and Infrastructure Implications

This is a historic part of Helena, with older infrastructure to manage water, wastewater, and storm sewer needs. Increasing development intensity and a gradual shift to an increased mix of entertainment and professional office development may also cause increased demand for enhanced Internet access. Policies call for systematic assessment and upgrades, as appropriate, focusing on what is needed to address those areas where services may need improvement.

6.3.1 Stormwater

Snowmelt and rain-on-snow events can stress the 6th Ward's storm drain system. The City's efforts to incorporate boulevard streets where appropriate and enhance streetscape environments should help alleviate localized ponding and flooding events.



6.3.2 Broadband access

There are multiple Internet providers in the 6th Ward. Process participants routinely complained of poor Internet access speeds in the district, a problem largely beyond the City's control. It is an important element of educational and business success, so the City may play the role of convenor of a larger conversation to facilitate broadband access to those who need it.

6.4 Economic Development Implications

Plan policies – in the Growth Policy, Urban Renewal Plan, and this subarea plan – call for continued economic prosperity in the 6th Ward, identifying improvements to the district's historic elements, enhancements to its public realm, targeted investment to stimulate business development and retention, and enhancing the district's connection to the rest of Helena while maintaining its unique identity. This subarea plan augments the Growth Policy and Urban Renewal Plan by including specific strategies:

6.4.1 Business Improvement District

A business improvement district can advance the plan's policies to nurture the district's grass-roots commercial energy. A BID can organize and support local retail, entertainment, institutional, and office uses in the Depot District.

6.4.2 Centennial Trail

The community can leverage the Centennial Trail as a vehicle to stimulate a variety of reinvestment in the Recreation District, enlivening Kindrick Field and inviting new uses into the warehouse district there.

6.4.3 Historic Reference, Adaptation and Design

The historic trolley line link to downtown Helena, views of the historic depot and Mt. Helena, the unique street layout, and the scale of the 6th Ward's development offer important and defining design cues the district can incorporate into its branding and future economic identity. In addition, retaining the fine-grained street network and the local access it provides, particularly along Gallatin Ave, Argyle St, Roberts St, and National Ave facilitates commerce in the district. And adaptive reuse of older buildings can accommodate new investment within the context of the district's historic identity.

6.4.4 Incremental Change

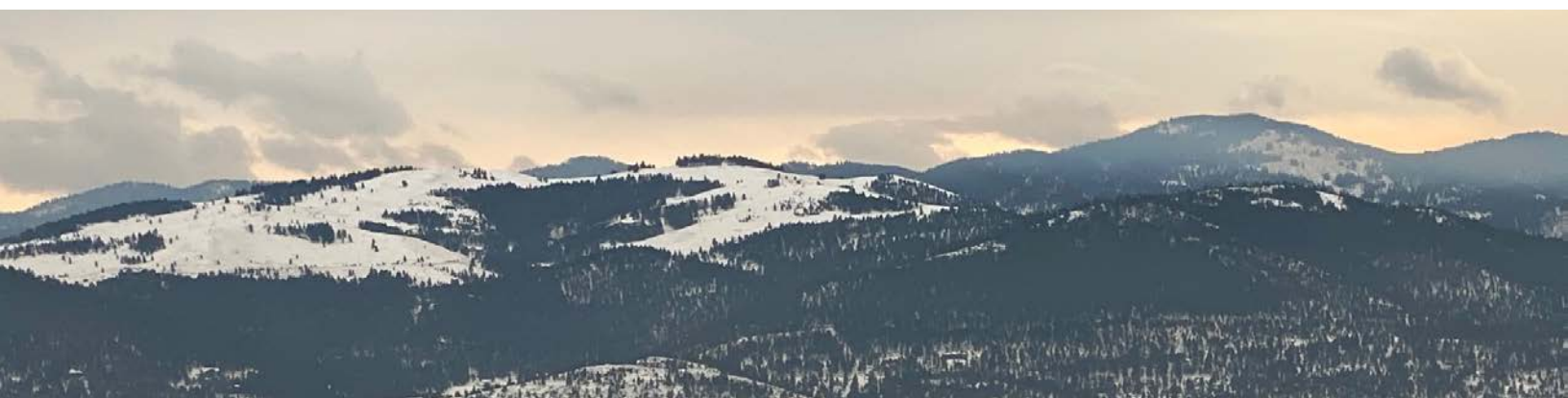
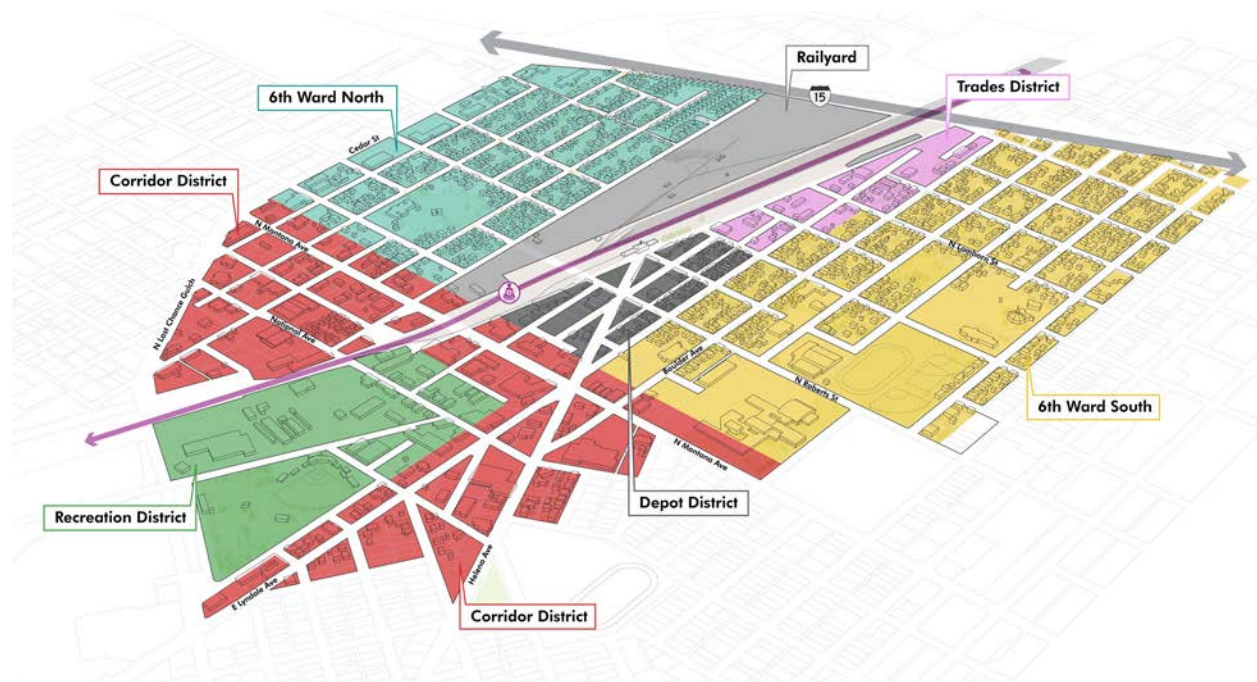
Change happens in small steps over time, and it can sometimes cause discomfort along the way. Parking availability, construction, land use shifts, and the needs of new residents will influence how the district behaves, possibly causing a need to either reexamine or reinforce this plan's recommendations.



7. Zooming In: Neighborhood Focus

The subarea plan’s vision, goals, objectives and implementation strategy knit together a series of actions, many of which rely on a detailed understanding of the 6th Ward’s neighborhoods and a detailed explanation of why they are necessary and how they can actually be accomplished. The following pages explore each of the district’s neighborhoods, confirming the overall vision for each one and how proposed changes may address challenges each neighborhood presents.

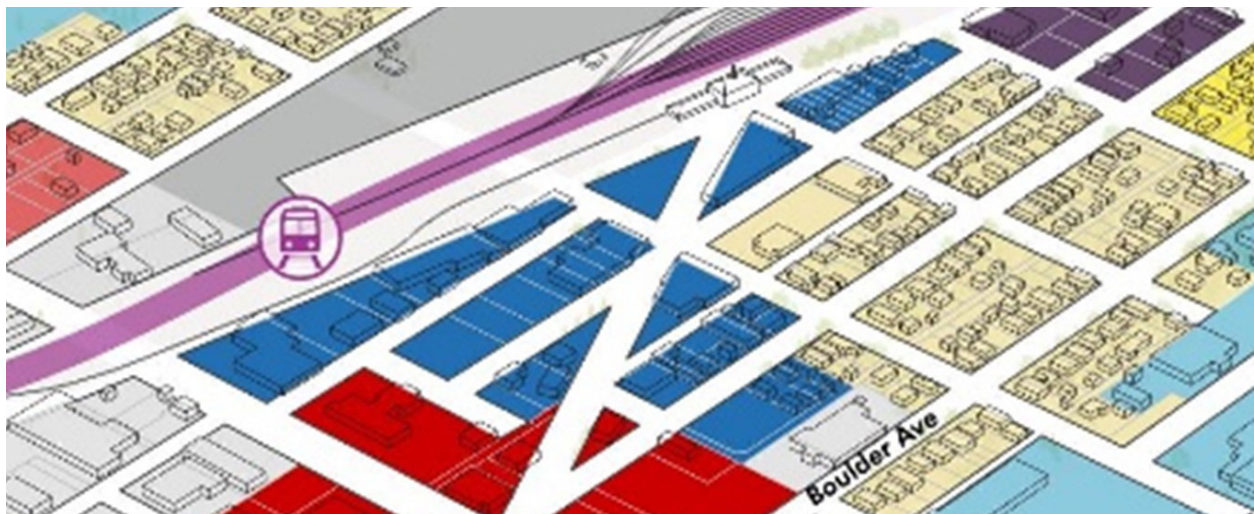
Figure 30: Railroad District Neighborhoods



7.1 Focus: Depot District

From the vision:

The commercial district remains anchored by the historic train depot, with restaurants, bars, hotels, merchants, and warehouses radiating east, south, and west. More contemporary retail, dining, entertainment, and professional office uses fill in the historic storefronts, and new apartments occupy the upper floors. The district becomes vibrant with new morning, day, and evening activity, retaining its quirks and character. It remembers its railroad roots, while offering a mix of social, cultural, commercial, and artistic activities unique to this part of town. Improvement of the roundabout at Montana and Lyndale enhances visibility and access into the core, and the Centennial Trail connection welcomes visitors on foot and by bike. Higher-intensity residential areas along the district's south edge bring customers close, within an easy walk of the core's retail and civic spaces.



7.1.2 The Concept

The Depot district builds on its current momentum, sustaining local businesses and providing a range of retail, services, dining, professional office, and entertainment uses. It is an active place, serving residents and visitors alike, referencing its historic identity and staying both hip and funky. It's a place locals cherish, uniquely Helena, with room for experimentation, fun, and a growing community connection.

7.1.3 The Challenges

The Depot District is challenged by its difficulty in access, and this may become even more critical if a grade-separated railroad crossing at North Montana Ave is constructed. The railroad and North Montana Ave present physical barriers to reach the district, making it difficult to navigate into the commercial core for those unfamiliar with it. The effective demand generated by nearby households causes the commercial uses here to rely on visitors, and making the district more accessible to them is key.





The district also has an indistinct presentation of its identity, with historic structures – such as the old train depot – not celebrated to the extent they can be. If the district is to use its historic identity as a foundation for its success, it must honor those historic resources, invest in them, and put them to effective use.

7.1.4 Recommended Changes

This plan’s proposed implementation actions advance strategic solutions for the Depot District. They target:

Land Use and Zoning

New zoning will permit residential uses in those commercial districts where they may not now be allowed.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

Improvements to the Centennial Trail, Malfunction Junction, and Lyndale Ave will

improve roadway and non-motorized access to the district, more effectively connecting it to the west. Access via Bozeman Ave will be eliminated if a grade-separated railroad crossing is constructed, and the planned Centennial Trail crossing at Argyle will also need to be relocated. Retaining the Roberts St rail crossing will ensure residents to the north retain easy access to the district.

Specific Streetscape Improvements

Improvements to Helena Ave to emphasize the historic trolley connection to downtown, to Roberts St to accommodate vehicle and pedestrian flows between the district’s neighborhoods and schools and parks, and to Lyndale Ave to carry eastward traffic from Malfunction Junction into the district will enliven the district and provide opportunities to project its identity in the public realm. In addition, a grade-separated railroad crossing may cause Helena Ave to be incorporated into the Centennial Trail and increase Helena Ave’s importance as a primary district entry from the west.



7.2 Focus: Trades District

From the vision:

South of the railyard and east of the Depot District lies the Trades District. This area mixes small-scale warehousing, trades workshops, artists' studios, and bungalows, with space available for live-work structures, small apartments, and cottages. This is a creative space, with a wide and surprising mix of activities, enjoying its proximity to all of what the Railroad District has to offer. It becomes a vibrant space for artists who wish to live and work where they exhibit, where the retail galleries smell of the furnaces, kilns, and paints used in the creative processes. While the Depot District emerges as the retail center, the Trades District is a working district, where trucks unload, things get made, and visitors to the place expect a degree of roughness and hardscrabble authenticity.



7.2.1 The Concept

The Trades District can offer a range of business and residential opportunities, accommodating the small warehouse, “maker” space, live-work building, artist studio, gallery, or small housing units. It is a neighborhood which can be loud, active, busy, and a little rough around the edges, facilitating creativity and the act of making things. It is part of the district’s destination character, drawing people from around the region to work or cruise artists’ workshops.

7.2.2 The Challenges

To flourish, the Trades District must maintain its commercial access, with a system of streets designed to accommodate the small trucks which are crucial to the district’s success. It should also have direct access to the Centennial Trail, connecting this district across Helena to places such as Memorial Park, Carroll College, the Great Northern District, Helena’s West End, and the Bray Institute.



7.2.3 Recommended Changes

This plan’s proposed implementation actions advance strategic solutions for the Trades District. They target:

Land Use and Zoning

The existing CLM and M-I zoning designations apply restrictions to housing development, impeding the development of smaller residential units and the creation of the type of artist studio, live-work, or “maker” spaces this plan envisions.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

Enhancing access to the Trades District will

involve improvements to the Centennial Trail and a new perspective on Lyndale Avenue and its segment between North Montana Avenue and a new connection to Boulder Avenue. The neighborhood’s interconnected grid is already compatible with the envisioned development types, but Railroad Ave would need an assured future – and a brick street surface – to help this district retain its charm.

Specific Streetscape Improvements

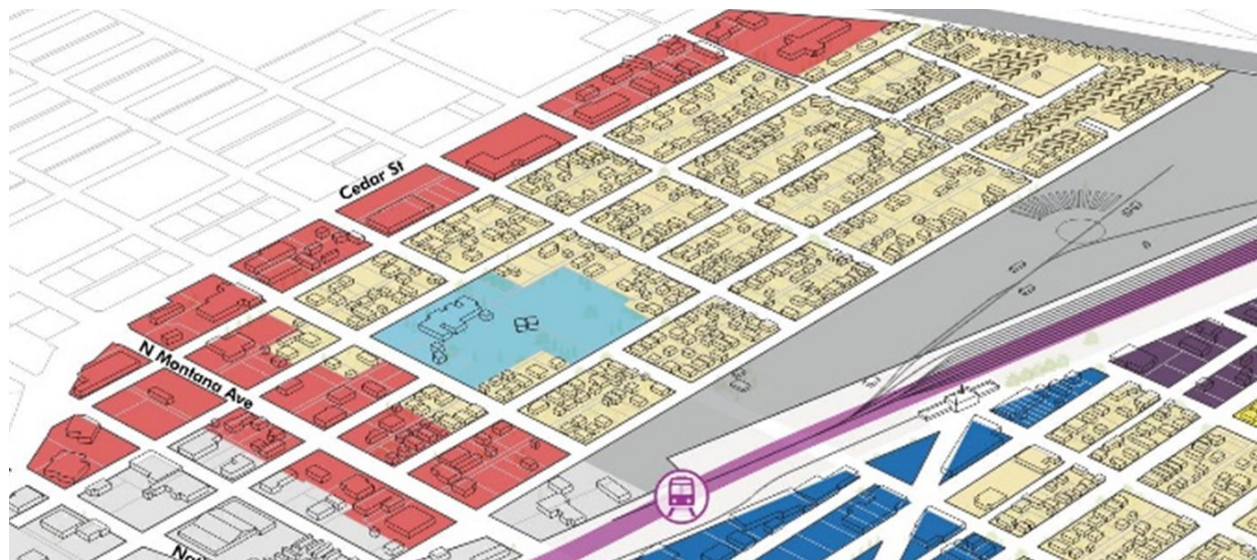
The Trades District streets should have a more industrial feel, accommodating small trucks and consistent with the grittiness associated with foundries, warehousing, working arts districts, and the like. While street trees are a priority in the Depot District, they are less important – though valued – here.



7.3 Focus: 6th Ward North

From the vision:

The northern neighborhood retains its rail worker housing scale and character, with small bungalows and “shotgun” houses serving households of all sizes and economic conditions. Folks who live here appreciate the neighborhood’s edgy vibe, compact form, walkable streets, and easy access to Cedar Street’s commercial corridor to the north and the Depot District to the south. Not much changes here during the planning period, except new houses and apartments get built in forms, scale, and styles similar to those which exist today.



7.3.1 The Concept

This is an eclectic neighborhood, with small lots, smaller housing units of a variety of types, and affordability. There are single-family homes, small apartments, manufactured homes, and townhouses, all mixed into a cohesive residential district tied together by a system of interconnected streets on a rectangular grid. Families walk and ride bikes, using the Roberts St crossing to access the district’s other neighborhoods.

7.3.2 The Challenges

The existing R-2 and “T” transition zoning is inconsistent with the neighborhood’s developed character, effectively making the entire neighborhood nonconforming. This limits reinvestment and directs any new projects to be inconsistent with the developed neighborhood surrounding them. The neighborhood is also reliant on the Roberts St rail crossing, and subject to “cut-through” traffic generated by non-residents looking for ways to bypass the rail crossing on North Montana Ave. Several process participants mentioned property maintenance as an issue here, though the focus seems to be more on ensuring adequate housing condition than on taking care of yards or abandoned vehicles.





7.3.3 Recommended Changes

This plan's proposed implementation actions advance strategic solutions for the 6th Ward North. They target:

Land Use and Zoning

The R-2 and "T" zoning must change, either by creating a new zoning district specifically designed to guide development consistent with the subarea plan's vision or by amending the R-2 district and eliminating the "T" overlay. Standards related to minimum lot size, minimum side setbacks, and permitted land uses should do a better job corresponding to what already exists – a condition neighborhood residents generally appreciate.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

Retaining the Roberts St rail crossing is essential, maintaining a local connection to the commercial and public land uses south of the tracks. Instituting strategies to slow speeds on the neighborhood streets may also help to reduce the amount of "cut-through" traffic.

Specific Streetscape Improvements

There are no specific recommendations to alter the neighborhood's street design, except for finding opportunities to calm traffic in conformance to the City's complete streets principles. The Roberts St rail crossing can be made safer for pedestrians and cyclists, and extending the enhanced treatment of Roberts northward across the tracks and into the 6th Ward North neighborhood would tie this portion of the district more closely to the Depot District and 6th Ward South.

7.4 Focus: 6th Ward South

From the vision:

The southern portion of the planning area is emerging as a center for education and recreation. There are houses here, too, enjoying proximity to the schools, parks, and college and to the commercial districts and Capitol complex further south. There is little to change here during the planning period. But enhancements to the neighborhood's streets facilitate non-motorized access to the local schools and the bustling Depot District. And the upgrading of Lyndale Ave east of the new roundabout relaxes traffic pressure on Boulder Ave, enhancing the pedestrian experience along this important east-west corridor.



7.4.1 The Concept

This is the district's more contemporary residential neighborhood, mixing a variety of residential, public, and institutional land uses on lots and with development conforming to existing zoning standards. The plan concept proposes no changes to this land use pattern, focusing, instead, on enhancing connections between this neighborhood and the rest of the district. This includes ensuring Roberts St serves multi-modal demand and connecting the Centennial Trail and Lyndale Ave to Boulder Ave near I-15.

7.4.2 The Challenges

This district's land use mix puts potentially incompatible land uses next to each other. For example, Helena High School and Helena College's plans may involve development of property now vacant, placing higher-intensity educational activity next to existing single-family homes. Other examples may include the eventual redevelopment of the Corridor District, where land use intensification may create impacts for those uses adjoining it.



7.4.3 Recommended Changes

This plan's proposed implementation actions advance strategic solutions for the 6th Ward South. They target:

Land Use and Zoning

There are few proposed changes to zoning in this area, except for those portions where the Depot District and Trades District transition along Lyndale Ave and where the R-2 district may now permit a wider variety of attached single-family housing.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

Improvements to the transportation network include aligning Lyndale Ave and

the Centennial Trail to meet Boulder Ave near I-15, facilitating local travel through the Railroad District and enhancing this neighborhood's connections to the Depot and Trades districts. Improvements to Roberts St may also be considered to ensure it adequately meets the multi-modal demand created by the neighborhood's schools and encourages connection to the Depot District's commercial core.

Specific Streetscape Improvements

The streetscape improvements include enhancements to Lyndale Ave to accommodate traffic and inclusion of the Centennial Trail extension which would otherwise rely on Boulder Ave. Lyndale has adequate right of way to carry this additional traffic, and the streetscape design and improvements can complement transitions to both the Depot District and Trades District.



7.5 Focus: The Corridor District

From the vision:

Montana Avenue and Lyndale Street west of the new roundabout are the axes for the corridor district. Much of it also serves as US Highway 12, linking the Railroad District to the east-west highway route. This corridor's new roundabout and "gateway" character set the stage for new types of mixed office, retail, and residential development. The corridor is still predominantly auto and freight oriented, but it is becoming more welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists as improvements are made, new buildings are constructed closer to the sidewalk, and parking is located to the rear, away from the street edge.



7.5.1 The Concept

This district is intended to gradually transform to accommodate mixed commercial, office, and multi-family residential uses on upper floors, lining the highway corridor with more development intensity and forming a "gateway" into Helena for those traveling on US 12. Its mixing of uses will add to the commercial vitality of the corridor and the Depot District, with residents within walking distance of a variety of retail, dining, services, and recreation opportunities. The streetscape is enhanced overall, with landscaping, sidewalks, and other treatments to make this corridor an attractive place for residents.



7.5.2 The Challenges

Today’s real estate development trends do not yet support the type of development envisioned here, but conditions change. The vision calls for the placement of storefront-style buildings along the arterial streets, and the current demand for abundant and visible parking for highway travelers make this difficult to achieve. The volume and speed of automotive and freight traffic – and the state Department of Transportation priorities – limit the degree to which non-motorized travel can be accommodated. Prioritizing traffic flow along the highway corridor creates an effective barrier isolating much of the Railroad District from the rest of Helena and discourages the type of mixed-use development envisioned along this segment of Montana Ave and Lyndale Ave.

The potential grade-separated rail crossing adds another dimension. While it may improve the efficiency of the proposed roundabout at Lyndale and Helena, it shifts the proposed alignment of the Centennial Trail crossing at North Montana Ave and places increased demand on Helena Ave to serve as the single point of entry to the Depot District. It also eliminates access to North Montana Ave near the railroad, necessitating new alternatives for those properties which now rely on North Montana Ave for access.

7.5.3 Recommended Changes

This plan’s proposed implementation actions advance strategic solutions for the Corridor District. They target:

Land Use and Zoning

This plan recommends the creation of a new corridor-focused zoning district, requiring the ability to incorporate mixed uses, pushing development toward the street, increasing permitted development intensity, instituting architectural design guidance,

and encouraging interparcel connections to reduce reliance on North Montana Ave for all vehicular access. Specific zoning strategies – like establishing minimum building heights, establishing “build-to” lines, eliminating required off-street parking, or prohibiting the location of parking between a building front and the street edge – may help establish a built form more consistent with this pattern. Instituting these standards in a form-based or other zoning construct may also smooth administrative approval of new development if it conforms to adopted standards.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

The Montana State Department of Transportation manages those portions of US 12 along North Montana Ave and Lyndale Ave, so the City’s ability to influence design improvements there is limited. The portion of North Montana north of Lyndale warrants special attention as plans for the potential grade-separated rail crossing evolves. North-south auto and freight mobility is a priority on this corridor, and the non-motorized system paralleling it and crossing it will need to adapt – while still creating an environment more compatible with the Corridor District’s vision. This emerging approach may influence the way in which the rest of Montana Ave and Lyndale Ave are managed by MDOT, effectively integrating a non-motorized component and enhancing the street environment to complement envisioned land use transformations.

Specific Streetscape Improvements

The three-lane section of North Montana Ave can be designed to encourage new development to approach closer to the street, with pedestrian facilities compatible with mixed-use development. It can also more easily accommodate the proposed pedestrian Centennial Trail crossing near Argyle St and Bozeman St.



7.6 Focus: The Recreation District

From the vision:

Helena's Centennial Trail runs east-west, connecting Helena's western neighborhoods to East Helena. A key portion of the trail runs through the Railroad District, linking Memorial Park and Carroll College to Kindrick Field, the Depot District and Trades District. The Trail connects the Railroad District's business and civic heart to the rest of Helena.



7.6.1 The Concept

This district maintains and enhances its recreational spirit, with the Centennial Trail, Memorial Park, and Kindrick Field offering a rich and active spectrum of recreational opportunities accessible to residents of and visitors to the Railroad District.

7.6.2 The Challenges

The Centennial Trail now terminates in this neighborhood, limiting its potential to attract new users. The neighborhood is also difficult to access, with the Lyndale portion of US 12 and the streets north of it not easily navigable to access recreational opportunities.

7.6.3 Recommended Changes

This plan's proposed implementation actions advance strategic solutions for the Recreation District. They target:



Access, Circulation, and Parking

Most of the plan's recommendations here focus on providing access to the recreational assets and facilitating development of recreational-oriented activities while also accommodating the existing manufacturing, logistics, and warehousing land uses sharing this space. Maintaining the National Ave rail crossing is important, as is ensuring access to Memorial Drive is enhanced. The Centennial Trail is another critical component, aligning it within existing rights of way to reach North Montana Ave.

Specific Streetscape Improvements

This district's street character is generally industrial, and the plan proposes no changes to street design. It does, however, propose extending the Centennial Trail along existing rights of way, resulting in targeted trail-related enhancement to portions of National Ave and Argyle St to accommodate the new, extended alignment and emphasize access to recreational or recreation-oriented uses along the way. In some cases, new sidewalks can close gaps where sidewalks do not now exist. In others – particularly where street speeds and vehicle volumes are low – the City may consider shared use arrangements where non-motorized traffic has priority.



8. Implementation

This chapter sets the plan into motion, articulating the neighborhood’s goals, the policies (or objectives) put in place to achieve them, and the specific actions necessary to implement this plan. These actions can be policy initiatives, investment into capital projects, or positioning for strategic partnerships where others may be better equipped to tackle plan priorities.

Implementation actions target infrastructure and institutional roles, reinforcing the physical, economic, social, and agency foundations for the district’s prosperity.

8.1 Roles & Responsibilities

Successful plan implementation requires collaboration and a shared commitment to the plan’s outcomes. While this may be the City of Helena’s plan, it requires action by many other agencies and individuals to become reality.

8.1.1 City of Helena

The City of Helena has land use and transportation jurisdiction throughout the subarea, partnering with the Montana State Department of Transportation on the improvement and maintenance of US Highway 12 along North Montana Ave and Lyndale Ave.

8.1.2 TIF Board

The Urban Revitalization District collects tax increment funds and applies them to support economic development efforts within the district boundaries.

8.1.3 RR District BID

Not yet created, a business improvement district in the 6th ward would collect revenue from businesses within the district – likely drawn closely around the Depot District and potentially including the Trades District – to invest in beautification, maintenance, and business development activities.



8.1.4 Montana Department of Transportation

The Department of Transportation has jurisdiction over US Highway 12 and has influence over the alignment and design of streets, walkways, and other improvements providing access to the highway corridor.

8.1.5 Lewis and Clark County Metropolitan Planning Organization

This entity is being formed at the time of the plan's writing. The MPO will channel federal transportation funds to deserving transportation projects based on a more local understanding of Helena's needs.

8.1.6 Partner Organizations

Multiple governmental, non-profit, and private organizations may contribute to this plan's implementation, as appropriate, based on their relationship to implementation commitments and outcomes.

8.2 Implementation Strategy

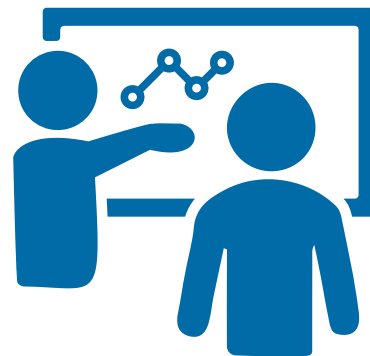
The paragraphs below identify the neighborhood's priority action items in response to the subarea plan's goals. Some of the actions are shorter term, focusing on issues which are more immediate.

Others cast a longer-term view, recognizing systemic or complex issues which may take more time and involve more partners to resolve. Where appropriate, this list also draws from the City's Growth Policy and the adopted Urban Renewal Plan, underscoring their continued relevance in planning for this neighborhood.

They revolve around policy changes, targeted investment, and the formation of partnerships, recognizing the City and community must work at different levels to achieve this plan's objectives.

Policy-related implementation actions include revisions to the Growth Policy and zoning ordinance, preparation of focused studies, and organizational clarity on transportation system priorities. Investment actions direct capital and operational expenditures, strategically leveraged to maximize impact on the district's physical landscape and demonstrate unified, coordinated commitment by the City, Tax Increment Financing District, and others, as appropriate. And the partnerships-related implementation actions recognize the need to act collaboratively on many issues, coordinating efforts and resources to address complex challenges and achieve mutually beneficial goals.

Policy references accompany each initiative, listed in the funding table provided at the end of this section. They anchor each recommendation to the subarea plan's policy direction.



Strategy #1: Adopt specific strategies to address community decay and vacant properties, guide TIF investment, and form a business improvement district (BID).

The City can address nuisance vegetation, stockpiling of refuse, and abandoned vehicles through the adoption of a nuisance ordinance.

Many of the transformational initiatives will rely on TIF leadership and targeted investment, putting the TIF Board in a more publicly visible position. Creating and vetting an integrated investment strategy will help, allowing business owners and residents to participate in determining TIF investment priorities and, on occasion, understanding how private investment may also be leveraged.

Local business owners have initiated efforts to coordinate marketing, branding, and commercial district improvements. It is time to formalize this direction, creating an instrument like a BID to facilitate continued coordination and establish an entity whose purpose is to nurture district businesses, advise on TIF strategy, partner with the City on various initiatives, and invest in the district's prosperity.

Issues Addressed:

Number	Issue
4	TIF Investment Strategy
5	Vehicle Storage
12	Placemaking



Strategy #2: Create streetscape plan and design to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor.

Existing streetscape designs do not support the mix and intensity of uses this plan envisions. Nor do they emphasize the district's and the highway corridor's unique identities. New streetscape designs sensitive to multi-modal needs and gradual adaptive investment will support the new types of uses compatible with the district's historic character.

The City's current initiative to redesign the eastern portion of Helena Ave seeks to enhance the Depot District's look, advancing the plan's objectives to confirm how the district's commercial streets will function, and underscore and enhance the relationship between the Depot District, Railroad Ave, the Centennial Trail, and the Trades District.

Roberts Street is an integral corridor for pedestrians and local traffic crossing the railroad tracks to access their homes, educational institutions, businesses, and public services. Improving the design and upgrading safety features on Roberts Street will allow for better access and provide pedestrians a sense of security.

Lyndale Avenue has two distinctly different personalities in the subarea. To the west of Montana Ave, it accommodates a steady flow of US 12 traffic on four lanes of roadway. To the east, it becomes a less-traveled street, still with abundant right of way but with fewer trips. The design challenge is to create a Lyndale compatible with highway operations for its western half and one better equipped to address the emerging needs of the Railroad District community on the east. In conjunction with the roundabout at Montana Ave, Lyndale will become a primary transportation corridor through the entirety of the Railroad District, accommodating highway traffic west of Montana and accommodating increased use – including school bus traffic – to the east.

A trolley once ran between the depot and downtown along Helena Avenue, transporting new arrivals and freight. This corridor can cement Helena's history through urban design and multimodal improvements, making pedestrian crossing easier and drawing design cues from Mt Helena to the west and the historic depot to the east (*designs to coordinate with City to ensure standards are met*).



Issues Addressed:

Number	Issue
3	Commercial District Identity/Vitality
4	TIF Investment Strategy
7	Neighborhood Character Preservation
8	At-Grade Rail Crossings
9	Stormwater Management
12	Placemaking

Strategy #3: Prepare a non-motorized strategy to complement proposed mobility improvements to North Montana Ave, design and construct the roundabout at Malfunction Junction, and install a Centennial Trail crossing of Montana Ave.

Helena's Five-Points multi-modal traffic study identified the roundabout as the best approach to solve multiple transportation objectives:

- ◆ Improving access to the 6th Ward neighborhoods from Lyndale and Montana Avenues,
- ◆ Maintaining Helena Avenue as a continuous route from the Railroad District to the downtown core through this intersection, and
- ◆ Maintaining acceptable operations for vehicles traveling on Highway 12, a need of the Montana Department of Transportation.

The Five-Points study also calls for a grade-separated railroad crossing at North Montana Ave and a signalized pedestrian crossing of Montana Ave between Lyndale Ave and the railroad. Participants in this process agree on the approach to the Centennial Trail crossing, recommending a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) for pedestrians and cyclists crossing Montana Avenue at the Argyle/Bozeman Street intersection. Many pedestrians and cyclists already use this path as an unofficial Centennial Trail extension. Participants are split on the grade-separated crossing, however, concerned by its access limitations and aware of its benefit to improve mobility. All actions related to this corridor must also be approached in coordination with MDT.



Issues Addressed:

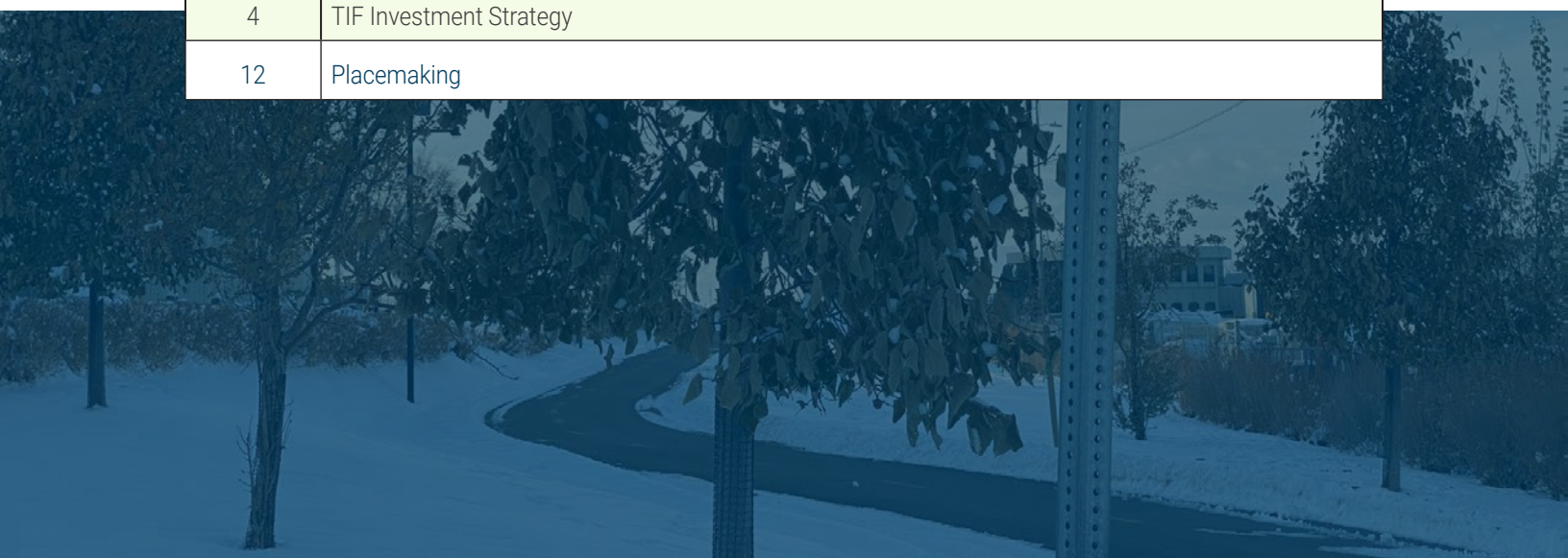
Number	Issue
1	Montana/Helena/Lyndale Intersection
2	Boulder Access
8	At-Grade Rail Crossings
12	Placemaking

Strategy #4: Confirm Centennial Trail alignment through the district, design it, and improve it.

The trail must continue from its existing terminus along public rights of way to reach Montana Ave and its proposed crossing at Argyle/Bozeman . There may also be influences on the final trail alignment based on the outcome of the current grade separation feasibility study, shifting the trail either north or south from its proposed Argyle/Bozeman crossing. This design effort will confirm the trail alignment through the entirety of the district, informing street design along the trail’s route and providing an opportunity to coordinate with adjoining property owners to maximize the trail’s positive impact.

Issues Addressed:

Number	Issue
3	Commercial District Identity/Vitality
4	TIF Investment Strategy
12	Placemaking



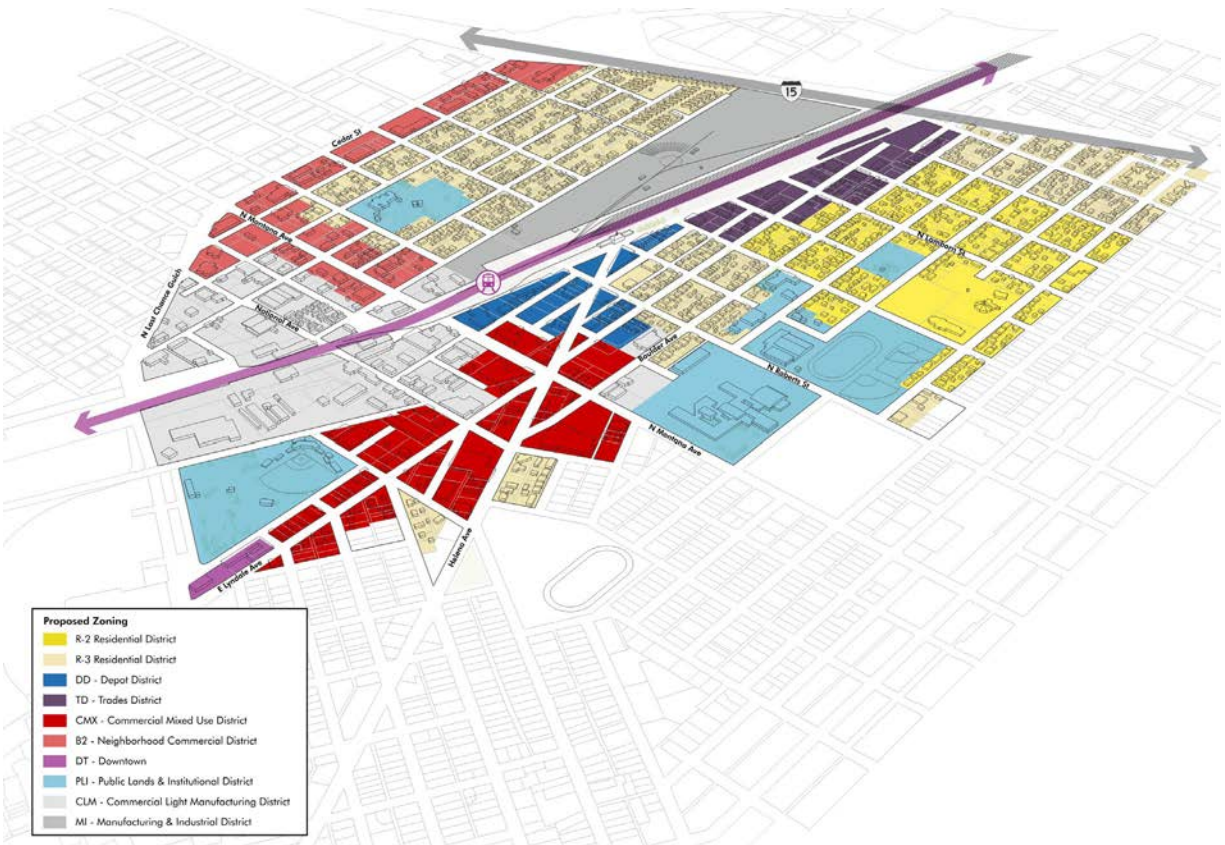
Strategy #5: Update zoning throughout the subarea, particularly in the Depot, Trades, and Corridor Districts.

The 6th Ward’s existing zoning renders much of the existing development patterns and types nonconforming and deters new revitalization opportunities. New development standards and land use permissions are necessary to achieve the potential this plan envisions.

Issues Addressed:

Number	Issue
3	Commercial district identity/vitality
6	Housing attainability
7	Neighborhood character preservation
10	Zoning and intensity
11	Zoning and built character compatibility
12	Placemaking

Figure 31: Proposed Zoning



8.3 Funding

The table below summarizes the various plan implementation actions, linking them to the subarea plan’s goals, indicating their relative timing, and identifying parties responsible for them. The City’s capital improvement program will take steps to implement recommendations, specifying timeline, investment, and responsibility.

The table here lists each of the proposed implementation actions, the goals and policies they implement, their anticipated timing in terms of short, medium, and long-range, those responsible for implementing them, and potential funding sources. The short, medium and long-range timing (abbreviated S, M, and L) correspond to 0 – 5 years, 6 – 10 years, and 11+ years from the date of this plan’s adoption.

Table 4: Implementation Matrix Abbreviations	
Abbreviation	Meaning
S	Short Range (0 – 5 years)
M	Medium Range (6 – 10 years)
L	Long range (11 + years)
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program
HSIP	Highway Safety Improvement Program
MDT	Montana State Department of Transportation
NH	National Highway Performance Program
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
RURD/TIF	Railroad Urban Renewal District/Tax Increment Financing
SWBID	Sixth Ward Business Improvement District
TA	Transportation Alternatives Program

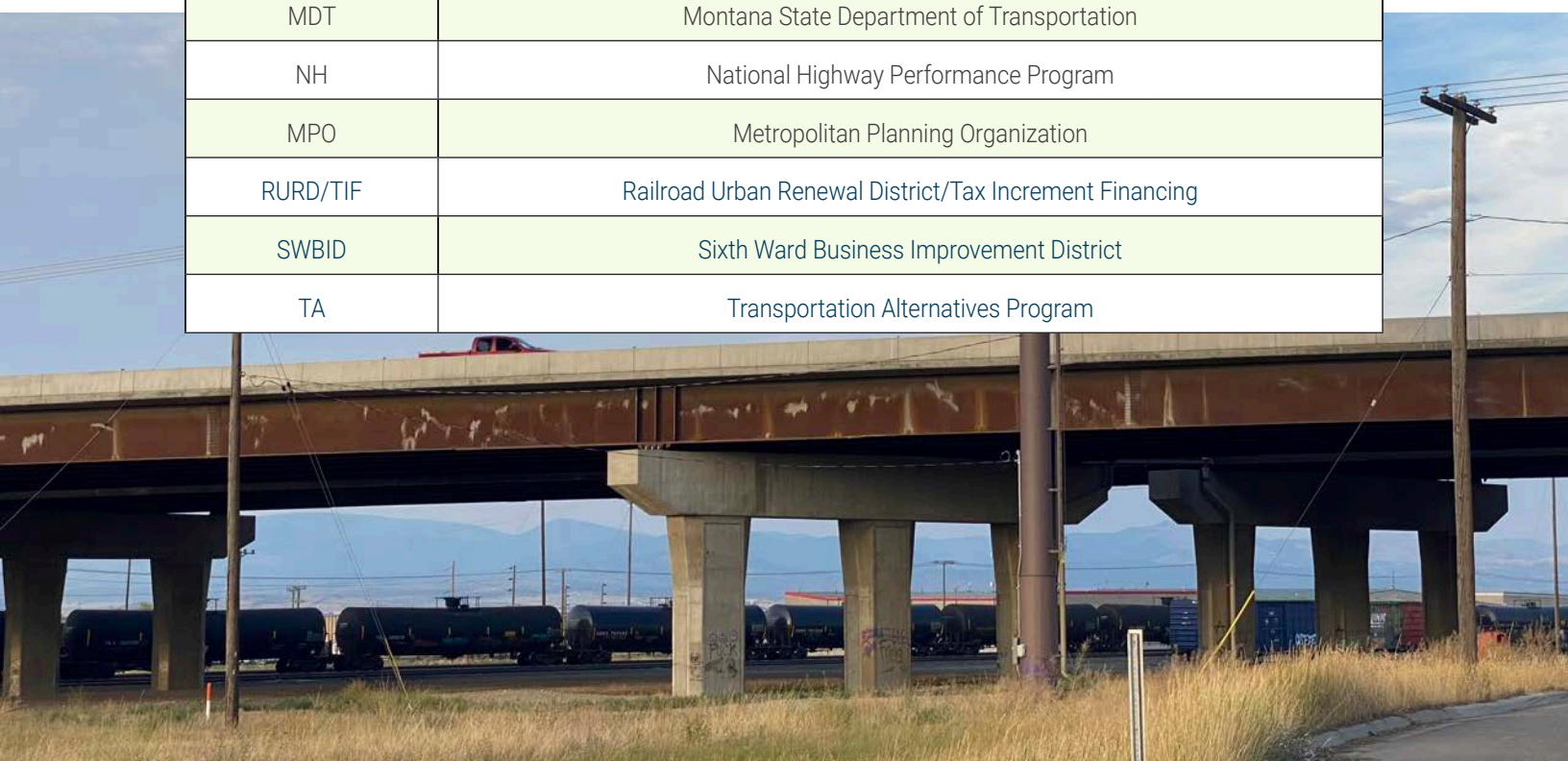


Table 5: Implementation Matrix

	Action	Issue(s)	Objective(s)	Timing (S, M, L)	Responsibility	Funding
1	Adopt specific strategies to address community decay and vacant properties, guide TIF investment, and form a business improvement district (BID).					
	Adopt a robust community decay and vacant property ordinance	4, 5, 12	1.1, 2.4, 5.8			
	Produce and vet a TIF investment strategy	4, 5, 12	1.5, 3.5, 4.5, 4.8, 5.4, 5.8	S	City	City
	Form a business improvement district	4, 5, 12	5.5	S, M	City	City, SWBID
2	Create streetscape plan and design consistent with complete streets policy to match vision in the Depot District and Trades District, Roberts St corridor, the Lyndale corridor, and the Helena Ave corridor.					
	Prepare a streetscape plan for the Depot District and Shops District	3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12	3.2, 3.4, 4.2, 4.8, 5.6	S	City, RURD, MDT	City, RURD/TIF
	Design the Roberts St corridor	3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12	2.2, 4.2, 4.8, 5.6	S	City, RURD, MDT	City, RURD/TIF
	Design the Lyndale Ave corridor	3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12	2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.4, 4.5, 4.8, 5.1	S	City, RURD, MDT	City, RURD/TIF
	Design the Helena Ave corridor, with improvements per Five-Points study	3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12	1.2, 1.3, 3.2, 4.2, 4.4, 4.8, 5.8	S, M	City, RURD, MDT	City, RURD/TIF
3	Implement complete streets policy for Montana Ave between Lyndale and Cedar, design and construct the roundabout at Malfunction Junction, and verify alignment of and construct the Centennial Trail crossing of North Montana Ave.					
	Redesign Montana Ave consistent with complete streets policy	1, 2, 8, 12	1.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 5.6	M	MDT, MPO	MPT, Discretionary Grant Funding, CMAQ
	Design and construct the Montana Ave Roundabout	1, 2, 8, 12	3.2, 5.6	M, L	MDT, MPO	MPO, Discretionary Grant Funding, NH, CMAQ
	Verify and construct the Centennial Trail crossing at Montana Ave	1, 2, 8, 12	2.1, 3.1, 3.4, 4.2, 4.8	S	City, MDT	City, RURD/TIF, TA, NH, HSIP



Table 5: Implementation Matrix

	Action	Issue(s)	Objective(s)	Timing (S, M, L)	Responsibility	Funding
Confirm Centennial Trail alignment through the district, design it, and improve it.						
4	Study and confirm the Centennial Trail alignment through the district	3, 4, 12	1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.8, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6	S	City, MDT, MPO	City, RURD/ TIF, TA, NH, HSIP
	Improve the Centennial Trail through the district	3, 4, 12	1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.8, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6	M	City, MDT	City, RURD/ TIF, TA, NH, HSIP
Update zoning in the Depot District, Shops District, and Corridor District.						
5	Update zoning to match land use and development standards with proposed vision	3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12	4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.8	S	City, Property Owners	Discretionary Grant Funding, City, RURD/ TIF



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APPENDICES



SCJ ALLIANCE
CONSULTING SERVICES



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Appendix A: Existing Conditions

A.1 Context: Demographics Snapshot

Based on information from community demographic data available from the US Census American Community Survey (ACS), it appears:

- ♦ Helena has a similar racial/ethnic background to Lewis and Clark County and Montana.
- ♦ Helena has a relatively high percentage of rental homes (44.8%) and a relatively high percentage of people with a bachelor's degree or higher compared to the county, state, and national levels. The community has a relatively high resident student population, with Carroll College and Helena College partially explaining the higher rental household percentages, low median age, and lower education levels. In addition, Helena is the state capital, increasing demand for rental housing available during the legislative sessions.
- ♦ The average household size tends to be larger in the county than in the city. This may indicate that families prefer to be in the reaches of open space of the county to raise a family. Family households in the city of Helena tend to be smaller, perhaps due to differences in lifestyle and competition for more resources.
- ♦ Helena's median household income is lower than the rest of the county, state, and nation.
- ♦ Retail sales per capita in Helena are almost double that for the state and nation, indicating the community is a central place for shopping and services serving a larger region. More than 90% of all retail sales in Lewis and Clark County occur in Helena, confirming the city's role as a regional hub for goods and services.
- ♦ The median values of owner-occupied

homes in Helena and Lewis and Clark County are almost identical but higher than the state and national median values.

Helena's Growth Policy incorporates this information for the community as a whole. The median household income in Helena is lower than that of Lewis and Clark County (see Table 3). The average household size for Lewis and Clark County was 2.34 people and the average family size was 2.90 members, whereas the City of Helena's average household was 2.11 people, and the average family size was 2.75. Family households accounted for 53.3% of the households within the City of Helena, and 62.5% of households in the county. Owner-occupied households have a larger average household size than renter-occupied households in both the city and the county (see Table 4). Comparatively, approximately 1 in 2 households in Helena are family households vs. the county's dynamic of 2 in 3 households are majority family households. These statistics show that more families tend to be located in the county than in the city of Helena. The average household size tends to be larger in the county than in the city. This may indicate that families prefer to be located in the reaches of open space of the County to raise a family. Family households in the city of Helena tend to be smaller perhaps due to differences in lifestyle and competition for more resources. More non-family households tend to be located in the city of Helena rather than in the county. This may be attributed to the types of housing available such as multifamily, duplexes, townhomes, and more rental housing stock. This availability of housing options may allow for greater versatility in housing situations than the traditional housing stock in the country.



Table A.1: U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts - City of Helena, Montana

	Helena	L&C Co.	Montana	US
Population estimate July 1, 2023	34,464	75,011	1,132,812	334,914,895
White alone	91.8%	93.7%	88.7%	75.5%
Black or African American alone	0.9%	0.5%	0.6%	13.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	1.4%	2.1%	6.5%	1.3%
Asian alone	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%	6.3%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
Two or more races	4.4%	2.7%	3.0%	3.0%
Hispanic or Latino	4.8%	3.9%	4.5%	19.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	88.1%	90.5%	85.3%	58.9%
Owner-occupied housing rate, 2018-2022	55.2%	70.5%	69.0%	64.8%
Median value of owner-occupied housing, 2018-2022	\$331,700	\$332,000	\$305,700	\$281,900
Households, 2018-2022	15,233	30,281	443,917	125,736,353
Persons per household, 2018-2022	2.04	2.31	2.39	2.57
High school graduate or higher, age 25+, 2018-2022	96.2%	95.0%	94.5%	89.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher, age 25+, 2018-2022	50.5%	42.7%	34.0%	34.3%
Total retail sales (\$1,000), 2017	1,006,978	1,100,449	16,935,827	4,949,601,481
Total retail sales per capita, 2018-2022	\$31,335	\$16,186	\$16,070	\$15,224
Mean travel time to work (minutes), age 16+, 2018-2022	13.4	17.3	18.8	26.7
Median household income, 2018-2022	\$64,798	\$71,967	\$66,341	\$75,149

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Helena City, Montana." QuickFacts Helena City, Montana; Lewis and Clark County, Montana; Montana; United States, U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/helenacitymontana/PST045222. Accessed 30 Aug. 2023.



A closer look at the Railroad District planning area reveals additional insight. This information, derived from ESRI's GeoEnrichment Service, shows Sixth Ward residents are younger, earn less, and live in slightly smaller households than others in Helena and Montana. There is a vast separation in educational attainment, with 16.2% of Sixth Ward residents possessing a bachelor's degree or above. This compares with slightly more than 50% in Helena. The planning area comprises about one-tenth of

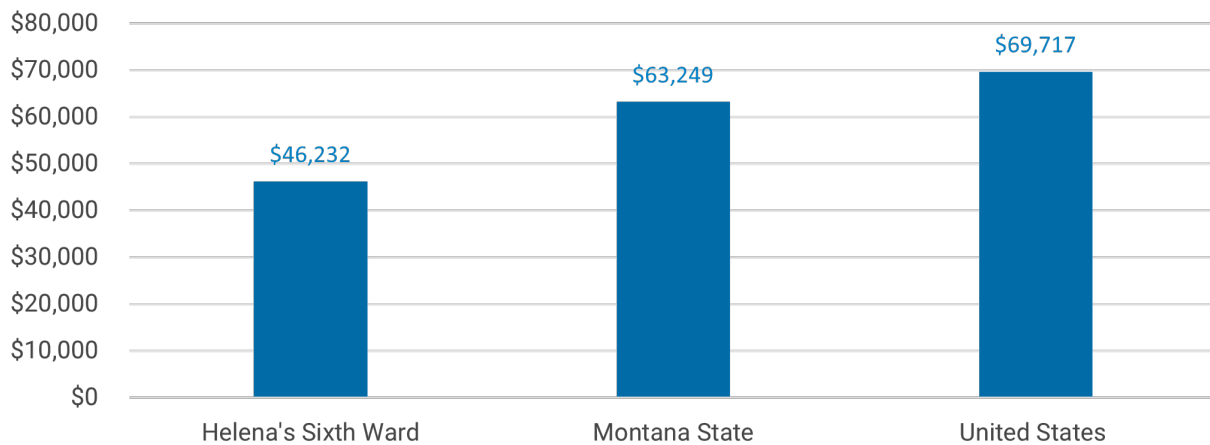
Helena's total population. These numbers differ slightly from the data in the table above because the Census data is more current.

Railroad District households also earn less than others in Helena. Median household income in the planning area is approximately 88% that of other Helena households. The disparity is even greater when compared to the rest of Montana and to the United States as a whole.

Table A.2: Railroad District Planning Area Statistics				
	Helena's 6th Ward	Helena	Montana State	United States
Population (2022)	3,495	33,885	1,104,271	331,893,745
Age	37.70	39.9	40.10	38.80
Education (bachelor's degree or higher)	16.20%	50.2%	34.80%	35%
Median Household Income	\$46,232	\$59,712	\$63,249	\$69,717
Total Households	1,735	15,032	448,949	127,544,730
Average Household Size	2.01	2.03	2.99	2.51

Source: Esri GeoEnrichment service "Helena Railroad District Demographics" (2023) data research. ESRI ArcPro GIS tool.

Figure A.1: Median Household Income



Source: Esri GeoEnrichment service "Helena Railroad District Demographics" (2023) data research. ESRI ArcPro GIS tool.



Table A.2: Railroad District Planning Area Statistics			
	Helena's 6th Ward	Helena	Montana State
White	84.10%	91.0%	88.7%
Black	1.10%	0.0%	0.6%
American Indian	4.00%	1.2%	6.5%
Asian	0.70%	0.8%	1.1%
Pacific Islander	0.10%	0.0%	0.1%
2 or more races	8.60%	4.8%	3.0%
White identifying as Hispanic	5.90%	--	--

Source: Esri GeoEnrichment service "Helena Railroad District Demographics" (2023) data research. ESRI ArcPro GIS tool.

A.2 Context: Policy

This subarea plan builds on other, recent work the City has completed. The City already has a library of adopted policies establishing either an overarching framework within which the subarea plan must operate or a set of models of similar work this process and plan can reference.

A.2.1 Growth Policy (2019)

Helena's recent Growth Policy offers high-level guidance on how the community should manage its transportation, land use, economic development, housing, and capital investment policy. Based on a comprehensive public engagement process, the Growth Policy sets out multiple objectives intended to guide City decision-making and position its relationship with agency partners.

Much of the Growth Policy is relevant to this plan, advocating for reinvestment in the community's neighborhood centers, providing local employment opportunities,

keeping neighborhoods intact, advancing transportation safety, enhancing the community's overall quality of daily life, facilitating access to affordable housing, and improving connections from one neighborhood to the next.

Appendix B includes the Growth Policy's policy framework.

A.2.2 Downtown Helena Master Plan

Downtown Helena, Inc commissioned the recent Downtown Plan, creating a playbook to enhance the district's prosperity. The plan includes multiple recommendations for land use, transportation and infrastructure improvements, business synergy, employment, wayfinding, and organizational strategy. While Downtown is different than the Railroad District, the Downtown Plan's approach to investigate conditions, reference existing policy, involve stakeholders in plan development, and specifically identify priority actions has proven largely effective in the eyes of those participating in this process.



A.2.3 Rodney Street Neighborhood Plan

Adjacent to downtown, the Rodney Street neighborhood features a small commercial district and a network of institutions, all closely tied to the historic residential district generally oriented along Rodney Street. The neighborhood is approximately the same age as the Railroad District, and the past 50 years have seen the neighborhood change as Helena has grown. Housing in Rodney Street is gradually transformed from almost exclusively single-family to a mix of single-family, apartments, and residential multi-unit conversions, turning historic mansions into multiple apartments. Many of the older homes have also been converted into office spaces.

Rodney Street is different from the Railroad District in many ways, but it represents neighborhood success in rediscovering what had been a declining commercial area and reconnecting its ties to the residential and institutional context surrounding it.

A.2.4 Railroad Urban Renewal District Plan and Tax Increment Financing (2015)

The Railroad URD Plan provides an overview of the proposed response to the conditions of blight found in the district as well as to other district revitalization priorities identified by stakeholders. The Plan suggests potential means of addressing the issues facing the district and does so in the explicit context of existing plans for the City of Helena. These existing plans, in conjunction with Montana laws, shape the proposed implementation of the Railroad URD Plan.

The Railroad URD Plan is intended to revitalize the existing Railroad District with upgraded infrastructure, business expansion, improved transportation functionality, and connections within and outside the district while maintaining a commitment to preserving the area's historic integrity. The Railroad URD details four overarching goals (See Chapter III – Railroad District Plan: Vision and Goals) which guide planning and implementation.

Appendix B includes the Urban Renewal District's policy framework.

A.2.5 Multimodal Traffic Study

The City of Helena recently commissioned a report to examine its more complex urban intersections and busy arterial corridors leading into them. The 2021 Multimodal Traffic Study: Five-Point Intersections & Corridor Connections report describes conditions along the Last Chance Gulch, Helena Avenue, and Lyndale Avenue corridors and at the intersections where these corridors meet. The study reviewed the multiple transportation-related issues plaguing the study area. There are treatment proposals that were indicated in the recommendations of the study that are relevant to the Railroad District. Based on the details from the study performed it appears extensive community engagement effort was made in identifying the issues from the public through multiple meetings, an online presence, and concentrated involvement with agency and organizational stakeholders. The engagement helped refine the project scope, create, and vet project options, and review and prioritize recommended solutions.



Prominent recommendations within this planning area include the construction of a roundabout at the Helena/Lyndale/Montana intersection, a roadway underpass at the Montana Ave rail crossing, a Centennial Trail connection to and across Montana Ave, and bike lanes on Helena Ave, and pedestrian crossings along Lyndale Ave.

Appendix C summarizes the study's recommendations.

A.2.6 Caird Property & Midtowne Neighborhood Community Visioning Project (2014)

Caird Engineering Works was a prominent company in Helena, and it occupied a high-profile site at the intersection of North Montana (US 12), Helena, and East Lyndale avenues. The company began when two friends, Charles Caird and Frank Hawksworth, purchased this property in June 1895 from the Montana National Bank. The company first started by fabricating mining equipment, then by October 1914, Caird filed Articles of Incorporation creating the Caird Engineering Works. The company expanded the business to include the manufacture of stove lids and other steel products. World War II caused a boom in Caird's business as it obtained contracts from the U.S. military between 1941 and 1945. By 1950, the company had filled 156,000 orders since 1895 and continued to be an important metal fabricating plant in the post-war years (Wilcox 1990).

Caird's Engineering site was a significant operation that fabricated steel and iron into materials that were used throughout Montana and the United States. In addition to mining and smelting equipment, it provided a wide range of products, such as lamp posts, manhole covers, and trolley poles to name just a few, to municipalities in the region. It was also a significant fabricator of military equipment during WWII and provided bridge components to the Montana Highway Department during the period of its greatest growth between 1927 and 1956. Porte and his nephew, Robert, operated the firm until 2006. In March 2014, the current owner, the Montana Business Assistance Corporation, purchased the property to demolish the buildings and the property has now been sold and new commercial development is anticipated (possibly a car wash).

A.2.7 Montana Rail Grade Separation Study (2016)

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) commissioned an update to the 2003 Montana Rail Grade Separation Study to address changed conditions and assess highway-rail crossing needs across the state. Since the publication of the 2003 Study, some Montana communities have experienced growth in population, roadway traffic, and train traffic, contributing to vehicle delays at at-grade railroad crossings. Both safety and delay issues at railroad crossings continue to be important statewide and individual community concerns.



The purpose of the 2016 Montana Rail Grade Separation Study was to use a data-driven evaluation process to identify a list of at-grade and grade-separated railroad crossings where potential feasible improvements may be considered. The evaluation process included a two-tiered screening and selection process to identify a final list of 10 at-grade and 12 grade-separated crossings. A data-based methodology was used to identify these

locations from a total of more than 5,200 at-grade crossings and more than 400 grade-separated crossings throughout the state. For each of the final 10 at-grade crossings, potential grade-separated alternatives were identified and conceptual plans, planning-level cost estimates, and benefit-cost analyses (BCA) were developed. Potential improvements were also identified for selected grade-separated crossings. The Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) framework:

Figure A.2: Montana Avenue BCA Framework

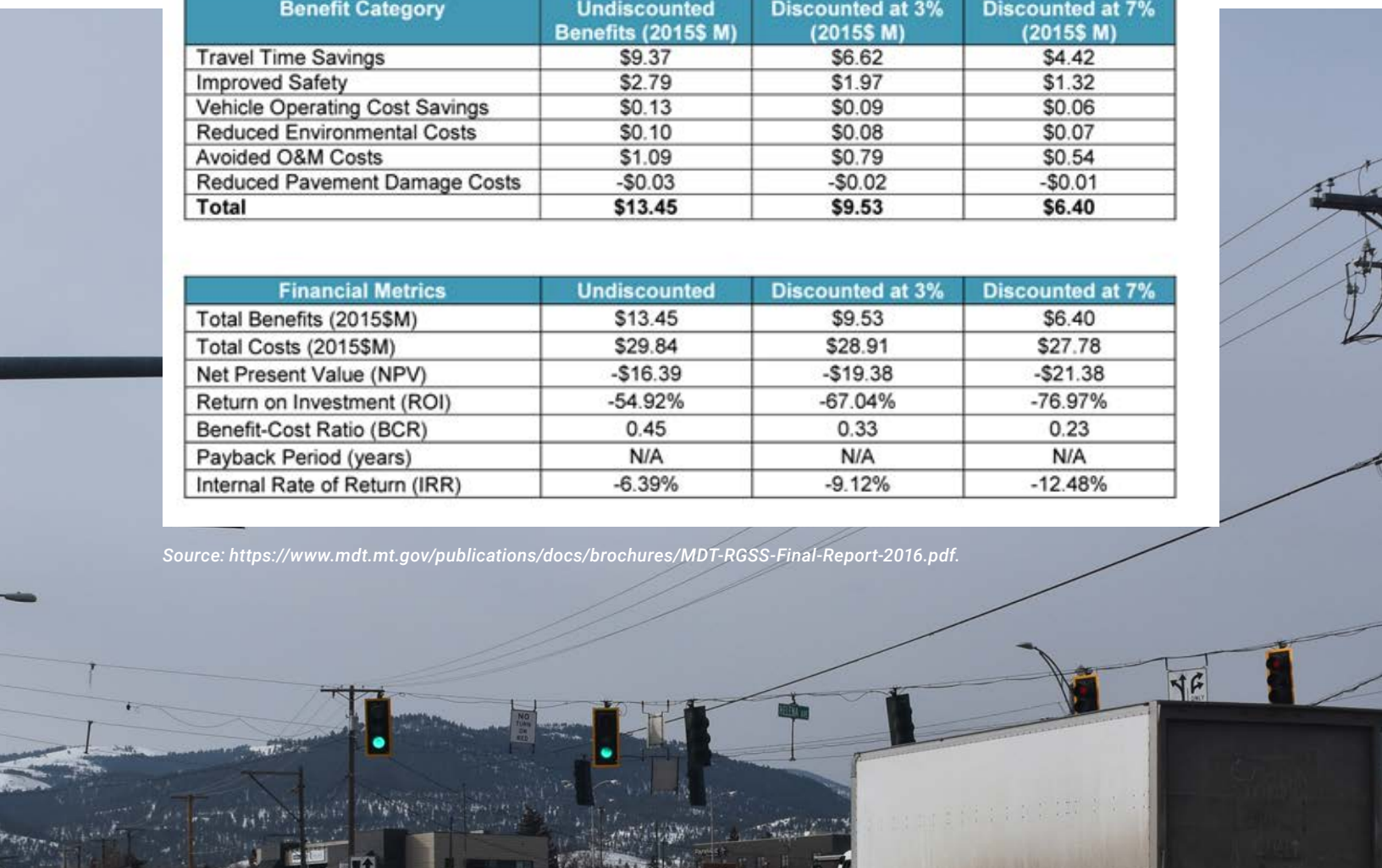
Helena – Montana Ave

Considering all monetized benefits and costs of the Montana Ave crossing, the estimated net present value of the project with a 7% discount rate is a net cost of \$21.38 million. The project's total benefits in present value terms are worth \$6.40 million - of which the largest benefit is \$4.42 million worth of travel time savings - while the total costs amount to \$27.78 million.

Benefit Category	Total Undiscounted Benefits (2015\$ M)	Total Benefits Discounted at 3% (2015\$ M)	Total Benefits Discounted at 7% (2015\$ M)
Travel Time Savings	\$9.37	\$6.62	\$4.42
Improved Safety	\$2.79	\$1.97	\$1.32
Vehicle Operating Cost Savings	\$0.13	\$0.09	\$0.06
Reduced Environmental Costs	\$0.10	\$0.08	\$0.07
Avoided O&M Costs	\$1.09	\$0.79	\$0.54
Reduced Pavement Damage Costs	-\$0.03	-\$0.02	-\$0.01
Total	\$13.45	\$9.53	\$6.40

Financial Metrics	Undiscounted	Discounted at 3%	Discounted at 7%
Total Benefits (2015\$M)	\$13.45	\$9.53	\$6.40
Total Costs (2015\$M)	\$29.84	\$28.91	\$27.78
Net Present Value (NPV)	-\$16.39	-\$19.38	-\$21.38
Return on Investment (ROI)	-54.92%	-67.04%	-76.97%
Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR)	0.45	0.33	0.23
Payback Period (years)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Internal Rate of Return (IRR)	-6.39%	-9.12%	-12.48%

Source: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/MDT-RGSS-Final-Report-2016.pdf>.



A.3 Context: Institutions

A.3.1 City of Helena

The city of Helena's local government office is located at 316 N Park Ave, Helena, MT 59623. The building is shared with the Lewis and Clark County government offices. The city's administration is maintained by a city manager and led by elected city commissioners and a mayor. The city of Helena requested this Urban Renewal Study of the 6th Ward to help facilitate understanding and direction. Helena's Planning department will use the feedback gleaned from the community to make informed recommendations on topics such as zoning or transportation in the neighborhood to the City's Commission.

A.3.2 Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

According to Montana's Website, its mission is to plan, build, operate, and maintain a safe and resilient transportation infrastructure to move Montana forward. Its vision is to accomplish this mission, which is to set the gold standard for a highly effective, innovative, and people-centric department of transportation.

Before the highway commission was formed, Montana's roads were little more than dirt tracks that functioned better for wagons than automobiles. It was in March 1913 that the Montana legislature created the Montana Highway Commission. Today, the state highway system includes approximately 12,900 miles.

MDT manages a multimodal transportation network that includes roadways, airways, airports, railways, traffic safety, and public

transit, along with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. This interconnected system "drives" Montana's quality of life and economy that will carry us ahead into the new biennium.

Areas of Highway 12 were discussed as major themes from the interviews to the open studios regarding providing safety upgrades such as RRFB signals, crosswalks, and pedestrian lighting for key access points (Malfunction Junction, National & Lyndale Avenue, Montana Ave, and Argyle Street). A portion of Highway 12 becomes Lyndale Avenue and enters the 6th Ward as one of the main streets that make up malfunction junction.

A.3.3 Helena's Sixth Ward Urban Renewal District

Helena's Sixth Ward comprises the areas east of the Last Chance Gulch, south of Cedar Street, west of Highway 287, north of Butte Avenue, and northeast of 13th Avenue. Helena's Sixth Ward is beginning to see a business renaissance with help from passionate business owners, developers, and community members. This district holds strong ties to Helen's beginnings. Speaking with stakeholders of the community urban renewal efforts should seek to highlight the 6th Ward's historic past, reestablish community interest through events, and support local businesses.

A.3.4 Helena School District

Helena School District is responsible for servicing 12 Elementary schools, 2 Middle schools, 2 High schools, and 1 alternative school. Helena Public School's guiding principle is "Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle."



Helena’s mission statement is “Committed to sharing the responsibility for creating a student-centered educational community that acknowledges learning as a life-long process.” Currently, the school board is comprised of an Executive Committee Chair, an Executive Committee Vice Chair, 3 board trustees, a Board President, a School representative, a Superintendent, and two student representatives.

A.3.5 University of Montana/Helena College

According to Helena’s Montana’s website, its mission is to “support its diverse community by providing the paths and tools necessary to assist learners in achieving their educational and career goals”. Its vision aspires to empower our students through impactful, affordable, lifelong education that is responsive to the needs of our community in ways that are enriching, collaborative, and equitable.

The Helena College University of Montana, formerly the Helena College of Technology and the Helena Vocational-Technical Center, was founded in 1939 when the Office of Public Instruction designated five training centers for Montana. The Helena Center is the only one to accept the challenge.

In 2007, a \$10 million expansion and renovation project was completed at the Airport and Donaldson Campuses. The expansion added 21% more space to the Donaldson Campus, including a new library, lecture hall, science labs, student services facilities, and a multi-purpose room for continuing education and academic instruction. Renovations of the existing space are completed, increasing classroom space, and providing facilities for the Nursing and Fire and Rescue programs. The Airport Campus expanded by 24% to include a

new facility for the Automotive Technology program and additional space for the Machine Tool program. The Construction Technology program was relocated to the Airport campus. The Montana Legislature approved funding for a further \$5.1 million expansion of the Airport Campus to provide more space for the Welding Technology program.

During the open studio sessions, feedback was given to seek other educational opportunities such as a school of cosmetology and flight school for pilots.

A.3.6 Houses of Worship

There are 7 churches located in Helena’s Six Ward (Hannaford Street Bible Church, St Mary’s Catholic Community, Calvary Chapel of Helena, Life Covenant Church, Emmanuel Church, St John’s Lutheran Church, and Mount Helena Community Church). Each church has its own story of beginnings and mission statement of how it seeks to help, support, and improve the everyday lives of Helena’s community.

A.3.7 Non-Profits

Friendship Center of Helena

Founded in 1971, The Friendship Center is the community resource for addressing and preventing domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking through advocacy, education, and outreach in Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, and Jefferson Counties. Their services are available to anyone, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Their mission statement is: “We must insist on being a community where the most vulnerable among us can find hope, safe haven, and support, not only to escape violence but to rise above their pasts and rebuild their lives”. The non-profit offers events, classes, and support services of all kinds for special circumstances



NAMI Montana

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is a nationwide, grassroots mental health organization. NAMI offers educational programs, advocates for individuals and families affected by mental illness, and operates a toll-free helpline.

A.4 Context: Transportation and Infrastructure

The Railroad District is a regional transportation hub, with US highway 12, a major freight rail line, and regional arterial roadways tracing through it. Located near the city's geographic center, the district also has a mature system of utility and stormwater infrastructure.

A.4.1 Roadways

The roadways of Helena are governed by city, county, and state entities. Helena's Transportation Systems department works in close conjunction with the county and state. Currently, two plans are acting as guiding documents:

1. **Greater Helena Area Long Range Transportation Plan—2014**
Update prepared by Robert Peccia & Associates (RPA) and ALTA Planning
2. **City of Helena Multimodal Traffic Study 5 Point Intersection & Corridor Connection**—prepared by Robert Peccia & Associates (RPA)

The Transportation Systems department's mission is to provide and maintain quality public services and safe roadways, sidewalks, parking, and Public Transportation to meet the Helena community's needs. Its vision is to be a newly designated steward of the community's roadways, parking, and transportation, managed through innovative

technology and the provider of superior services for our community's future. The department is located within the City-County Building at 316 N Park Ave, Helena, MT 59601.

A.4.2 Rail

Currently, the railyard and operating rail line rights are under the ownership of Montana Rail Link Trainmaster which is currently in the process of being acquired by Burlington Northern Sante Fe (BNSF) Railway. BNSF's vision is to realize tremendous potential by providing transportation services that consistently meet our customers' expectations. The rail infrastructure is a major institutional asset to Helena's economy and holds the potential to revive new industries should passenger rail return.

Many community members who provided feedback in the public engagements detailed a yearning for the passenger rail line to return to the railyard. "Rural community members see it as an economic development opportunity but also as a social lifeline for residents who might not have any other means to travel long distances for necessities." For nearly a century, passenger train service was available through central Montana's remote grass-rich mountain valleys, cattle country. The passenger service was available until Amtrak pulled the plug on the North Coast Hiawatha in 1979. There has been momentum by the Biden Administration and a dozen counties across the sparsely populated state that are hoping for a return to passenger train service through the cities of Billings, Bozeman, Helena, and Missoula.

A.4.3 Trails

The city of Helena has guiding documents that pertain to the maintenance of some trails and inventory analysis of others. The city partners with Prickly Pear Land Trust for trail planning efforts.



According to Prickly Pear Land Trust’s website, they are committed to the belief that open space is essential to the well-being of all communities. “Spacious views, abundant wildlife, and recreational opportunities renew and revitalize our spirits. Maintaining traditional agricultural lands preserves Montana’s cultural heritage.” Prickly Pear Land Trust seeks to preserve and protect the rural character of the Prickly Pear Valley and adjoining lands in Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, Broadwater, and Powell counties through voluntary and cooperative means. Their mission is to inspire connections to the landscapes, water, wildlife, recreation, and agricultural heritage, of West-Central Montana through conservation, now and for future generations. Centennial Trail is a major discussion point with the community. Many detailed that the Centennial Trail needs to continue eastward through Montana Avenue. Currently, the trail has a terminus at National Avenue and continuation appears to be stifled by Montana Avenue’s flow of traffic and “Malfunction Junction.” Providing safety amenities could help alleviate the issues of that junction.

A.4.4 Utilities

Many services within the City are supplied by private utilities, including electric power, natural gas, cable television, phone services, and wireless communications. The City works closely with all providers to ensure that citizens’ needs are adequately addressed. Areas requiring close coordination include easement acquisition and placement, converting overhead utilities to below ground, installation, and maintenance of utilities within City rights-of-way, and siting of new facilities (such as cellular towers).

Water and wastewater services are billed to the landowner monthly. Water meters are read once a month and billed a month behind. Water is billed on actual usage. Residential wastewater is calculated from your October read through your May read

of each year and updated in the July bill. Commercial wastewater is calculated on the actual usage.

A.4.5 Water

The City of Helena provides drinking water to the citizens of the city. It receives its water resources from the mountain reservoirs, streams, and nearby rivers. The two major water sources: are Tenmile Creek and the Missouri River. According to the city’s website, before the water shows up in people’s homes the water must be treated before it can be used for drinking and domestic use. The Water Treatment Division’s goals are to maintain the highest standards for water treatment while choosing a cost-effective means to meet future demands. Supply customers with the highest quality potable water possible while keeping the water costs down. Investigate and implement practical and cost-effective methods to treat the water looking at new and old technology.

The Water Treatment Division has a variety of duties to perform to acquire, treat, and supply water culminating at the consumer’s water tap. This requires the Water Treatment Division to work co-operatively with regulatory groups, environmental groups, and the public. Each year the City of Helena provides a Water Quality Consumer Confidence Report that is mailed to utility customers and made available through the City website. Water rates for the City of Helena are established through resolution each fiscal year.

A.4.6 Wastewater

The City of Helena provides support and maintenance services for the removal of wastewater. The city has a Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) that uses a biological nutrient removal (BNR) process to treat over 1 billion gallons of wastewater each year. Wastewater includes everything that goes down the drain.



Such as showers, bath water, toilets, sinks, washing machines, dishwashers, discharge from local industrial cooling systems, cleaning projects, and some chemical processes. Over 178 miles of sanitary sewer pipes, 3470 manholes, and 7 lift stations throughout the City of Helena collect and transport the wastewater to the WWTF for treatment. The treated wastewater is discharged into Prickly Pear Creek which flows into Lake Helena and eventually to the Missouri River. The City of Helena has an approved Industrial Pretreatment program that is regulated by the EPA and used to maintain compliance with the Wastewater Treatment Facility's discharge permit requirements. This program facilitates compliance by reducing heavy metals and other harmful contaminants from entering the WWTF.

The Wastewater Treatment Facility continues to accept hauled septic waste as a valuable community service.

A.4.7 Stormwater

Stormwater runoff is a major cause of water pollution in urban areas. When rain falls on roofs, streets, and parking lots in cities and their suburbs, the water cannot soak into the ground as it should. Stormwater drains through gutters, storm sewers, and other engineered collection systems and is discharged into nearby water bodies. The stormwater runoff carries trash, bacteria, heavy metals, and other pollutants from the urban landscape into those water bodies. Today cities and urban areas regulate stormwater systems to help improve water quality by using various methods to remove pollutants from storm water before it enters our water bodies. These methods include Best Management Practices, Low Impact Development, and Green Infrastructure.

Due to the size of the City of Helena, our stormwater system is regulated under the Montana Pollution Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Storm Water

Discharges Associated with Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems issued by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The City has developed a Storm Water Management Program in accordance with the General Permit requirements. New additions of infrastructure to the system and new connections that will discharge to the storm sewer system must be developed to meet the requirements in the General Permit, the Storm Water Ordinance under City Code 6-6-1, the Engineering and Design Standards, and the system must be operated to apply Best Management Practices to protect stormwater quality.

The Utility Maintenance Division maintains and operates the storm sewer system. The storm sewer system consists of approximately: 70 miles of storm pipe ranging from 8-inch to 90-inch pipes, 30 miles of open storm drainage channels, 700 manholes, and 1,800 storm inlets.

A.4.8 Power

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) delivers reliable, affordable, and carbon-free hydropower produced in the Columbia River Basin to communities across the Northwest. BPA maintains 15,000+ circuit miles of high-voltage power lines, which equates to 28% of the electric power in the Northwest. BPA also powers the lives of 3 million people and markets hydropower from 31 federal dams in the Columbia River Basin.

The Bonneville Power Administration is a nonprofit federal power marketing administration based in the Pacific Northwest. BPA dedicates itself to providing high system reliability, and low rates consistent with sound business principles, environmental stewardship, and accountability.

NorthWestern Energy Service Center: At NorthWestern Energy, our goal is to provide our customers with reliable energy at the lowest long-term cost. We do this through a balanced mix of safe, reliable, affordable,



and clean energy. Our electric portfolio is built on the carbon-free hydro system, along with wind, coal, gas, and solar. This mix of renewable and traditional resources helps us keep energy bills as affordable and predictable as possible.

A.4.9 Natural Gas

Big Sky Gas, an alternative to Northwestern Energy was born in Helena, the first company to offer Montanans a choice when it comes to natural gas. Thanks to energy deregulation, the monopoly in the natural gas industry has been broken. That means you are no longer held hostage by Northwestern Energy.

Energy choice allows consumers -- from large and small commercial businesses to individual households -- the ability to choose alternative rates for their natural gas supply.

NorthWestern Energy Service Center: At NorthWestern Energy, our goal is to provide our customers with reliable energy at the lowest long-term cost. We do this through a balanced mix of safe, reliable, affordable, and clean energy. Our electric portfolio is built on the carbon-free hydro system, along with wind, coal, gas, and solar. This mix of renewable and traditional resources helps us keep energy bills as affordable and predictable as possible.

A.4.10 Communications

ABC Fox Montana Helena - Breaking news for Helena. Watch ABC Fox Montana - KHBB - for news, sports, weather, and community information for Helena and Montana.

City of Helena Website - All news local. Sign up for Updates. Get news from the City of Helena in your inbox. Click the link below to start receiving our monthly e-newsletter, The Lookout. Get the latest on city business, city projects, notices of decisions, and road closures.

Helena Independent Record - Read the latest Helena, MT news. Get the latest on events, sports, weather, entertainment, and more. Local News, Crime & Courts, Contact Us, E-edition.

KTVH Helena Montana - News, Weather, Wildfire Watch, Montana Politics

KXLH Helena Montana News - Coronavirus, We're Open Montana, Wildfire Watch, BOLO Alerts, Montana Politics, Montana AG Network, Military Matters, Helena News, News, Breaking News and Alerts, Montana News

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A.4.11 Public Transportation

According to the City of Helena's website, Capital Transit provides bus service within Helena City limits, as well as a route from East Valley / East Helena to the Transit Center. Buses operate within Helena City limits between 6:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. East Valley/East Helena commuter-style route runs 8 am - 10 am and 2 pm - 4 pm. The East Valley/East Helena route is closed on all federal. Capital Transit's office is located at 1415 North Montana Avenue. Community feedback has retorted that Capital Transit service is underutilized and needs to improve service to spur local ridership. Many have stated that they would consider using public transit if there was a higher frequency of service, operation times extended beyond 6 PM, and operational on the weekends within the city. Public transit has the potential to be a key element in the Sixth Ward revitalization efforts.



A.5 Context: Land Use

This portion of Helena has been developing for more than a century, with a historic district centered around the rail's passenger terminal and a range of commercial, industrial, institutional, residential, and public land uses located throughout.

A.5.1 Growth Policy

This Growth Policy is based upon Montana law (76-1-601 MCA) and serves as the basis for the City of Helena's zoning and subdivision regulations and other City Codes. It may be used to guide decisions related to City budgeting, the capital improvements program (CIP), and annexation. This Growth Policy is intended to be reviewed and updated every five years as required by Montana law (76-1-601 (3)(f)).

This Growth Policy aims to optimize Helena's growth and change in multiple ways, strategically coordinated to ensure day-to-day decisions and implementing actions advance the community's long-term vision. The growth policy attempts to show how current trends and logical progressions in land use can be managed over a relatively long-time frame. Helena's Growth Policy embraces this need, promoting collaborative efforts on numerous fronts and encouraging community involvement along the way.

The Future Land Use Map acknowledges existing development patterns, despite some with environmental, service, or other constraints. The map also reflects the community's interest in preserving natural resource values, avoiding environmental degradation, preserving public investments in infrastructure, and providing for efficient, cost-effective expansion of the community.

Figure A.3: City of Helena Future Land Use Map

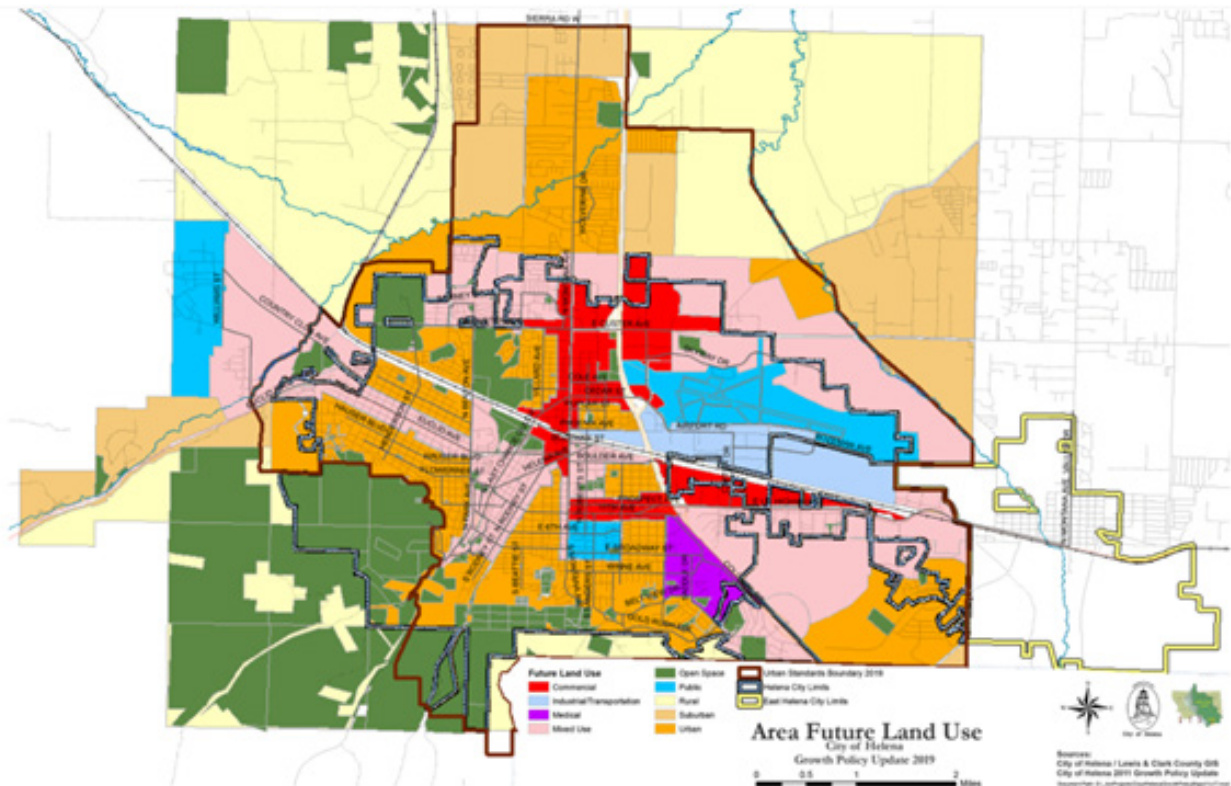


Figure 3.06 - Future Land Use map (Image: City of Helena)



A.5.2 Zoning

Helena's zoning ordinance reflects the growth policy and regulates land development and the use of established zoning districts. The zoning map is a parcel-specific statement reflecting boundaries and present and proposed uses of lands. As a legal statement, the zoning map has immediate force and effect. Given the relationship between the growth policy and zoning, the zoning map should not be a copy of the future land-use map. Because the growth policy's future land-use map is generalized, it is not intended to show the location of small-scale land uses. The future land use map does not tie private properties to only the designated land use. The future land use map helps guide zoning decisions to anticipate the direction the city wishes to see in new areas of development or redevelopment.

Helena's future land use strategy map is comprised of the growth policy's goals and objectives. The Future Land Use Map helps direct a wide range of considerations such as where transportation corridors should run, suggested locations for new schools, identifies historic districts, and aims where economic vitality and prosperity should be located.

The City of Helena's Zoning Code is Euclidean, based on the establishment of districts to separate incompatible uses. Euclidean Zoning also traditionally establishes bulk and dimensional requirements and design standards. In an Euclidean Zoning code, the jurisdiction is divided into districts where each district has a separate purpose. The Sixth Ward study area has 8 zoning districts: CLM, MI, PLI, R-O, R-2, R-3, B-1, and B-2.

The CLM (Commercial-Light Manufacturing) District provides for the community's commercial and light manufacturing needs. These uses generally need access to the City's transportation amenities and should be located to reduce adverse impacts on residential neighborhoods in the City.

The M-I (Manufacturing and Industrial) District provides for manufacturing and other industrial uses.

The PLI (public lands and institutions) district provides for and applies only to public and quasi-public institutional uses and lands, and recreational, educational, and public service activities for the general benefit of the citizens of the city.

The R-1/R-2 (residential) districts provide for residential dwellings and limited nonresidential development that protects and enhances the residential nature of the area.

The R-3 (residential) district provides for the development of a mixture of residential structures to serve varied housing needs and allows limited compatible nonresidential uses.

The R-4/R-O (residential office) districts provide for a comparable mix of higher-density residential development with professional and business offices and associated service uses.

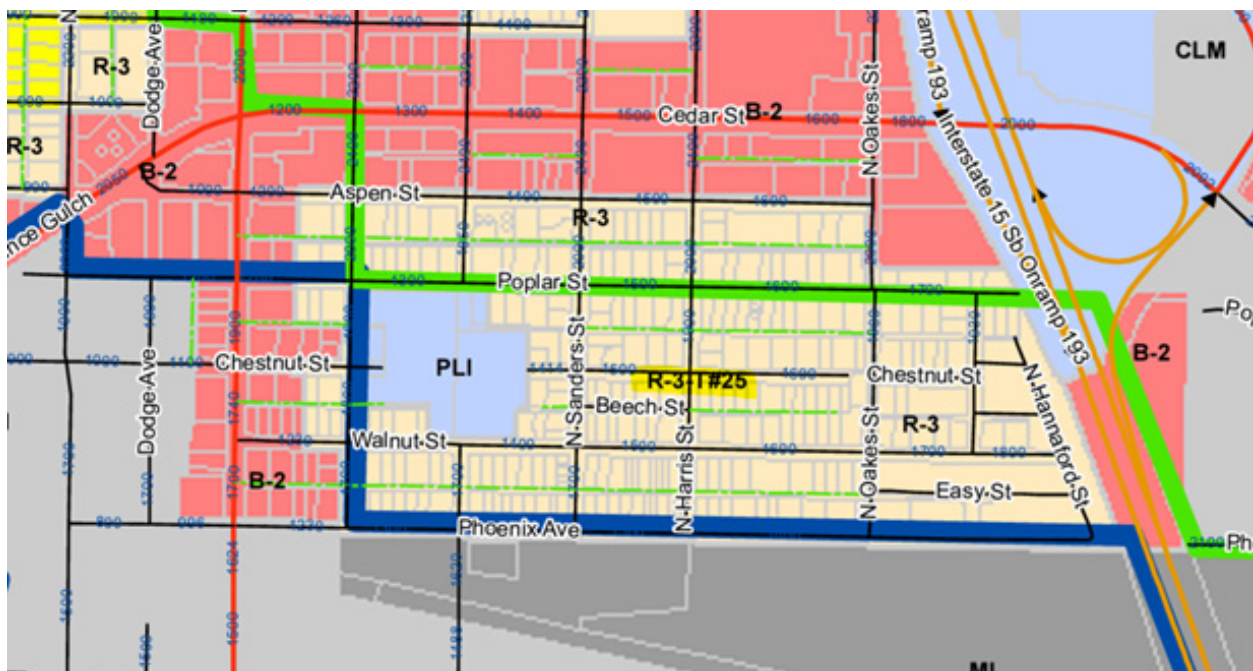
The B-1 (neighborhood business) district provides for a compatible mixture of residential, public, and small-scale commercial uses that serve as transitions between zoning districts.



The B-2 (general commercial) district provides for comparable residential uses and a broad range of commercial and service uses that serve large areas of the city and that are normally required to sustain a community.

The commercial district remains anchored by the historic train depot, with restaurants, bars, hotels, merchants, and warehouses radiating east, south, and west. More contemporary retail, dining, entertainment, and professional office uses fill in the historic storefronts, and new apartments occupy the upper floors. The district becomes vibrant with new morning, day, and evening activity, retaining its quirkiness and character. It remembers its railroad roots, while offering a mix of social, cultural, commercial, and artistic activities unique to this part of town. There is also an overlay district known as T-zone identified in the Sixth Ward north neighborhood. As shown below, the zoning district is identified as R-3-T#25, the T overlay affects the development standards of the R-3 zoning district. According to Helena’s municipal code, T stands for transitional district which intends to provide for a more orderly and harmonious transition between zoning districts where appropriate. Each Transitional District has unique standards and is intended to be temporary and phased out over time. There may be more T-zones in the study area that are not shown on the map. These T-zones were created by the city to address development standards in specifically targeted areas. Little is known on how or why their creations came about but T-zones still have a lasting effect on development standards to this day. Many residents shared their disdain for them in public engagement discussions. City staff and residents support the dissolving of T-zones as their usefulness no longer seems necessary. More research is needed to better understand Helena’s T-zones.

Figure A.4: The Railroad District’s T-Zone



In cases where the growth policy recommends a land use designation that differs from the existing land use or zoning, it is appropriate to let the existing zoning or use remain, provided that the zoning is gradually revised over time to phase in the desired future land use pattern.

Helena’s growth policy contains information and policies (objectives) that can help determine specific rules and decisions about the location of individual land uses. For example, the city supports the consideration of applying or revising zoning designations with careful consideration of the factors including:

- ◆ Future land use mapping
- ◆ Compatibility with surrounding land use
- ◆ Infrastructure and service plans
- ◆ Development of vacant and under-utilized buildings
- ◆ Existing and future traffic patterns
- ◆ Goal and objectives of the growth policy, related master plan, and/or facility plans.

A.5.3 Existing Uses

Existing land use closely follows the city’s existing zoning. The age of the buildings can range from over 120 years to 15 years. Buildings typically consist of single-story to two-story buildings. The character of the buildings can range from historic significance to newer recently constructed residential homes. Major landowners in the Sixth Ward range from BNSF, City of Helena, Helena Housing Authority, Helena School District, and private ownership of homes and businesses.

Identifying existing land uses helps anticipate, evaluate, and prepare for future growth and land use patterns as the community changes over time. The existing Land Use Map has been developed to give a snapshot look at current conditions. It is not intended to be lot-specific, but to provide a broad view of Helena and the surrounding area.

Figure A.5: 2019 Growth Policy, Chapter 3 - Land Use

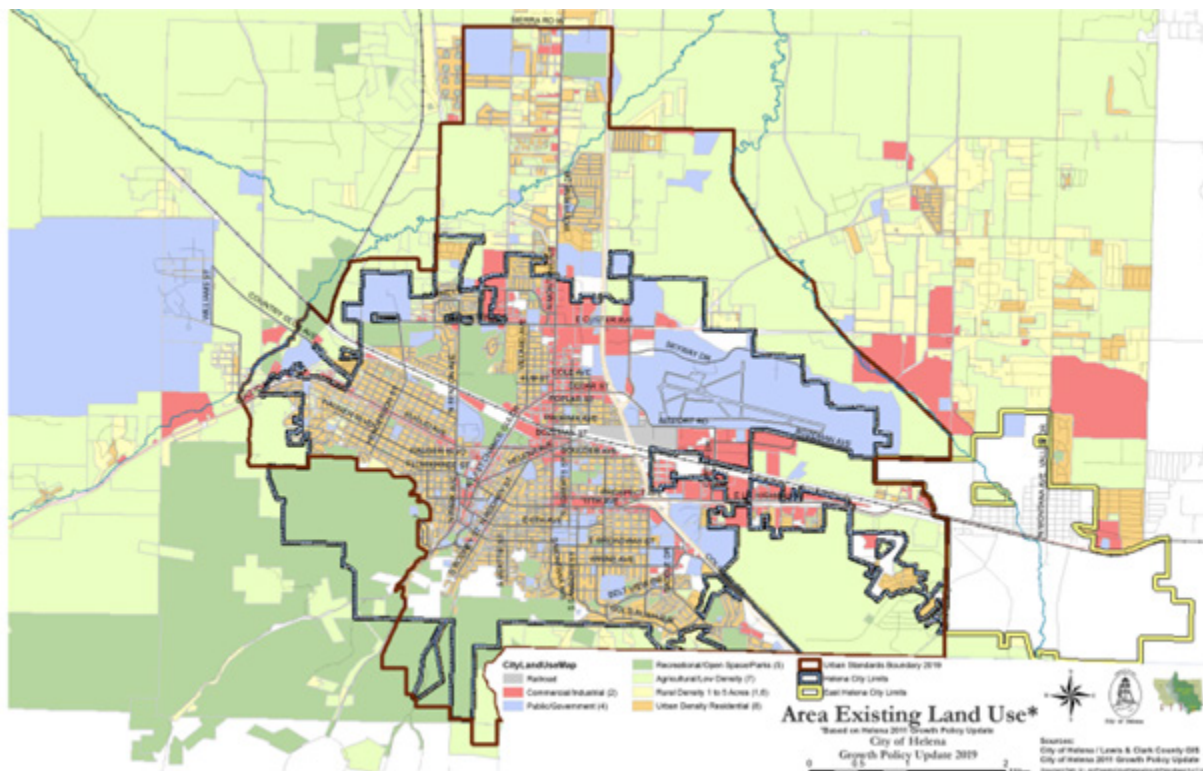


Figure 3.05 – Existing Land Use map (Image: City of Helena)



Figure A.6: Number of Units by Type of Structure

Units in Structure	2000		2010		2017	
		%		%		%
Total Units	12,118		13,538		14,621	
1 unit detached	6,583	54.32%	7,260	53.6%	8,020	54.9%
1 unit attached	488	4.03%	508	3.8%	945	6.5%
2 to 4 units	2,398	19.79%	2695	19.9%	2,800	19.2%
5 to 9 units	586	4.84%	989	7.3%	722	4.9%
10 or more	1,326	10.94%	1363	10.1%	1,472	10.1%
Mobile Home, etc.	737	6.08%	723	5.3%	662	4.5%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey Data 2000, 2010, 2017

A.5.4 Residential

Helena’s residential housing is a mix of rentals and owner-occupied residences. The housing stock is predominantly single family at 54.9%, then duplexes to fourplexes making up 19.2%, large multi-family complexes of 5+ units makeup 15.0%, mobile homes make up 4.5%, and the remaining units are classified as attached units such as condominiums and other attached homes 6.5%.

The majority (58.6%) of Helena’s rental rates range between \$500 to \$999, the second largest (23.9%) range is between \$1,000 to \$1,499, the third largest (8.6%) range of rent is less than \$500, then the fourth largest (4.9%) range is from \$1,500 to \$1,999, and

the remaining 4% of rents are above \$2000. By the fair market rate table of 4.12, rentals ranging from \$500-\$999 must have a wage roughly between \$11.00-\$17.50 an hour. According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), housing is affordable if it costs households no more than 30% of their gross income for housing and utility costs. If the median wage of Lewis and Clark County is 11.82 then housing options are limited to rentals in the range of \$573. This median range would also correspond to the statistic that almost 6 in 10 rentals in Helena range from \$500-\$999. Affordable monthly rent for a minimum wage of \$8.50 would be \$442. Affordable monthly rent for an average rate of social security income would be \$231.

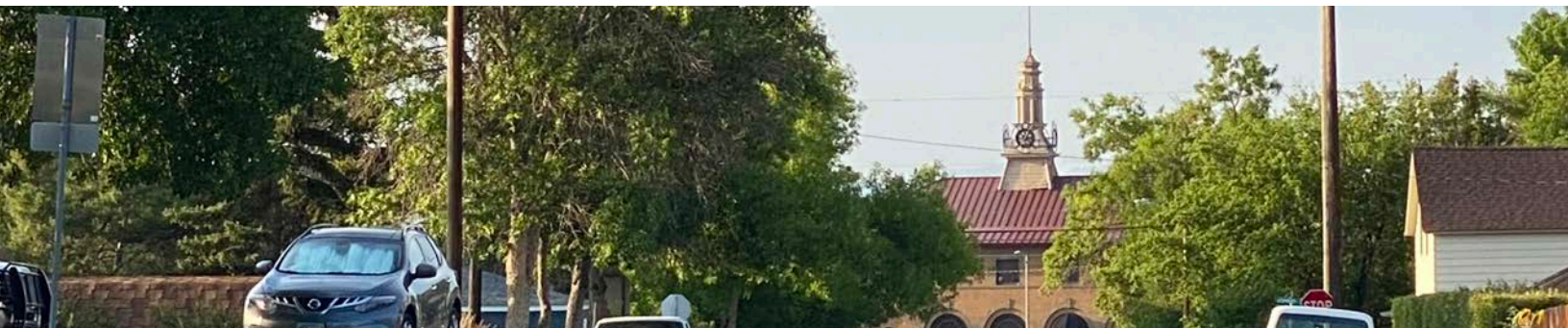


Table A.3: Rental Rates in the City of Helena	
Measure	Value
Less than \$500	8.6%
\$500 to \$999	58.6%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	23.9%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	4.9%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	3.2%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	0.0%
\$3,000 or more	0.8%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey Data 2000, 2010, 2021

Figure A.6: Fair-Market Rent & Cost-Burdened Thresholds in Lewis and Clark County

Unit Size	Market Rent	Housing Wage
0 Bedroom (Studio)	\$573	\$11.02
1 Bedroom	\$703	\$13.52
2 Bedroom	\$892	\$17.15
3 Bedroom	\$1,278	\$24.58
4 Bedroom	\$1,433	\$27.56
Mean Renter Wage (estimated)		\$11.81
Affordable Rent for Mean Renter		\$614
Affordable Rent at Minimum Wage (\$8.50)		\$442
Affordable Rent at Average SSI		\$231

Source: National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 2019, <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/montana>

Based on the data presented above, many of Helena’s working population struggle with the affordability of housing. Gaps between what residents may afford for housing and prevailing market costs create challenges for many households. In addition, many retirees, those with disabilities, or special

needs require affordable or moderately priced housing which appears to be in very short supply. As rental prices continue to rise with inflation, and wages either stagnate or do not keep up, housing disparity will force vulnerable populations to make hard choices on what they can afford.



A.5.5 Mixed-Use

Helena's zoning districts B1, B2, CLM, DT, and M-I Districts allow for mixed-use residential and commercial uses. Each zoning district requires its own set of standards to be met to allow certain projects. Redevelopment and expansion of retail uses are also occurring all over the city, particularly along major streets. Most established mixed-use commercial areas typically remain strong due to the diversification of uses and activities that are often supported by the residents who use them. The most noteworthy mixed-use area is Downtown Helena, which features a variety of offices, banks, restaurants, art galleries, retail stores, and residences. Portions of this area are in the Helena Historic District. Another mixed-use area is in the Sixth Ward near the historic train depot. The surrounding development around the historic train depot was built to support the commerce brought by rail. Since the railroad's decline in commerce, several historic buildings are now utilized for commercial, light industrial, and residential uses. The Larson building is a prime example of a successful mixed-use building. Helena's growth policy plan supports infill and mixed-use concepts to allow residents the ability to lead a more social, less car-dependent lifestyle. Currently, there are existing buildings in the Sixth Ward that have opportunities to redevelop into mixed-use buildings. There are some areas in the Sixth Ward where mixed-use development would need to be supported by zoning.

A.5.6 Retail/Office

From 2010 to 2017 the retail trade industry declined by over 20% (see Table 2.06 for details). These declining trends in the retail industry appear to be reflected in the saturation of available office and retail spaces for lease. According to ROFO an online real estate database, in Helena, MT there are currently 87 office spaces

for lease, 2 warehouse spaces for rent, 7 retail spaces, and 18 shared office spaces (also known as co-working spaces and executive suites). This high inventory could be reflected in the social trends of allowing employees to work from home and the rise of e-commerce due to the recent global pandemic. This may mean that retail and office spaces are no longer as needed as they used to be before the global pandemic. A saturation of inventory could also mean more opportunities are available for new businesses to start up. The saturation of retail and office space may also mean opportunities to transform these spaces into attractive mixed-use designs which could greatly benefit neighborhoods where families are seeking more live work options.

A.5.7 Warehousing/Industrial

According to Rofo.com, an online real estate database, in Helena, MT there are currently 2 warehouse spaces for rent. This low inventory stock could mean that more inventory is needed. However, since 2010, Helena has experienced large job increases in the Wholesale Trade Industry (60.3%) and services (49.6%). Meanwhile, there have been significant losses in the retail trade industry (-21.8%) and the transportation in warehousing, and utilities (-29.4%) (see Table 2.06 for details regarding this topic). These drastic changes in industries could be attributed to new trends in the supply chains or changing trends in commerce which will affect employment in Helena. Much of Helena's historic economy revolved around the commerce brought by the railroad. Many warehouses and large-scale buildings were constructed near the railroad in the depot district to support the industries created by the railroad commerce. The decline in the transportation and warehouse industry may mean helping residents adapt by learning new skills and education to evolve with employment trends.



Figure A.7: Helena Area Employment

Industry	2000	2010	2017	Change 2000-2010	Change 2010-2017
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining	162	273	263	68.5%	-3.7%
Construction	692	756	823	9.2%	8.9%
Manufacturing	349	391	440	12.0%	12.5%
Wholesale trade	199	179	287	-10.1%	60.3%
Retail trade	1,346	1,595	1,248	18.5%	-21.8%
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	330	299	211	-9.4%	-29.4%
Information	583	248	326	-57.5%	31.5%
Finance and insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	902	1,029	1,306	14.1%	26.9%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste-management services	1,290	1,779	1,676	37.9%	-5.8%
Educational services, health care and social assistance	2,840	3,504	3,757	23.4%	7.2%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	1,282	1,720	1,645	34.2%	-4.4%
Other service except public administration	679	679	1,016	0.0%	49.6%
Public administration	2,637	2,443	2,882	-7.4%	18.0%
Total civilian employed population 16 years and over	13,291	14,895	15,880	12.1%	6.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Census 2000, U.S. Census 2010

The railroad still brings commerce to Helena, but it appears it is no longer a beacon of employment. New emerging trends show major increases in the Wholesale trade and services industry which is becoming more automated, requiring less need for support by human labor. Attracting new industries through infrastructure projects and economic incentives may be options to consider.

A.5.8 Institutional

Helena’s Growth Policy supports partnerships between local governments, financial institutions, private and public organizations, and the public to work together to understand the housing needs of all residents and to ensure that everyone in the community has the opportunity to live in safe, affordable housing.

Helena’s institutional fabric adds to local “livability.” The location, scale, and access to schools, houses of worship, parks and open spaces, environmentally sensitive areas, medical facilities, and other institutional or

conservation uses can make a difference in how neighborhoods function and endure. In particular, the school location and quality influence neighborhood feeling, stability, and overall value. If done well, schools stimulate increased pedestrian activity in neighborhoods, add to neighborhood identity, and complement the surrounding transportation and infrastructure context. New development can learn from what has succeeded in the past, providing easy multi-modal access to these institutional and conservation spaces and ensuring that new neighborhoods enrich and are enriched by this interdependent relationship.

A.5.9 Parks and Open Space

Helena has 2,297 acres of park and open space areas and a variety of recreational facilities, including approximately 30 parks; bike/pedestrian trails; public swimming and wading pools; an aquatics park; a public golf course; tennis court complexes; a skateboard park; outdoor skating rinks; community gardens; two natural parks and more.





City parks are used for special events, fund-raising activities, community gardens, and races.

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Helena's growth policy provides and supports parks and recreational opportunities that include the enhancement of the community's parks for revitalization efforts. Open space preservation continues to be vitally important to the community. The city continues to support enhancing "identity" features by encouraging active social lifestyles. In the Transportation section of the Growth Policy, the city seeks to coordinate with the parks system and open space planning, helping facilitate and activate existing and future trail networks. According to the Growth Policy document

the city is evaluating land use patterns that add to local "livability," including the location, scale, and access to schools, houses of worship, parks and open spaces, environmentally sensitive areas, medical facilities, and other institutional uses.

Also, the city continues to support a wide range of arts and cultural assets and educational and recreational opportunities. Helena residents cherish current open space access, parks, and recreational services, and wish to retain the same or higher levels of service as the community grows.

These goals below direct the city to consider open space, parks, and recreational needs in all related plans and actions, including land use decisions, regulatory requirements, and budgeting.

- ◆ Foster open-space connectivity in and around Helena, helping link parks, open spaces, and water bodies, and providing opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle trails.
- ◆ Coordinate parks system planning with land use and transportation planning, recognizing the public health and recreational value of features that support walking and cycling.
- ◆ Promote small block development patterns, promoting connectivity and reduced multi-modal travel distances between residences and schools, parks, and services.



Appendix B: Policy Foundations

Helena adopted its Growth Policy in 2019, incorporating into it a range of goals and objectives to provide the community with consistent, clear, and effective policy guidance on a range of topics. The Growth Policy incorporated a “policy framework” consolidating the entire policy array into a single table. That table appears in this Appendix to serve as an easy reference to the Growth Policy. Elements of this policy framework are cited in the subarea plan, demonstrating the seamless connection between the Growth Policy and this subarea plan’s goals and objectives.

In addition, the Railroad District adopted an Urban Renewal Plan, also providing policy direction relevant to the subarea plan. The Urban Renewal Plan’s goals and policies are also included in this Appendix, rounding out the full existing policy context within which this subarea plan operates.

Accessibility: for screen-reader friendly versions of these excerpts, please use the following links to access the full versions of each plan document: [2019 Growth Policy: Appendix A](#) and [Railroad Urban Renewal District Plan](#).



Goals & Objectives Matrix

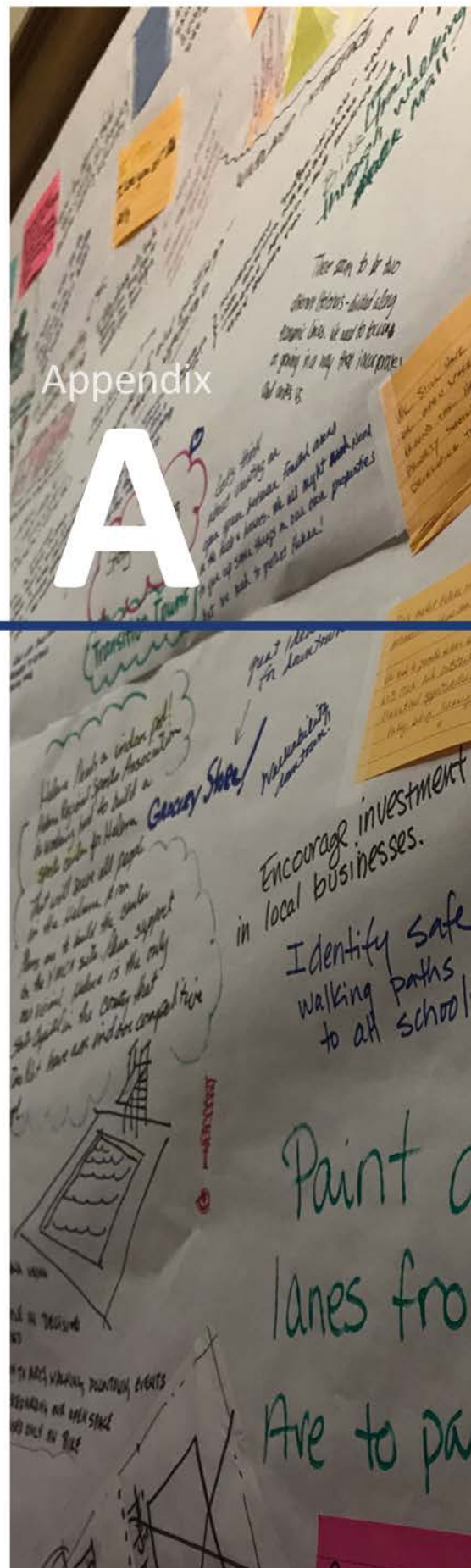
The following pages present the goal and objectives matrix developed for the City of Helena's Growth Policy update (HGP), consistent with Montana law (76-1-601 (3) (c)). These were also shaped using the following resources and methodologies:

Existing framework – Goals and objectives from the 2011 HGP were a primary resource in developing this matrix. For the purposes of clarity brevity and utility, each and every 2011 objective was evaluated according to expressed intent, and:

- *Re-categorized* – per the HGP's definitions of goals, objectives and actions (see below);
- *Edited* – for clarity, to reduce the use of jargon and/or to collate language under common headings;
- *Combined or removed* – where duplicated or functionally identical goals or objectives were discovered.

Public input – This framework was reviewed and amended in response to extensive community input, reflecting comments gathered during the public process used to develop this and prior updates to the HGP.

Other plans – The goal and objectives set was influenced by existing and adopted plans developed for the City of Helena, including the most recent versions of the Transportation Safety Plan; the Parks



Appendix

A



& Recreation Master Plan, as well as numerous other relevant plans including the Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy, and similar plans from neighboring jurisdictions, the State of Montana and others.

All goals and objectives are numbered sequentially. The numbering and order of items in no way indicate City priority or relative importance.

Goal and Objectives rows include a “Chapter Listings” column to the left, indicating those HGP chapters where each goal and objective was referenced at the time of this update’s adoption.¹ For development purposes, many of the objectives have been grouped together by primary topic and goal, though it should be noted that secondary or tertiary relationships between objectives and topics mean that the groupings in this table are not comprehensive – such groupings are instead provided in each HGP chapter.

A column on the right-hand side of the Objectives reference implementing actions identified at the time of this plan’s adoption.² In addition, italicized text below each goal is provided to help introduce and describe the source of, and the purpose for, the referenced item.

For purposes of this plan, the terms “Goal”, “Objective”, and “Action” are defined as:

- **Goal** – Broad statements indicating a *general aim* or purpose to be achieved. A goal is a direction setter, an ideal future end, condition, or state related to the public health, safety, or general welfare toward which planning and implementation measures are directed;³
- **Objective** – An objective is a topic-specific statement to guide current and future decision-making. It indicates a clear commitment of the local legislative body. An objective is an extension of a plan’s goals, reflecting topical nuance as well as an assessment of conditions;⁴
- **Action** – Actions are more directive, offering detailed, measurable steps envisioned to implement plan objectives. Actions may include the development of localized or topic-specific plans, work to implement objectives, formal agreements, regulations or other strategies.

¹ A chapter abbreviation key is provided in the matrix footer.

² Implementing Actions are listed in the Coordination & Implementation chapter.

³ For example, G.01 (Goal 03) directs economic vitality, but provides flexibility on a path forward.

⁴ For example, O.01 (Objective .01) relates to and helps implement G.01 by supporting business-related programs, but provides flexibility on specific programs.





Chapter Listings ¹	Goals	Objectives	Chapter Listings ¹	Implementing Actions ²
EC LU	<p>[G.01] Promote and sustain Helena's economic vitality, supporting existing businesses and attracting a diverse range of economic sectors that provide employment opportunities.</p> <p><i>Discussion: In seeking long-term prosperity, Helena residents understand the need to build economic diversity – capitalizing on access to neighboring areas as well as developing a strong business base within City limits. This plan supports strategies that build and sustain a diverse, balanced economic base, retain existing quality of life assets, and help keep Helena prosperous.</i></p>	<p>Objectives</p> <p>[O.01] Create and sustain a diverse local economic base by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping retain, promote and expand existing businesses and industry; • Supporting innovative, entrepreneurial enterprises; • Creating 'business campus' and mixed-use models; • Developing mechanisms that promote provision of workforce housing; • Attracting new businesses and clean industry. <p>[O.02] Support the maintenance and growth of local businesses, providing infrastructure and developing resources and educational programs.</p> <p>[O.03] Support efforts to encourage the creation and expansion of small businesses in Helena.</p> <p>[O.04] Encourage partnerships between public and private business sectors in the Helena area, promoting a healthy business community.</p> <p>[O.05] Create and maintain incentive programs and other financial resources promoting job development, including expansion of existing industries and attraction of new ones.</p> <p>[O.06] Encourage the creation of "living wage" jobs that pay salaries and benefits sufficient to support families and contribute to the local economy, including providing active assistance to businesses and individuals, where appropriate.</p> <p>[O.07] Work closely with the Helena Regional Airport Authority to facilitate growth in aviation, aeronautical and light manufacturing businesses related to aviation, in concert with the Airport Master Plan.</p> <p>[O.08] Continue support for the Montana Business Assistance Connection's efforts to attract new and grow existing businesses within the Helena metropolitan area.</p> <p>[O.09] Work cooperatively with other jurisdictions on issues that impact Helena's economy.</p> <p>[O.10] Work to retain existing business and commercial enterprises in Helena's downtown.</p> <p>[O.11] Seek and support opportunities to leverage Helena's rich open space and natural areas setting in promoting tourism and economic growth.</p>	<p>EC HO</p> <p>EC</p> <p>EC</p> <p>EC</p> <p>EC</p> <p>EC CI</p> <p>EC PFS</p> <p>EC</p> <p>EC CI</p> <p>EC</p> <p>EC CC</p>	<p>A.01, A.02, A.03, A.04, A.05, A.07, A.19, A.33, A.34, A.39</p> <p>A.01, A.02, A.03, A.19, A.22, A.23, A.23, A.34</p> <p>A.01, A.02, A.03, A.04, A.06</p> <p>A.03, A.05, A.06, A.32, A.39</p> <p>A.02, A.03, A.32</p> <p>A.01, A.02, A.04</p> <p>A.05</p> <p>A.01, A.03, A.04</p> <p>A.10, A.14, A.20, A.23, A.26, A.44, A.46</p> <p>A.03, A.04, A.34, A.35, A.39</p> <p>A.14, A.15, A.26, A.28, A.37, A.47</p>

¹ – Chapter Key; EC = Economic Conditions; LU = Land Use; HO = Housing; PFS = Public Facilities & Services; XP = Transportation; NE = Natural Environment; CC = Community Culture & Design; CI = Coordination & Implementation

² – See Actions Table, Chapter 9: Coordination & Implementation



Chapter 1 Listings	Goals	Objectives	Implementing Actions
HO EC LU	<p>[G.02] Support provision of housing that is safe, available, accessible, and affordable for all Helena residents.</p> <p><i>Discussion: Helena's ongoing success depends on the ability of residents to afford safe, comfortable and convenient housing. This goal provides the foundation for a wide range of objectives supporting housing provision, guiding decisions regarding housing diversity, land use patterns, facilities provision, transportation, funding mechanisms and supporting services.</i></p>	<p>Objectives</p> <p>[O.12] Promote and maintain development of a diverse housing stock, helping to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize depletion of natural resources; • Reduce land consumption and demands on the physical environment; • Provide housing options for all residents; • Optimize infrastructure use; • Prepare Helena to meet emerging needs. <p>[O.13] Maintain a regulatory environment that minimizes barriers for the creation of new or upgrades to existing housing, while protecting residents' health, safety, and welfare.</p> <p>[O.14] Support the development of housing located in proximity to necessary services and quality of life assets, including generalized physical, technological, social and economic infrastructure.</p> <p>[O.15] Support and expand the supply of housing for lower income, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, homeless, and others with special needs.</p> <p>[O.16] Support the preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock.</p> <p>[O.17] Work to involve the community in developing housing-related planning and design standards that will provide more housing consistent with the character of the neighborhoods.</p> <p>[O.18] Encourage maintenance of housing in an attractive, safe and sanitary condition, helping extend the service life of housing and enhancing the general appearance of the city and its neighborhoods.</p> <p>[O.19] Maintain standards for multi-family housing that encourage quality building design, landscaping and usable open space, supporting long-term family living.</p>	<p>A.03, A.07, A.08, A.09, A.25, A.34</p> <p>A.02, A.07, A.08, A.09, A.22, A.34</p> <p>A.03, A.04, A.07, A.08, A.34, A.36</p> <p>A.04, A.07, A.08, A.37</p> <p>A.02, A.07, A.09, A.38, A.40</p> <p>A.07, A.08, A.09, A.34, A.38, A.40, A.45</p> <p>A.32, A.38, A.40</p> <p>A.07, A.08, A.09, A.27</p>
PFS XP	<p>[G.03] Provide high-quality, affordable and efficient public facilities and services in Helena that also prioritize the protection of public health, including residents and visitors.</p> <p><i>Discussion: Municipalities exist to provide infrastructure and services that would be impossible for individuals to provide. While pooled resources make services achievable, they also require strong levels of coordination and management to assure accountability and efficiency. This goal anchors the need for the City of Helena to consider the long-term cost implications and benefits of facility choices impacting land use, transportation investments, parks and recreational services, as well as other types of infrastructure – maintaining efficiency and the overall well-being of the community it serves.</i></p>	<p>[O.20] Maintain public health and public safety as high priorities, providing necessary services and addressing potential hazards within and adjacent to City limits.</p>	<p>A.03, A.10, A.12, A.13, A.14, A.16, A.17, A.18, A.24, A.30, A.33, A.44, A.46, A.47</p> <p>A.03, A.10, A.12, A.13, A.15, A.16, A.17, A.18</p>

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 2 – See Action Table, Chapter 3, Coordination & Implementation



Chapter 1 Listings Goals	Objectives	Implementing Actions 2
PFS LU CI	[O.22] Maintain municipal water and wastewater system quality and levels of service through ongoing system upgrades and maintenance.	A.03, A.10, A.12, A.13, A.44
PFS	[O.23] Coordinate the development of new or expanded water and wastewater treatment capacity with Lewis and Clark County, complementary to and generally concurrent with growth.	A.03, A.10, A.12, A.13, A.15
PFS LU CI	[O.24] Give priority for future extension of services and annexations to property located within Helena's Urban Standards Boundary (USB) area.	A.03, A.04, A.10, A.15, A.36, A.37
PFS LU CI	[O.25] Avoid annexation of undeveloped land until all public facilities are adequate to serve the new development, or an infrastructure plan is in place to assure that such facilities will be provided when needed.	A.03, A.04, A.10, A.12, A.37
PFS NE	[O.26] Consider and implement ways to reduce nutrient discharges from Helena's wastewater treatment plant and its stormwater system to meet regulatory standards, including enforcement of the Stormwater Ordinance and erosion control requirements.	A.12, A.32, A.33
PFS XP NE	[O.27] Promote efficient use of community infrastructure, services and resources, including efforts to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase energy efficiency; • Reduce vehicle trips; • Maintain air quality; • Minimize noise pollution. 	A.04, A.09, A.11, A.13, A.19, A.23, A.25, A.32, A.33, A.34
PFS NE	[O.28] Continue to authorize connection of County residents with failing septic systems or lagoons to City treatment facilities, when compatible with Helena's Growth Policy and its discharge permit.	A.03, A.10, A.37, A.44
PFS NE HO LU CI	[O.29] Promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in new and existing development, minimizing impacts on natural resources and the environment through measures including, as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development standards; • Land use regulations; • Public/private partnerships; • Public education; • Tax or other monetary incentives. 	A.02, A.03, A.04, A.11, A.12, A.13, A.32, A.33
PFS NE	[O.30] Manage provision and use of recreational facilities to protect the integrity of environmentally-sensitive areas.	A.14, A.26, A.28, A.29
PFS EC CC	[O.31] Provide and maintain a full range of quality park facilities, open spaces and recreational opportunities for citizens of all abilities and age groups.	A.14, A.15, A.26, A.28, A.29

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2 - See Actions Table, Chapter 9: Coordination & Implementation



Chapter 1 Goals	Objectives	Implementing Actions 1
<p>Chapter 1 Listings 1</p> <p>Goals</p> <p>[G.05] Establish and maintain a strong multi-modal transportation system for Helena, providing opportunity for all to travel safely and efficiently, on-pace and in concert with demand and overall Growth Policy objectives.</p> <p><i>Discussion: All cities require functional, resilient transportation networks providing for the flow of people and materials. In assisting with this Growth Policy, residents urged improvements to the existing fabric and criteria that provide a full-featured street network for Helena, improving the efficiency, function and value of the City. Residents also recognize the importance of coordinating design of facilities with surrounding land uses, using transportation systems to complement existing patterns.</i></p>	<p>Chapter 1 Listings 1</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>[O.32] Continue to fund and adequately maintain sports fields, trails, and other City recreational facilities on-pace and complementary with growth.</p> <p>[O.33] Foster open-space connectivity in and around Helena, helping link parks, open spaces and water bodies, and providing opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle trails.</p> <p>[O.34] Coordinate parks system planning with land use and transportation planning, recognizing the public health and recreational value of features that support walking and cycling.</p> <p>[O.35] Work with Helena Public Schools to coordinate City parks, facilities and service planning with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School facility plans; • School programs, recreational facilities and educational opportunities. <p>[O.36] Maintain city parks and open spaces taking full advantage of applicable and developing technologies.</p> <p>[O.37] Work towards compliance with accessibility requirements in accordance with Americans with Disability Act (ADA).</p> <p>[O.38] Encourage citizen involvement in crime prevention programs.</p> <p>[O.39] Develop and enhance a transportation system in Helena that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates the safe, efficient movement of people, goods and services; • Supports non-motorized and recreational needs; • Promotes livable neighborhoods; • Supports the needs of Helena's elderly, disabled and disadvantaged populations; • Improves safe pedestrian and bike routes; • Respects the area's natural and historic context; • Improves and connects to regional transit systems. <p>[O.40] With Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), plan a logical, long-range arterial system for Helena, including interstate access that promotes compact, highly-connected land use patterns and that may be systematically implemented through right-of-way reservations.</p> <p>[O.41] Coordinate transportation investment with efficient land use patterns, making cycling and walking a practical transportation alternative.</p> <p>[O.42] Promote transportation facilities and land use patterns that support resource efficiency and reduce the output of greenhouse gasses.</p>	<p>A.14, A.15, A.29</p> <p>A.14, A.25, A.34</p> <p>A.14, A.25, A.34</p> <p>A.14, A.25, A.35</p> <p>A.14, A.15, A.27, A.28, A.29</p> <p>A.03, A.14, A.19, A.22, A.34</p> <p>A.16, A.18, A.27, A.35</p> <p>A.03, A.14, A.15, A.19, A.22, A.23, A.24, A.25, A.34</p> <p>A.20, A.23, A.45</p> <p>A.01, A.03, A.04, A.23, A.25, A.36, A.44</p> <p>A.01, A.03, A.04, A.22, A.23, A.25, A.31, A.34, A.44</p>
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Goals Chapters 1	Objectives	Implementing Actions 1
<p>[G.06] Protect and enhance the quality of Helena's natural environment, conserving resources for the benefit of present and future generations.</p> <p><i>Discussion: A hallmark of Helena is its mountainside setting, including forested hillside backdrop and open-space lands. In concert with other plan goals and policies directing growth, this goal supports the preservation of scenic and open space areas, urging creative employment of tools such as land trusts, rights-purchasing or exchanges, or other appropriate strategies.</i></p>	<p>[O.43] Require street development or improvement projects to include facilities allowing persons of all ages and abilities to travel by automobile, foot, bicycle, and public transit.</p> <p>[O.44] Prefer transportation designs that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve natural viewsheds; • Are compatible with historic resources; • Minimize construction cut-and-fill on slopes. <p>[O.45] With local and regional jurisdictions, identify key transportation corridors and work to differentiate arterial roadway design, emphasizing neighborhood centers as points of community importance and focus.</p> <p>[O.46] Require that subdivisions and other developments provide a transportation system that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes connectivity where adjacent to developed areas; • Provides for future connectivity with anticipated development; • Incorporates "traffic calming" measures where appropriate; • Supports non-motorized transportation. <p>[O.47] Maintain and improve the continuity of sidewalks, trails, and bicycle paths in Helena, improving conditions for non-motorized transportation across the city and between future neighborhood centers.</p> <p>[O.48] Work to improve street connectivity in all areas of Helena, improving walkability, public health and safety, and transportation efficiency.</p> <p>[O.49] Encourage new development to provide multi-modal access to nearby parks, trails and green spaces.</p>	<p>A.03, A.23, A.25, A.31, A.34</p> <p>A.23</p> <p>A.23, A.44</p> <p>A.23, A.24, A.25, A.36</p> <p>A.24, A.25, A.34</p> <p>A.03, A.23, A.25, A.34</p> <p>A.23, A.25, A.34, A.36</p> <p>A.31, A.32, A.33</p>
<p>[G.06] Protect and enhance the quality of Helena's natural environment, conserving resources for the benefit of present and future generations.</p> <p><i>Discussion: A hallmark of Helena is its mountainside setting, including forested hillside backdrop and open-space lands. In concert with other plan goals and policies directing growth, this goal supports the preservation of scenic and open space areas, urging creative employment of tools such as land trusts, rights-purchasing or exchanges, or other appropriate strategies.</i></p>	<p>[O.50] Support local and regional efforts to conserve energy, promote recycling and reduce solid waste.</p> <p>[O.51] Protect and sustain irreplaceable natural features such as wetlands, stream corridors, and similar high-value areas that provide wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, improved water quality and safety values such as flood control.</p>	<p>A.31, A.32, A.33</p> <p>A.14, A.26, A.29, A.33</p>

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Chapter Listings ¹	Goals	Objectives	Chapter Listings ²
NE PFS CI		<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.52] Encourage 'green' building and renewable energy investments, helping promote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of local jobs; • Increased property values; • Reduced energy costs; • Helena's long-term sustainability. 	A.31, A.32, A.33
NE LU		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.53] Preserve habitat areas identified by the Endangered Species Act or as important to wildlife identified by the State of Montana as species of conservation concern. 	A.14, A.26, A.28, A.29
NE LU		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.54] Minimize conflicts between wildlife and human development, especially in areas abutting wildlife habitat. 	A.14, A.26, A.29, A.47
NE LU		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.55] Minimize environmental degradation in areas with challenging physical and environmental characteristics, such as steep slopes, watercourses, drainage ways and wetlands. 	A.26, A.29, A.34, A.47
NE PFS CC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.56] Encourage use of technologies and techniques that direct light downwards, minimizing intrusive or excessive glare, reducing energy use and optimizing "dark sky" conditions in Helena. 	A.30, A.32, A.33
NE CC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.57] Minimize cut-and-fills on slopes resulting from road or building construction. 	A.23
NE CI		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.58] Reduce the spread of invasive plant species in Helena, including requiring City operations or contracts to include weed-free materials and construction methods. 	A.27, A.29, A.33
NE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.59] Support the State in its efforts to monitor levels of water-based invasive species and promote programs that reduce their spread. 	A.33
NE CC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.60] Promote the planting and protection of trees citywide, helping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautify and enhance community value; • Provide shade and comfort; • Affirm Helena's association with the outdoors and its historic origins; • Provide wildlife habitat. 	A.27, A.33, A.34
NE CC PFS XP		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [O.61] Promote landscaping guidelines that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or restore native trees and vegetative cover; • Support locally-compatible species diversity; • Re-vegetate disturbed areas; • Beautify streets, entry corridors, roadways and parking lots; • Help calm traffic; • Help treat and address stormwater issues. 	A.27, A.33

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Chapter Listings	Goals	Objectives	Implementing Actions
<p>PFS NE EC</p>	<p>[G.07] Provide an adequate and stable supply of safe and economical water to all users in the Helena community, while protecting the quality of both ground- and surface-water in the Helena area watershed.</p> <p><i>Discussion: City livability, health and value are fully dependent on clean, safe and sustainable water supplies. This goal underscores Helena's commitment to maintaining both supply and quality of ground and surface water, recognizing them as essential to the community's survival.</i></p>	<p>Objectives</p> <p>[O.62] Mitigate and adapt to climate change, supporting sustainable practices including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of programs and projects to address sustainability and climate change such as, in order of priority, source reduction, reuse, recycling of materials to achieve zero waste; Tracking of available indicators including temperature, precipitation, snowfall, days below freezing, and incorporation of photovoltaics into public and private infrastructure. Support for local food production, including community gardens, healthy food preparation and ecologically sound gardening practices that, composting, reduced water, synthetic fertilizer, and pesticide use; Educational efforts to increase awareness, explain benefits and promote voluntary efforts addressing climate change, carbon-neutral lifestyles, and related topics; Educational efforts regarding mitigation techniques for development in fire- and flood-prone areas. <p>[O.63] Promote water conservation efforts in Helena, reducing the need for infrastructure expansion.</p>	<p>A.14, A.27, A.30, A.31, A.32, A.33, A.34</p>
<p>PFS NE</p>		<p>[O.64] Evaluate subdivision impacts to ground and surface waters, drainages, floodplains, riparian areas and wetlands, incorporating adequate buffers or requiring appropriate mitigation, including, but not limited to, stormwater treatment and discharges to improve wetland viability.</p>	<p>A.14, A.27, A.29, A.33, A.34, A.36</p>
<p>PFS NE</p>		<p>[O.65] Protect the Ten Mile watershed as a key part of the municipal water supply, restoring those parts of the watershed that have been impaired by human activity.</p>	<p>A.03, A.12, A.13, A.26</p>
<p>PFS NE</p>		<p>[O.66] Promote sustainable practices for water resource preservation, supporting multiple uses of area waters, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreational activities; Forest health; Wildlife preservation; Maintaining viable agricultural lands. 	<p>A.03, A.12, A.13, A.26, A.29, A.33</p>
<p>NE</p>		<p>[O.67] Promote reducing impervious surfaces, thus increasing infiltration through the soil, which helps regenerate groundwater and remove pollutants.</p>	<p>A.13, A.27, A.33</p>
<p>PFS NE</p>		<p>[O.68] Encourage the use of xeriscape landscaping, grey water, rain barrels, and other mechanisms to reduce demand on potable water and the amount of effluent.</p>	<p>A.13, A.27, A.32, A.33</p>
<p>CC LU EC</p>	<p>[G.08] Sustain and expand Helena's arts, cultural and civic environment, including visual and performing arts, historical assets, library and educational facilities, and recreational opportunities.</p> <p><i>Discussion: Residents of Helena value and support the arts, cultural and social organizations, events and facilities. This goal and supporting objectives direct the City to encourage and expand community arts programming, historic and cultural resources – benefiting the civic health, quality of life, and economic vitality of Helena.</i></p>	<p>[O.69] Work to preserve or mitigate potential loss of historic, cultural or aesthetically-significant features, boosting overall economic vitality, tourism and local quality of life, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscapes and open space areas; Skylines, sightlines and viewsheds on the City's south border; Buildings, districts or objects of historic significance. 	<p>A.14, A.34, A.40</p>

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Chapter Listings	Goals	Chapter Listings	Objectives	Implementing Actions
CC LU HO EC	<p>[G.09] Sustain the historic downtown as the "heart" of Helena, bringing the community together and enhancing its commercial, service and civic vitality.</p> <p><i>Discussion: In preparing this plan, residents made it clear that the historic city center should still be considered the heart of Helena. Maintaining a vibrant city center will require supporting its numerous and necessary functions, including a strong commercial base, community services, public space availability and access, parking and diverse housing options. This plan provides objectives and actions that help foster an environment in which the downtown can thrive, in turn aiding the attractiveness, efficiency and value of the entire community.</i></p>	CC LU HO EC	<p>[O.70] Encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of buildings in the downtown.</p> <p>[O.71] Work to maintain Helena's downtown as the city's 'heart' and key focal point, combining commercial, civic, cultural, residential, and recreational uses.</p> <p>[O.72] Promote the economic and social vitality of historic districts.</p> <p>[O.73] Coordinate historic and pre-historic preservation issues with land-use planning and decision-making.</p> <p>[O.74] Work to improve the awareness, availability and access of cultural programs and activities for all Helena residents, including coordination of such activities with other agencies and community organizations.</p> <p>[O.75] Maintain support for the City of Helena's advisory committees.</p>	A.39, A.40 A.34, A.39, A.41 A.34, A.35, A.40, A.41 A.34 A.41, A.42, A.43 A.43
LU EC HO NE CC	<p>[G.10] Plan for and establish types and quantities of land uses in Helena supporting community needs, neighborhood centers, aesthetics and the City's long-term sustainability.</p> <p><i>Discussion: Cities exercise considerable influence over land use, in turn influencing the type and character of developments, patterns of growth, and the short- and long-term financial impact of growth on the local economy. Consequently, this plan supports the allocation of land use types, supporting features and facilities sufficient to achieve overall plan objectives.</i></p>	LU EC HO NE CC	<p>[O.76] Support land use patterns that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote compatible, well-designed development; Foster the long-term fiscal health of the community; Maintain and enhance resident quality of life; Implement related master plans and/or facility plans. <p>[O.77] Apply or revise zoning designations with careful consideration of factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future land use mapping; Compatibility with surrounding land uses; Infrastructure and service plans; Development of vacant and under-utilized buildings; Existing and future traffic patterns; Goals and objectives of the growth policy, related master plan and/or facility plans. <p>[O.78] Encourage infill development on vacant and under-utilized land within the city, directing growth to areas currently served by, or in close proximity to, existing infrastructure and that harmonizes with the character of existing neighborhoods.</p>	A.01, A.03, A.04, A.09, A.34, A.35, A.37, A.38, A.44 A.01, A.04, A.23, A.34 A.03, A.04, A.34, A.35, A.37

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Chapter Listings ¹	Goals	Objectives	Implementing Actions ²
LU PFS		[0.79] Encourage development within the Urban Standards Boundary (USB) to use City standards and guidelines to facilitate future annexation.	A.37, A.44
LU XP HO		[0.80] Promote development of varied and compatible types of mixed-use neighborhood centers in Helena, serving to enhance neighborhood identity, address community need, and support more compact land use patterns.	A.04, A.07, A.08, A.34, A.35, A.39
LU PFS HO		[0.81] Identify and encourage the growth of mixed-use neighborhood centers where appropriate and may be served by existing infrastructure.	A.01, A.03, A.04, A.34, A.35, A.39
LU PFS NE		[0.82] Encourage development patterns and proposals that promote efficient use of city infrastructure and resources.	A.03, A.04, A.34, A.35, A.38, A.39, A.44
LU XP HO		[0.83] Encourage development patterns that provide suitably-scaled, daily needs services within walking distance of residential areas, allowing a measure of independence for those who cannot or choose not to drive.	A.01, A.03, A.04, A.25, A.34, A.38
LU XP PFS		[0.84] Promote small block development patterns, promoting connectivity and reduced multi-modal travel distances between residences and schools, parks, and services.	A.04, A.25, A.34, A.35, A.38
LU XP CC CI		[0.85] Reduce functional and visual impacts of entry corridors and commercial development on abutting residential neighborhoods, considering buffering uses, design standards and other methods.	A.01, A.08, A.23, A.27, A.34, A.38
LU EC		[0.86] Promote the redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized properties with a mix of uses, supporting local and citywide objectives.	A.01, A.04, A.06, A.39, A.40
LU PFS XP HO		[0.87] With the school district, prioritize location of schools in areas with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to arterial and collector streets; • Ample sidewalks and pedestrian access; • Proximity to residential areas being served; • Proximity to designated neighborhood centers; • Cost-effective access to necessary utilities and services. 	A.01, A.03, A.07, A.34, A.35, A.38

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2 – See Actions Table, Chapter 9: Coordination & Implementation

Chapters 1 Goals	Chapters 1 Listings 1	Objectives	Implementing Actions 1
<p>CI LU HO XP PFS NE EC</p> <p>[G.11] Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and agencies, including East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Jefferson County, and Broadwater County on issues that have regional impacts.</p> <p><i>Discussion: In the past, Helena was a more centralized, independent place. Today, the City's fortunes and that of its residents depends on a set of dynamic, inter-dependent relationships between East Helena, Lewis and Clark, Jefferson and Broadwater Counties, and other agencies and forces that shape the region. Over the course of this plan's life cycle, it is expected that inter-agency collaboration will become even more important. Accordingly, this plan's goal and objectives framework supports actions building the economic health and resilience of the region as a whole, especially as it relates strategically to the unique qualities Helena residents enjoy.</i></p>	<p>LU CI PFS NE</p> <p>[0.88] In making annexation decisions consider the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master plans for water, sewer, transportation, parks, schools and emergency services; • Provision of necessary rights-of-way and easements; • Studies that evaluate environmental and public service factors; • Timing that supports orderly development and/or coordinated extension of public services; • Ability to leverage existing facilities, minimizing expansion or duplication of facilities; • The Urban Standards Boundary (USB); • Growth Policy goals and objectives. 	<p>A.02, A.03, A.04, A.10, A.12, A.14, A.23, A.26, A.34, A.36, A.37, A.44, A.47</p>	<p>A.18, A.26, A.47</p>
<p>CI PFS</p> <p>[0.89] Develop and maintain disaster, mitigation, emergency, and recovery plans, working with and maintaining consistency, and integrity of such plans with adjacent jurisdictions.</p>	<p>CI PFS</p> <p>[0.90] Maintain and implement wildfire prevention and evacuation plans, helping prevent or reduce loss of life, property damage and recovery costs in and around Helena.</p>	<p>A.14, A.18, A.26, A.47</p>	<p>A.03, A.04, A.10, A.37, A.44</p>
<p>CI PFS LU</p> <p>[0.91] Work with Lewis and Clark County and East Helena to create joint development standards that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a more consistent regulatory system for in-city and surrounding areas; • Guide annexation decisions; • Require new development connect to public services whenever practical or provide for future connections if not immediately practical. 	<p>CI LU</p> <p>[0.92] Coordinate land use development issues with East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Jefferson County, Broadwater County and other adjacent jurisdictions as beneficial to the long-term quality of life of Helena and its region.</p>	<p>A.10, A.23, A.44, A.46, A.47</p>	<p>A.37, A.44, A.45</p>
<p>CI</p> <p>[0.93] Work to coordinate revisions, updates, and implementation of Helena's Growth Policy with all adjacent jurisdictions.</p>	<p>CI</p> <p>[0.94] Enhance e-government and internet capabilities, improving communications and making interactions between the City and residents more convenient.</p>	<p>A.45</p>	

1 – Chapter Key: EC = Population & Economic Conditions; LU = Land Use; HO = Housing; PFS = Public Facilities & Services; XP = Transportation; NE = Natural Environment; CC = Community Culture & Design; O = Coordination & Implementation

2 – See Actions Table, Chapter 9: Coordination & Implementation





Chapter Listings 1	Goals	Objectives	Implementing Actions 2
Chapter Listings 1	<p>Goals</p> <p>[G.13] Maintain, update, coordinate and implement Helena's policy and regulatory documents.</p> <p><i>Discussion: Cities are more likely to succeed when leaders and citizens come together to address a shared vision and set of objectives. This goal serves to affirm Helena's commitment to community planning and implementation. This Growth Policy is configured to aid periodic updates, and encourages future planning work by City departments, creating topical, parks or sub-area planning. Good planning – and just as important, implementation – is key to maintaining Helena's essential qualities over time.</i></p>	<p>Objectives</p> <p>[O.95] Encourage and support citizen involvement with City boards, commissions, and civic organizations.</p> <p>[O.96] Encourage community involvement in Helena government planning and decision-making.</p> <p>[O.97] Continue to improve permitting for new development, supporting the public interest and long-term community objectives.</p>	<p>A.43, A.45</p> <p>A.07, A.23, A.34, A.35, A.45</p> <p>A.01, A.02, A.09, A.45</p>
Chapter Listings 1	<p>CI</p> <p>CC</p>	<p>[O.98] Provide timely, professional and efficient processing of building permits, development review, and code administration.</p> <p>[O.99] Promote the concentration of specialized industries within the city where specialized infrastructure, information, and labor advantages may promote economic development and desirable growth.</p> <p>[O.100] Consider amendments to the City of Helena Growth Policy as needed and, at a minimum, once every five years. Amendments should consider, coordinate and compliment with the long-term plan for the community as expressed in the Growth Policy.</p>	<p>A.02, A.15, A.45</p> <p>A.01, A.02, A.03, A.05, A.19, A.34</p> <p>A.34, A.45</p>
Chapter Listings 1	<p>CI</p> <p>PFS</p>	<p>[O.101] Any necessary changes to development regulations, modifications to capital improvements programs, or proposed neighborhood plans required for implementation should accompany proposed amendments to the Growth Policy, so that regulations maintain consistency with the Growth Policy.</p>	<p>A.03, A.04, A.37, A.44, A.47</p>
Chapter Listings 1	<p>CI</p>	<p>[O.102] Within the Urban Standards Boundary (USB), mitigate the financial impacts of annexation through the use of service agreements and/or neighborhood planning.</p>	<p>A.37, A.44</p>

1 – Chapter Key: CI = Population & Economic Conditions; LU = Land Use; HO = Housing; PFS = Public Facilities & Services; TP = Transportation; NE = Natural Environment; CC = Community Culture & Design; CI = Coordination & Implementation
 2 – See Actions Table, Chapter 5: Coordination & Implementation

Chapter III – Railroad URD Plan: Vision and Goals

Introduction to the Plan

The URD plan for the Helena Railroad District has been prepared to meet the requirements for an Urban Renewal and Tax Increment Finance District under Montana Urban Renewal Law in Title 7, Chapter 15, parts 42 and 43, of Montana Code Annotated. The plan is intended to be responsive and adaptable, recognizing that conditions may change and unanticipated development opportunities may arise over the anticipated 15-year period of the plan. It is anticipated that further planning and public involvement will be needed to identify priorities for projects and fund expenditures based on current information, conditions and opportunities.

This chapter identifies a broad vision, primary goals, and key objectives for the Railroad District. Chapter IV provides more information on how the plan will be implemented.

Vision for the Railroad District

The Railroad District will be a destination district in the City of Helena, with a strong neighborhood identity based on the district’s historic core, unique mix of uses, including workforce housing , manufacturing, and the railroad after which the district is named. The Railroad District will be a vibrant place to work, live, and visit with shops, restaurants, and diverse commercial businesses. It will be uniquely different from the city’s other main nearby destinations – downtown, Great Northern Town Center, and the Capitol area. People will easily access the Railroad District by vehicle, and pedestrian and bike-friendly connections.

Goals and Objectives

The purpose of the goals and objectives is to establish an overall framework and direction for the future of the Railroad District. They are intended to provide a rational and more specific basis for how the vision will be achieved.

The following goals and objectives are drawn from previous studies and public outreach efforts, dating back nearly 15 years. Most recently, this plan draws on individual interviews with landowners, businesses, and residents of the area; a public meeting held in October; meetings held by the U.S. EPA over the spring, summer and fall of 2015 to address a variety of issues for an area that includes the Helena Railroad District, and meetings with city officials and the city-county planning board (See **Appendix D**).

For purposes of land use planning, a goal is a general statement; a target for a future condition and for which actions are aimed. Goals are intended to be broad, long-range and all-encompassing, and should experience little change through the years. Objectives are actions or policies to realize the goal. Objectives refer to specifics that are reasonably attainable.

In the following lists, goals and objectives are numbered so that they can be more easily referenced, not to suggest any particular priority order. In fact many of the goals and objectives overlap. The determination of priorities will be made through additional planning and annual work plans for the District. More information on this topic can be found in Chapter IV.



Goal #1: Emphasize the District’s Historic Importance

1. Promote the railroad depot area as a defining feature of the District.
2. Review and update as needed the 2003 Architectural Guidelines and formally adopt as guidelines.
3. Work with the BNSF and others to pursue how best to highlight the railroad’s historic importance and unique potential for observing railcar operations from the depot area.
4. Develop interpretive signage with a consistent appearance.
5. Retain and restore/rehabilitate historic buildings and other historic features such as brick paving, fencing, and lighting.
6. Develop and market programs and activities that incorporate education on the area’s historic importance.
7. Develop an image “brand” for the District, based on its distinctive character and history.

Goal #2: Increase Property Utilization and Function

1. Provide technical assistance and planning to identify vacant and underutilized properties for redevelopment.
2. Provide for a mix of uses within the District.
3. Strive for neighborhood commercial options—places to shop and eat within walking distance of work, schools, and homes.
4. Provide for a variety of residential housing, including affordable workforce housing and special needs housing.
5. Prepare properties for redevelopment by facilitating land assemblage and property transfer.
6. Work with city planning and zoning and private interests to identify regulatory roadblocks to improving property and identify solutions.
7. Consider the unique differences in various parts of the District and identify planning and project approaches as necessary for those areas.

Goal #3: Expand and Diversify the District’s Economy

1. Promote and market the District as a place to do business – highlight what makes the District uniquely qualified for various businesses.
2. Upgrade and expand on existing broad-band capabilities to attract high tech businesses.
3. Develop the District’s historic and proposed mix of residential, commercial and light industrial uses as a unique, identifying feature for businesses.
4. Work with business leaders and individual businesses to provide maximum opportunity, consistent with the sound needs of the municipality as a whole, for the rehabilitation or redevelopment of the Helena Railroad District by private enterprise.
5. Develop partnerships among existing property owners, new/expanding businesses and the local government to increase economic activity
6. Work with Helena College to identify training opportunities to expand and diversify District businesses.



7. Encourage projects that provide opportunities for college students to live and/or work near the campus.
8. Encourage businesses that can benefit from proximity to the college.
9. Potential for live-work building concepts, e.g., artist studios with retail and living space.

Goal #4: Create an Inviting Venue

1. Develop planning tools to address eight key urban design elements identified by the Urban Land Institute: imageability, enclosure, human scale, transparency, complexity, coherence, legibility and linkage.
 - Imageability - Features or landmarks that make the area distinct, recognizable and memorable.
 - Enclosure - Streets and public spaces that are visually defined with trees, buildings, and other vertical elements to create outdoor spaces.
 - Human Scale - Building dimensions, architectural details, signage, public lighting, sidewalks, and street widths which are more intimate landscapes for pedestrians
 - Transparency - Street-level storefront windows, doors and entryways, courtyards, etc. that invite passersby to look in.
 - Complexity - An area with a visual richness from architectural diversity, landscape elements, street furniture, signage, and human activity.
 - Coherence - A sense of visual order, influenced by consistency and complementarity of scale, character, and arrangement of buildings, landscaping, and other physical elements.
 - Legibility - Ease with which people can navigate the area, including layout of streets
 - Linkage - The physical and visual connections that unify various elements – e.g., from building to street, one side of street to the other.
2. Develop “Entryways” and wayfinding signage– for example, entryway arches or other features at key intersections into the District, and distinctive signage for locating specific sites.
3. Promote street art that reflects the District’s historic foundations.

Goal #5: Address Public Infrastructure Needs

1. Plan and prioritize public infrastructure in coordination with the city’s transportation planning system and capital improvements planning process.
2. Consider and plan for primary motorized access to/from the District, including:
 - a. Montana Avenue Railroad Crossing - and possible potential under-over-pass;
 - b. Other Railroad Crossings;
 - c. Malfunction Junction; and
 - d. Other major connections into/within District: Lyndale, Helena, Boulder Avenue.
3. Plan for motorized access within the district, including:
 - e. Memorial Park transportation improvements; and
 - f. Establishing criteria for prioritizing other street improvements in the district.



4. Address non-motorized transportation needs, including:
 - g. Trail Systems and Non-Motorized Crossings of Montana Avenue;
 - h. Safe routes to School;
 - i. Sidewalks, Complete Streets;
 - j. Railroad crossings, and
 - k. Connections to the region-wide trail systems.
5. Identify and prioritize upgrades to water, sewer and stormwater drainage infrastructure.
6. Plan for specific parking needs of various businesses. Develop guidelines that reflect urban design elements identified in Goal #4 “Create an Inviting Venue.”

Goal #6: Provide for Public and Environmental Health

1. Promote compatible adjoining land uses and avoid adjacent uses with potential for public health or safety issues.
2. Reduce air, noise and other environmental pollution problems.
3. Support green infrastructure/green development.
4. Provide recreational opportunities including trails, and “active” parks with playgrounds.
5. Provide complete streets with access for those with disabilities.

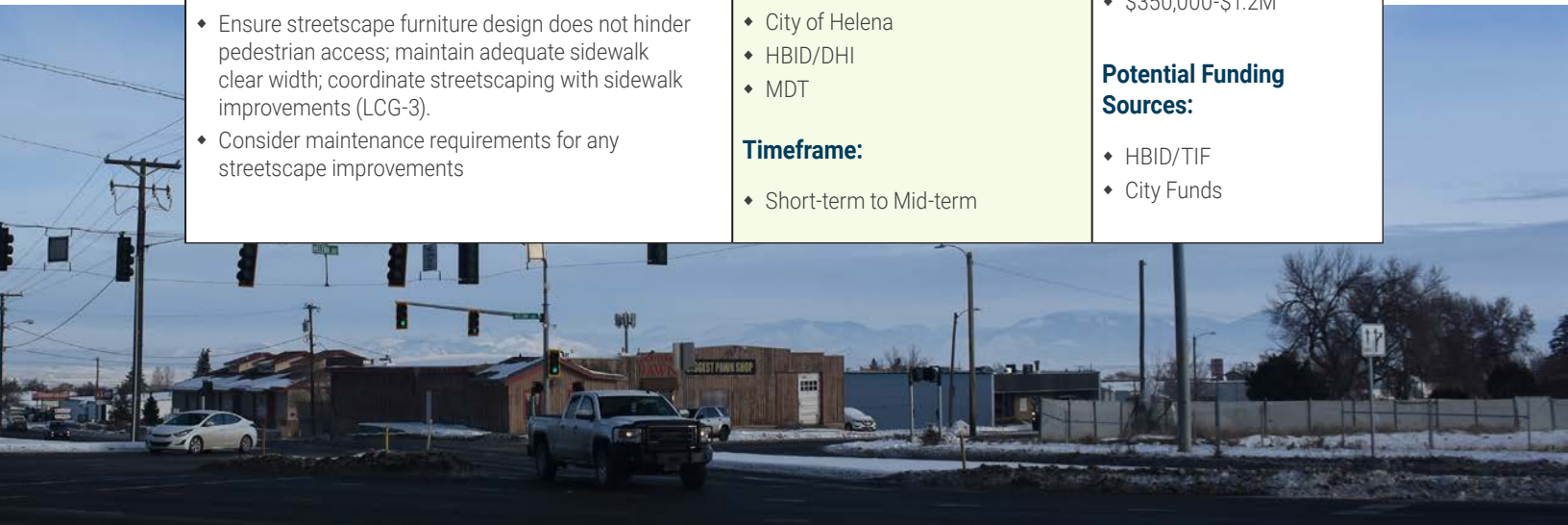


Appendix C: Multi-Modal (Five-Points) Study Recommendations

In 2020, the City of Helena commissioned a multimodal traffic study. The multimodal traffic study was prepared by Robert Peccia and Associates (RPA) and completed in 2021 to assess five-point intersections, review corridor connections linking them, and provide recommendations to address the gaps in connectivity and safety measures. The recommendations for improving the five-point intersections and corridors connecting the Downtown and Midtowne areas of Helena vary from streetscape improvements, adding additional safety measures, to complete restructuring of intersections through roundabout designs. The two five-point intersections included in the evaluation are located at Lyndale Avenue/Montana Avenue/Helena Avenue and Last Chance Gulch/Helena Avenue/Neill Avenue. The connecting corridor segments evaluated include Last Chance Gulch, Lyndale Avenue, Helena Avenue, and Montana Avenue. The purpose of the Five-Point Intersections and Corridor Connections Multimodal Traffic Study was to develop comprehensive long-range strategies for managing Helena’s transportation network. The report recommendations identify feasible improvement projects to address needs identified by the public and local stakeholders through public engagement. The traffic study provides an examination of geometric characteristics, MDT crash history reports, Helena’s land uses, existing physical constraints, environmental resources, and multimodal needs of the intersections and corridors.

LCG-2. Last Chance Gulch Street Design – North of Neill Avenue

RECOMMENDATION: Install streetscape enhancements.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensure streetscape furniture design does not hinder pedestrian access; maintain adequate sidewalk clear width; coordinate streetscaping with sidewalk improvements (LCG-3). ◆ Consider maintenance requirements for any streetscape improvements 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City of Helena ◆ HBID/DHI ◆ MDT <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Short-term to Mid-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$350,000-\$1.2M <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ HBID/TIF ◆ City Funds



LCG-3. Last Chance Gulch Sidewalk Improvements

RECOMMENDATION: Repair or replace deficient sidewalks along the northern and southern segments of Last Chance Gulch.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate sidewalk improvements with streetscape enhancements (LCG-1 and LCG-2) to ensure adequate pedestrian clear width. Ensure compliance with ADA requirements for all pedestrian improvements. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Helena Business/Property Owners HBID/DHI <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term to Mid-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$230 to \$340 per linear foot <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HBID/TIF City Funds TA

LYN-1. Lyndale Avenue Pedestrian Crossing - Ewing/Rodney Streets

RECOMMENDATION: Remove the existing crossing at Warren Street; provide enhanced pedestrian crossing at Ewing Street/Rodney Street; install shared-use path or sidewalk adjacent to the northern leg of the intersection connecting to Centennial Trail; install sidewalks and sharrow markings on Rodney Street from Lyndale Avenue to Helena Avenue.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct engineering study and prepare site-specific information outlining justification for crossing treatment for MDT consideration. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Helena MDT <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term to Mid-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$520,000 <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Funds Railroad URD/TIF TA NH HSIP



HLN-1. Helena Avenue Bike Lanes

RECOMMENDATION: Extend bike lanes to within a half block of the two five-point intersections; install signage instructing bicyclists to use the full travel lane where bike lanes end approaching the five-point intersections.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensure new signage complies with MUTCD requirements. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City of Helena <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Short-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$3,000 potential <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City Funds ◆ TA ◆ Railroad URD/TIF

HLN-1. Helena Avenue Pedestrian Accomodations

RECOMMENDATION: Provide continuous sidewalks on both sides of Helena Avenue; install ADA-accessible curb ramps.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensure compliance with ADA requirements for all pedestrian improvements. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City of Helena <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Short-term to Mid-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$190,000 <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City Funds ◆ TA ◆ Railroad URD/TIF



HLN-3. Helena Avenue Triangle Intersection Improvements - 13th Street to 15th Street

RECOMMENDATION: Convert triangle spurs to open space or parking; extend constructed corners with curb/gutter, sidewalks, and ADA curb ramps; install marked crosswalks and appropriate signage.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with adjacent property owners to determine appropriate redevelopment of former roadway spurs. Consider maintenance requirements associated with improvements. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Helena Property Owners <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term to Mid-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$150,000 (Parking Area) \$190,000 (Parklet) <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Funds TA Private

HLN-4. Helena Avenue Intersection Improvements - 16th/Ewing Streets

RECOMMENDATION: Install ADA-accessible pedestrian crossing enhancements including curb bulb-outs, signage, and pavement markings; reorient the northern Ewing Street approach.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Helena <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$120,000 <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Funds TA





HLN-5. Helena Avenue Intersection Improvements – National/Dakota/Boulder Avenues

RECOMMENDATION: Install pedestrian crossing enhancements including curb bulb-outs, signage, and pavement markings; realign intersection to improve geometrics.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consider Boulder Avenue grade when designing roadway realignment. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City of Helena <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Short-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$190,000 <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City Funds ◆ Railroad URD/TIF ◆ TA

MT-1. Montana Avenue Rail Crossing

RECOMMENDATION: Construct a grade-separated rail crossing on Montana Avenue.		
<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consider the effects on Roberts Street and National Avenue at grade rail crossings. ◆ Coordinate with improvements at the Lyndale Avenue/ Montana Avenue/Helena Avenue intersection and Centennial Trail crossing. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ MDT ◆ MRL ◆ City of Helena <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Long-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$35.4M <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City Funds ◆ NH ◆ Discretionary Grant Funding ◆ Private

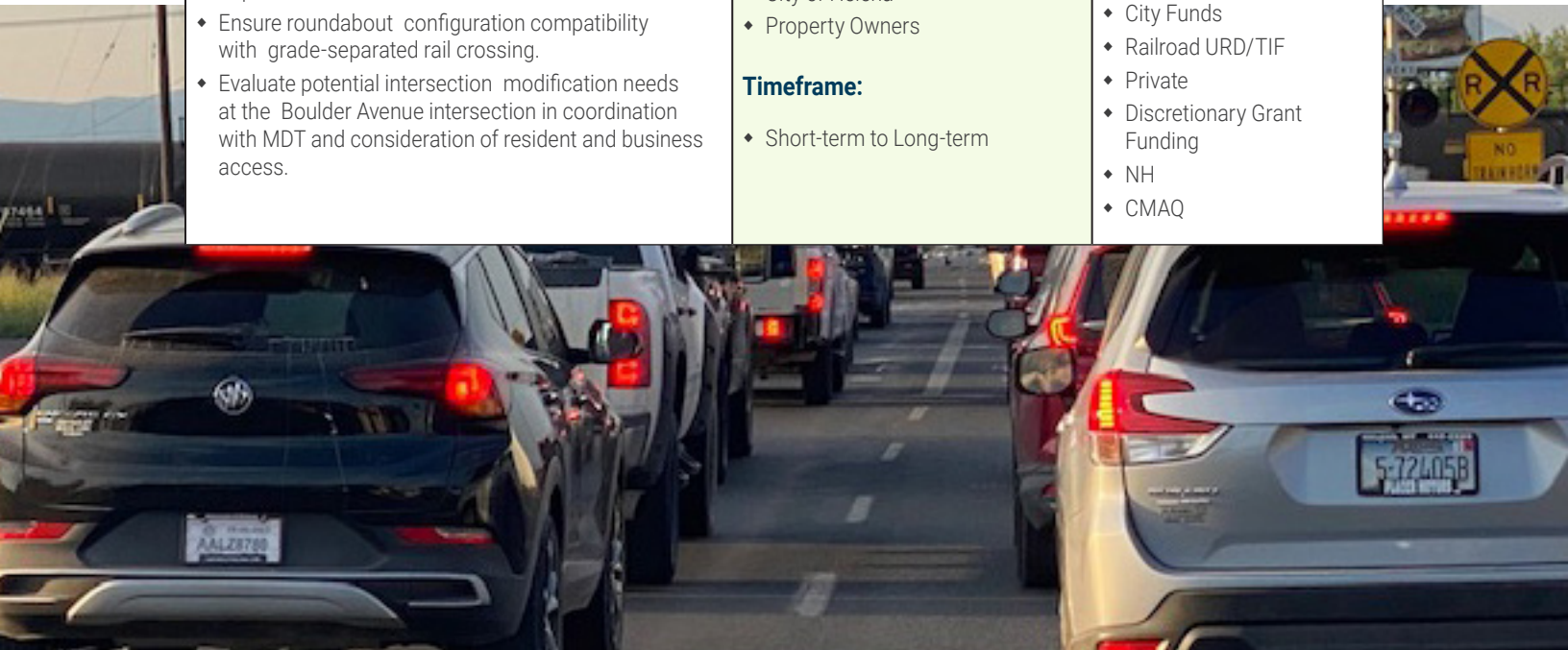


MT-2. Montana Avenue Rail Crossing

- ◆ **Alternative A: Existing Configuration** – Maintain existing five-point intersection configuration with enhanced wayfinding.
- ◆ **Alternative B: Reconfigured Traffic Signal** – Add a left-turn lane on Lyndale Avenue, enabling left turns onto Montana and Helena Avenues; add a left-turn lane on the southbound leg of Montana Avenue, enabling left turns onto Helena Avenue; provide separated through and left-turn lanes on the westbound leg of Helena Avenue; remove raised medians.
- ◆ **Alternative C: Four-Legged Intersection** – Close eastbound and westbound legs of Helena Avenue before intersection with Montana Avenue; create standard four-legged intersection with Montana Avenue and Lyndale Avenue; provide left, through, and dual-right lanes on west leg of Lyndale Avenue; add left-turn lane on southbound leg of Montana Avenue, enabling left turns onto Lyndale Avenue; install new traffic signals at Lyndale Avenue/National Avenue and Montana Avenue/Boulder Avenue.
- ◆ **Alternative D: Roundabout** – Remove traffic signal; install a two-lane roundabout, maintain access from all current intersection legs.

RECOMMENDATION: Install a multi-lane roundabout (long-term); Implement pedestrian and streetscaping beautification improvements (short-term).

<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pursue funding partnership between MDT and the City of Helena. ◆ Coordinate with property owners regarding roundabout impacts. ◆ Ensure roundabout configuration compatibility with grade-separated rail crossing. ◆ Evaluate potential intersection modification needs at the Boulder Avenue intersection in coordination with MDT and consideration of resident and business access. 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ MDT ◆ City of Helena ◆ Property Owners <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Short-term to Long-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$4.9M-5.9M <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ City Funds ◆ Railroad URD/TIF ◆ Private ◆ Discretionary Grant Funding ◆ NH ◆ CMAQ
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MT-3. Montana Avenue Centennial Trail Crossing and Extension

- ♦ **Alternative A: Lyndale Avenue with Crossing at 5-Point Intersection** – Shared use path south on National Avenue and east along the north side of Lyndale Avenue; Montana Avenue crossing at the five-point intersection.
- ♦ **Alternative B: Argyle Street with Crossing at Bozeman Street** – Shared use path north on National Avenue, east on Argyle Street, and south along Montana Avenue; provide a crossing at Bozeman Street.
- ♦ **Alternative C: Argyle Street with Crossing at 5-Point Intersection** – Shared use path north on National Avenue, east on Argyle Street, and south along Montana Avenue; provide a crossing at the five-point intersection.
- ♦ **Alternative D: National Avenue to Livingston Avenue** – Shared use path south on National Avenue; provide Lyndale Avenue and Helena Avenue crossings; continue south on Dakota Avenue to Livingston Avenue and east across Montana Avenue to Roberts Street.
- ♦ **Alternative E: Ewing Street to Livingston Avenue** – Shared use path south on Ewing Street; provide Lyndale Avenue and Helena Avenue crossings; continue east to Dakota Avenue then south to Livingston Avenue and east across Montana Avenue to Roberts Street.

RECOMMENDATION: Extend Centennial Trail along National Avenue and Argyle Street; provide enhanced pedestrian crossing at Bozeman Street; update the Centennial Trail Master Plan.

<p>Project Development Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Identify the need for additional right-of-way to enable a shared-use path facility separated from the roadway. ♦ Conduct engineering study and prepare a site-specific memorandum outlining justification for crossing treatment and confirmation of operational performance and queuing on Montana Avenue for MDT consideration. ♦ Evaluate crossing configurations on Montana Avenue in terms of trail user safety, vehicular delay and queuing, and construction impacts. ♦ Consider impacts to on-street parking. ♦ Consider impacts from future grade-separated rail crossing (MT-1). 	<p>Implementation Agency/ Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ City of Helena ♦ MDT ♦ Railroad URD ♦ NMTAC ♦ Adjacent Property Owners <p>Timeframe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Short-term to Mid-term 	<p>Estimated Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ \$420,000 (Option A Crossing) ♦ \$530,000 (Option B Crossing) <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ City Funds ♦ Railroad URD/TIF ♦ RTP ♦ TA ♦ Private
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Appendix D: Public Engagement

Public input was fundamental to this plan’s development, and the City sponsored multiple interactive public engagement activities to shape this plan’s overall vision, debate alternatives, and promote specific recommendations for policy and implementation strategy.

D.1: Orientation Interview Summary

The following individuals participated in the orientation interviews conducted at Helena College from November 14 through 16, 2022.

Table D.1: Orientation Interview Participants		
Name	Affiliation	Date
Ray & Susie Kuntz	Local developer/property owner	11/14/22
Bruce Day	Helena Foodshare	
Dustin Burdick	Neighborhood resident/Burdick Locksmith	
John Iverson	Local developer/property owner	
Trisha Klack	Bryant Elementary School	
Sandy Bauman	Helena College	11/15/22
Rose Casey	Neighborhood resident	
Andy Garland	Montana Rail Link	
Kathy Macefield & Pam Attardo	Historic Preservation	
Megan Malkin	Mae and June Vintage	
Steve Skinner	Local developer/property owner	11/16/22
Pamela Melcher	Montana Playwrights	
Megan Helton & Bob Goodwyn	Stonetree Climbing Center	

D.1.1: Topics

The interviews over the three days generated comprehensive conversations about the 6th Ward and the topics this plan may need to address. There are 65 on this list, and more may surface as the process continues. The table below lists all 65 topics and identifies if they’re generally associated with neighborhood character, the economy, transportation, housing, or local institutions. Expectedly, many topics relate to more than one of these five overarching considerations.



Table D.2: Orientation Interview Topics and Themes

Topic	Character	Economy	Transportation and Services	Housing	Institutions
20-year vision	X	X	X	X	X
Central location	X	X			
Historic preservation	X			X	
Neighborhood heritage	X			X	
Railyard history	X	X			
Rail yard sounds	X		X		
“Helper” station	X	X	X		
Gateway opportunity on Helena	X	X			
Landmarks/attributes	X	X	X		
Public art	X	X	X		
Lighting	X		X		
Street trees	X		X		
Lyndale corridor character	X	X	X		
Streetcar/trolley	X		X		
Rodney Street model	X	X			X
Poverty	X	X		X	
Business recruitment		X			
Lease rates		X			
Tourism	X	X	X		X
Property maintenance		X		X	
TIF investment track record		X			X
Commercial center/micro-downtown	X	X	X	X	X
Crime	X	X			X
6th Ward popularity	X	X		X	
Depot building tenancy options		X			
Caird Steel property	X	X			
Local business/non-profit “hustle” for success		X			X
Underground fuel plume and migration		X	X		X



Table D.2: Orientation Interview Topics and Themes

Topic	Character	Economy	Transportation and Services	Housing	Institutions
MRL/BNSF merger		X	X		X
Evening activities	X	X			
Outdoor concert noise		X			
Storage and warehousing in commercial district	X	X	X		X
Community garden appropriateness		X	X		X
Maintenance of TIF property tax base		X			X
Commercial district tenant synergy	X	X			
Railroad crossings			X		
Access east of Montana Ave		X	X		X
Customer parking	X	X	X		
Centennial Trail connections	X		X		X
Residential parking			X	X	
Navigation/wayfinding	X		X		X
Cut-through traffic Sanders/Phoenix/Roberts			X		
Boulder Ave access from Montana Ave			X		
Local walking/bicycling	X	X	X		X
Brick street/pavement maintenance priority	X	X	X		X
Flooding			X		X
Public restroom			X		X
Housing supply and demand		X		X	
Housing instability		X		X	
Residential displacement		X		X	
Abandoned houses	X			X	
Mobile home park long-term tenancy	X			X	
Families moving in/kids	X			X	
Arts/maker space	X	X		X	X
New residential construction	X	X		X	
New owner-occupants		X		X	



Table D.2: Orientation Interview Topics and Themes

Topic	Character	Economy	Transportation and Services	Housing	Institutions
Schools and community relations	X				X
Helena College program changes		X		X	X
St Mary's Solar and Jubilee Garden					X
County museum	X		X		X
Helena College property ownership/Zone of Acquisition	X				X
Student Housing				X	X
Lincoln School closure/"Head Shed"			X		X
Institutions	X	X	X	X	X
School kid transport			X		X

Character

20-Year Vision

Some interviewees would like to see a longer-term vision built by and agreed to by the community, acting as a rallying call for investment into the district's land uses, transportation systems, and business development.

Central Location

Interviewees see the 6th Ward as uniquely situated to take advantage of its central location, with relatively convenient access to the community's larger commercial areas, downtown, the Capitol, and the Interstate.

Historic Preservation

Most interviewees believe the neighborhood has historic value, even if not uniformly expressed in the quality and character of individual structures. The neighborhood's history as the hub of railroad commerce – both for passengers and freight – dictated

much of its form and the building types. Many of the older structures remain, in varying conditions, and interviewees believe there is value in either preserving them or otherwise memorializing them.

Neighborhood Heritage

The neighborhood's history runs deep in the eyes of interviewees. Built around the railroad, the neighborhood mixed a small commercial district with railroad yard housing and warehousing. The modest housing stock mostly consists of smaller, clapboard bungalows on 2,500 to 5,000 sf lots, reflecting the incomes of railroad workers at the time. This blue-collar, bootstrap heritage remains, showing up in the once pejorative and now affectionate nickname of "6th Ward Rats" adopted by those who live here.

Railyard History

The 6th Ward's railyard history underpins interviewee perspectives on the neighborhood.



Many interviews focused on the rail yard, its relationship with Helena’s development, and its tie – via Helena Avenue – to the center of town. Interviewees also value the “grittiness” of the commercial center’s character and its enduring ties to the rail yard and the people who work it.

Rail Yard Sounds

Interviewees noted the rail yard has unique sounds, including the coupling and uncoupling of cars, the squeal of rail trucks, the clanging of crossing signals, the ring of horns, and the roar of diesel engines as they slow and accelerate. The sounds reinforce the neighborhood’s intimate tie to rail operations, an abiding reminder of the area’s history and current context.

“Helper” Station

Because Helena sits in a topographic bowl, this rail yard is considered a “helper station.” According to interviewees, trains in Helena often require “help” to climb the grades leading out of town. This sometimes requires splitting longer trains to lighten their load or attach supplemental engines to push or pull trains over the hill.

Gateway Opportunity on Helena

Interviewees noted that Helena Avenue can directly access the Railroad District east of Montana Avenue, using the traffic light at “Malfunction Junction.” They believe there is an opportunity to celebrate the Helena Ave entry into the commercial district through a gateway arch, sign, or other streetscape treatment.

Landmarks/Attributes

Interviewees identified landmarks and unique attributes that contribute to the 6th Ward’s identity. The rail depot, the old rail yard manager’s house, Bryant School, St Mary’s church, the neighborhood’s parks, the old baseball park, the complexity, and challenge of “Malfunction Junction,” the new mural celebrating the 6th Ward, and

the irregular street intersection at the commercial core all contribute to what makes the district unique within Helena’s context.

Public Art

Interviewees see opportunities for public art in the commercial district, where pedestrian activity and historic identity come together.

Lighting

As part of a larger “placemaking” theme, interviewees mentioned a need for improved lighting in the district. Beyond a need for increased safety, interviewees called for lighting in keeping with the neighborhood’s identity and historic roots.

Street Trees

Some interviewees believe street trees, particularly in the historic commercial core, would help to define the retail district’s identity, slow traffic, and draw visitors in from the Montana Ave corridor.

Lyndale Corridor Character

A major arterial street, Lyndale functions as US Highway 12 west of Montana Ave. It is a prominent east-west corridor and has been developed with a mix of retail, office, warehousing, recreational, and manufacturing uses, most of which cater to auto and truck traffic. Interviewees hope for something a bit more notable about this corridor, looking to it to contribute to the vitality of the Railroad District.

Streetcar/Trolley

Helena Avenue cuts southwest from the railroad depot and was once the alignment of a trolley linking the depot to downtown. Interviewees mentioned this and noted the trolley system extended beyond just this route. The city owns two historic trolleys. One is on display at Last Chance Gulch’s walking mall. The other is in storage at the fairgrounds.



Rodney Street Model

Many interviewees pointed to the Rodney Street neighborhood as a model for what the 6th Ward might achieve in terms of stimulating and directing investment in neighborhood revitalization. They understand Rodney Street is a completely different place, but they see how business development, neighborhood action, housing reinvestment, and institutional support work together to achieve common objectives.

Economy

Poverty

Interviewees mentioned poverty in the conversations but did not dwell on it or see it as a topic for this process to address. The conversations were more focused on how the community's FoodShare, churches, and schools assist neighborhood households in need. The feeling among interviewees appears less about efforts to elevate neighborhood incomes and more about enabling those who live here to access housing, provide for their households, and live the lives they choose.

Business Recruitment

Business owners in the commercial district are active in bringing other entrepreneurs into the neighborhood. At least two interviewees spoke of their efforts in this, reflecting a level of enthusiasm for the district which may contribute to its revival and popularity.

Lease Rates

Interviewees reported commercial yearly lease rates ranging from \$6/square foot to \$12/square foot. These rates seem comparable to other commercial districts away from Helena's downtown and newer commercial centers. Some interviewees believe lower lease rates help businesses get a start and then move to other, more expensive spaces. Others believe higher

rates assure an increasingly stable retail base, potentially at the expense of the quirkiness and experimentation lower rents might facilitate.

Tourism

Some interviewees see the Railroad District as a potential tourist destination, working in concert with downtown and the Capitol.

Property Maintenance

While most interviewees appreciate the neighborhood's "live and let live" character, most also believe there are minimum standards to which property owners should be held – mostly to alleviate impacts to property adjoining neglected houses, businesses, or vacant lots.

TIF Investment Track Record

Interviewees are curious about the process the TIF Board uses to determine which projects to fund and the magnitude of funding assistance available. While some interviewees have been involved in TIF activities, there is still a lack of understanding of the TIF district's mission, priorities, and operations.

Commercial Center/Micro-Downtown

The commercial district's street pattern echoes that of "Malfunction Junction," but it is a much smaller scale, with slow traffic, buildings placed close to the street edge, and a functioning pedestrian environment. This creates a dynamic and active place, where the retail, office, and institutional uses mimic – at a micro scale – the type of mix found downtown.

Crime

Interviewees spoke of the neighborhood's reputation for being a rough place in the past. While they recognize there may still be crime in the district, they don't see it as a particular problem today.



6th Ward Popularity

Many interviewees believe the district is gaining popularity, becoming a place where people are drawn to visit, start a business, attend school, or reside.

Depot Building Tenancy Options

Some interviewees noted the depot building may be underutilized, occupied solely by the railroad. The railroad's operations within the building require immediate track access, so any reshuffling of tenancy to make space available for other uses, like a restaurant, may require more effort than the railroad is either willing or able to expend.

Caird Steel Property

Interviewees pointed to the Caird Steel property for a variety of reasons. It will be the future home of Helena FoodShare and is the site of the Caird Pattern House, where steel patterns were produced for the plant to manufacture. Some interviewees noted the steelworks produced the types of streetlights many would like to see in the district, reinforcing the historic character and underscoring the level of complexity present in the 6th Ward. Those interviewees aware of the proposed carwash on the site are disappointed by it, hoping the land would be developed as a more endearing neighborhood or commercial district entry.

Local Business/Non-Profit "Hustle" for Success

Several interviewees acknowledged the enthusiasm the local businesses and non-profits have for the district and the energy they dedicate to promoting the district and the success of their operations. Some interviewees also appreciate what it takes to continue this "hustle" from the first, establishing generation to the next, cultivating new leaders to participate in transition planning and sustaining operations over time.

Underground Fuel Plume and Migration

One interviewee mentioned the possibility of an underground fuel plume near the rail yard, potentially posing a contamination threat as it migrates north and east.

MRL/BNSF Merger

Montana Rail Link and Burlington Northern Santa Fe are merging operations. Interviewees say the MRL employees will transfer seamlessly to become BNSF employees and that there are no immediate changes planned for the types of activities performed in the yard. Interviewees are concerned, however, that the rail operator will lose its local ties and general responsiveness.

Evening Activities

Interviewees yearn for more evening dining and entertainment activities, identifying a restaurant as a particularly attractive addition. The Playwrights operation now brings after-hours visitors to the district, as do Hap's Tavern and Stonetree Climbing Center. Interviewees wish to add even more.

Outdoor Concert Noise

While many interviewees are eager for additional evening dining and entertainment options, at least some are concerned about after-hours noise.

Storage and Warehousing in Commercial District

The commercial district includes a wide variety of land uses, mixing offices, retail, and warehousing in a relatively compact area. The State of Montana recently constructed an equipment storage facility on Roberts, occupying a prominent corner in the district with non-retail use. Many interviewees believe it to be a poor use for the site, diminishing energy that could have been provided by a retail tenant.



The abundance of property nearby dedicated to warehousing or shop space would have been a better choice in the eyes of interviewees, allowing the State’s employees easy access to the commercial district while allowing a different use to occupy the Roberts site.

Community Garden Appropriateness

Several interviewees spoke about the community garden. Some believe it is a use integral to the district’s emerging identity and an opportunity for broad community involvement. Most, however, believe the garden may have outlived its usefulness, relying on a shrinking number of volunteers for its upkeep and occupying a site better suited for retail or office uses. These interviewees acknowledge the garden’s potential importance and advocate for its relocation to a site near the commercial district but not its heart.

Maintenance of TIF Property Tax Base

Some interviewees hope future development will contribute to the TIF property tax base, concerned that non-profits buying property for their projects will contribute little to the TIF’s ability to fund local priorities.

Commercial District Tenant Synergy

Interviewees mentioned the importance of synergy in the business mix, speaking to the relationships between various tenants and how they benefit from each other’s attraction. They hope to continue the complementary nature of businesses in the district, and some take an active part in targeting and recruiting new businesses they believe are a good fit.

Transportation and Public Facilities

Railroad Crossings

Nearly every interviewee mentioned the critical need to retain the two rail crossings in the neighborhood. Some believe the crossing at Montana Avenue should be grade-separated, with the road aligned beneath the rail. All agreed the crossing at Roberts should remain open, allowing the neighborhood to connect north-south without relying entirely on a single crossing at Montana.

Access East of Montana

Montana Avenue, particularly south of the railroad tracks, is difficult to cross. The street is a busy north-south artery, and turning movements and pedestrian crossings are restricted to preserve north-south mobility and traffic flows on US Highway 12. For instance, eastbound travelers on Lyndale Ave cannot proceed straight into the district’s commercial core because of restrictions at its intersection with Montana Ave.

Customer Parking

Interviewees believe there is a need for more parking in the commercial core. While many may walk or bike to the commercial blocks, most drive. Additional retail, office, or non-profit activity will likely rely on visitors from the larger Helena area, increasing demand for convenient parking, according to interviewees. There are now plans underway to provide angled parking along Helena Ave and convert Gallatin St to one-way, increasing the number of available on-street stalls. Some interviewees envision a parking structure, possibly located in what is now the community garden, as a key requirement for increasing evening hours of entertainment or dining activity in the commercial center.



Centennial Trail Connections

The Centennial Trail was featured in every interview, with participants indicating a desire to bring the trail into the district and complete the connection to the Boulder Ave freeway underpass. The lack of trail right of way from its existing terminus west of Montana Ave and the difficulty crossing Montana Ave were identified as missed opportunities.

Residential Parking

Some interviewees mentioned the parking or storage of inoperable or commercial vehicles on neighborhood streets and vacant lots. While not usually seen as a problem, these interviewees object when the vehicles make on-street parking spaces unavailable for long periods or when commercial or inoperable vehicles on vacant lots become a nuisance.

Navigation/Wayfinding

Some interviewees wish for an easier way to find destinations in the retail core – and others located elsewhere in the neighborhood – given the interruptions present in an otherwise interconnected street network. Getting from Point A to Point B is not always intuitive.

Cut-Through Traffic Sanders/Phoenix/Roberts

Northbound and southbound travelers frequently use residential streets in the Railroad District to bypass “Malfunction Junction,” according to several interviewees. This can result in faster speeds along these residential roadways, creating noise impacts and safety risks for those who live there. Interviewees want to slow speeds or reduce the amount of flow, hoping to implement calming strategies.

Boulder Ave Access from Montana

Boulder Ave is restricted to right-out turning movements at its intersection with Montana Ave, limiting access to the southern portion

of the district, Helena High School, and Helena College. Additionally, interviewees noted the left-turn lane for southbound travelers on Montana Ave is especially short, restricting the number of vehicles able to queue for access to eastbound Boulder Ave. Interviewees said this is particularly challenging for school access, impacting school buses and other school-bound traffic.

Local Walking/Bicycling

Some interviewees appreciate the ability to walk or ride bikes easily within the district. They also underscored the difficulty of traveling west across Montana Ave, wishing the Centennial Trail connected to the neighborhood.

Brick Street/Pavement Maintenance Priority

Interviewees mentioned the loss of the district’s brick streets and streetcar tracks, preferring to keep them in place as a sign of district identity.

Flooding

Some interviewees mentioned a former stream running through the central commercial core, and recent rain-on-snow events have flooded the area’s streets. Some interviewees reported damage to their ground floor areas. The City has a storm drain system in place, but the grates clog with snow and ice in the winter, making them less effective.

Public Restroom

While there is a public park (Beattie Park) in the commercial core, interviewees indicated there is no public restroom. This is a deficiency people interviewed would like to address.



Housing

Housing Supply and Demand

Helena's housing market is expensive, and the 6th Ward remains one of Helena's more affordable neighborhoods. But interviewees suggest things are changing, where homes and vacant lots are experiencing property value increases, and rents are on the rise.

Housing Instability

Interviewees discussed the challenge of housing instability, with many households in the neighborhood either in subsidized housing or in other situations where housing conditions threaten to be impermanent. Divorce, drug use, unemployment, or other factors influencing housing stability are significant in the district, and the neighborhood's institutions support families to the degree they can.

Residential Displacement

Rising property values and rising rents may make households vulnerable to losing their place in the neighborhood. Interviewees expressed concern about the potential for displacement in the face of these market influences, and they were restrained in suggesting additional reinvestment in the housing stock believing the new investment may exacerbate the growing affordability challenge.

Abandoned Houses

Interviewees acknowledge the presence of abandoned buildings in the district and are interested in finding new uses for them, arguing for the construction of new housing on old lots, with the new housing designed to be compatible in design and scale with those surrounding.

Mobile Home Park Long-Term Tenancy

There is a large mobile home park in the district, located north of the tracks at

Lamborn St. Interviewees noted the park is mostly home to long-term tenants and provides essential affordable housing for neighborhood households. While the individual units are older, interviewees describe the facility as stable and a functioning element of the neighborhood fabric.

Families Moving in/Kids

Interviewees mentioned the neighborhood is seeing an influx of families with children, a relatively recent demographic shift in their eyes.

Arts/Maker Space

Some interviewees believe there are opportunities to develop a culture of art studios and maker spaces in this district, where the land use mix already blends shops, warehouses, and light manufacturing in a residential context.

New Residential Construction

Interviewees are generally eager to see new residential construction in the district. They hope, however, for it to conform to the neighborhood's historic forms and scale. Some interviewees are concerned existing zoning may not permit houses as they may have been built at the neighborhood's creation, and they hope small homes on small lots with reduced setbacks can once again be constructed here.

New Owner-Occupants

While more than 60% of the district's residential units are renter-occupied, interviewees say they believe more owner-occupants are coming to the neighborhood.

Institutions

Schools and Community Relations

Bryant Elementary School has grown as a community focus and source of local pride, according to some interviewees.



The school reports that 100% of its students qualify for free and reduced meals, and the school routinely distributes take-home packages to assist households in need. The school also hosts a series of outward-facing neighborhood events each year, reinforcing its connections to the community it serves.

Helena College Program Changes

Helena College is about to offer cosmetology training and will remodel its main building to accommodate the new program. The cosmetology school will likely attract students from across the state since it will be the only public cosmetology program in Montana. The program also features a retail side, where the public can receive discounted cosmetic services from students. These changes may generate increased student housing demand and additional student and retail traffic during the school's cosmetic program hours.

St Mary's Solar and Jubilee Garden

St Mary's Catholic Church has a solar array to produce electricity and a garden to produce food for distribution to the neighborhood.

County Museum

Some interviewees noted the district could be a fitting site for a county museum.

Helena College Property Ownership/Zone of Acquisition

Helena College is part of the University of Montana system and is a significant property owner in the district. The purchase, use, and disposition of its properties, however, is governed by law related to the school's "zone of acquisition" to ensure colleges can expand and the assurance that

land adjoining campus is compatible with school operations.

Student Housing

Helena College's program offers aviation technology and soon, cosmetology draw students from the larger region. This results in demand for student housing, estimated to be more than 60 units. The college does not provide housing and relies on the surrounding neighborhoods to offer units student households can afford.

Lincoln School Closure/"Head Shed"

Interviewees mentioned the closure of the Lincoln Elementary School as a loss to the northern portion of the 6th Ward, but they appreciate the school district's continued use of the facility as an administrative center and the district's investment in the Bryant Elementary School. While Lincoln no longer serves as an educational facility, it remains part of the neighborhood's institutional fabric and complements Lincoln Park.

Institutions

Interviewees appreciate the inventory of institutions in the neighborhood, with churches, schools, parks, and non-profit organizations adding to the mix of activities and the prominence of community-building.

School Kid Transport

Bryant Elementary students residing south of the tracks are expected to walk to school or be delivered by their parents or guardians. Those residing north of the tracks or more than a mile from the school qualify for bus service. However, even some of the children north of the tracks walk to school, emphasizing the importance of safety at the rail crossing.



D.1.2 Issues

The following issues are derived from the topics discussed in the conversations, distilled in a way to help give this planning effort a sense of direction, provide urgency for the community's priorities, and serve as a touchstone for the rest of the process, ensuring it stays focused on what is most important. As with the topics, additional issues may surface as the conversations continue, and additional information will help refine these to facilitate resolution.

Malfunction Junction

This intersection is at the top of everyone's list. The issues here stem from the irregular roadway alignments, the state highway designation, and the relatively high traffic volumes on the regional arterials coming together here.

- ◆ It is difficult to access areas east of Montana Ave when approaching the intersection from Lyndale Ave.
- ◆ It is difficult to cross Montana Ave on foot or by bike at this intersection, with irregularly configured crosswalks, confusion, long crossing distances, and no mid-crossing pedestrian refuge.
- ◆ The US Highway 12 designation limits local discretion in how to manage the intersection.
- ◆ Limited rights of way narrow design options for potential solutions.

Boulder Access

Boulder Ave is an important access corridor for the southern 6th Ward but getting to it from the north and west is difficult.

- ◆ The proximity of Boulder Ave to Malfunction Junction limits the length of its protected left-turn lane, making it difficult for school buses, freight, and vehicular traffic to access the southern 6th, Ward.

- ◆ Traffic flows and the priority to maintain mobility on US Highway 12 restrict full access at Boulder Ave.

Commercial District Identity/Vitality

The historic commercial center is more than a century old, and it appears to be enjoying new energy. The district's enthusiasm seems to be generated by folks who've newly discovered the place, investing in buildings, properties, and businesses in pursuit of opportunity in a place where the history, character, and economics support their actions.

- ◆ The revitalization depends on a relatively small pool of local businesses, driven by the passion of local entrepreneurs but reliant in the longer term on early success and effective succession planning.
- ◆ New investment may influence the character and feel of the 6th Ward and threaten change that some may not accept.
- ◆ Incoming businesses and increased popularity may result in rising rents, potentially displacing businesses that have been in the district for generations.

TIF Board Investment Strategy

The TIF has been in place since 2016 and has begun making investments to elevate business activity in the district. The TIF district's young age, however, means available revenues are still slim. Investments to date have been small and targeted to easy wins.

- ◆ The TIF Board's investment has taken advantage of opportunities and now may be the time to coalesce TIF strategy around longer-term objectives and draw from broad community consensus on priorities, criteria, and tradeoffs.



Vehicle Storage

The neighborhood has practiced a “live and let live” lifestyle, allowing households and businesses to operate as they please, as long as they don’t create a nuisance or safety hazard. With increasing attention – and increasing desires to promote an active and exciting commercial district – long-standing habits of storing commercial or abandoned vehicles on neighborhood streets or vacant lots are coming under increased scrutiny.

- ◆ Vehicle storage impacts the visual attractiveness of the 6th Ward, inconsistent with many residents and business owners’ hopes for an emerging neighborhood identity – at least in the core commercial area.

Housing Attainability

This has been one of Helena’s more affordable close-in neighborhoods. But property values are rising. With Helena College expanding to attract students from outside the region, demand for student housing nearby will increase.

- ◆ As local housing demand and property values continue to rise, households who may have been able to afford to purchase or rent in the neighborhood may need to find housing elsewhere.

Neighborhood Character Preservation

New investment in housing or the construction or remodeling of existing structures may influence the feel, scale, and experience of the 6th Ward. Existing zoning and design controls may not generate the types of results neighborhood residents or business owners want.

- ◆ The City’s development regulations may not be appropriate to manage new development in ways consistent with neighborhood hopes or needs.
- ◆ There is no historic district or other

statement of historical significance to articulate historic character or underscore elements worth preserving.

At-Grade Rail Crossings

The two crossings at Montana Ave and Roberts Ave are important to the 6th Ward. Both are also important in the regional context, with Montana Ave providing access to Helena’s regional commercial districts and the valley and Roberts providing an alternate, parallel route for those who choose not to use Montana Ave. Train traffic blocks one or both crossings up to 20 times per day, sometimes for as long as 25 minutes. The city has grade-separated rail crossings at Last Chance Gulch and Interstate 15, both of which can provide alternative crossing opportunities within minutes of the crossings at Montana and Roberts. Still, traffic backs up at the at-grade crossings, complicating flows at nearby intersections.

- ◆ Creating a grade-separated crossing at Montana Ave is expensive, will impact multiple commercial properties, and is unfunded.
- ◆ The local and regional community relies on both crossings, even with their occasional interruptions, and will have difficulty adapting if either one is closed.
- ◆ There is now no definitive commitment to the future of the two crossings, leaving the neighborhood, the railroad, the larger community, and the state Department of Transportation without a resolution on what to do or how to adapt.

Stormwater Management

There was a small stream that used to flow through this area, generally to the northeast through the core of the commercial center. A stormwater system now manages the flow, but it can be vulnerable to winter rain-on-snow events when the storm inlets are covered by ice and snow.



Recent flooding has damaged ground floor spaces in businesses along Helena Ave and Gallatin Ave.

- ◆ The stormwater system periodically fails to convey surface water, resulting in flooding and damage in the commercial district.

Zoning and Intensity

The area's zoning may not reflect long-term objectives for land use and economic development in this part of town, failing to permit the type of development the neighborhood hopes for and allowing what the neighborhood might not appreciate. Zoning may not contribute to housing attainability, business diversity, or employment objectives.

- ◆ Current zoning may apply land use and development intensity standards that are inconsistent with neighborhood objectives.

Zoning and Built Character Compatibility

Even though residents and business owners in the 6th Ward believe their neighborhood is unique, the zoning standards that apply here are the same as those applicable in other parts of town. The residential, commercial, and industrial zoning districts move toward a more homogenous Helena, something this neighborhood may not appreciate.

- ◆ Today's zoning applies the same

development and design standards to this neighborhood as to others in Helena under the same designations, ignoring those characteristics that make the 6th Ward unique.

Placemaking

Newer business and property owners in the district's commercial core hope for street trees, lighting, wayfinding, and parking improvements, creating a "place" that attracts attention, facilitates pedestrian activity, and draws people from other parts of town for shopping, dining, recreation, and employment. The effort to make the commercial core a place argues for change, improving its looks and altering its functions to serve a larger audience.

- ◆ There is no guidance on what type of place the central commercial area should be, leading to individual initiatives that may act at cross-purposes.
- ◆ The transformation of the commercial district to become something different than what it has been not accepted by all.

D.2 Storefront Studio Summary

Conducted March 20 – 27, 2022 in the NAMI conference room, the storefront studio invited community members to drop in and consider three alternative visions for the district's future.



Table D.3: Storefront Studio Summary

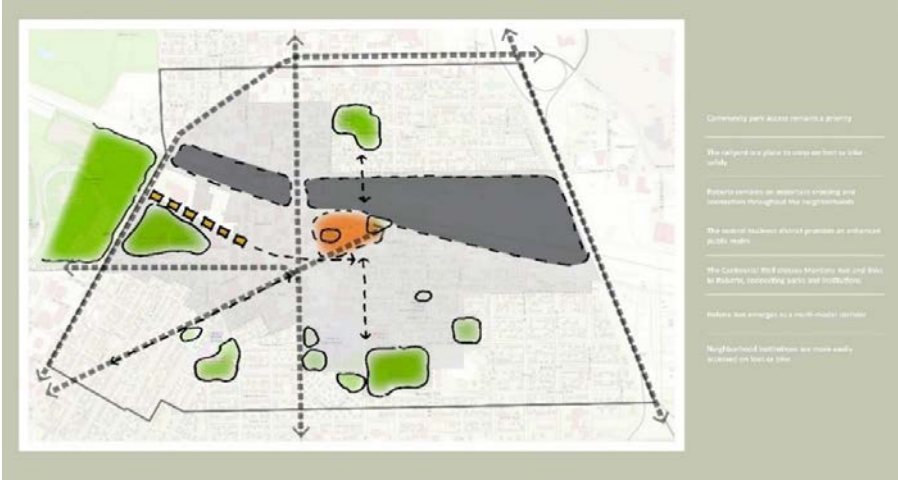
Vision	Commentary
<p>Recreation</p>	<p>Helena's 6th ward has 11 community parks, seven community churches, six recreational businesses, and four educational institutions. There are various local businesses located here, too.</p> <p>This scenario emphasizes connections to parks and creates a family-friendly atmosphere with public events supporting local festivals, concerts, and other outdoor activities. Community-sponsored events encourage more connection to existing recreational activities. The existing community institutions - such as churches, local businesses, and educational institutions - catalyze and sponsor neighborhood events, establishing and nurturing community pride.</p> <p>Scenario 1 seeks collaborative neighborhood inclusion, possibly involving neighborhood art projects, public art, and increased community engagement in the district's schools. Community-sponsored events and entertainment may be key to bringing the community together, generating a shared sense of identity and commitment to all of the 6th Ward's neighborhoods.</p> 



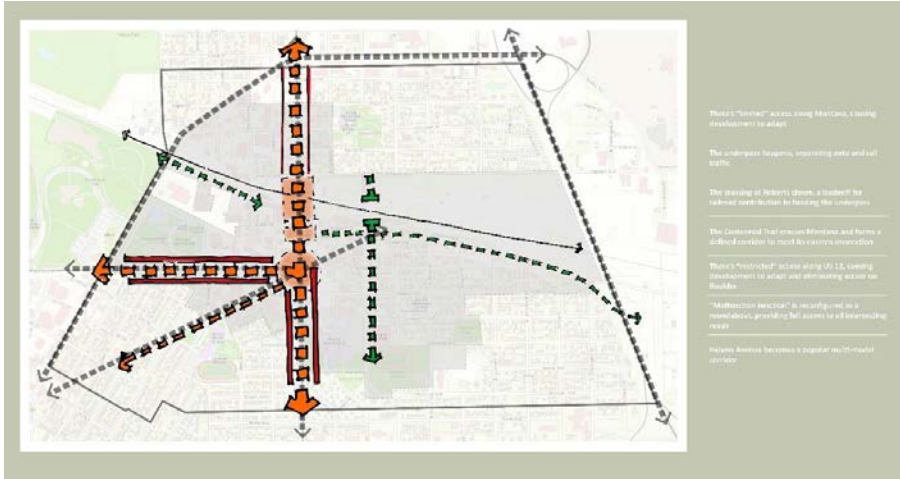


Table D.3: Storefront Studio Summary

Vision	Commentary
<p>Prosperity</p>	<p>Helena was founded as a gold camp during the Montana gold rush and established on October 30, 1864. The railroad's 1880 arrival put Helena on the map, and the link between the depot and downtown developed as an essential corridor connecting the commercial and warehousing district to the town's commercial and institutional center.</p> <p>This scenario supports the continued revitalization of the district's commercial core, emphasizing new housing adjacent to it and fueling interest in the emerging Shops District. Sixth Ward businesses range from artisan shops, consulting services, food markets, financial institutions, hotels, medical offices, personal services, restaurants, recreational activities, retail stores, and vehicle services. Strategies will spur civic programming events, welcoming 6th Ward residents and outside visitors to support and grow economic vitality. Part of the commercial district's drawing is its history, expressed in the buildings that remain and the railyard culture that defined the place's origins.</p> <p>This scenario brings back economic vitality to the 6th Ward, the same vitality Helena once experienced when the railroads and gold mining brought prosperity to this region. But it is reshaped to reflect today's economy and to honor the scale, uniqueness, and flavor for which the 6th Ward is known, reflecting the "6th Ward Rats" character and charm.</p> <div data-bbox="506 1373 1403 1850"> </div>



Table D.3: Storefront Studio Summary

Vision	Commentary
<p>Mobility</p>	<p>Navigating the 6th Ward on foot or by bike can be challenging. The transportation priority has been on moving freight and autos, with the railroad and US Highway 12 both transiting the district. Sidewalks have gaps, and the intersection of Montana Ave, Lyndale Ave, and Helena Ave is affectionately known as “Malfunction Junction.”</p> <p>Helena commissioned a study on its five-point intersections a few years ago, with recommendations largely incorporated in this scenario. The big-ticket items of an underpass at the railroad and a roundabout at Malfunction Junction lead the list, with the emphasis continuing to be on efficiency, smoothness, and capacity for freight and autos. Some improvements address walking and biking, but they adapt to the roadway nature of the transportation network, with crossings at established intersections and non-motorized corridors generally following roads and tracks. The roadway underpass would also require railroad participation, and that may cause the Roberts St. crossing to close.</p> <p>An emphasis on mobility will also likely further limit access to properties adjoining US 12 and Montana Ave and may further reduce access to Boulder Ave. This will reshape the character of development along the roadways, pushing buildings further back and focusing access to a limited number of driveways or street intersections.</p> 

After reviewing the scenarios and discussing the premises and implications of each, participants noted what they liked and what might need to be improved upon for each one, resulting in a rich array of comments on the scenarios. The table below captures comments for each scenario and indicates where the comment may apply to more than just the scenario where it appeared. Those topics relevant to all three scenarios are highlighted here to indicate universal consideration.



Table D.3: Scenarios and Comments Array				
Scenario	Topic	Recreation	Prosperity	Mobility
Recreation	Roberts crossing is important!	X		X
	Consider a non-alcoholic business/gathering space i.e., Teahouse.	X	X	
	Third Place!	X	X	
	Capitalize on Sixth Ward’s existing historic district (nature, infrastructure, history).	X	X	
	Sixth Ward needs more businesses like Vanilla Bean.	X	X	
	The old trolley needs to come back to Sixth Ward.	X	X	X
	Restoring the old Trolley line for transportation.	X	X	X
	Activity like a museum is missing from the Sixth Ward.	X	X	
	The Railroad district needs the old trolley line infrastructure, gas-powered lights, etc.	X	X	X
	Emphasize Sixth Ward’s historic neighborhood in the plan.	X	X	
	I Love Trolley’s comments regarding bringing back the trolley and line back to functionality in the railroad district.	X	X	X
	The railroad district needs a historic square with an accessible parking lot & sidewalk connection.	X	X	X
	Sixth Ward needs interconnected community shared spaces.	X	X	
	Commercial services should be more accessible to those on foot and bike. Currently most services and retail are only available by car.	X		X
	More stop signs should be added at uncontrolled intersections for safety.	X		X
	More should be done to improve existing community infrastructure such as parks, trails, and adding a pool.	X		X
	Currently, it is not safe access to the parks from the Southwest part of the planning area (Logan Street, Warren, Jackson, Ewing, etc.). Also, it is not safe to cross at the intersections of Lyndale Ave, Helena Ave, & Montana Ave.	X		X
	The Sixth Ward needs help with identity/branding (for example: Rodney Street).	X	X	
	Sixth Ward needs wayfinding for parks to make it easier to get between them. Currently, there is no clear path.	X		X
	The Sixth Ward needs medical center/clinic access.	X	X	
Gateway signage is needed over Helena’s historic Railroad District.	X	X		
Playground equipment is needed in city parks.	X	X		



Table D.3: Scenarios and Comments Array				
Scenario	Topic	Recreation	Prosperity	Mobility
Recreation	Needed sidewalk improvements should be addressed through grant funding instead of the expense of homeowners.	X	X	X
	Helena Avenue was the route downtown from the train depot. Encourage businesses to capitalize on Helena Avenue's connectivity with signage.	X	X	
Prosperity	Shops district needs more public art at or around Vanilla Bean.	X	X	
	The city should consider redesigning the on-street parking at Helena and Gallatin.		X	
	Sixth Ward needs increased housing density & public transportation connection.		X	
	Sixth Wards needs to organize like Downtown Helena Inc. (DHI) to communicate needs to the city. I've tried for years to be involved with city Planning meetings - 8 wrong Zoom links, and unanswered emails. I doubt my commentary will be used by the city for this.			X
	How would the prosperity scenario drive traffic? We own a business in 6th Ward. The city of Helena lacks communication when working with local businesses. We need something.	X	X	
	The Northern Pacific rail line arrived in 1883 not 1880. The 6th ward has the only remaining original depot structures on the Railroad line.		X	
	Plans are underway for fiberoptic infrastructure investment in the neighborhood.		X	
	The idea of redesigning on-street parking at Gallatin Street to angle parking is not good.		X	X
	The Sixth Ward neighborhood plan needs to spotlight history and spur the development of more restaurants.	X	X	
	Love the idea of having more restaurants, small markets, and semi-public spaces.	X	X	
	Sixth Ward needs more affordable multi-family housing.		X	
	The city of Helena needs to coordinate street flow & angle parking strategy.		X	X
	A food market is needed in the Railroad district like a local co-op store.	X	X	
	Bozeman & Gallatin Streets are currently busy and need more parking.		X	X
	The city of Helena needs to add stop signs at uncontrolled intersections and crosswalks. Also, more signage needs to be provided to improve visibility.	X	X	X
The city should consider restoring historic brick streets.	X	X	X	



Table D.3: Scenarios and Comments Array				
Scenario	Topic	Recreation	Prosperity	Mobility
Prosperity	Sixth Ward needs more new shops, restaurants, and bars along Lyndale Avenue.		X	X
	Snow removal on Helena Avenue along the North side of the historic Larson Building becomes a barrier to access shops and services due to city plow snow storage.		X	X
Mobility	A bike lane is needed going down Bozeman, Roberts Streets, and 6th Street.	X		X
	More safety connectivity improvements are needed from Helena Middle School to Centennial Park using RRFB at National and Lyndale.	X		X
	The city of Helena should consider a left turn only coming from Helena Avenue to Montana Avenue. An RRFB should be located at the Malfunction junction located between Helena to Helena for cyclists, middle schoolers, and the Elderly.	X		X
	An RRFB should be located at National & Lyndale for pedestrians, kids, and cyclists to safely access the Centennial trail.	X		X
	The railroad district is a historical neighborhood that should be capitalized through investment.	X	X	X
	Memorial Drive needs infrastructure improvements.	X	X	X
	Shutting down Roberts Street would be a benefit because this would circumvent vehicle traffic out of my neighborhood. Or consider making Montana Avenue more attractive for vehicles through infrastructure improvements. Pedestrians in my neighborhood need relief from surging vehicles.			X
	An RRFB signal at Chestnut and Montana is needed.	X		X
	A crosswalk at Argyle and Bozeman Street is needed as per the 5-point study recommendation.	X		X
	The 5-Point study roundabout recommendation design sounds great!			X
	I like the idea of having an underpass from the railroad crossing Montana Avenue.			X
	Middle school students going over to Memorial Park have issues crossing Lyndale Avenue safely.	X		X
	Bozeman Street is important, and a bike lane should be added to improve connectivity to Centennial Trail. #TeamBozemanStreet	X		X
The Southwest part of the Sixth Ward (trolley district) is a child desert. My belief is there are no children due to safety concerns. Walkability is an issue because you can't get out of the neighborhood to go anywhere safely.	X		X	



Table D.3: Scenarios and Comments Array				
Scenario	Topic	Recreation	Prosperity	Mobility
Mobility	More walking paths are needed for pedestrians.	X		X
	There are safety issues in the southwest part of the Planning area. There is a crosswalk with signage at the intersection of Warren and Lyndale Avenue, but it is not enough. This intersection needs safety improvement like a red rapid flashing beacon (RRFB) etc.	X		X
	Consider an 8-year-old girl riding a bike into the Sixth Ward from north, west, or south. Are you comfortable with your daughter crossing at Montana and Argyle?	X		X
	I suggest providing connecting bike/ped paths across Montana.	X		X
	Bozeman Street should not be closed off with under/overpass street improvement without leaving Robert Street open. Roberts Street connection must remain open.			X
	When considering chip seal vs. paving for street maintenance, durability should be the main goal of focus.			X
	Neighborhood plans should support bringing regional passenger rail back.	X	X	X
	I like the 5-point study's recommendation of adding a Roundabout and overpass at Malfunction Junction.	X	X	X
	An underpass for the railroad crossing is critical to all forms of travel. The railroad bridge could be improved to utilize a Centennial trail crossing over Montana Avenue. If an elevated Centennial bridge is not installed, then it would be a nightmare for pedestrians crossing Montana Avenue.	X		X
	Returning a light at Malfunction Junction, the way it used to be, would help alleviate the malfunction.			X
	People are always saying they hate roundabouts. I'm sure there will be complaints from the city. However, I am not confident the city is competent to address public concerns.			X
	I can't wait another 15 years for the Railroad underpass construction project.			X
	Safety is a concern when leaving the middle school area to go over to Memorial Park. Kids can't cross Lyndale's safety.	X		X
	Does the state transportation system agree with the roundabout idea?			X
	Provide safety improvements for crossing at Boulder and Montana Avenue.	X		X
Bring back a real historic trolley as a public transit option from the Railroad district to downtown. Also, save the brick railroad avenue.	X	X	X	



Visitors could also raise issues they believe important to the district, defining its identity, addressing persistent challenges, or taking advantage of opportunities just now beginning to materialize. The “Jam Board” tabletop worksheet invited a range of comments and suggestions, evolving during the studio’s course to reflect participant conversations and ideas.

Figure D.1: 6th Ward Jam Board

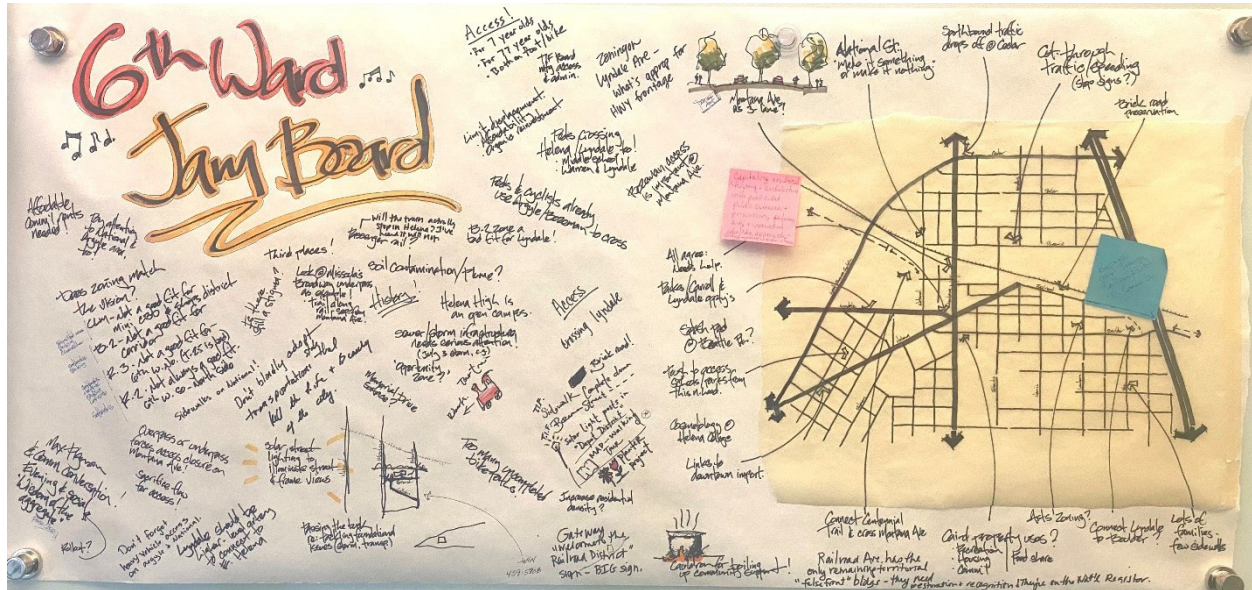


Table D.4: Jam Board Commentary

Topic	Recreation	Prosperity	Mobility
Affordable Commercial rents are needed!	X	X	
Pay attention to the National & Argyle area too!	X		X
Does zoning match the vision?	X	X	
CLM-Not a good fit for mini-Commercial Business District and Trades district. Permitted uses Parking characters.	X	X	
B-2 Not a good fit for the corridor. Setbacks and Parking Design		X	
R-3 Not a good fit for 6th W. No. (T-25 is bad) T is an overlay district that changes the activities and design standards.		X	
R-2 Not always a good fit. 6th W, SO-North side.		X	
Sidewalks on National!			
Max Pigman & Community conversation! Evening & Social "Wisdom of the aggregate". Roberts Street! -Rose Casey			
An overpass or underpass forces access closure on Montana Avenue.		X	X



Table D.4: Jam Board Commentary

Topic	Recreation	Prosperity	Mobility
Sacrifice flow for access.		X	X
Don't forget heavy vehicle access on Argyle and National.			X
Lyndale should be a lighter-level artery to connect to Helena.			X
Is there still a stigma?	X	X	
Third Places!	X	X	
Don't blindly adopt street transportation that will be the life and beauty of the city.			X
Solar street lighting to illuminate streets & frame vehicles		X	
Passing the buck. Rethink tackling foundational issues (stormwater infrastructure, Transportation infrastructure)		X	X
Memorial Drive Surface?	X		X
Soil contamination/plume?			
Will the passenger rail service be brought back to Helena? I've heard it will not. Passenger rail should be supported by this plan.		X	X
Helena High is an open campus.			X
Sewer/ storm infrastructure needs serious attention! The July 3rd, 2022, storm showed the city's infrastructure is lacking. The city of Helena did not do enough to check on the welfare of the public.		X	
Will there be a consideration to create an opportunity zone?		X	
Too many uncontrolled bike trails!!	X		X
There needs to be better safety measures crossing Lyndale Avenue.	X		X
Brick road is important!!	X	X	X
History is important and should not be forgotten!	X	X	
The B-2 zone is a bad fit for Lyndale!		X	X
Pedestrians and cyclists already use Argyle/Bozeman to cross. Adding a crosswalk would be a good goal.	X		X
Limit displacement. Raise affordability and organic reinvestment.		X	
Providing more access for 7-year-olds, 77-year-olds, and pedestrians both on foot/bike is critical.	X		X



Table D.4: Jam Board Commentary

Topic	Recreation	Prosperity	Mobility
TIF Board management should consider projects that provide access & administer economic prosperity		X	
Pedestrians are crossing Helena/Lyndale Avenue too! The crossing should be improved at Warren & Lyndale. Middle schoolers face dangerous crossings.	X		X
Zoning on Lyndale Avenue does not seem to fit. What zoning is more appropriate for Hwy frontage?		X	
Bozeman Avenue access off Montana Avenue is important.		X	X
All agree malfunction junction needs help.			X
City parks, Centennial Trail, Lyndale Opportunity	X		X
There used to be a splash pad at Beattie Park. Need to bring back a free-swimming splash pad that can be used by the neighborhood kids.	X		
Tough to access schools/parks from this neighborhood triangle from Last Chance Gulch to Helena Avenue to Lyndale Avenue.			X
Cosmetology should be a vocational education taught at Helena College.		X	
Creating access links to downtown from the Sixth Ward is important.	X		
Cauldron for boiling up community support!		X	
Could Montana Avenue be reduced to just 3 lanes?			X
National Street has good access with potential for corridor improvements. Make it something or make it nothing.			X
Provide improvements to extend the Centennial Trail connection at Montana Avenue.	X		X
Railroad Avenue has the only remaining territorial false front" bldgs. - they need restorations and recognition. They are on the National Registry.	X	X	
Create a supportive Art zoning district surrounding Montana Avenue, Boulder Ave, Bozeman, and Roberts Streets.		X	
There are lots of families but very few sidewalks in the Railroad district.	X		X
Capitalize on local history and architecture with public art, public outreach, promotion, performing arts, recreation, and holistic approach zoning to make it happen.	X	X	
Connect Lyndale Avenue to Boulder Avenue.	X		X
The current property uses. Recreation, Housing, Community, Food Share	X	X	



Table D.4: Jam Board Commentary			
Topic	Recreation	Prosperity	Mobility
Gateway "Welcome to the Railroad District" Sign - Big Sign with Train	X	X	X
There should be zoning changes to allow an increase in residential density.		X	
TIF board should consider funding for complete sidewalks down Bozeman Street, restoring the brick road on Railroad Avenue, a planter project, and solar-powered light posts in "Depot District. " Also funding an interactive Walking Tour Map of the Historic District.	X		X

The preferred scenario references these conversations and comments, resulting in a “mash-up” of the three scenarios and presenting a unified direction. The district’s spatial vision reflects this unified direction, as do the policy recommendations incorporated in the plan. The hybrid of the three scenarios also reconciles what might be conflicting priorities, reflecting on the studio’s discussions, existing City policy, and the urban renewal plan to produce clarity in the implementation strategy.

The plan’s direction emerges from responses to several key topics and issues. Several themes recurred in conversation, the Jam Board, and responses to the three scenarios, summarized below with preliminary analysis and suggestions on how the plan might respond.

Table D.5: Key Topics and Issues		
Topic	Specific Commentary	Suggestions
Safe crossing for Montana and Lyndale	#1 recommended RRFB Crossing at Argyle Street & Montana #2 Three-way tie for RRFB crossings at National & Lyndale, Warren Street & Lyndale, and Malfunction Junction between Helena and Helena.	Upgrading safety crossings for pedestrians on Montana Avenue and Lyndale Ave. Argyle and Montana was the most popular suggestion for keeping the Centennial Trail connected to the Railroad district. Crossing Lyndale at Warren was also highly coveted for pedestrian crossing. This upgrade would allow for greater connection to the Centennial Trail and parks for kids and families.
Roberts Street is a very important crossing	Closing the crossing would hurt connectivity to the RR district, making this neighborhood even more isolated.	If talks between the Railroad company and the city begin citizens would be disappointed in losing Roberts Crossing. Commentary suggests a sidewalk should be added to Roberts Crossing.



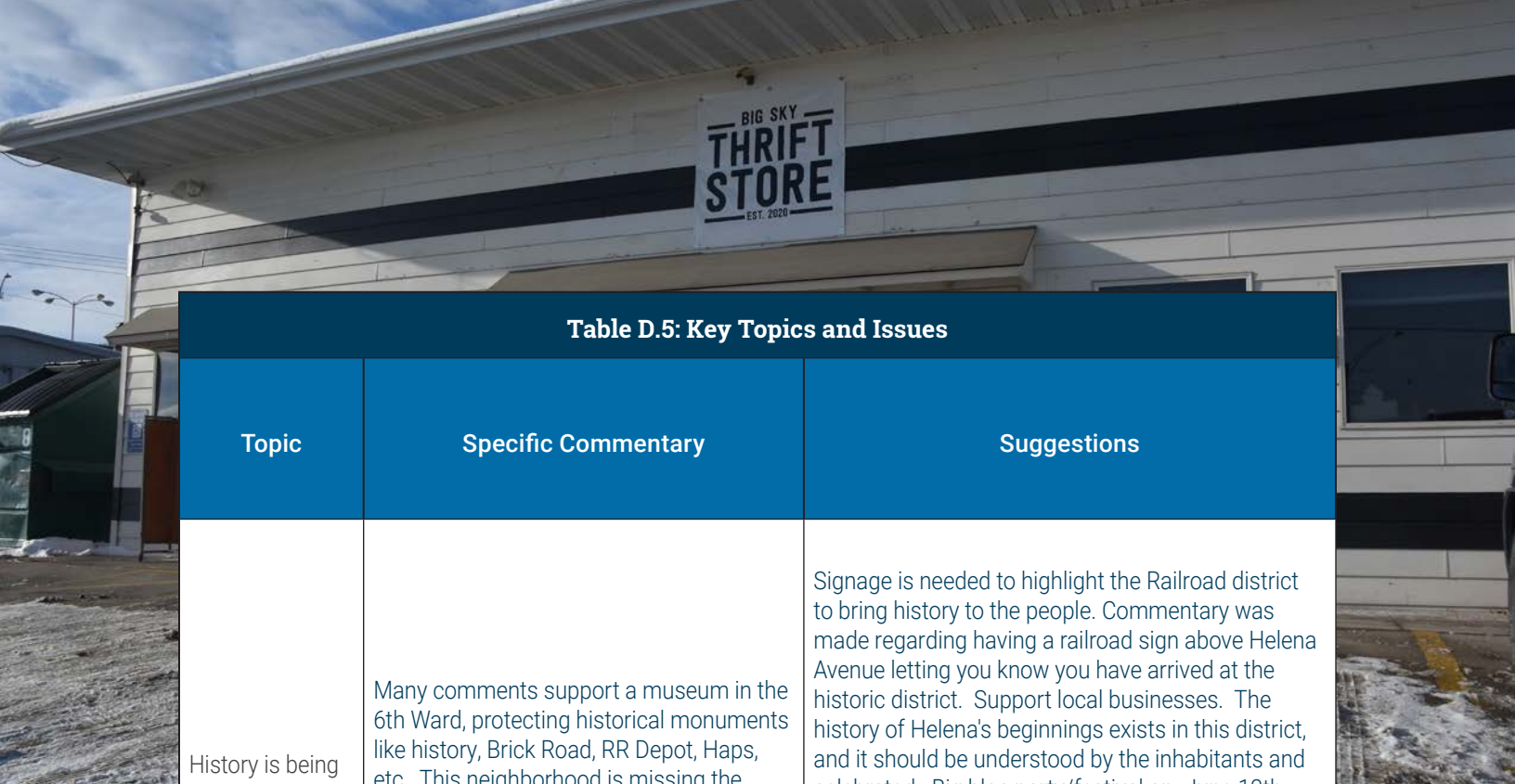


Table D.5: Key Topics and Issues

Topic	Specific Commentary	Suggestions
History is being neglected in the 6th Ward.	Many comments support a museum in the 6th Ward, protecting historical monuments like history, Brick Road, RR Depot, Haps, etc. This neighborhood is missing the signage, and character/atmosphere of its importance. This could be Helena's timely historic tourism. The neighborhood needs a tour train connecting to downtown.	Signage is needed to highlight the Railroad district to bring history to the people. Commentary was made regarding having a railroad sign above Helena Avenue letting you know you have arrived at the historic district. Support local businesses. The history of Helena's beginnings exists in this district, and it should be understood by the inhabitants and celebrated. Big bloc party/festival on June 13th (the day the 1st locomotive steamed into Helena). The following quote "Eventually rail travel declined and passenger service discontinued, but the district remains a vivid testament to the Northern Pacific line and its enormous importance to the Queen City of the Rockies. Perhaps capitalize on the trademark of being the Queen City of the Rockies.
Trust in the city is an issue and infrastructure is a concern in the 6th ward	Received testimony and commentary stating the city has issues with transparency and accountability. July 3rd flooding had a major impact on businesses and residents and there was not a response by the city regarding outreach.	Building trust will be necessary to help spur revitalization. Businesses, developers, and community leaders have the strongest impact on their community. Begin with an open-ended invitation for a meeting between stakeholders, the city manager, street & public work directors, and Planning. Changing perception begins with a relationship. Building relationships will involve discussion and discussion regarding goal seeking. Discussion regarding Infrastructure, communication, and understanding of current city projects would go a long way to establishing relationships.
Revitalization will require investment in infrastructure	Encouraging more restaurants and businesses will require capital investment and a shift in mindset of working with business owners. I.e., the city may be working to improve the infrastructure in this area but does not communicate with the local businesses that may be impacted.	The capital facilities plan needs to be reviewed in the context of the July 3rd major flooding event. Many local businesses were negatively impacted and deserve recognition for the hardship. The city must do more to understand the issues local businesses and residents are facing.



Table D.5: Key Topics and Issues

Topic	Specific Commentary	Suggestions
<p>Passenger rail service is an exciting opportunity.</p>	<p>A lot of positive feedback on passenger rail possibly returning to Montana. Action is dependent on County Commissioners' elected officials' support for the passenger rail. A new depot building would be required to be constructed. Passenger rail would revitalize tourism, netting economic growth, bring forth new economic interest in the area, may or may not bring home prices down, and could also bring transient activity. Depending on how the community chooses to move forward the railroad district has potential for positive change. Neighborhood pride needs support.</p>	<p>Conversation is needed between the mayor, city manager, city commission, and county commissioners to discuss supporting passenger rail. Then once support has been made clear to Amtrack there would need to be further discussions regarding the barriers to bringing back passenger rail. Barriers maybe constructing a new train depot. The recommendation would be utilizing the historic district as the platform to support returning passenger rail.</p>
<p>The district is missing amenities.</p>	<p>Restaurants, local food stores, convenience stores, non-alcoholic stores (like tea stores), 3rd space locations (community engagement/socialization).</p>	<p>Adding businesses is a market-driven enterprise. The city could review its zoning and municipal codes to allow for more commercial activities such as restaurants to continue. Potentially allowing Downtown transitional and removing T-districts which are confusing and archaic. 3rd Space locations would be public/private partnerships.</p>
<p>Crossing Montana Avenue is a major bike and pedestrian safety concern.</p>	<p>Addressing Malfunction junction issues (5-point intersection, can be dangerous for pedestrian foot and bicycle traffic, speedy intersection, highway brings heavy vehicles, intersection should be updated to allow for better flow of vehicles and safety, roundabout seemed received mixed reviews, people are irritated by the train stopping traffic, RRFB system heavily suggested, 5-Point traffic study appears questionable).</p>	<p>After receiving feedback from our open house. Updating the flow and safety features is needed at Malfunction Junction. The way those improvements are made through a roundabout, making this intersection a 4-way intersection, or just adding more safety features to the already existing intersection this topic appears to be a topic of discussion between stakeholders, the public, and decision-makers.</p>



Appendix E: Zoning Assessment and Recommendations

The subarea plan recommends revisions to zoning, in some cases offering suggestions for minor text amendments and in others creating entirely new districts tailored to neighborhood centers in general and the Railroad District specifically.

The existing zoning applies to districts also in use elsewhere in Helena, imposing development regulations in the Railroad District which may or may not be consistent with the district’s developed character.

The proposed zoning map applies targeted revisions, identifying two new districts at the core of the neighborhood center which emphasize the unique elements of the commercial and warehousing districts and a new commercial corridor district tailored to the B-2 commercial uses within the district along North Montana Ave and Lyndale Ave.

Figure E.1: Existing Zoning

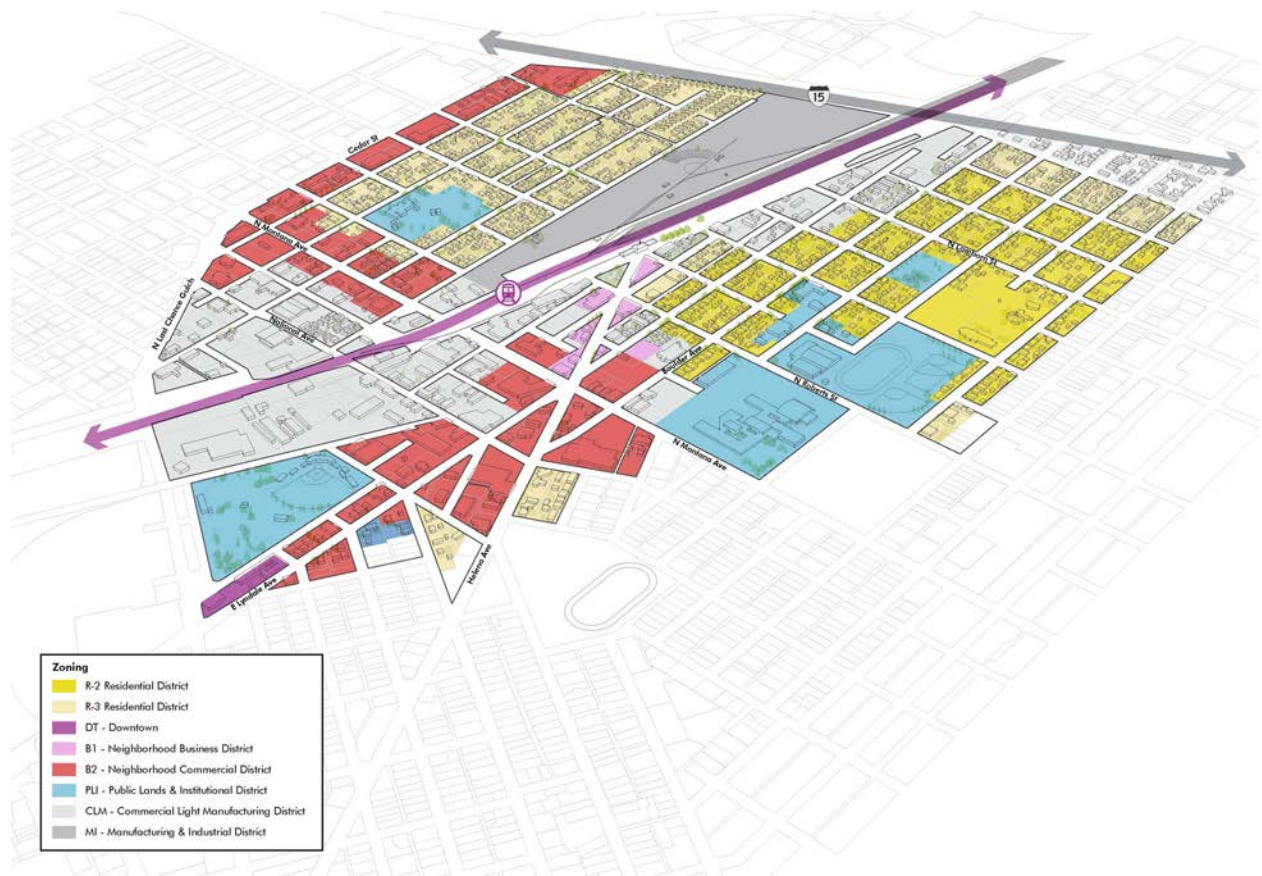
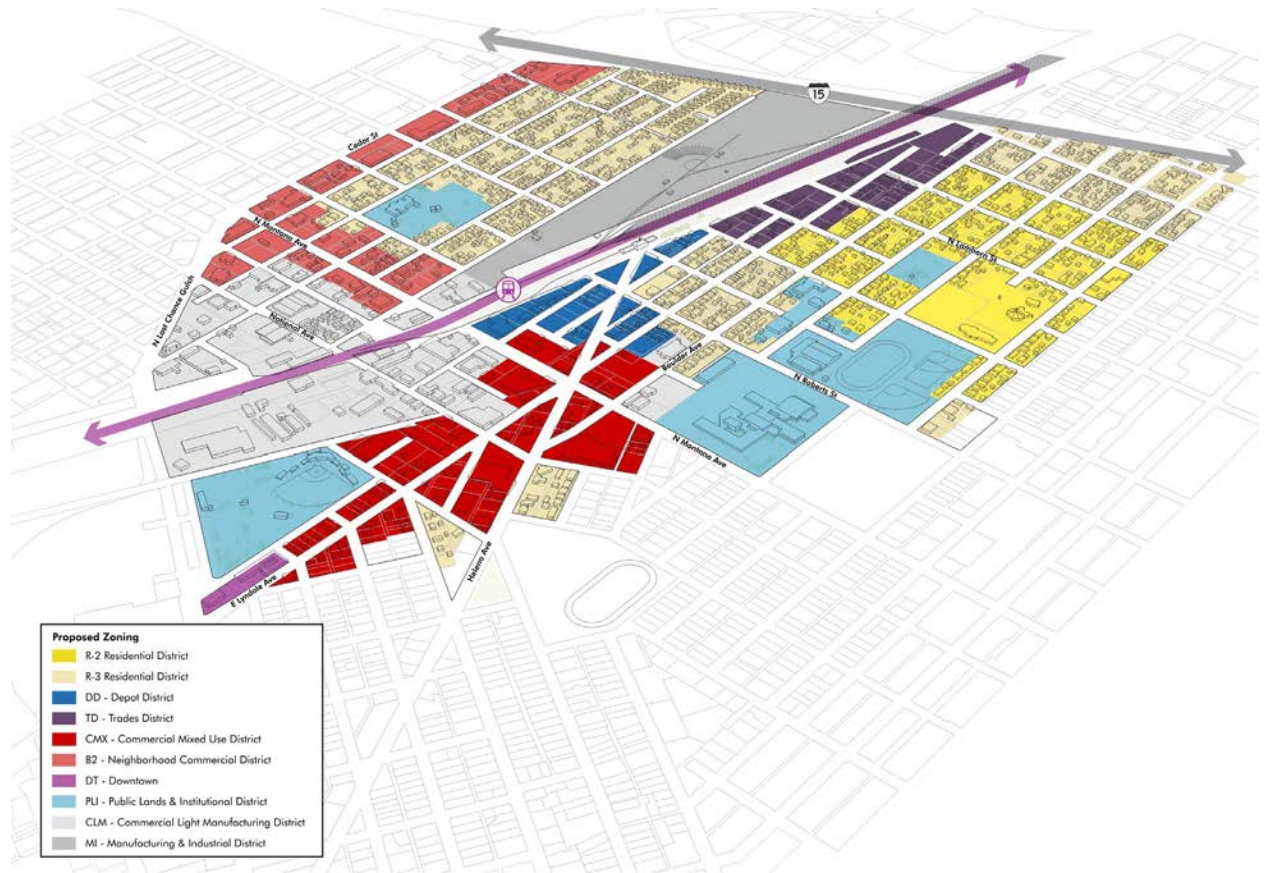


Figure E.2: Proposed Zoning



The table on the following page identifies each zoning district and summarizes its adopted intent. It then summarizes how the subarea plan might modify each zoning district to better fit the subarea plan’s objectives and how the specific land use, development standards, intensities, or other zoning characteristics might be adjusted to facilitate plan implementation. In some cases, these changes may be significant enough to warrant creating a new zoning district. In others, however, the changes may also be consistent with other applications of these districts in Helena, making these recommendations suitable for this subarea plan and for broader use citywide.

The changes proposed are intended to be surgical, touching only those parcels in the Railroad District as necessary to promote the type of development and land use making the district a unique, dynamic, and prosperous neighborhood center.

This Appendix also presents a more detailed analysis of each district and suggestions on how the zoning districts within the 6th Ward may change as a result of this plan’s adoption.



Figure E.3; Changes from Previous Zoning

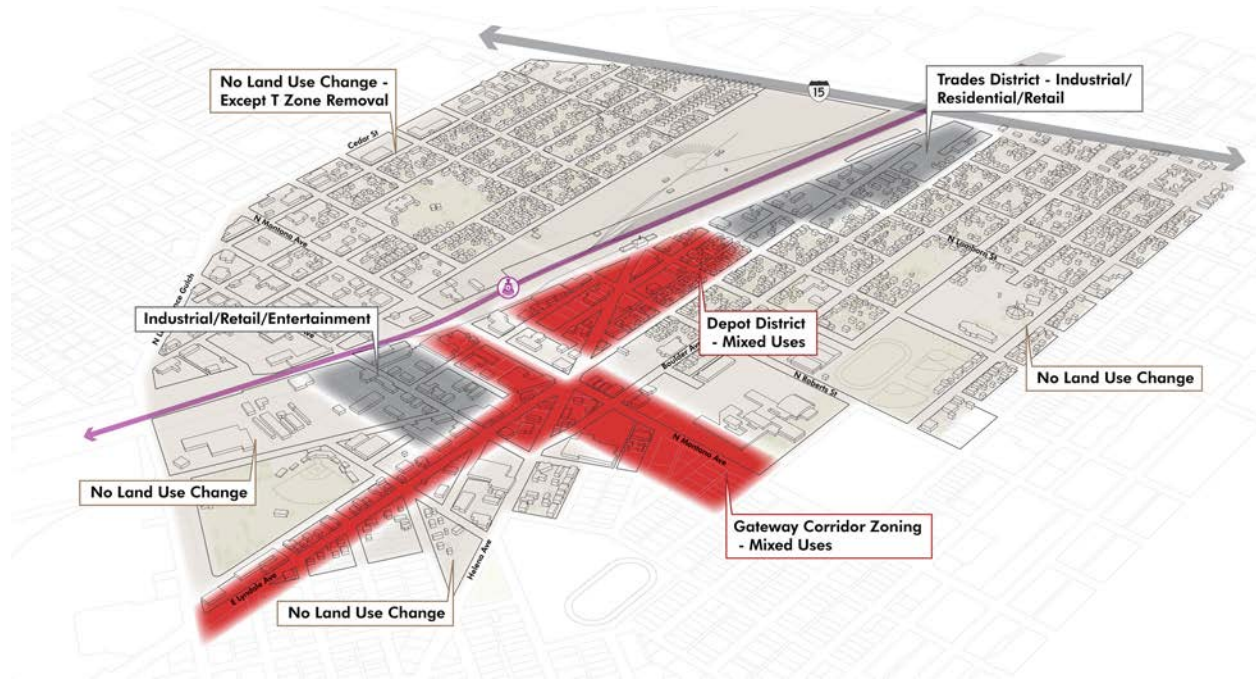


Table E.1: Zoning Changes Matrix

Zoning District	Existing Intent	Subarea Plan Intent	Objectives for Change			
			Permitted Uses	Standards	Intensity	Other
R-2	Residential dwellings and limited nonresidential development	A variety of residential dwellings and limited nonresidential development	Permitted uses are consistent	Modifying standards to permit townhouse types		
R-3	Mixture of residential structures to serve varied housing needs and allows limited compatible nonresidential uses	Mixture of residential structures to serve varied housing needs and allows limited compatible nonresidential uses	Permitted uses are consistent	Modifying standards to permit townhouse types and "corner store" non-residential uses		



Table E.1: Zoning Changes Matrix

Zoning District	Existing Intent	Subarea Plan Intent	Objectives for Change			
			Permitted Uses	Standards	Intensity	Other
R-3/T25	Orderly and harmonious transition between zoning districts where appropriate	Replace with modifications to underlying R-3 zoning				
B-1	Mix of residential, public and small-scale commercial as transition between districts	Replace with Depot District unique to commercial center	Permitted uses are consistent	Increase building height to accommodate mixed uses, ensure street front treatment	Increase achievable residential intensity	Enhance streetscape experience
B-2	Broad range of commercial and service uses to serve large areas, "compatible residential uses"	To be replaced by new CMX to advance "gateway" style development	Permitted uses are consistent	Setbacks are too great, there are no parking location standards, and off-street parking reduction criteria are difficult to attain	Attaining maximum intensity is incompatible with existing parcel configurations in district	Relationship to state highway and high speeds causes buildings to be pushed back from street and not to include residential uses
R-0	a compatible mix of higher density residential development with professional and business offices	No changes				
CLM	Provides for commercial and light manufacturing needs	To be replaced by Trades District zone to advance "maker" space development	Essentially excludes live-work types of development	Standards are consistent	Intensity is consistent	



Table E.1: Zoning Changes Matrix						
Zoning District	Existing Intent	Subarea Plan Intent	Objectives for Change			
			Permitted Uses	Standards	Intensity	Other
MI	Provides for manufacturing and other uses	Provides for manufacturing and other uses	Permitted uses are consistent	Standards are consistent	Intensity is consistent	
PLI	Public and quasi-public institutional uses and lands, and recreational, educational, and public service activities for the general benefit	No changes				

E.1 R-2 Residential Zone

E.1.1 Intent

The R-1/R-2 (residential) districts provide for residential dwellings and limited nonresidential development that protects and enhances the residential nature of the area.

E.1.2 Permitted Uses

This district permits single-family and duplex residential development types, with a mix of low-intensity recreational and institutional uses generally compatible with single-family neighborhoods.

E.1.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

The R-2 district encompasses much of the 6th Ward South neighborhood and is generally consistent with the area’s developed character and with the vision for this neighborhood’s future. There are some areas where the R-2 Zone fits less well, particularly in those areas north of Boulder Ave near the Depot District and Trades District, where the lots are narrower, housing units are smaller, and anticipated change might favor residential development types this district does not permit.



Table E.2: R-2 Residential Zone Development Standards

Current Development Standards	Note	Recommendation
Setbacks: Front: 10' Side: 8' Rear: 10'	Setbacks are consistent with the range of residential development permitted by district, but the 8' side setback is greater than what is established in some of the existing neighborhoods.	Either reduce setbacks to match existing R-2 development or change R-2 areas north of Livingston to R-3.
Maximum height: 30'	Limits structures to one and one-half or two stories, depending on roof forms.	This may be too low to accommodate permitted residential density.
Lot coverage: 40%	Retains low-intensity feel.	Maintain current standard or increase lot coverage
Lot size:	Allows for flexibility and creativity for future subdivisions	Maintain current standard

E.1.4 General Observations

The R-2 type zoned parcels are the second largest share of the zoning of the study area. It permits residential development in detached structures, consistent with the developed character in the majority of the district. It may not be consistent with anticipated change in the area between Boulder Ave and Lewis St, where setback and building height requirements will prohibit any attached housing types.

E.1.5 Recommendations

The area of R-2 north of Boulder and south of the tracks should be considered for a zoning change to permit a wider variety of higher intensity housing, such as townhomes or two- to three-story apartments. Inclusion of new Depot District and Trades District zones may also encroach into this R-2 area,

specifically allowing for higher intensity housing near the 6th Ward’s commercial core.

E.2 R-3 Residential Zone

E.2.1 Intent

The R-3 (residential) district provides for the development of a mixture of residential structures to serve varied housing needs and allows limited compatible nonresidential uses.

E.2.2 Permitted Uses

The R-3 Zone permits a range of residential uses, with single-family, duplex, and multi-family development types permitted. It also permits home occupations and some lower-intensity recreational uses.



E.2.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

Table E.3: R-3 Residential Zone Development Standards		
Current Development Standards	Note	Recommendation
Setbacks: Front: 10' Side: 6' Rear: 10'	Setbacks are consistent with the range of residential development permitted by district, but the 6' setback is greater than what is established in much of the existing R-3 neighborhoods.	Reduce side setback to 4' to match existing development pattern.
Minimum lot width: 50'	Minimum width requirement is greater than many existing lot widths.	Reduce lot width to 45' and permit narrow lots for attached single-family.
Maximum height: 36'	Limits structures to two stories.	This may be too low to accommodate permitted residential density.
Lot coverage: 40%	Retains low-intensity feel.	Consider increasing to 50% to accommodate existing developed character.
Lot size: No minimum	Allows for flexibility and creativity for future subdivisions.	Maintain current standard.

E.2.4 General Observations

The R-3 type zoned parcels are the largest share of the zoning of the study area. Many of the existing lots in this district are smaller than what is now permitted, creating a non-conforming situation (except where the “T” overlay applies). These residential neighborhoods now offer a mix of unit types, lot sizes, and structure sizes, with narrow lots and narrow side yard setbacks.

E.2.5 Recommendations

Reducing minimum lots size (width and square footage) should be reviewed to allow for a townhouse type of housing development, where attached single-family units can be located on small, individual parcels. This may also reduce non-conforming conflicts if the “T” overlay district is removed. The narrowing of minimum lot widths and lot sizes may also apply to other R-3 areas in Helena.



E.3 R-3 T-25 Residential Zone Overlay

E.3.1 Intent

The R-3 T-25 overlay adjusts the standard R-3 zoning district by modifying setback and building height requirements to ensure development compatible with existing context.

E.3.2 Permitted Uses

The R-3 T-25 overlay does not affect the range of uses permitted under R-3 zoning.

E.3.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

Table E.4 R-3 T-25 Residential Zone Overlay Development Standards		
Current Development Standards	Note	Recommendation
Setbacks: Front: 10' Side: 6' Rear: 10'		

E.3.4 General Observations

The R-3 T-25 overlay adds confusion to the permitting of development in this part of the subarea. The T overlay zones are difficult to enforce, and specific development standards associated with each are not easy to find or apply.

E.3.5 Recommendations

The overlay should be eliminated, either replaced by a new R-3 district with appropriate standards or a new residential zoning district designed to fit with the 6th Ward North’s developed context.



E.4 B-1 Neighborhood Commercial District

E.4.1 Intent

The B-1 district provides for a compatible mixture of residential, public, and small-scale commercial uses that serve as transitions between zoning districts.

E.4.2 Permitted Uses

This district permits a wide variety of typical general commercial uses, including residential uses either on the ground floor or above. The permitted uses are generally consistent with the uses near the core of the 6th Ward, including storefront retail,

professional offices, dining, lodging, indoor and outdoor entertainment facilities, and schools. Any business established after 1998 greater than 5,000 square feet in area requires a conditional use permit.

E.4.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

The B-1 district is a close fit for the 6th Ward’s commercial core, except for its lack of design control. This subarea plan calls for mixing of commercial and residential uses in its central commercial districts and a more urban street environment. The existing B-1 establishes an appropriate land use mix and level of overall intensity, but it does not create standards to achieve what the district seeks. The CUP requirement for a larger footprint business may create an unnecessary burden.

Table E.5: B-1 Neighborhood Commercial District Development Standards

Current Development Standards	Note	Recommendation
Setbacks: Front: 0' Side: 6' Rear: 15'	A side yard setback may be unnecessary or unwanted, prohibiting a storefront or townhouse development type.	
Height: 36'	The height limit may not permit mixed-use structures to be developed.	Increase the height limit to at least 40' to permit construction of three-story mixed-use buildings.
Lot Coverage: 60% maximum for residential, no maximum for commercial	None	
Lot Area: For multiple dwelling units 1,000 sf per unit. No minimum for single-family or non-residential		
Parking	Lot configurations may limit ability to take advantage of possible reductions	Consider reducing off-street requirements



E.4.4 General Observations

The B-1 district is now applied to the small commercial properties generally along Gallatin Ave, Helena Ave, and Lyndale Ave east of N Montana Ave. Despite its low height limit and requirement for a CUP for larger businesses, the district generally fits the character and scale of the 6th Ward core as the core now exists. Successfully incorporating housing and nurturing growth of local businesses, however, may necessitate some changes to permit taller buildings and allow businesses to expand without requiring an additional land use permit. Design requirements – not now incorporated in the B-1 District – may help, offering more development options by right in exchange for a greater degree of design control.

E.4.5 Recommendations

The B-1 district in the 6th Ward should be replaced by a new Depot District zone, blending the existing B-1 and CLM in the 6th Ward core into a mixed-use business district. This district can permit slightly taller buildings, require storefront style buildings with zero front setback, relax land use standards, apply design standards, and vary dimensional lot standards to better suit development in this part of town. It may also apply special parking requirements, different from those in other districts, where on-street or public parking and a focus on potential transit services and increased bike and pedestrian traffic reduce the need for off-street parking.

E.5 B-2 – General Commercial District

E.5.1 Intent

The B-2 (general commercial) district provides for compatible residential uses and a broad range of commercial and service uses that serve large areas of the City and that are normally required to sustain a community.

E.5.2 Permitted Uses

This district permits a wide variety of typical general commercial uses, including residential uses but only if they are located on stories above a retail or commercial use. The permitted uses are generally consistent with the non-residential uses along North Montana and along the Highway 12 corridor, including auto sales and repair, retail and services, dining, schools, lodging, health care, professional offices, worship facilities, and outdoor entertainment facilities.

E.5.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

The B-2 may not fit well with the envisioned changes to the US 12 corridor, where the subarea plan calls for mixing commercial and residential uses in its commercial districts and a more urban street environment along N Montana and Lyndale. The existing B-2 district fits well along Last Chance Gulch and Cedar, where the corridor is dominated by auto traffic and has a developed land use pattern consistent with it. The 6th Ward's hopes for an enhanced identity, prosperous commercial core, and easier connection to neighborhoods to the west call for a different zoning treatment.



Table E.6: B-2 – General Commercial District Development Standards

Current Development Standards	Note	Recommendation
Setbacks: Front: 0' Side: No minimum unless abutting residential zone, then 10' minimum Rear: No minimum unless abutting residential zone, then 15' minimum	None	
Height: 75'	This height may be compatible with development patterns along Last Chance Gulch and Cedar Ave, but it is too high for development within other portions of the 6th Ward area.	New zoning should be introduced in the subarea to apply a lower height limit, while still allowing vertical mixed uses.
Lot Coverage: No maximum	None	
Lot Area: No minimum		
Parking	Lot configurations may limit ability to take advantage of possible reductions	

E.5.4 General Observations

Helena applies the B-2 zone to its busy arterials, applying a general commercial district to accommodate development catering to the driving public. This may be compatible in some areas of the 6th Ward, but it lacks attention to scale, design, and land use flexibility the 6th Ward seeks.

E.5.5 Recommendations

The B-2 district should be reduced to apply only to the Last Chance Gulch/Cedar St corridor and the North Montana Ave corridor north of the railroad, with the new Depot District Zone and Corridor Mixed-Use Zone replacing the B-2 areas along Lyndale

Ave and North Montana Ave south of the tracks. These two new districts will apply new standards tailored to the 6th Ward’s business core (Depot District) and to the US 12 corridor (Corridor Mixed Use), facilitating development of mixed uses consistent with the character sought by the community.

The B-2 district, if replaced by the new CMX district, would require no further changes.

E.6 CLM Commercial Light Manufacturing Zone

E.6.1 Intent

The CLM District provides for the



community’s commercial and light manufacturing needs. These uses generally need access to the City’s transportation amenities and should be located to reduce adverse impacts on residential neighborhoods in the City.

E.6.2 Permitted Uses

This district permits an exceptionally wide variety of uses, including residential uses but only if they are located on stories above a retail or commercial use. The permitted uses are extensive and generally consistent with the non-residential uses existing in the subarea, including a range of small manufacturing, warehousing, governmental facilities, storage, retail, and service commercial uses.

E.6.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

The subarea’s industrial landscape is essential to its character, but the CLM district lacks the ability to effectively integrate residential uses in ways the 6th Ward hopes to. In addition, several lots now zoned CLM are developed with non-conforming, ground-floor residential uses. While the CLM district may still have a place in the 6th Ward, the extent of it and the degree to which it is replaced by the new Depot District and Trades District zoning designations may require either refinement to the district boundary or a rezone to a more appropriate district.

Table E.7: CLM Development Standards

Current Development Standards	Note	Recommendation
Setbacks: Front: 15' Side: No minimum unless abutting residential zone, then 15' minimum Rear: No minimum unless abutting residential zone, then 15' minimum	The required front setback for development in the CLM zone limits the ability to have commercial storefronts abutting the sidewalk.	Either reduce setbacks to match existing R-2 development or change R-2 areas north of Livingston to R-3.
Maximum height: 60'	Maximum height might be too tall for the scale of industrial uses expected in the district core and adjoining residential neighborhoods. Height might be appropriate west of N Montana north of Lyndale.	The CLM zone should be applied to areas with higher-intensity industrial uses than found in the 6th Ward core.
Lot coverage: No maximum		
Lot area: No minimum		



E.6.4 General Observations

The CLM area east of Harris St, while home to several operating local businesses, includes non-conforming residential development, vacant lots, abandoned vehicles, and unmaintained properties. CLM areas south of Lewis St and west of Roberts include housing and Helena High School property which appear unlikely to transform into industrial or manufacturing uses. The CLM district appears to fit well with development west of N Montana, consistent with the scale, type, and intensity of development.

E.6.5 Recommendations

The CLM Zone should be reduced in area in the 6th Ward, with much of what lies south of the railroad east of N Montana rezoned to implement the Depot District and Trades District and to more closely conform to the residential, institutional, or small-scale business in place in that part of the 6th Ward. CLM land west of N Montana and those CLM properties east of N Montana north of the railroad can remain, where the uses and scale of activity is consistent with

the CLM district’s intent.

E.7 MI Manufacturing and Industrial Zone

E.7.1 Intent

The M-I (Manufacturing and Industrial) District provides for manufacturing and other industrial uses.

E.7.2 Permitted Uses

The range of uses includes a wide range of storage, industrial and manufacturing activities, permitting high levels of intensity, noise, and vibration.

E.7.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

The MI zone does not allow residential uses. This zone supports heavy and intense manufacturing and industrial uses which are not conducive to retail businesses and residential activities. MI zoned parcels in the 6th Ward are in the Railyard.

Table E.8: MI Zone Development Standards

Current Development Standards	Note	Recommendation
Setbacks: Front: 15' Side: No minimum unless abutting residential zone, then 15' minimum Rear: No minimum unless abutting residential zone, then 15' minimum	None	
Height: 60'	None	
Lot Coverage: No maximum	None	
Lot Area: No minimum		



E.7.4 General Observations

The parcels zoned MI are located with the railyard, appropriate for railyard activities. None of the parcels zoned MI are located outside of the railyard of the study area. The location of these MI-zoned parcels does not conflict with the 6th Ward’s residential or commercial development.

E.7.5 Recommendations

The MI Zone can remain unchanged.

E.8 PLI – Public Lands and Institutional Zone

E.8.1 Intent

The PLI (Public Lands and Institutions)

District provides for and applies only to public and quasi-public institutional uses and lands, and recreational, educational, and public service activities for the general benefit of the citizens of the City.

E.8.2 Permitted Uses

This district’s permitted uses includes a range of governmental and institutional activities, such as a bus terminal, school, healthcare facility, community center, outdoor entertainment venue, park, or worship facility.

E.8.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

The MI zone does not allow residential uses. This zone supports heavy and intense manufacturing and industrial uses which are not conducive to retail businesses and residential activities. MI zoned parcels in the 6th Ward are in the Railyard.

Current Development Standards	Note	Recommendation
Setbacks: Front: 0’ Side: No minimum unless abutting residential zone, then 15’ minimum Rear: No minimum unless abutting residential zone, then 15’ minimum	Setback standards allow for maximum design flexibility for public and institutional uses.	
Height: 60’	The schools in the 6th Ward are generally low-rise buildings not approaching the maximum height limit.	
Lot Coverage: No maximum		
Lot Area: No minimum		



E.8.4 General Observations

The PLI district is home to Memorial Park, Helena High School, Bryant Elementary, Helena College, and the old Bryant School at Lincoln Park. It generally fits with the existing uses, except for a portion of CLM which is applied to the Helena High School property south of Boulder Ave.

E.8.5 Recommendations

The PLI should remain as-is, except for possibly rezoning the high school's CLM property to PLI.

E.9 DD – Depot District Zone (proposed)

E.9.1 Intent

The Depot District (DD) Zone provides for the development of a compact, mixed-use, commercial district central to the 6th Ward,

building on the community's identity, historic character, and scale and introducing housing into the commercial core.

E.9.2 Permitted uses

The permitted uses will be those now included in the B-1 Zone and specifically including townhouses and apartments, provided storefronts line Helena Ave, Gallatin Ave, Bozeman St, and Railroad Ave.

E.9.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

This proposed district aims to expand development opportunity in the district's core in ways the community hopes to see the commercial center grow. It favors the creation and enhancement of a local business community in an identity-rich setting tied closely to the 6th Ward's historic context and scale. Creating this new district also provides an opportunity to emulate the pattern of the downtown's zoning, applying it to a commercial district incorporating many of the same types of uses but at a different scale.



Table E.10: Proposed DD Zone Development Standards

Proposed Development Standards	Note
Setbacks: Front (primary or secondary street): 0' Side: 0' Rear: 15'	The new zoning should require at least 50% of the building to be constructed to the minimum setback line, using building mass to define the street edge and create a continuous pedestrian environment.
Height: 45'	This building height will permit development of three-story structures, compatible with a ground-level storefront, office, entertainment, or dining use and two floors of residential, office, or lodging uses above.
Lot Coverage: 60%	This would remain a maximum coverage standard, requiring at least 40% of the site to remain free of structures. This helps maintain the scale of the historic district and provide some opportunity for managing storm runoff and snow storage on site.
Parking	The City's parking codes require off-street parking by land use, not by district. But allowable parking reductions are available under certain circumstances which may apply in the DD district.
Land uses	The DD land uses would be similar to the B-1 district, but development and design standards will emphasize the district's intent to mix residential uses into the central commercial district.

E.9.4 Recommendations

The Depot District is intended to be tailored specifically to the needs and aspirations of the 6th Ward's commercial district. It closely resembles the B-1 district, but it facilitates mixed use development, applies targeted design guidance (build-to lines, façade transparency, parking location), and creates a framework for land use regulation unique to the 6th Ward's character and evolution. The City can amend the Depot District as

appropriate in the future, treating its unique needs without also needing to consider the broader implications of amending the B-1 district.

The new zoning district could essentially draw from the existing Downtown District, using the same format but tailoring the standards to meet the unique scale and character of the Depot District. The tables below illustrate how the Downtown District tables can be modified to accommodate the new Depot District standards.



Table E.11: New DD Design Standards

Design Standard (Setbacks)		
Lot line, primary street	0 ft setback	Minimum 50% building frontage
Lot line, secondary street	0 ft setback	Minimum 50% building frontage
Lot line, common	0 ft setback	
Lot line, rear	15 ft setback	
Corner lot orientation	0 ft setback	
Surface parking setback	10 ft minimum	
Design Standard (Building Height)		
Building height	45' maximum	
Ground floor story height	14' minimum	
Primary/secondary street façade wall segment length	45 ft maximum	
Design Standard (Transparency)		
Ground floor story, primary street frontage	50% minimum	
Ground floor story, secondary street frontage	30% minimum	
Upper stories	25% minimum	
Design standard (Pedestrian Access)		
Entrance spacing	1 entrance per primary street frontage minimum	
Walk/approach width	10 ft minimum	
Awnings and canopies	10 ft minimum height above grade 6 ft maximum overhang into right of way Ground floor only	



E.10 TD – Trades District Zone (proposed)

E.10.1 Intent

The Trades District (TD) Zone is intended to facilitate a relaxed mixing of housing, light manufacturing, light industry, and retail uses, establishing a district for artist studios, maker spaces, flexible shop spaces, and other, similar, activities consistent with the context of the 6th Ward.

E.10.2 Permitted Uses

This district will have a range of permitted

uses similar to what the CLM now permits, except it will encourage development of residential uses, either on the ground floor or above, to facilitate live-work development.

E.10.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

This new district is intended to build on the 6th Ward’s wide variety of uses which have already been established here. It welcomes this variety and encourages even more, accentuating the place’s atmosphere of creating, building, storing, and operating. It also adds to the mix an emphasis on artisanship, with maker spaces, live-work opportunities, and galleries, understanding the potential synergy of operations like small foundries, workshops, and social spaces.

Table E.12: TD Zone Development Standards

Proposed Development Standards	Note
Setbacks: Front (primary or secondary street): 5’ Side: 0’ Rear: 15’	This requires buildings to be set back at least 5’ from street edges. The new zoning may also consider requiring at least 50% of the building to be constructed to the minimum setback line, using building mass to define the corridor and create breaks in what might otherwise be contiguous surface parking lots.
Height: 55’, only with residential use on top two floors, otherwise 35’	This building height will permit development of four-story structures, creating enough leasable space to support mixed uses. Reduced off-street parking requirements may be necessary to realize development at this scale given the CMX small parcel sizes and – in some cases – irregular configurations.
Lot Coverage: 60%	This would remain a maximum coverage standard, requiring at least 40% of the site remain free of structures.
Parking	The City’s parking codes require off-street parking by land use, not by district. But allowable parking reductions are available under certain circumstances which may apply to certain parcels in the CMX district.
Land uses	The TD land uses would be similar to the CLM district, adding opportunity for select residential and institutional uses fitting the character of the district..



E.10.4 Recommendations

The Trades District will retain many of the development and land use standards from the CLM, but with targeted updates to the land use table to welcome additional residential uses – particularly if they are

associated with the arts or small-scale manufacturing. The district would also welcome secondary education, overnight accommodations, and health care facilities compatible with the neighborhood’s manufacturing and artisan character. The maximum building height will increase to 55’ to permit four-story mixed-use development.

Table E.13: New TD Design Standards		
Design Standard (Setbacks)		
Lot line, primary street	0 ft setback	Minimum 25% building frontage
Lot line, secondary street	0 ft setback	
Lot line, common	0 ft setback	
Lot line, rear	15 ft setback	
Corner lot orientation	0 ft setback	
Surface parking setback	10 ft minimum	
Design Standard (Building Height)		
Building height	55’ maximum, if residential on top two floors 35’ otherwise	
Ground floor story height	14’ minimum	
Primary/secondary street façade wall segment length	45 ft maximum	
Design Standard (Transparency)		
Ground floor story, primary street frontage	40% minimum	
Ground floor story, secondary street frontage	25% minimum	
Upper stories	25% minimum	



Table E.13: New TD Design Standards		
Design standard (Pedestrian Access)		
Entrance spacing	1 entrance per primary street frontage minimum	
Walk/approach width	10 ft minimum	
Awnings and canopies	10 ft minimum height above grade 6 ft maximum overhang into right of way Ground floor only	

E.11 CMX – Corridor Mixed Zone (proposed)

E.11.1 Intent

The Corridor Mixed (CMX) Zone provides for more intense general commercial and mixed-use development along the US 12 corridor between Interstate 15 and Helena’s downtown, establishing the context for well-designed development serving as a gateway to Helena from the east. Different segments of the corridor may warrant different treatments, compatible with parcel sizes, transportation and mobility considerations, and existing land uses. The couplet portion of US-12 between I-15 and North Montana Ave, may need to be tailored to address the specific needs of the space between the two one-way corridors and the potential for redevelopment. The intent of the CMX district in the 6th Ward would be more suited to the parcel size and land use mix along the corridors within the Railroad District.

E.11.2 Permitted Uses

The permitted uses in the CMX district would remain mostly as they exist in the B-3 district. However, the district’s emphasis on mixing uses would make it easier to blend residential development with non-residential land uses, either horizontally on the same parcel or vertically in the same structure.

E.11.3 Compatibility with 6th Ward

The entire length of the US 12 corridor in the Railroad District may be suited to a single CMX approach. The portion along North Montana Ave is characterized by Helena High School, a residential development, and several buildings located on smaller parcels. The portion along Lyndale is a bit different, where parcels are generally small, with many oriented on a bias aligned with Helena Ave. A single district would ease administration, but it will need to recognize the limitations of small-parcel development, unusual parcel configurations, and the incremental redevelopment of existing uses over time.



Table E.14: CMX Zone Development Standards	
Proposed Development Standards	Note
Setbacks: Front (primary or secondary street): 5' Side: 0' Rear: 15'	This requires buildings to be set back at least 5' from street edges. The new zoning may also consider requiring at least 50% of the building to be constructed to the minimum setback line, using building mass to define the corridor and create breaks in what might otherwise be contiguous surface parking lots.
Height: 55'	This building height will permit development of four-story structures, creating enough leasable space to support mixed uses. Reduced off-street parking requirements may be necessary to realize development at this scale given the CMX small parcel sizes and – in some cases – irregular configurations.
Lot Coverage: 60%	This would still remain a maximum coverage standard, requiring at least 40% of the site remain free of structures.
Parking	The City's parking codes require off-street parking by land use, not by district. But allowable parking reductions are available under certain circumstances which may apply to certain parcels in the CMX district.
Land uses	The CMX land uses would be similar to the B-2 district, with the exception of restricting single-family and duplex development along the corridor.

E.11.4 Recommendations

Helena’s downtown zoning structure may be generally appropriate for the CMX district, providing a foundation for requiring the lot size, building placement, parking placement, and permitted use standards along the US-12 corridor. The CMX standards would be different than those in downtown, but the structure may be similar. For instance, the downtown district introduces a build-to requirement, compelling new development to build to street lines. It also establishes a minimum lot coverage requirement rather than a maximum, encouraging greater building footprints and less land area devoted to surface parking.

These standards will likely not apply to

the CMX district in the 6th Ward, where surface parking is still a critical component for the highway-oriented land uses and the corridor’s streetscape is not now as compatible with pedestrian and bicycle use as are the streets downtown. Still, they introduce specific design requirements into Helena’s zoning language, important considerations for the CMX zone.

Section 11-22-9 of the Municipal Code provides for a range of reductions in required off-street parking, particularly in instances where on-street parking or transit service is available adjacent to or near the development site. This may help reduce the size of surface parking lots in some cases. However, on-street parking is not available along North Montana and Lyndale avenues, so the parcels able to take advantage of it are those with substantial side-street



frontages. There may be an opportunity to add another parking reduction provision targeted to CMX areas, but they might apply more appropriately in areas other than the Railroad District, where parcels are larger and the need for individual parking lots is

reduced.

As with the Depot District and the Trades District, this new CMX district’s zoning regulations can conform to the structural form of the Downtown District, as below.

Table E.15: New CMX Design Standards		
Design Standard (Setbacks)		
Lot line, primary street	10 ft setback	Minimum 50% building frontage
Lot line, secondary street	10 ft setback	Minimum 20% building frontage
Lot line, common	0 ft setback	
Lot line, rear	15 ft setback	
Corner lot orientation	0 ft setback	
Surface parking setback	10 ft minimum	
Design Standard (Building Height)		
Building height	45' maximum	
Ground floor story height	14' minimum	
Primary/secondary street façade wall segment length	45 ft maximum	
Design Standard (Transparency)		
Ground floor story, primary street frontage	50% minimum	
Ground floor story, secondary street frontage	30% minimum	
Upper stories	25% minimum	
Design standard (Pedestrian Access)		
Entrance spacing	1 entrance per primary street frontage minimum	



Table E.15: New CMX Design Standards		
Walk/approach width	10 ft minimum	
Awnings and canopies	10 ft minimum height above grade 6 ft maximum overhang into right of way Ground floor only	

E.12 Helena Land Use Table

The land use table below indicates how the three new districts compare to the existing zoning districts already in place in the Railroad District. The Depot District, Trades District, and Corrido Mixed-Use District are indicated to the right of the table, with the final column highlighting those areas in which the new districts differ from their citywide companions.

Table E.16: Helena Land Use Table											
Use	R-2	R-3	B-1	B-2	CLM	M-I	PLI	DD	TD	CMX	Supplemental Notes
Residential											
Community residential facility, type I, 1 - 12 residents	P	P	P	P	CUP	NP	NP	P	CUP	P	
Community residential facility, type II, 13 or more residents	P	P	P	P	CUP	NP	NP	P	CUP	NP	
Mobile home park	CUP	CUP	CUP	CUP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	
Residence, single-dwelling unit	P	P	P	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	NP	Not OK in CMX
Residence, two-dwelling units	P	P	P	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	NP	Not OK in CMX



Table E.16: Helena Land Use Table

Use	R-2	R-3	B-1	B-2	CLM	M-I	PLI	DD	TD	CMX	Supplemental Notes
Residence, multiple-dwelling units (3 or more units)	CUP	P	P	P	CUP	P	P	P	CUP	P	As part of maker space in TD
Non-Residential Uses											
Agricultural Uses											
Community Gardens	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Commercial Nursery	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Horticulture	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Community Services/Uses											
Administrative government agency	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	P	
Animal shelter	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	
Community center	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	P	
Community cultural facility	CUP	CUP	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	
Correctional facility	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	CUP	CUP	NP	NP	NP	
Prerelease center	NP	NP	CUP	CUP	P	NP	CUP	CUP	P	CUP	
Public safety facility	CUP	CUP	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	P	
Worship facility	CUP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	P	
Education											



Table E.16: Helena Land Use Table

Use	R-2	R-3	B-1	B-2	CLM	M-I	PLI	DD	TD	CMX	Supplemental Notes
Kindergarten, Preschools, Elementary Schools	P	P	CUP	CUP	NP	NP	P	CUP	NP	CUP	
Middle Schools	P	P	CUP	CUP	NP	NP	P	CUP	NP	CUP	
High Schools	P	P	CUP	CUP	NP	NP	P	CUP	CUP	CUP	Trades Dist OK w/ CUP
Instructional facility	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Food and Beverage Sales											
Casino	NP	NP	NP	CUP	CUP	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	Not in TD
Food Trucks	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Kiosks	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Restaurant	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	P	
Restaurant, drive-in	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	P	
Specialized food production	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Tavern	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	P	
Healthcare											
Healthcare facility	NP	NP	CUP	P	NP	P	P	P	CUP	P	OK in TD w/CUP
Healthcare office	PN	CUP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Industrial / Manufacturing											
Contractor yard	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	P	NP	NP	P	CUP	



Table E.16: Helena Land Use Table

Use	R-2	R-3	B-1	B-2	CLM	M-I	PLI	DD	TD	CMX	Supplemental Notes
Industrial, heavy	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	NP	NP	CUP	NP	
Industrial, light	NP	NP	CUP	CUP	P	P	NP	CUP	P	CUP	
Junkyard	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	NP	NP	P	NP	
Motor vehicle wrecking facility	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	NP	NP	NP	NP	Not in TD
Contractor yard	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	P	NP	NP	P	CUP	
Industrial, heavy	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	NP	NP	CUP	NP	
Industrial, light	NP	NP	CUP	CUP	P	P	NP	CUP	P	CUP	
Junkyard	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	NP	NP	P	NP	
Motor vehicle wrecking facility	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	NP	NP	NP	NP	Not in TD
Contractor yard	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	P	NP	NP	P	CUP	
Marijuana Sales / Operation											
Cultivation	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	P	NP	
Dispensary	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	NP	
Manufacturer	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	NP	NP	NP	NP	
Testing Laboratory	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Transporter facility	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	NP	NP	P	NP	
Overnight Accomodations											



Table E.16: Helena Land Use Table

Use	R-2	R-3	B-1	B-2	CLM	M-I	PLI	DD	TD	CMX	Supplemental Notes
Bed and breakfast no more than eight (8) guest rooms	CUP	P	P	P	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	
Bed and breakfast no more than fifteen (15) guest rooms	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	NP	P	CUP	P	OK in TD w/CUP
Boarding house 1-3 residents	P	P	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Boarding house 4-20 residents	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Campground/ RV park	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	NP	P	P	
Emergency shelter	NP	NP	CUP	P	CUP	NP	P	CUP	CUP	P	
Hotel/motel	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	NP	P	CUP	P	OK in TD w/CUP
Recreation and Entertainment											
Indoor entertainment, sports, and recreation	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Open space	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Outdoor entertainment, sports and recreation	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Parks/ playgrounds	P	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	P	
Rental and Repair											
General repair	NP	CUP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	



Table E.16: Helena Land Use Table

Use	R-2	R-3	B-1	B-2	CLM	M-I	PLI	DD	TD	CMX	Supplemental Notes
Large equipment rental	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	
Small equipment rental	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Sales											
Agriculture supply sales	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Auction sales	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Construction material sales	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
General retail sales	NP	CUP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
General retail sales, small scale 1,000 square feet or less	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Manufactured housing sales	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Medical marijuana dispensary	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Sexually oriented business	NP	NP	NP	P	NP	CUP	P	NP	NP	NP	Not OK in TD
Services											
Artisan shop	NP	CUP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Commercial kennel	NP	NP	CUP	P	P	P	NP	NP	CUP	P	
Crematorium	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	P	NP	
Daycare center	CUP	P	P	P	CUP	NP	P	P	CUP	P	



Table E.16: Helena Land Use Table

Use	R-2	R-3	B-1	B-2	CLM	M-I	PLI	DD	TD	CMX	Supplemental Notes
Daycare, home	P	P	P	P	CUP	NP	P	P	P	P	
Financial services	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	OK in TD
Funeral home	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
General services/ professional offices	NP	CUP	P	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	P	
Veterinary clinic, large animals	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	P	NP	NP	P	CUP	
Veterinary clinic, small animals	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	NP	P	P	P	
Storage											
Fuel tank farm	NP	NP	NP	CUP	CUP	CUP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	Not OK in TD
Ministorage facility	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP	NP	CUP	P	OK in TD w/CUP
Storage facility, Outdoor	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	CUP	NP	NP	CUP	NP	
Warehouse	NP	NP	NP	CUP	P	P	NP	NP	P	CUP	
Temporary Uses by District											
On site construction office	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Outdoor concerts and theatrical performances	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Transportation											
Airport	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	



Table E.16: Helena Land Use Table

Use	R-2	R-3	B-1	B-2	CLM	M-I	PLI	DD	TD	CMX	Supplemental Notes
Bus terminal	NP	NP	CUP	P	P	NP	P	CUP	P	P	
Freight terminal	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	P	NP	
Parking lot	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Parking structure	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Railroad yard	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	NP	NP	NP	Not OK in TD
Utilities											
Communication tower	CUP	CUP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Composting facility	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Recycling center	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Recycling facility, mobile	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Utility, major	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	CUP	CUP	P	P	P	
Utility, minor	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Utility, small scale energy production	NP	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Vehicle Trade and Service											
Vehicle fuel sales	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	
Vehicle repair	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP	CUP	P	P	OK in DD w/CUP
Vehicle sales and rental	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	
Vehicle services	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP	NP	P	P	



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City of
Helena



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