



**Item:** Public Hearing - Ordinance 3088 to adopt the Great Falls Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan, including a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) provision pursuant to Sections 7-15-42 and 43 MCA.

**From:** Michael Haynes, AICP, Director Planning and Community Development

**Initiated By:** Planning and Community Development Department

**Presented By:** Michael Haynes, AICP, Director Planning and Community Development

**Action Requested:** City Commission conduct the Public Hearing and adopt Ordinance 3088.

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**Public Hearing:**

1. Mayor conducts public hearing, calling three times each for opponents and proponents.
2. Mayor closes public hearing and asks the will of the Commission.

**Suggested Motion:**

1. Commissioner moves:  

“I move the City Commission (adopt/deny) Ordinance 3088.”
  2. Mayor calls for a second, discussion, and calls the vote.
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**Staff Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the City Commission adopt Ordinance 3088 to adopt the Great Falls Downtown Urban Renewal Plan.

**Background:**

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a state authorized, locally driven funding mechanism allowing cities and counties to direct property tax dollars that accrue from new development, within a specifically designated district, to community and economic development activities. To utilize TIF, a municipality must take the following steps:

1. Document the existence of conditions that discourage economic investment.
2. Establish the Urban Renewal District boundaries.
3. Adopt an Urban Renewal Plan, including a Tax Increment Financing provision.

The City Commission, at their meeting on May 1<sup>st</sup>, set the public hearing to adopt the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan. Previously, on March 6, 2012, the City Commission approved Resolution 9961 that addressed steps one and two. Step three can be implemented through the adoption of Ordinance 3088; the adoption of an urban renewal plan will guide the redevelopment and revitalization of the district. Montana Statutes require that the adopted urban renewal plan include a provision to utilize TIF as part of the City's urban renewal program.

The City of Great Falls Downtown Master Plan (DMP) was adopted as an attachment to the 2005 Growth Policy by the City Commission in October 2011. The DMP provides a goal-driven, action oriented blueprint to guide the redevelopment and revitalization of downtown Great Falls. The establishment of a Downtown urban renewal district and plan, including a provision to utilize TIF, is a key recommendation of the DMP. It is anticipated that the establishment of the district and the provision of TIF funds will allow the City to catalyze and incentivize private development through a series of strategic investments and improvements to implement the strategies and recommendations outlined in the DMP.

The City has worked with a number of public agencies and organizations and private stakeholders in the initial steps of establishing the urban renewal district. To date, the following tasks have been accomplished through the work of this public/private partnership:

- Defined, described and mapped the boundaries of the urban renewal district;
- Prepared a "Finding of Blight" report, as required and defined in Montana Statute;
- Prepared a resolution of blight, as approved by the City Commission; and
- Prepared a draft Downtown Urban Renewal Plan (DURP).

Additionally, Section 7-15-4213, MCA, requires the City's Planning Advisory Board to review and provide written recommendation to the City Commission regarding the DURP's conformance with the City's Growth Policy. On April 10, 2012, the Planning Advisory Board unanimously concurred with the staff recommendation and found that the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan conforms to the Growth Policy.

Pursuant to the public notice requirements in 7-1-4214, MCA, the public hearing notices have been published in the Great Falls Tribune Legal Section on May 6, 2012. Additionally, pursuant to public notice requirements in 7-15-4215, MCA, notice of the hearing was mailed to the person's whose names appear on the county treasurer's tax roll as the owners, reputed owners, or purchasers under contracts for deed of the property, at the address shown on the tax roll.

**Concurrences:**

Representatives from a variety of public and private organizations and agencies have been involved throughout the development of the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan including: Montana Department of Revenue, Great Falls Public Schools, Cascade County, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, Great Falls Development Authority, NeighborWorks and the Downtown Business Improvement District, among others. These groups have worked with several City departments including Planning and Community Development, Fiscal Services and the City Attorney.

**Fiscal Impact:**

It is anticipated that actions resulting from the plan will increase the overall taxable value of the proposed district through strategic public and private investment. The increase in taxable value from a set baseline level as of January 1, 2012 will be re-directed back into the district. The increment that is derived from the increase in taxable values therefore will stay in the district and will not be available to be used elsewhere in the City.

**Alternatives:**

The City Commission could deny Ordinance 3088 and not adopt the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan.

**Attachments/Exhibits:**

Ordinance 3088

Downtown Urban Renewal Plan

Resolution 9961

Planning Advisory Board written recommendation to City Commission

ORDINANCE 3088

AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT THE GREAT FALLS DOWNTOWN  
URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT PLAN, INCLUDING A TAX  
INCREMENT FINANCING PROVISION PURSUANT TO SECTIONS  
7-15-42 AND 43 MCA.

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WHEREAS, the procedure provided in Title 7, Chapter 15 Parts 42 and 43 of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA) authorizes municipalities to exercise statutory Urban Renewal powers for redevelopment and rehabilitation through urban renewal plans and projects; and,

WHEREAS, the City Commission adopted Resolution 9961, which established the boundaries of the Downtown Urban Renewal District, and established that the area is “blighted” as defined in Section 7-15-4206 MCA; and,

WHEREAS, a Downtown Urban Renewal Plan, including a Tax Increment Financing provision, has been prepared to guide the rehabilitation and redevelopment of the blighted area established by Resolution 9961; and,

WHEREAS, in accordance with Section 7-15-4213 MCA the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan has been submitted to the Great Falls City Planning Advisory Board for review and the Board found the DURP to conform to the Great Falls Growth Policy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, MONTANA:

That the City Commission of the City of Great Falls hereby adopts this ordinance adopting the Great Falls Downtown Urban Renewal Plan, pursuant to section 7-15-42 MCA.

APPROVED by the City Commission of the City of Great Falls, Montana, on first reading May 1, 2012.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the City Commission of the City of Great Falls, Montana, on second reading May 15, 2012.

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Michael J. Winters, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Lisa Kunz, City Clerk

(CITY SEAL)

APPROVED FOR LEGAL CONTENT:

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James W. Santoro, City Attorney

State of Montana )  
County of Cascade : ss  
City of Great Falls )

I, Lisa Kunz, City Clerk of the City of Great Falls, Montana, do hereby certify that I did post, as required by law and as prescribed and directed by the City Commission, Ordinance 3088 in three places within the limits of said City to-wit:

On the Bulletin Board, first floor, Civic Center Building  
On the Bulletin Board, first floor, Cascade County Court House  
On the Bulletin Board, Great Falls Public Library

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Lisa Kunz, City Clerk

(CITY SEAL)

# CITY OF GREAT FALLS

## Downtown Urban Renewal Plan



May 2012

# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan

## **Introduction:**

The City of Great Falls has embarked on an ambitious program to revitalize downtown Great Falls. In October 2011 the Great Falls City Commission unanimously adopted the Downtown Master Plan (DMP) as an attachment to the 2005 City of Great Falls Growth Policy. As an attachment to the Growth Policy, the DMP now serves as the guiding policy document for downtown. The DMP provides a strategically focused, goal driven “blueprint” for the future growth and development of downtown. The DMP creates a vision and outlines strategies, actions, partnerships and timeframes that will facilitate the redevelopment of a regional destination.

The 82 strategies within the DMP are each designed to capitalize on downtown’s assets and proactively address downtown’s issues. The strategies all seek to create a downtown that has a balance of amenities, housing and transportation options, goods and services and cultural, entertainment and educational opportunities.

The DMP recommends the creation of an Urban Renewal District that utilizes Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund public improvements recommended in the DMP in an effort to revitalize Downtown Great Falls. The proposed Downtown Urban Renewal District (DURP) will be the third urban renewal district established in the City of Great Falls. The Central Place Revitalization Urban Renewal Program, established in 1977, has since expired while the West Bank Urban Renewal District, established in 2006 is currently operational.

The Downtown Urban Renewal District and TIF funds generated through the improvements to property in the district are anticipated to be the primary funding sources to implement the recommendations of the DMP. Previous urban renewal districts in the City have been successful in redevelopment and revitalization efforts. It is the hope of the City of Great Falls and the Downtown stakeholders that this urban renewal district will yield the same positive results.

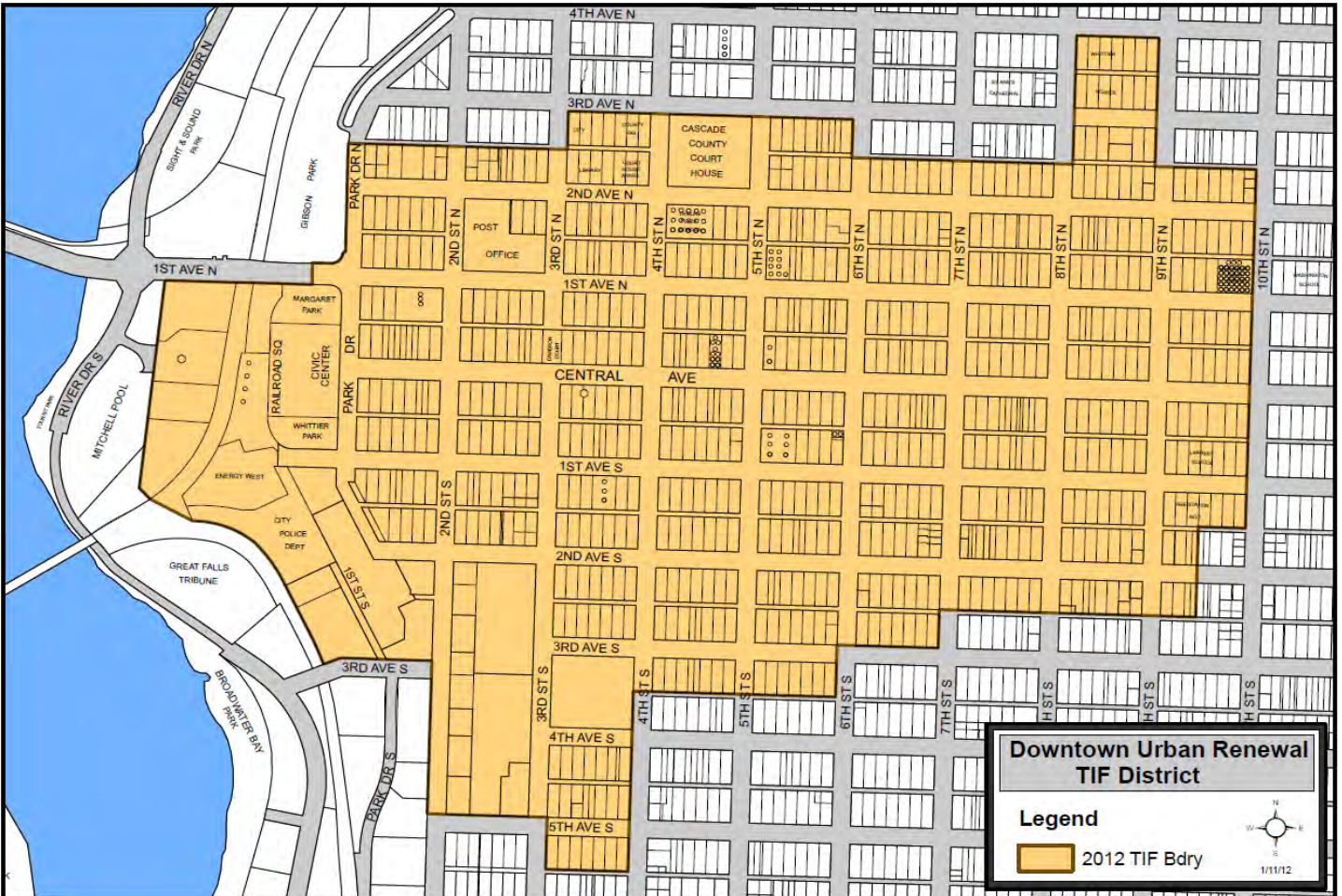
### **Legal Description of the District:**

Beginning at a point that is the southeast corner of Lot 1, Block 11, of the Broadwater Bay Business Park; thence south across 3rd Ave So to the northeast corner of Lot 6, Block 9, of the Broadwater Bay Business Park; thence south along the west right of way line of 2nd St So to a point that is directly west of the southwest corner of Lot 8, of the Amended Plat of Block 453, of the Great Falls Original Townsite (GFOT); Thence east across 2nd St So to the southwest corner of Lot 8, of the Amended Plat of Block 453, of the GFOT; thence east to the southwest corner of Lot 14, Block 452, of the GFOT; thence south to the southwest corner of Lot 1, Block 455, of the GFOT; thence east to the southeast corner of Lot 7, Block 455; of the GFOT; thence north along the west right of line of 4th St S to a point directly west from the southwest corner of Lot 1, Block 420, of the GFOT; thence east across 4th St So to the southwest corner of Lot 1, Block 420, of the GFOT; thence east to the southeast corner of Lot 7, Block 421, of the GFOT; thence north to the southeast corner of Lot 8, Block 413, of the GFOT; thence east across 6th St So to the southwest corner of Lot 14, Block 412, of the GFOT; thence east to the southeast corner of Lot 8, Block 412, of the GFOT; thence north to the southeast corner of Lot 7, Block 412, of the GFOT; thence east to the southwest corner of Lot 1, Block 411, of the GFOT; thence east to the southeast corner of Lot 3, Block 409, of the GFOT; thence north to the southeast corner of Lot 3, Block 376, of the GFOT; thence east to the southeast corner of Lot 7, Block 376, of the GFOT; thence north along the west right of way line of 10th St N to the northeast corner of Lot 8, Block 258, of the GFOT; thence west to the northeast corner of Lot 8, Block 257, of the GFOT; thence north to the northeast corner of Lot 7, Block 242, of the GFOT; thence west to the northwest corner of Lot 1, Blk 242, of the GFOT; thence south to the northwest corner of Lot 14, Blk 257, of the GFOT; thence west to the northeast corner of Lot 8, Blk 254, of the GFOT; thence north to the northeast corner of Lot 7, Blk 254, of the GFOT: thence west to the northwest corner of Lot 1, Blk 252, of the GFOT; thence south to the northwest corner of Lot 14, Blk 252, of the GFOT; thence west to the northwest corner of Lot 13, Blk 250, of the GFOT; thence continuing west to a point that is located on the west right of way of Park Dr N; thence south along the west right of way of Park Dr N to the corner of Park Dr N and 1st Ave N; thence around a curve to the left to a point of tangent thence continuing west eighty feet along the north right of way of 1st Ave N; thence south on a perpendicular line to the south right of way line of 1st Ave N; thence west along the south right of way line of 1st Ave N to the northwest corner of Lot 5, Blk 13, of the Broadwater Bay Business Park Addition (BBBP); thence southwesterly to the southwest corner of Lot 2, Blk 13, of the BBBP; thence southeasterly to the southeast corner of Lot 2, Blk 13, of the BBBP; thence continuing southeasterly to a point that is the intersection of the north railroad right of way line and the westerly boundary of Mark 22A (City of Great Falls Police Department); thence southeasterly along a curve to the right also being the north railroad right of way line to the southwest corner of Lot 1, Blk 12, of the BBBP; thence easterly along the north right of way line of 3rd Ave S to the point of beginning.



# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan

## District Boundary



## **Determination of Blight:**

To establish an Urban Renewal District in Montana, it must be found that conditions of blight are present in the area. Section 7-15-4206 (2) MCA defines blight as “an area that is conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, infant mortality, juvenile delinquency, and crime, that substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the city or its environs, that retards the provision of housing accommodations, or that constitutes an economic or social liability or is detrimental or constitutes a menace to the public health, safety, welfare, and morals in its present condition and use, by reason of:

- the substantial physical dilapidation, deterioration, age obsolescence, or defective construction, material, and arrangement of buildings or improvements, whether residential or nonresidential;
- inadequate provision for ventilation, light, proper sanitary facilities, or open spaces as determined by competent appraisers on the basis of an examination of the building standards of the municipality;
- inappropriate or mixed uses of land or buildings;
- high density of population and overcrowding;
- defective or inadequate street layout;
- faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;
- excessive land coverage;
- unsanitary or unsafe conditions;
- deterioration of site;
- diversity of ownership;
- tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land;
- defective or unusual conditions of title;
- improper subdivision or obsolete platting;
- the existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes; or
- any combination of the factors listed in this subsection (2).



# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan

With the adoption of Ordinance XXXX, the Great Falls City Commission found that the following conditions of blight are present in the District:

**The substantial physical dilapidation, deterioration, age obsolescence, or defective construction, material, and arrangement of buildings or improvements, whether residential or nonresidential.**

Vacancy, underutilization and a lack of maintenance has led to the substantial physical dilapidation and deterioration of a number of buildings within the district. Not only does this affect the aesthetic character of these buildings, and the district it also produces conditions that are unsafe, unsanitary and not conducive to economic development.

**Inappropriate or mixed uses of land or buildings.**

A large amount of land within the District is currently used as surface parking for automobiles. While a certain amount of parking is necessary to support other uses within the District, surface parking lots are an inefficient use of land in the City's commercial core. This land could potentially be redeveloped as commercial, office, residential or mixed use activities that would improve the vitality of the downtown and increase the taxable value of the District.

The heavy industrial nature of the southwest area of the District is incompatible with the adjacent commercial and retail and residential uses of the area. This area has the potential to be redeveloped in a mixed-use or transitional fashion to provide a key entry corridor into the District.

**Defective or inadequate street layout.**

Three one-way couplets currently traverse through the district. Although a complete, formal analysis of the impact of the one-way couplets is planned for the spring and summer of 2012, multiple studies and analysis conducted across the U.S. indicate that downtown access and circulation, customer parking and property values increase when downtown one-ways are restored to two-way streets.

A primary intersection within the district - Park Drive and 1st Avenue N - is unsafe and difficult to navigate for pedestrians. Additionally, the configuration of the intersection produces inefficient conditions for automobiles, especially those making turns at high volume portions of the day.

**Deterioration of site.**

Vacant, underutilized or unmaintained buildings and parcels concentrated within



specific areas of the district have created pockets of site deterioration throughout the district. The deterioration of sites has often led private investment and development to move to outlying areas of the City and has also slowed redevelopment and infill efforts downtown. If site deterioration is not addressed, the exodus of commercial and residential development will continue and ultimately lead to further deterioration.

**The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes.**

A number of buildings in the district are in conditions that could potentially endanger life of property. Multiple factors have contributed to these conditions including fire damage, the use of hazardous construction materials, negligence on behalf of a property owner and extended vacancy among others. Buildings that have reached this condition are often the target of graffiti and other forms of vandalism, leading to further deterioration in the district.

## **Urban Renewal Plan**

The DMP will guide the urban renewal and revitalization efforts within the district. The overall vision of the DMP and the goals, objectives and strategies of the Plan provide a comprehensive framework for the redevelopment of the downtown core. The following table displays the 82 strategies of the DMP with associated timelines, categories and partner organizations.



# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan

Strategy	Partners	Timeframe	Category
<b>1. CONNECTED:</b>			
<b>1. Improve pedestrian connectivity and safety Downtown.</b>			
a. Ensure streetscape improvements are designed to enhance pedestrian safety and pleasure by providing sufficient space for pedestrian needs and uses.	CofGF (P&CD, PW)	Short	Regulatory Framework
b. Develop public/private partnerships to ensure Downtown is safe, clean and accessible for all users.	CofGF, DAA (Safety team)	Immediate	Program
c. Identify, prioritize and correct accessibility barriers to sidewalks, curbs, pedestrian signals and other pedestrian facilities.	CofGF (P&CD, PW) Accessibility group	Short	Program
<b>2. Develop a comprehensive Downtown bicycle network to connect into a city-wide system.</b>			
a. Prepare a complete streets policy to guide roadway construction and rehabilitation.	CofGF, GFGF, GFBC	Immediate	Regulatory Framework
b. Update the bikeway chapter of the Long Range Transportation Plan, including prioritization of improvements and routes for implementation.	CofGF (P&CD, P&R), GFBC, RTI, TWG	Short	Regulatory Framework
c. Improve and expand bicycle connections to the River's Edge Trail through signage and routes.	CofGF (P&CD, P&R), GFBC, RTI, TWG	Short	Capital Improvement
d. Ensure that bike routes link and connect neighborhoods, employment centers, amenities and destinations.	CofGF (P&CD), GFBC, RTI	Short	Regulatory Framework
e. Develop public education and marketing programs to maximize the use of the bicycle network.	RTI, GFBC	Short	Program
<b>3. Reduce or eliminate Downtown one-ways.</b>			
a. Conduct a one-way conversion plan to help facilitate an environment that is pedestrian and retail friendly, improves local circulation, and increase access to Downtown businesses.	CofGF (P&CD, PW), MDT	Medium	Program
b. Effectively communicate the costs and benefits of one-way conversions to all stakeholders.	CofGF, DAA (BID, DGFA)	Medium	Program
c. Develop roadway and streetscape design standards to further the intended benefits of one-way conversions for all users.	CofGF	Medium	Regulatory Framework
<b>4. Improve connectivity to the Missouri River, River's Edge Trail, and Gibson Park for bicycles and pedestrians.</b>			
a. Improve the attractiveness and enhance the visibility of railroad crossings and underpass tunnels that connect Downtown to the Missouri River, River's Edge Trail and Gibson Park.	CofGF (P&CD, PW, P&R), RTI	Medium	Capital Improvement
b. Identify locations and develop design options to develop an additional separated grade bike and pedestrian crossing of railroad tracks.	CofGF (P&CD, PW, P&R), RTI	Long	Capital Improvement
c. Utilize signage, pathways and striping to provide pedestrians and bicyclists with safe and efficient connections between Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.	CofGF (P&CD, PW), RTI, TWG	Short	Capital Improvement
<b>5. Develop a comprehensive Downtown wayfinding system.</b>			
a. Develop a comprehensive wayfinding program.	CofGF, DAA (GFDA), Private Business	Short	Capital Improvement

b. Supplement proposed wayfinding program with printed maps and brochures, digital and audio tours and websites and apps to guide visitors throughout Downtown.	CofGF (P&CD), HPAC, CVB, TBID	Medium	Program
c. Incorporate a series of named or themed pathways that connect Downtown amenities and destinations.	CofGF (P&CD), HPAC, CVB, TBID	Long	Capital Improvement
<b>6. Optimize Downtown parking for all stakeholders.</b>			
a. Conduct a comprehensive parking study to guide Downtown parking program.	CofGF (P&CD)	Short	Regulatory Framework
b. Improve bicycle parking facilities Downtown.	CofGF (P&CD, PW), GFBC, BID, private business	Short	Capital Improvement
<b>7. Expand the use of public transit Downtown.</b>			
a. Promote the use of transit for Downtown specific events.	GFTD, DGFA	Short	Program
b. Encourage expanded partnership between the Great Falls Transit District and Great Falls Public Schools to promote transit usage to reach Downtown events and activities.	GFTD, GFPS, DAA (DGFA)	Short	Program
c. Encourage Downtown businesses to work with the Great Falls Transit District to provide subsidized bus passes for employees as an alternative to Downtown parking.	DGFA, BID, GFTD, Private Business	Short	Program

**DESTINATION:**

<b>1. Market Downtown's entertainment, culture, shopping and dining.</b>			
a. Continue to actively cross-promote and package Downtown's entertainment, culture, shopping and dining facilities with Downtown events.	MT, MEC, DGFA	On-going	Program
b. Work with various groups and organizations including the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Tourism BID, Montana Expo Park and Airport Authority to promote Downtown as a tourism and convention destination to the region and Canada.	DAA (CVB, TBID), MTEP, GFIA	Short	Program
c. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated Downtown marketing campaign utilizing print, radio, television and social media.	DAA (all), TA	Immediate	Program
<b>2. Promote a broad range of family friendly entertainment and recreational opportunities and activities Downtown.</b>			
a. Review existing Downtown events and add free or low cost activities that engage a variety of age groups including: families, teens, young adults and older adults.	CofGF (P&R), DGFA	Short	Program
b. Promote new and exciting events in Downtown's parks, pools and recreational facilities that attract families with young children.	CofGF (P&R), DGFA	Short	Program
c. Encourage Downtown organizations and facilities to establish programs for parents to drop children off while they utilize Downtown's shopping and amenities.	Private Business, DGFA, Museum Group	Short	Program
<b>3. Ensure Downtown is active and vibrant during the evenings and weekends.</b>			
a. Actively pursue the development of a Downtown boutique hotel to provide quality lodging and amenities for Downtown visitors.	DAA (GFDA, CofGF), Private Business	Medium	Site Specific
b. Develop programs and events that provide opportunities for people to remain in and visit Downtown in the evening and on the weekend.	DAA (DGFA), CofGF (P&R)	Short	Program
c. Actively recruit an already successful restaurant to relocate or expand into Downtown.	GFDA, BID, DGFA	Short	Program

# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan

d. Work with existing restaurant and bar/tavern owners to identify, develop and promote a Downtown Dining District.	DGFA, TA, DAA (all)	Medium	Program
e. Market Downtown's amenities and activities to current employers and employees to encourage the workforce to stay Downtown after business hours.	DAA (DGFA), TA, Restaurant owners	Immediate	Program
f. Create a year-round public market / food and arts incubator that would cater to residents, employees and visitors.	GFDA, DGFA, CofGF	Medium	Site Specific
<b>4. Increase the utilization of the Convention Center and Mansfield Center for the Performing Arts (Mansfield).</b>			
a. Develop public/private partnerships to package the facilities at the Civic Center and Mansfield with catering and dining services and lodging facilities to enhance the attractiveness of Downtown as a convention destination.	CVB, TBID, MCPA	Medium	Program
b. Enhance partnerships with entertainment promoters to utilize the Mansfield as a concert venue.	MCPA	Short	Program
c. Educate potential users of the Civic Center and Mansfield about the opportunities available at the facility, policies and prices.	MCPA	Immediate	Program
<b>FLOURISHING:</b>			
<b>1. Identify and support an organization to lead and champion Downtown revitalization.</b>			
a. Establish a formal Downtown Development Agency within the City of Great Falls, in partnership with public and private entities, to foster new development and redevelopment Downtown and implement the goals, objectives and strategies identified in the Plan.	CofGF, DAA (all), Private Business	Immediate	Regulatory Framework
b. Establish a Downtown TIF and associated Urban Renewal Plan district to fund Downtown projects, improvements and organizational management.	CofGF, GFPS, CC	Immediate	Regulatory Framework
c. Update zoning and land use regulations to support recommendations of the Plan.	CofGF (P&CD)	Short	Regulatory Framework
<b>2. Improve the public realm to provide a safe, attractive and welcoming environment.</b>			
a. Encourage a partnership between Downtown organizations and stakeholders and the City Police Department to ensure a clean and safe environment.	DAA (W&S), GFDP	Short	Program
b. Establish a volunteer based Downtown clean-up day and/or program.	DAA (W&S)	Short	Program
c. Increase street level vitality by encouraging the active use of ground floor space in the Downtown core.	CofGF (P&CD), BID, DGFA	Short	Regulatory Framework
<b>3. Identify and attract high paying employers and jobs to Downtown.</b>			
a. Develop a comprehensive Downtown business retention and development plan that focuses on successful and emerging business clusters Downtown.	GFDA, CofGF	Short	Program
b. Utilize GFDA's business attraction and retention resources to leverage Down-	GFDA	Immediate	Program
<b>4. Support existing and attract new commercial and retail business Downtown.</b>			
a. Establish a mentor program to pair new entrepreneurs with successful Downtown business owners.	DGFA, BID, GFDA	Short	Program
b. Utilize national research and trends to identify and attract "Downtown friendly" retailers.	GFDA, BID, NW	Short	Program

c. Conduct a Downtown market analysis to guide commercial and retail development.	GFDA, BID, DGFA	Medium	Program
d. Provide existing business owners with market research and technical and financial assistance.	CofGF, GFDA, DGFA, BID	Medium	Program
e. Conduct a Downtown business and building inventory to establish and maintain an accurate database of what is currently located Downtown and what opportunities exist for business expansion, attraction and relocation.	CofGF (P&CD), BID, DGFA	Immediate	Program
<b>5. Attract a diverse mix of visual and performing artists to live and work Downtown.</b>			
a. Revive and support the Great Falls Arts Council to develop and promote arts programs, events and education.	CofGF, DAA (all)	Short	Regulatory Framework
b. Encourage the development of lofts, studios and live/work spaces in vacant or underutilized buildings to attract artists to Downtown and increase arts and culture activity.	CofGF (P&CD), DAA (GFCC, GFDA)	Medium	Program
c. Develop a roster of visual and performing artists and craftsperson's living in and around Great Falls to utilize for Downtown programs and events.	DGFA	Short	Program
d. Capitalize on the success of Western Art Week by drawing visitors to Downtown galleries, shops and restaurants.	DAA (GFCC)	Immediate	Program
e. Continue to promote Downtown art galleries and artists through events such as the First Friday Art Walk.	DAA (DGFA)	Immediate	Program

**LIVING:**

<b>1. Promote a wide range of housing choices throughout Downtown.</b>			
a. Ensure that the proposed City of Great Falls Downtown Development Agency is a champion of Downtown housing development.	NW, CofGF (P&CD)	Short	Regulatory Framework
b. Evaluate zoning and land use regulations to ensure policies allow for and encourage Downtown housing in the form of rehabilitation and preservation of existing buildings, infill development and new construction.	CofGF (P&CD)	Short	Regulatory Framework
c. Conduct a Downtown housing inventory to establish and maintain an accurate database of housing and property available for rent, ownership, and/or rehab.	NW, W&S, CofGF (P&CD)	Short	Program
<b>2. Ensure existing housing is safe and attractive.</b>			
a. Actively monitor the condition of existing housing and enforce the City's Property Maintenance Code.	CofGF (P&CD), W&S	On-going	Program
b. Promote and utilize the City of Great Falls Housing Rehab Loan program and Neighborworks Great Falls programs to enhance existing homes and rental properties.	CofGF, NWGF	On-going	Program
c. Develop a volunteer based residential improvement plan to ensure Downtown housing is safe and attractive.	W&S, NC	Short	Program
<b>3. Attract private investment and financing for Downtown housing.</b>			
a. Create new and promote existing incentive programs to encourage residential development.	NW, CofGF	Short	Program
b. Prepare a housing market study to assist developers, lending institutions and private property owners in developing Downtown housing.	Realtors, HBA, NW, GFDA	Short	Program
c. Establish a clearinghouse and/or database of residential financing options and incentives.	Realtors, HBA, NW, GFDA	Short	Program



# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan

## 4. Attract retailers and neighborhood services that cater to Downtown residents.

a. Survey Downtown residents and utilize national research to identify neighborhood based commercial, retail and services that are missing Downtown.	NW, NC	Immediate	Program
b. Encourage mixed-use development that places residents within close proximity to commercial activities.	CofGF (P&CD)	Short	Regulatory Framework

## AESTHETICS:

### 1. Preserve, restore, and reuse Downtown's historic buildings and sites.

a. Market Downtown's historical resources to facilitate improvements and restoration of properties through tax incentives and preservation grants.	CofGF, HPAC	Immediate	Program
b. Educate current property owners and developers of the funding programs available to make improvements to the Downtown buildings.	HPAC, DAA (BID)	Immediate	Program
c. Establish a technical assistance and incentive program to encourage the adaptive re-use, rehabilitation and preservation of historic buildings and sites.	CofGF, HPAC	On-going	Program

### 2. Increase the number and diversity of public spaces Downtown.

a. Actively pursue the development of an indoor/outdoor community gathering space to host activities and events and attract residents, employees and visitors throughout the year.	CofGF, Private Business	Short	Site Specific
b. Encourage diversity in the form and function of Downtown parks, plazas and gathering spaces.	CofGF (P&CD, P&R)	Medium	Regulatory Framework
c. Explore the feasibility of developing rooftop green spaces.	CofGF (P&CD, PW), Private business	Medium	Regulatory Framework

### 3. Promote quality design and construction in Downtown's built environment.

a. Develop design guidelines to enhance the character of Downtown through the quality design and construction of Downtown's built environment.	CofGF, DAA (all)	Short	Regulatory Framework
b. Evaluate the function, authority and scope of the City's Design Review Board to ensure aesthetic goals of the Plan are achieved.	CofGF	Short	Regulatory Framework

### 4. Create attractive gateway design features that welcome residents and visitors to downtown.

a. Identify priority entrances into Downtown to construct gateway design features.	CofGF (P&CD, P&R), GFDA	Short	Capital Improvements
b. Establish a program to encourage community and/or service groups, private businesses and other stakeholders to "sponsor" the construction of gateway features.	DAA (all)	Short	Capital Improvements

<b>5. Expand and enhance the existing downtown streetscape.</b>			
a. Develop a comprehensive Downtown streetscape plan that prioritizes future improvements and builds upon the existing streetscape.	CofGF (P&CD, PW)	Short	Regulatory Framework
b. Ensure streetscape improvements are implemented in coordination with the construction of gateway design features.	CofGF (P&CD)	Short	Regulatory Framework
c. Work with the City Forester to establish tree planting programs throughout Downtown.	DAA (BID), NC	Short	Program
<b>6. Actively pursue the preservation and rehabilitation of the Rocky Mountain Building.</b>			
a. Identify an organization or partnership to lead restoration efforts including assisting in permitting process and requirements, identifying funding options, leading fundraising efforts and recruiting a mix of building tenants.	CofGF (P&CD), DAA (all)	On-going	Program
b. Encourage the current building owners to move forward with restoration improvements before weathering and damage continue to a point where rehabilitation is no longer feasible.	CofGF (P&CD), DAA (all)	On-going	Program

# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan

## **Funding and Administration:**

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is necessary to encourage private reinvestment within the District, create employment opportunities, implement the goals set forth in this plan and increase the tax base of the District. The Downtown Urban Renewal District is hereby established as a tax increment financing urban renewal area in accordance with 7-15-4282-4292 and 4301-4324 (MCA).

For the purpose of calculating the incremental taxable value each year for the life of the district, the base taxable value shall be calculated as current base taxable value of the district as of January 1, 2012.

### **Administration**

The District will be administered in accordance with 7-15-4232 (MCA). The Great Falls City Commission has the authority to administer and manage the District and the implementation of the DURP. Under 7-15-4232 (MCA) the City Commission may authorize a City Department to manage the program and implement the recommendation of the DURP. It is envisioned that the Commission will receive recommendations and input from the Planning and Community Development Department in partnership with the Downtown Partnership of Great Falls (the Partnership).

Planning and Community Development Staff will work with the Partnership to prepare an annual District work plan and budget, which the Partnership will submit to the City Commission for consideration and adoption. The work plan will list the activities and cost of activities for the coming fiscal years and a method of financing those activities. The Partnership will enter into an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other form of agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities of this group in relation to the District.

The Planning and Community Development Department will provide initial staffing to assist the Partnership in preparing the annual District work plan and budget, preparing and presenting annual reports to the City Commission, and coordinating the review of proposed projects and development requesting TIF funding. It is anticipated that TIF moneys will be used in the future to fund a permanent staff position.

Planning and Community Development Staff will provide to the City Commission and the public an annual program evaluation as part of the annual report.

## **Conformity with the Growth Policy**

The establishment of the Partnership and the Downtown TIF are both direct recommendations of the DMP - which was adopted as an attachment to the 2005 Growth Policy. Additionally, specific themes, goals and policies of the City's Growth Policy (displayed below) are supported by recommendations contained within the DURP.

- Encourage livable, walkable, visually and functionally cohesive neighborhoods that incorporate traditional design concepts (Land Use pg. 20).
- Formulate and adopt modern, flexible land development regulations in order to preserve and enhance the scale, quality, and character of existing neighborhoods (Land Use pg. 21).
- Encourage mixed land uses in new and redeveloping areas to achieve a high degree of self-containment, reduce auto dependence, and foster a strong live-work-play pattern of activity within neighborhoods (Land Use pg. 22).
- Encourage preservation of corridors of land for non-motorized transportation routes/trails and provide public investment for non-motorized transportation facilities (Land Use pg. 22).
- Review existing zoning to ensure it is consistent with neighborhood objectives, and pursue rezoning of areas where conflicts are found (Land Use pg. 23).
- Increase code enforcement activity in order to help protect neighborhoods from decay, decline and disinvestment (Land Use pg. 23).
- Allow for compatible, small-scale commercial uses that support existing neighborhoods and reduce dependence on automobile travel (Land Use pg. 24).
- Encourage public investment in parks and schools that are neighborhood focal points, consistent with the Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan (Land Use pg. 25).
- Proactively direct development through public investment in infrastructure (Land Use pg. 28).

## **Amendment of the DURP**

The DURP may be modified at any time by the City Commission as necessary to eliminate and prevent the development or spread of blight and to encourage urban rehabilitation. The process for plan amendment shall be consistent with the procedures outlined in 7-15-4212 - 4219 (MCA).

# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan

## **Conclusion:**

The City of Great Falls Downtown Master Plan recommends the establishment of an Urban Renewal District that utilizes TIF funding to revitalize and rehab downtown. The Plan provides an ambitious yet obtainable framework of goals, objectives and strategies that are intended to transition this area from its current condition to a vibrant and thriving destination. The Downtown Urban Renewal District has tremendous potential to re-emerge as the commercial, cultural and entertainment center of Great Falls.

# Downtown Urban Renewal District Plan



## RESOLUTION 9961

### A RESOLUTION DECLARING A BLIGHTED AREA EXISTS WITHIN THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, MONTANA AND THAT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THAT AREA IS NECESSARY FOR THE REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN GREAT FALLS

\*\*\*\*\*

WHEREAS, the State of Montana has provided for the redevelopment of those portions of its cities which constitute an economic and social liability; substantially impair the sound growth of a municipality; retards the provision of housing accommodations; and aggravates traffic problems; and,

WHEREAS, the procedure provided in Title 7, Chapter 15, Parts 42 and 43 of the Montana Codes Annotated authorizes municipalities to exercise statutory urban renewal powers for redevelopment and rehabilitation through urban renewal plans and projects, after the municipality has made a finding that a blighted area exists; and,

WHEREAS, Title 7, Chapter 15, Part 42 of the Montana Codes Annotated provides the definition of blight and identifies conditions that contribute to the existence of a blight; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Great Falls Downtown Master Plan identifies a Downtown Urban Renewal District with a provision to use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as necessary to redevelop and revitalize Downtown and implement certain recommendations of the Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Great Falls has conducted a study (attached as Exhibit "A" to this Resolution) to determine the existence of blight in the proposed Downtown Urban Renewal District described in the legal description and map identified in the study and in particular found:

1. Physical deterioration of buildings and properties
  - Vacancy, underutilization and a lack of maintenance has led to the physical dilapidation and deterioration of a number of buildings within the district. Not only does this have a negative impact on the aesthetic character of specific buildings and the district as a whole, it also produces conditions that are unsafe, unsanitary and not conducive to economic development.
2. Inappropriate or mixed uses of land or buildings.
  - A large amount of land within the District is currently used as surface parking for automobiles. While a certain amount of parking is necessary to support economic and residential activities within the District, an over-abundance of surface parking lots represents an inefficient use of land in the City's commercial core. Underutilized surface parking lots could potentially be redeveloped as commercial, office, residential or mixed use development with the potential to improve the vitality of the downtown and increase the taxable value of the District.

- In certain areas of the District, heavy industrial uses are adjacent to residential, retail and transitional uses. These areas present key locations for redevelopment within the District.
3. Defective or inadequate street layout.
- Three one-way couplets currently traverse through the district. Although a complete, formal analysis of the impact of the one-way couplets is planned for the spring and summer of 2012, multiple studies and analysis conducted across the U.S. indicate that downtown access and circulation, customer parking and property values increase when downtown one-ways are restored to two-way streets.
  - A primary intersection within the district - Park Drive and 1st Avenue N - is unsafe and difficult to navigate for pedestrians. Additionally, the current configuration of the intersection produces congestion and inefficient automobile travel.
4. Deterioration of site.
- Vacant, underutilized or unmaintained buildings and parcels concentrated within specific areas have created pockets of site deterioration throughout the district. The deterioration of site has often led private investment and development to move to outlying areas of the City, slowing redevelopment and infill efforts downtown. If site deterioration is not addressed, the exodus of commercial and residential development will continue and ultimately lead to further deterioration.
  - An analysis of building permits issued in the City of Great Falls from 2005 to 2010 illustrates the lack of investment within the District. Of the 1,760 building permits issued in the City over this five year period, only 96 were issued for construction in the District. The value of projects for which the building permits were issued resulted in a \$369,346,006.00 investment city-wide compared to \$13,553,878.00 in the proposed district. A statistical analysis of the valuation of the projects shows that the maximum value found city-wide is much larger (\$10,788,533.00) than found within the District (\$1,500,000). Additionally, the median value of city-wide projects (\$221,962) was approximately 65% greater than the median value of downtown investment (\$141,186). Exhibit B of this resolution displays a geographical depiction of investment and building activity in the City from 2005 to 2010.
5. The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes.
- The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes is present. Multiple factors have contributed to these conditions including fire damage, the use of hazardous construction materials, negligence and extended vacancy among others. Properties that have reached this condition are often the target of trespassing, graffiti and other forms of vandalism.
  - Although the district accounts for less than 2% of the geographic area of the City, certain crimes that endanger life or property occur within the district at a disproportionately high rate. According to Great Falls Police Department dispatch records, nearly half (47%) of all arson cases reported in 2011 occurred



within the district. Additionally, over a third (34%) of all trespassing and a nearly a quarter (24%) of abandoned vehicles reports occurred in the district.

6. Conclusion

- Based on these findings, the proposed Downtown Urban Renewal District can be described as blighted per Montana Statute, with respect to physical deterioration of buildings and properties; inappropriate or mixed uses of land or buildings; defective or inadequate street layout; deterioration of site; and the existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, MONTANA:

That the City Commission finds that blight exists within the City of Great Falls in the area described in Exhibit "B" of this Resolution under the definition contained in Section 7-15-4206 (2), M.C.A. and that rehabilitation and redevelopment of such area (pursuant to the Montana Urban Renewal Law) is necessary and desirable in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City of Great Falls and that this rehabilitation and redevelopment be made with a commitment to quality improvement and a commitment to property owner and community involvement in decision making.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY SAID CITY COMMISSION that this Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its passage and approval.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Commission of the City of Great Falls, Montana, on March 6, 2012.

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Michael J. Winters, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Lisa Kunz, City Clerk

(SEAL OF CITY)

APPROVED FOR LEGAL CONTENT:

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James W. Santoro, City Attorney



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Planning & Community Development Dept.

P.O. Box 5021 Great Falls, MT 59403

Date: April 17, 2012  
To: Great Falls City Commission  
From: Great Falls Planning Advisory Board  
Subject: Downtown Urban Renewal Plan

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Commissioners,

The Great Falls Planning Advisory Board has reviewed the Great Falls Downtown Urban Renewal Plan and has found that it is in conformity with the Growth Policy for the development of Great Falls. This recommendation was approved by the Planning Advisory Board by a unanimous vote.

Sincerely,

Thor Swensson  
Vice-Chairman  
Great Falls Planning Advisory Board